



LEARNER-GENERATED DRAWING AS A STRATEGY FOR VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT IN B1–B2 EFL LEARNERS: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

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Abstract. *The thesis substantiates the use of learner-generated drawing as a strategy for learning English vocabulary and developing critical thinking. Based on dual coding theory, the levels-of-processing framework, the involvement load hypothesis and research on the “drawing effect”, it proposes the See – Draw – Say – Justify technique for B1–B2 learners and describes a quasi-experimental design for testing its effectiveness.*

Keywords: *drawing effect, visual representation, vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking, dual coding, EFL, B1–B2 learners.*

Introduction

Vocabulary is widely recognised as the foundation of communicative competence: without a sufficient lexical base learners cannot understand texts or express themselves, whatever their knowledge of grammar (Nation, 2013). In Uzbekistan, where CEFR-based certification has become an important requirement for students and teachers, learners at the B1–B2 levels must quickly expand both the size and the depth of their vocabulary. In practice, however, new words are still often memorised from bilingual lists, which gives short-term results and contributes little to the ability to use words in context or to think critically about meaning.

Cognitive psychology offers a simple and accessible alternative – learner-generated drawing. Experiments by Wammes, Meade and Fernandes (2016) showed that drawing a word's meaning, even for a few seconds and regardless of artistic skill,



leads to substantially better recall than writing it out repeatedly. This thesis seeks to transfer this “drawing effect” into the methodology of EFL vocabulary teaching and to link it with the development of critical thinking.

Several theories explain why drawing supports word learning. According to dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986), a word that is encoded both verbally and visually has two interconnected memory traces and is therefore retrieved more easily. The levels-of-processing framework (Craik & Lockhart, 1972) predicts better retention when information is processed semantically rather than superficially, and drawing requires the learner to analyse the meaning of a word in order to depict it. The involvement load hypothesis (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001) states that retention depends on need, search and evaluation; a drawing task raises all three components, especially evaluation, when the learner decides which features of a concept are essential.

Fernandes, Wammes and Meade (2018) note that drawing integrates elaborative, motor and pictorial processing. This integration also has a critical-thinking dimension: to draw an abstract word (e.g., “freedom”, “responsibility”) the learner must interpret the concept, select features and justify the choice – operations that correspond to analysis, interpretation and explanation as defined in the expert consensus on critical thinking (Facione, 1990).

Methods

The research methodology combined an analysis of psychological and linguodidactic research on the drawing effect, dual coding, levels of processing and task-induced involvement; systematisation of existing vocabulary teaching techniques; pedagogical modelling for developing the proposed technique; and design of a quasi-experiment for its subsequent empirical verification.

Results and discussion

Building on the reviewed theories, the author proposes the See – Draw – Say – Justify technique, which consists of four steps. See: the learner meets a target word in a meaningful context (a short text, video or dialogue) and clarifies its meaning. Draw: within 30–60 seconds they make a simple sketch representing the meaning;



artistic quality is not assessed. Say: the learner uses the word in an oral sentence related to the drawing and explains the drawing to a partner. Justify: peers try to guess the word from the drawing, and the author explains why particular visual features were chosen and how the word differs from its synonyms.

The technique is especially effective for abstract nouns, phrasal verbs, idioms and collocations, which are traditionally difficult for Uzbek learners because they have no direct equivalents in the native language. Drawings are collected in a personal visual dictionary (paper or digital), which learners use for spaced revision.

To verify the technique empirically, a quasi-experiment will be conducted with two groups of B1–B2 university students over eight weeks. Both groups will learn the same 120 target words; the experimental group will use the See – Draw – Say – Justify technique, and the control group will use traditional list-based and written practice. Instruments include a pre-test, an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test after four weeks (receptive and productive knowledge), a rubric assessing the quality of learners' justifications as an indicator of critical thinking, and a short questionnaire on learners' attitudes. Results will be compared using appropriate statistical tests.

Conclusion and recommendations

The experimental group is predicted to show higher delayed retention of vocabulary, especially of abstract and figurative units, and more developed skills of interpretation and argumentation. The technique requires no special equipment, takes little lesson time and is accessible to learners without any artistic training, which makes it suitable for wide use in schools and universities of Uzbekistan. Drawing to learn can therefore be seen as a cognitively grounded and practically feasible way of making vocabulary learning deeper and more thoughtful.

In practice, the technique should be applied primarily to abstract nouns, phrasal verbs, idioms and collocations, to keep drawing time short (30–60 seconds), and to combine the technique with spaced revision of learners' personal visual dictionaries.



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