

TITLE: Promoting Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition through Task-based Interaction

AUTHOR: Gayoung Lee

FACULTY SPONSOR: Youjin Kim, Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics

Introduction: Over the last few decades, tasks have been recognized as useful vehicles for language teaching in classroom contexts (Ellis, 2003; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). However, many past studies have mainly focused on the acquisition of grammar despite the positive indication of task-based language teaching in promoting creative learning involvement.

Motivation: Newton (2013) has shown that learner-learner task-based interaction provides peer assistance as learners focus on the negotiation of the word meaning to carry out tasks together. What is still missing in previous literature is that to what extent task-based interaction would promote long-term learning of new words.

Purpose: The purpose of the current study is to examine the role of collaborative tasks in the learners' acquisition of new vocabulary words in its proper and meaningful context over time.

Method: A total of 50 English language learners in Korea were randomly assigned to either a control group or collaborative task group. All participants took a pretest, four instruction sessions, and two posttests over six weeks. During instruction, the control group was provided with explicit vocabulary exercises, whereas the task group performed collaborative tasks in pairs. The study included a total of 36 target vocabulary words related to travelling. Students' interaction during task performance was audio-recorded and transcribed. The frequency of their use of target words during task performance was counted. In order to assess the students' learning of target vocabulary words, both receptive (translating English words to Korean) and productive (creating a sentence in English using target words) vocabulary tests were provided, and their responses were audio-recorded. The receptive tests were scored based on accuracy, and the productive tests were scored for correct use of both form and meaning.

Conclusion: The results showed that task-based instruction resulted in higher retention of new words over time. However, their use of target words during task performance varied. The findings of the study will be discussed in light of the benefits of collaborative instructional tasks in promoting second language vocabulary learning.