

## The Effect of Advertisements on Improving Turkish Young EFL Learners' L2 Vocabulary Learning

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### Abstract

Vocabulary is at the heart of English language teaching/learning process, because without adequate vocabulary learners cannot understand others or convey their own ideas. Beck et al. (2002, p.15) provided a research based conclusion in this regard: "All the available evidence indicates that there is little emphasis on the acquisition of vocabulary in school curricula." Thus this study tried to investigate the effect of ads on improving L2 vocabulary learning. Sixty female learners participated in this quasi-experimental research which lasted 18 sessions. Before starting the program the researcher administered a language proficiency test for controlling the proficiency level of the participants. Afterwards one pre-test on their word knowledge has been administered and at the end of the study one post-test was taken. The results provided powerful support for the positive effects of ads on L2 vocabulary learning. This would be due to the role of authentic materials in learning, since these materials are provided for native users and for real purposes.

**Keywords:** advertisement, EFL learner, L2 vocabulary learning

### INTRODUCTION

According to Levenston (1979), Psychologists, linguists, and language teachers have been interested in vocabulary learning strategies for an extensive period of time. Plentiful investigations have been carried out in comparing the retention outcomes of various vocabulary teaching strategies. Actually, the vocabulary ground has been particularly fruitful nowadays. According to Pikulski and Templeton (2004) it appears that it is impossible to overstate the power of words; they accurately have affected and will continue to affect the course of world history. They also believe conceivably the greatest devices we can give learners for succeeding, not only in their education but more generally in life, is a large, rich words and the skills for using those words. Our capacity to function in today's intricate social and economic worlds is tremendously shaped by our language skills and word awareness. Besides the fundamental

significance of vocabulary for achievement in life, a large vocabulary is more exclusively “predictive and reflective “of high levels of reading accomplishment. It is a very vital point that how many words a language user knows in speaking or writing or reading in a foreign or second language ( figure 1). For that reason lecturers need to be aware of significant vocabulary tutoring for language learners. The more words you know the more you will be able to comprehend what you listen to, and read, and so you will be able to write professionally Learning vocabulary appears one of the easiest steps in learning a language but actually it is one of the most tricky steps to pass. This is yet more demanding when it comes to foreign language pupils with partial and limited exposure to language and not having plenty occasioned to use learnt words in actual life. Accordingly they have deep problems, for example in reading skill; undoubtedly that reading is one of the most important parts of experiencing a foreign language. Lecturers, linguists, and language teachers tried to study vocabulary learning strategies. There are so many studies about the maintenance of words that are results of using special vocabulary strategies, this shows the effects of a variety of strategies in how of teaching (Yongqi GU, 2003).

## REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

### Vocabulary

According to Hubbard (1983) vocabulary can be defined as a powerful transporter of meaning. The most vital point in lexis development is how words are learned. Teachers help their students in learning vocabulary with direct and indirect means. We don't learn the mainstream of words we know through training thus it seems vocabulary learning would be implicit or incidental. In late1980s and 1990s so lots of studies were expanded in this ground, researchers attempted to discover the meaning of effective and efficient in short term and long term vocabulary development (Cartner &Nunan, 2002). It is undoubted that Vocabulary is the major means of learning a language. Words are foundations of languages. Vocabulary is a vital constituent of language use. The noteworthy effect of vocabulary knowledge on second or foreign language learning has been highlighted recently (Zahedi & Abdi, 2012).

Learning extended inventories of unrelated words is tedious, tricky and doesn't aid language users while they are coming across come across those words in a different context. While focusing on learning words in the genuine contexts users are more likely to be successful in the process of acquiring and applying them when the situation requires. The knowledge of word meanings and the ability to access that knowledge efficiently are recognized as important factors in reading and listening comprehension, speaking and writing fluency. Thus, vocabulary knowledge helps students with language comprehension. Like Widdowson (1989), McKeown (2002) discuss that vocabulary knowledge is the spirit of a language comprehension and use. Moreover Barra (1995) proposes that to comprehend a text effectively learners need to have adequate word knowledge. This is to say that the comprehension of a language depends on the amount of words that are identified in that language. Moreover students need to have sufficient word knowledge to comprehend what they read. Students can comprehend a writer's

meaning merely if they know the meaning of most of the words used in a manuscript. Nunan (1989, p.40) offers the conservative definition of authentic texts: "Authentic materials are usually defined as those which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language". Such instance contains print materials like newspapers and timetables, or spoken materials like public announcements. He also supports that "the use of authentic sources leads to greater interest and variety in the materials that learners deal with in the classroom. This authentic material helps bring the contact to life, and ultimately makes learning and using language more meaningful and easier for students." Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value.

Authentic materials are an effective way to language acquisition. It is also useful to vocabulary acquisition. According to Lewis (1993) "vocabulary is often described as the cornerstone of language learning". Without vocabulary, learners would be unable to form the simplest of utterances, and therefore unable to communicate at even the most basic level. Also Knight (1994) argued that "Vocabulary achievement is consequently regularly prioritized in the learning procedure by students and teachers. Nowadays many teachers use authentic materials such as magazine, advertisements and, newspapers written notes and messages for vocabulary acquisition, in this study the researcher made use of advertisements as instructional tools of vocabulary teaching.

### **Advertisements**

Advertising is defined as any form of communication to current or potential clients in which a registrant is promoting her/his business. The writers add to that definition: mediated communication" is "communication which is conveyed to an audience through print, electronics, or any method other than person-to-person contact" (Richards & Curran, 2002, p. 74). Yet the offered definition of advertising increases little problems. Firstly, any mood of communication is mediated. Second one is that, if the concept of „action“ implies a process of doing something then the process of viewing is an action itself. Thirdly, the problem of the definition is related to the assumption that advertising message cannot be conveyed to an audience through person-to-person contact. This hypothesis is obviously contradictory with many recent examples of viral marketing, a "strategy that encourages individuals to exceed on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential development in the message's exposure" (Kirby, 2005). The mainstream of current studies on the impact and efficiency of TV commercials in English as a foreign language consists of classroom research and educators' personal skills (Davis, 1997; Goldthorpe, 1993; Katchen, 1993). One helpful result is that students provided with these commercials in the classroom improve their listening skills or that their motivation to listen increases at a faster rate than that of students who only experience listening to audio (Davis, 1997).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Q1: Does Advertisement have any effect on Turkish EFL learners' L2 vocabulary learning?

Q2: Does Advertisement result in improving Turkish EFL learners' L2 vocabulary learning?

H<sub>0</sub>1: There are no significant differences in the effect of Advertisement on Turkish EFL learners' vocabulary learning

H<sub>0</sub>2: There are no significant differences in the effect of Advertisement on Turkish EFL learners' vocabulary learning

## METHODOLOGY

### Design of the study

The design of the study is quasi-experimental, that is without randomization. The Independent variable of the study was ads and the dependent variable was EFL vocabulary learning.

### Participants

A total of 60 language learners with an age range of 9-12 participated in this program of which lasted for one academic term. All the participants were from Turkish background. They were picked from 5 classes. The contributors were students of the one of the high institutes in Istanbul, Turkey.

### Instruments

For collecting quantifiable data the researchers made use of the following instruments:

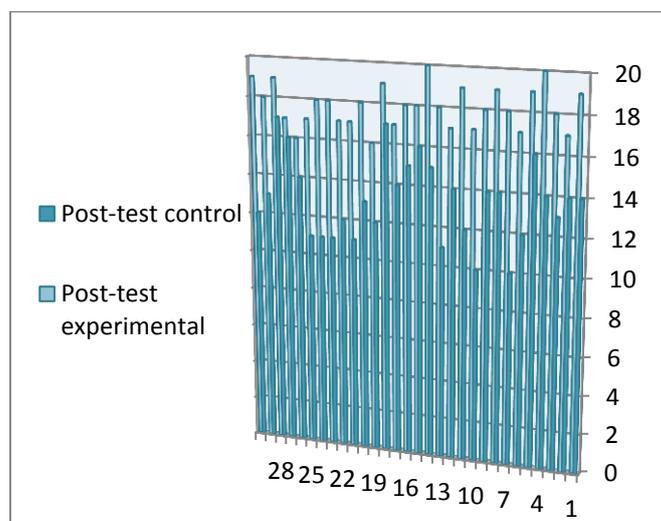
First of all one language proficiency test was conducted for assuring the level of the subjects. After theta Pre-test of which was administered on participants' word knowledge the words which were chosen from the TV advertisements (which were appropriate for the level of the participants). The post test of which was conducted at the end of the program for measuring the effectiveness of the ads.

### Procedures

Prior to beginning the program one language proficiency test was carried out on learners' skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, for assuring their proficiency level. Later one pre-test was administered for confirming the comparability of both groups on their word repertoire. Then the researchers established the program. The researchers taught new words in Experimental group through providing them with TV ads. While in control group learners learned the same words through traditional instruction. After 18 sessions, one post-test was run to both groups. The gathered data was analyzed via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Actually the first question of the current study was loaded question (since never researcher at the beginning of the study would judge about the effectiveness of the treatment. Loaded question can be defined as question that contains a controversial or unjustified assumption), but the answer is yes ads are of great importance in the process of word acquisition. It is worth to say that both groups were at same level at the beginning of the program since the means of pre-test for the groups of control and experimental were 12.88 and 12.41 respectively. After conducting the program as it can be seen in the following figure the experimental group outperformed in the post-test:



**Figure 1.** Post-tests of control and experimental groups

Results due to the main research question are going to be discussed in the following section: The mean of control group in post-test was 13.14 as it is evident there was no meaningful improvement. In experimental group mean of pre-test was 12.41 while in post-test was 17.96, thus there was consequential changes in post-test scores within this group. The collected data was analyzed by SPSS as is given in the following table:

**Table 1.** Independent Samples Test

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Differences	Std Error Differences	Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances Assumed	0.607	.427	1.37	58	.897	-.08000	.58477	1.261	1.1114
	Equal variances not assumed			1.37	57.085	.897	-.08000	.58477	1.261	1.1117

	Assumed									
	Equal variances									
	Assumed			-					-	-
				7.714	58	.000	-4.81000	.62545	6.0171	3.40486
Posttest	Equal variances not	1.119	.279	-	52.708	.000	-4.81000	.62545	-	-
	Assumed			7.714					6.0171	3.48898

Based on Leven test for equality of variances in this table, Sig. (2-tailed) for both groups is 0.897. It means, there is no statistically significant difference in means of both groups in pretests and confidence interval of the difference attested the results. in line with the Leven test, there is a significant difference in means of both groups in the posttests since the *p* value is (*P* > .05) it means that means of experimental group got better i.e. the difference of post- test scores are definitely higher than that of pre-test in experimental group. Consequently the constructive effect of advertisements on vocabulary learning has been confirmed. Also the group statistics are as follows.

**Table 2.** Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre test	control	30	12.8888	1.94422	.38869
	Experi.	30	12.4111	2.23688	.44724
Post test	control	30	13.1400	1.74855	.34785
	Experi.	30	17.9666	2.57866	.51994

In this study the major objective of the researchers was to making use of the TV commercials/ads on improving English vocabulary learning. They believe that because of the authentic nature of the advertisements, it is more likely to utilize them as instructional tools. The results of the study also prove that claim. Although there might a handful of studies on the effect of ads on word learning but surely this is supported from the view of the authenticity. Particularly in the words of which the participants were interested in (whatever the reason), they were really in learning and recall. The authentic nature of the ads on one hand and interesting and fascinating nature of the on the other hand make them as successful and effective instructional tools. Stempleski and Tomalin (1990), also believe that people’s interest is promoted when language is presented in active way through television and video. They continued their claims and stated that, “this combination of moving picture and sound can present language more comprehensively than any other teaching medium and more realistically too. A video sequence watched in class, makes students more ready to communicate in the target language”. (p. 3)

## CONCLUSION

The current study suggested a number of points that are recommended to be taken into account by teachers, educators. Because of the obvious advantages of the commercials (For instance, they are short- 30 to 50 seconds- being focused, having visual, verbal, and written presentation, being of authentic content and including cultural facts of the native society) are very effective tools of teaching a foreign language and foreign culture simultaneously. They can also be utilized for teaching speaking since they are provided by native speakers of foreign language. Perhaps they are the most appropriate exposures to the target language for the EFL learners with their extremely limited exposure to English. In this study there are some limitations of which need to be taken into account in further investigations in the field. Firstly the level of the participants (elementary) puts an obstacle on the generalizability of the findings, the other one was the number of participants that was another burden on the generalizability, and the last but not the least was the gender of the subjects (all female).

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