

Extension homework and classroom assignments

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to determine whether different types of homework assignments influenced the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding and if the students provided with extension homework acquired vocabulary better than those just given the classroom assignments. The study took place in the public high schools in Chavar, Ilam. The participants were 120 high school students. A pre-test was administered to determine the homogeneity of the groups. The mean scores of the groups were 24.5 and 25 out of 50, for the experimental and control groups, respectively, and t -observed (0.41) was much smaller than t -critical (1.67), so they were nearly homogeneous. Both groups were assigned classroom activities that were based on practicing skills covered during the lesson, but the experimental group was assigned extension homework. After two-month period, a post-test was administered to determine if extension homework had an effect on their understanding of the vocabulary. The mean scores for two groups were 34.5 and 30.65 out of 50, for experimental and control groups, respectively. A t -test was used to analyze the data, and it was determined that the students who received extension homework had a better understanding of taught vocabulary than those who received just classroom assignments. The t -observed (9.077) was much larger than t -critical (1.67), so the hypotheses were safely rejected.

Keywords: Homework, Classroom, Assignments.

INTRODUCTION

Everyday, millions of school-age children arrive home from school. Some bring massive amounts of homework with them; others bring no homework at all. For some, homework is a piece of cake; for others, it is hard; and still for others, homework is designed to reinforce and review what is already learnt in school. Some children get homework assignments, but don't do these assignments. Other children begin their homework, but never seem to finish these homework tasks. Some teachers assign no homework at all, while others assign minimal homework. A question is raised, "is homework an effective tool to help learners learn more?" (Stacy, 1995, p 13) There are some advantages to do homework: One enduring advantage of homework is that it furthers learning tasks through reinforcement, assimilation, practice and application, and has the support of current psychological principles based on research (LeFrancois, 1991). Another advantage of homework is that it allows students to complete unfinished assignments and make up work. Homework also helps students fall behind in school work because of their presumed lack of ability, intelligence, or circumstance.

Interest in the area of homework is so widespread because its assignment in our schools affects a variety of persons including students, teachers, and parents. Obviously, the student is affected because it is he or she who must carry out the assignment. The teacher is involved in many ways. Planning for homework must be carried out by the teacher. The assignments and its subsequent evaluation are the responsibilities of the teacher. Teachers are the first to admit that this aspect of the instructional process is a tedious job, yet they make these assignments because they are committed to carrying out the various functions of teaching that will make the process successful, despite the undesirable elements that are a part of that assignment. Parents respect homework because they are really interested in their child's progress and feel that the assignment is going to complement their child's learning. There may be resistance to the assignments if these exercises interfere with the normal activities that are planned for the family (Check and Ziebell, 1980).

With regard to the importance of homework on students' achievement in learning and retention of instructional materials, this study is an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of extension homework on high school students'

learning and to compare the role of extension homework with class-work assignments. It also tries to investigate if students provided with extension assignments learn much more than those provided with class-work assignments or not.

Review of the related literature

Homework has been the topic of spirited debate for more than 100 years. During this time, public attitude has shifted dramatically from positive to negative and back again. In the early 20th century, homework was considered a key schooling strategy, an important means of disciplining the child's mind through memorization (Brinks, 1937). The mind was viewed as a muscle that could be strengthened through mental exercise. Since exercise could be done at home, homework was viewed favorably. At that time, many educators thought of homework as a means for disciplining children's minds (Brinks, 1937). From the end of the nineteenth century through the 1940s, the child health and progressive education movements led to an attack on homework for elementary school and junior high school students. Some even blamed homework for the child mortality rate, and a writer of the period called Nash referred to homework as a "legalized criminality" (Gill and Schlossman, 1996).

Events in the 1950s reversed this trend with the advent of the space race. Educators once again viewed homework as a means for accelerating the pace of knowledge acquisition. But by the late 1950s, after the launch of Sputnik, homework, again, grew in popularity. Worried that education in the United States lacked rigor, the public felt homework might speed up knowledge acquisition. In the early 1960s, parents became concerned that children were not being assigned enough homework in the belief that homework was essential for academic excellence (Gill and Schlossman 2004). Homework continued in favor until the mid 1960s, when the pendulum swung the other way and reversed itself and parents and educators perceived homework as a sign of excessive pressure on students to achieve (Cooper, 1989). Two decades later, in the 1980s, homework again came back into favor as it came to be viewed as one way to stem a rising tide of mediocrity in American education. The push for more homework continued into the 1990s, fueled by rising academic standards (Cooper, 1989).

Over the past decades, international studies on educational outcomes have raised serious concerns about the quality of school instruction in industrialized countries (e.g., Beaton et al., 1996; Burstein, 1980; Huse'n, 1967; Robitaille & Garden, 1989; Travers & Westbury, 1989). According to proponents of extensive homework assignments (Paschal, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984; Walberg, 1991), homework has a positive influence on the academic achievement of students simply because it rises the time on task

Definition of Homework

Homework is defined as school-related assignments by a teacher, or through mutual agreement of the student and teacher, which will require time and effort outside of the regular classroom for successful completion. It also serves to reinforce what is taught in the classroom and, as such, is practiced independently as an extension of the previous day's lesson or as a preparation for the next lesson. It should never take the form of busy work. Homework is also defined as academic work assigned in school that is designed to extend the practice of academic skills into other environments during non-school hours. This definition stresses the importance of homework as a means of programming for academic skill generalization (Stokes & Baer, 1977).

Homework is defined as academic work assigned in school that is designed to extend the practice of academic skills into other environments during non-school hours (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, and Macias, 1998). Additionally, homework is recognized as an indicator of both successful schools and students (Epstein and Van Voorhis, 2001). When students complete homework assignments, it means they are engaged in what is happening in the classroom..

Homework is typically defined as any tasks "assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours" (Cooper, 1989). Homework is also an integral part of instructional programs and life-long learning experiences. For a new skill to become automatic or for new knowledge to become long-lasting, distributed and sustained practice is necessary (Marzano, 2001; Willingham, 2002).

According to J. Michael Palardy, (1995), teachers identify four major purposes for assigning homework. The first is that homework teaches students self-discipline, independence, and responsibility. The second major purpose of homework is probably the most controversial. The third purpose of homework has been called "the most powerful" (Pendergrass, 1984). The fourth major purpose for homework is that it expands, explains, and eases time constraints on the curriculum because it permits students to have learning experiences in real situations as opposed to contrived situations.

According to Epstein and Becker (1982), there are seven purposes of homework (I called them 7 Ps): (1) Practice (2) Participation (3) Personal development (4) Parent-child relations (5) Policy (6) Public relations and (7) Punishment.

Homework can also be assigned for instructional and non-instructional purposes (Cooper, 1989), both of which can be further subdivided.

Instructional homework is generally assigned for one of four purposes: Practice homework, Preparation homework, Extension homework, and Integration homework.

The second level of homework, non-instructional homework, also includes four subcategories (Epstein and Van Voorhis, 2001): 1) Homework assigned for personal development, 2) Homework assigned to improve communication between parents and their children, 3) Peer interaction homework, and 4) Policy homework.

Types of homework

Homework assignments typically have one or more purposes. The most common purpose is to have students practice material already presented in class. Practice homework is meant to reinforce learning and help the student master specific skills. Preparation homework introduces material that will be presented in future lessons. These assignments aim to help students learn new material better when it is covered in class. Extension homework asks students to apply skills they already have to new situations. Creative homework requires the student to apply many different skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or creative writing.

Homework and Achievement

Homework has been identified as one of the most important practices for establishing a successful academic environment (Epstein, 1988). Harris, (1973) sought to determine the relationship between homework assignments and achievement. In several experiments, he found that when the students were given daily homework assignments in social studies and mathematics, relatively few children completed the assignments and that student performance was only slightly affected (Trautwein & Köller, 2003).

One interesting study done by Cooper (1989) reviewed nearly 120 studies of the effect of homework and found that homework had a significant influence on student achievement at the high school level. He commented that the studies showed that an average student doing homework will outperform about 69% of students that are in the class who do not complete homework (Cooper, 2006).

Still another study was done by Trautwein, (2007), in which he considered the homework- achievement relationship. The results of the study indicated that homework assignments were positively associated with achievement (class-level effect) and that doing homework was associated with achievement gains (student-level effect), but that the positive effects of homework assignments and completion were not captured by the "time on homework" measure (Trautwein, 2007).

Foyle and Baily, (1985) found that homework increased student achievement only when the homework was regularly assigned, clearly stated, regularly collected, promptly graded, and quickly returned.

Another study examined whether different types of homework assignments had an impact on student achievement in Mathematics as well as on student completion of homework. The findings of the study indicated that subjects who were assigned homework that contained practice exercises, writing activities, and higher level tasks completed more homework than subjects who were assigned homework containing only practice exercises. However, no difference was found in academic achievement between the control and experimental groups. (Stefanek Frant, 2008).

Family involvement

Parental involvement in education has received much attention in recent decades as various school-improvement efforts have sought to enhance student learning. Parents often become involved in their children's education through homework. Whether children do homework at home, complete it in after school programs or work on it during the school day, homework can be a powerful tool for (a) letting parents and other adults know what the child is learning, (b) giving children and parents a reason to talk about what's going on at school, and (c) giving teachers an opportunity to hear from parents about children's learning.

Parents appear to involve themselves in their children's homework for three major reasons: they believe that they should be involved; they believe that their involvement will make a positive difference, and they perceive invitations to involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

But parent involvement may also interfere with learning. Parents can confuse children if the teaching techniques they use differ from those used in the classroom. Parent involvement in homework can turn into parent interference if parents complete tasks that the child is capable of completing alone.

Parent involvement can be classified in at least three categories: school-based involvement, home-school conferencing, and home-based involvement (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hill and Craft, 2003).

Vocabulary Acquisition

Do we as teachers feel the need to teach vocabulary? The obvious answer to this question is: yes, we certainly do. As Michael Lewis (1997) said, the single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a sufficiently large vocabulary. Vocabulary as a major component of language learning has been the object of numerous studies, each of which has its own contribution to the field. Finding the best way of learning the words deeply and extensively is the common objective of most of those studies. However, using a variety of activities can reinforce the teaching points without boring the students (Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Coady, 1977; Zimmerman, 1997). Therefore, teachers and educators should revise the old procedures of teaching vocabulary. Perhaps they had better break the routine of classroom drills and grammar translation methodologies.

Vocabulary is central to language, as Zimmerman, (1997) noted, and words are of critical importance to the typical language learner. One can not learn a language without vocabulary (Krashen, 1989; Nation, 1990). Much of the vocabulary in foreign/second language textbooks must be learned. Without it, no one can speak or understand the language.

In 1995, Stacy Townsend had a study to determine if homework influences the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding on 40 third grade students. The results indicated that students who received homework had a better understanding of vocabulary that had been taught. A questionnaire was also given to teachers to assess their feelings about their worthiness of homework. Most of the teachers surveyed felt that homework increases vocabulary understanding (Townsend Stacy, 1995).

Nakata, (2006) acknowledged that vocabulary acquisition requires continual repetition in order for effective vocabulary learning. Vocabulary acquisition is not something a student can spend time learning or memorizing, like grammar, and be successful. Acquisition requires the learner to be disciplined; spending time each day working on words he/she does not know in order for learners to remember high frequency words and put them into their long term memory. Nation and Waring stated that learners need to encounter the word multiple times in authentic speaking, reading, and writing context at the student's appropriate level, (1997).

Learning new vocabulary through context helps the student understand the word's correct usage and prevents students from making sentences from dictionary definition (Yongqi Gu, 2003). Learning new words from a word list is much different from learning them in the context of a sentence or story. Yongqi Gu, (2003) stated that learning new words through context is only one step students may use, and that students should think meta-cognitively and learn new words within the context of where they appear.

According to Nation, (1994), the major components of a vocabulary course are: 1) meeting new vocabulary for the first time, 2) establishing previously met vocabulary, 3) enriching previously met vocabulary, 4) developing vocabulary strategies, and 5) developing fluency with known vocabulary

The purpose of the Study and the Hypotheses

Homework is helpful if it is based upon pupils' needs and individually assigned projects. It is an effective way to make up work missed by absences from school, and may also aid in overcoming the academic difficulty a student is experiencing. Homework should assist students who work to their capacities, and increases their breadth of understanding.

Poor performance of Iranian high school students in their English is a matter of serious concern among those in and around education, and their quest for finding suitable remedies is getting more and more intense. As assigning suitable homework can improve the students' learning, the present study was conducted to find out the impact of extension homework and class-work on students' learning ability. The following questions represent the general purpose of this study:

1. Is there any significant relationship between extension homework and students' learning in vocabulary acquisition?
2. Do the students given extension homework learn the language significantly better than the control group which is given a regular amount of homework?

Assigning enough homework and class-work to high school students and checking what they have done can help them overcome their difficulties in learning English as their second language. This study has tried to investigate the relationship between extension homework and students' vocabulary learning. It has also tried to show that the students provided with both homework and class-work assignments will improve their learning ability much more than those provided just with class-work assignments. Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were developed:

1. The use of extension homework bears a significant and positive relationship with achievement of vocabulary when carefully designed.
2. Students given extension homework will improve their learning ability significantly more than those doing just the classroom assignments.

3. There is a significant and direct relationship between doing extension homework and students' learning of vocabulary.

Subjects

The participants in this study were 120 high school students from Chavar, Ilam. They were selected from all high school students in this district. The participants were both male and female with the age range of 15 to 17. They were divided into two groups randomly: 60 in the experimental group and 60 in the control group. The subjects were categorized into four separate classes- two male 30-student classes and two female 30-student classes. In order to determine the homogeneity of the participants, a Nelson Battery Test (A) was administered. The experimental group's average was 25 and the control one was 24.75.

Instrumentation

At first, in order to divide the participants -60 girls and 60 boys- into 2 groups (experimental and control), a Nelson Battery Test consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions was administered. After the test, they were divided into two groups randomly. During a two-month period, the experimental group was given both classroom and homework assignments, while the control group was just given classroom assignments. The classroom assignments given to both groups and the way they were taught were the same. All the assignments were related to the material the teacher taught while the focus was on vocabulary. During each session, all the participants were given some multiple choice questions, gap filling and matching exercises, as well as tasks based on their own vocabulary. However, the experimental group was provided with much more assignments related to techniques and tasks during the course, with the intention of observing the effect of such a treatment. After two months of instruction, the two groups took a post-test containing 50 multiple choice questions on the material they were taught. Then the pre-test and post-test scores were calculated and the means obtained by the two groups were compared via a t-test.

Procedure

At first, in order to determine the homogeneity of the subjects, a Nelson Battery Test with the reliability of 0.94 was administered to all of the high school students in this district. 120 students were selected based on their scores on the pre-test. Then, the instructional phase started. In two sessions (one for each group), some instructions were given to all participants about the purpose of the test, the procedure of the test, what they were supposed to do, and the right date of the post-test. Both groups were taught the same materials in the same way. In each session, they were taught new vocabulary through different methods using pictures, definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and films in order to make them more interested in learning English. The researcher also used different methods and approaches in his teaching while teaching new vocabulary in each session.

During the study, each group was taught by the same teacher and was subjected to the same in-class activities. Throughout the study, subjects in both groups were given the same in-class assignments in the form of multiple-choice, gap filling, completion, and matching. The only difference in the instruction between the control and experimental groups was the type of assigned homework. Students in the control group were given homework assignments that were designed to practice the skills covered during the lesson. After the same lesson, students in the experimental group were given assignments that consisted of a combination of practice exercises, evaluation tasks and different kinds of activities in the form of more multiple-choice questions, gap-fillings, matching, completing, definitions, and short passages.

The following session was dedicated just to the experimental group as the treatment session. During this session, the participants were given various kinds of assignments' including multiple choice questions, gap-filling, matching, synonyms and antonyms, definitions -both blanks and matching, and short passages. While doing their assignments, they were monitored by the teacher.

The control group may have had access to extra assignments. In order to solve this problem, the students in the experimental group were provided with much more extensive homework and many kinds of assignments such as multiple choice questions, matching, short answers, open-ended answers, and cloze tests. This was done to cancel out the effect of the control group's possible outside reading. In other words, obligatory homework was assigned to account for optional homework of the other group.

Administering the post-test was the final phase of the study. At this stage, all participants took a test including 50 multiple choice questions on the presented material and topic they had been taught. The students in both groups were given the same questions, and the same amount of time to answer them. After that, the means of the two groups were calculated and compared via a t-test. The mean for control group was 31, while it was 34 for the experimental group. The mean score of the experimental group was greater than that of the control group indicating better performance of the experimental group, while the mean score of the control group (i.e. 0.5) on the pre-test

was slightly greater than that of the experimental group. However, in order to compare the two mean scores, the statistical *t*-test was run.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study, as mentioned before, was an attempt to find out if extension homework and extra activities had a considerable effect on the improvement of the high school students' vocabulary acquisition. It also tried to show if the students given both homework assignments and classroom activities had better achievement than those just given classroom assignments, while the other parameters such as the class environment, the instructor, duration of instruction, the instructional methods, the amount of classroom activities, the various kinds of assignments, and their pre- and post-tests were the same. The only difference was just assigning much homework to the experimental group and not to the other group.

Throughout the study, two *t*-tests were run, one for the pre-test and one for the post-test. After administering the tests, the means and the standard deviations for pre- and post-test were calculated. According to Hatch and Farhady (1981), if the *t*-observed exceeds the *t*-critical, our hypothesis will be rejected.

Table 1. *t*-test for both group's performance on the pretest

Group	Mean	SD	N	df	Variance	t- observed	t- critical
control	25	5.30	60	59	28.169	.41	1.67
Experimental	24.5	5.77	60	59	33.40		
Total			120	118			

As the results indicate, the calculated mean and the standard deviation for experimental group on the pre-test were 24.5 and 5.77, respectively. For the control group, the mean was 25 and the standard deviation was 5.30. So, the *t*-observed (.41) is much smaller than the *t*-critical (1.67) at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance. As table 1 shows, there is no significant difference between the two groups on the pre-test. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the difference between the two groups before treatment was not meaningful and both groups were equal enough or homogeneous in terms of vocabulary learning.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of both groups on their pre- and post-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
preCntrl	60	25.0000	.68519	5.30749
preExp	60	24.5000	.74618	5.77986
postCntrl	60	30.6500	.70784	5.48287
PostExp	60	34.5000	.91858	7.11527

Two months later, after experiencing treatments, both groups were given a similar post-test. As tables represent, the calculated mean and the standard deviation for the experimental group were 34.5 and 7.11, respectively. For the control group, the corresponding values were 30.65 and 5.48 in turn (table 2). As table 3 represents, the *t*-observed (9.077) exceeded *t*-critical (1.67) at 0.05 level of probability with 118 degree of freedom, so the null hypothesis is rejected. Although the two groups were not significantly different at the outset of the study, they behaved differently on the post-test with regards to extension homework since all of the other factors like the teacher, the instructional methods, duration of instruction, the atmosphere of the class, and so on were the same. So, it seems justifiable to conclude that the students given extension homework have served the intended purpose.

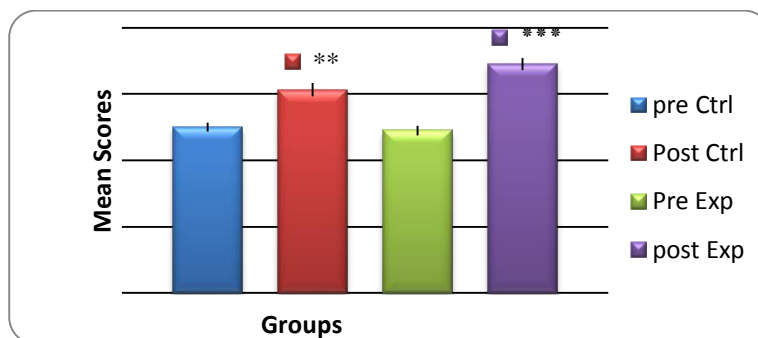


Chart1. The comparison of the mean of the four groups at p<0.05

As the tables above represented and according to the comparison of the two groups' scores, the mean score of the experimental group on the post-test was much higher than the control group- the difference was 3.85, while on the pre-test, the former was lower than that- a difference of -.5, so we can conclude that the students doing extension homework improved their vocabulary learning more than the control group, who just did classroom activities.

According to Table 2 and Chart 1, the mean score of the experimental group was 34.5, which was greater than the mean score of the control group i.e. 30.65. To see whether the treatment was effective or not, the means of the two tests were compared through a t-test (Table 3). As the observed value for t was 9.077 at 116 degree of freedom, which is greater than t-critical (1.67) at the significance of p<.05, the difference is significant. In plain terms, the results of this study clearly point to the highly significant effects of extension homework on the vocabulary achievements of the students. The impact of such homework was so strong that it overrode the initial differences that existed between the two groups of students. On the basis of such findings, all the directional hypotheses of this study are verified and consequently their corresponding null hypotheses are rejected.

Table 3. Comparing means of two groups on post test at p<0.05

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t-test for Equality of Means	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper
d	Equal variances assumed	22.083		.000	9.077	116	.000	-4.32203	.47613		-5.26507	-3.37900
	Equal variances not assumed				9.077	91.608	.000	-4.32203	.47613		-5.26772	-3.37635

Discussion

The ultimate goal of this study was to know whether the use of extension homework has any effect on vocabulary acquisition of high school students and whether the students provided with both classroom and homework assignments showed better performance on vocabulary acquisition than those just provided with classroom assignments.

The results of the checklist test are consistent with the hypothesis that L2 students who have been exposed to a combination of classroom activities and extension homework will show an increase in vocabulary knowledge. On the whole, the results of the pre-test and post-test showed a significant difference where the value was 0.41 in the pre-test and 9.077 in the post-test. The t-critical (1.67) at the 118 degree of freedom at the level p<.05 was smaller than the t-observed and it was high enough in the post-test to reject the null hypotheses safely.

Why did the experimental group outperform the control group on vocabulary acquisition despite their similar pretest scores? The extension vocabulary exercises may have been the key. Completing a variety of vocabulary exercises tapping different levels of processing capabilities such as practice, recognition, and production may have engaged the experimental group in varying levels of cognitive processing. Given the variety and amount of exercises that the experimental group completed during the instructional treatment, it logically follows that they had more opportunities to undergo a deeper mental processing of these target words- hence greater likelihood to enhance their vocabulary acquisition and retention.

The control group also showed some improvement on their post-test, which could be attributed to the course of instruction and classroom (not homework) assignments. It was thought that the control group might have access to extra assignments. In order to solve this problem, the students in the experimental group were provided with much

more extensive homework, and many kinds of assignments such as multiple choice questions, matching, short answers, open-ended answers, and cloze tests. This was done to cancel out the effect of the control group's possible outside reading. In other words, obligatory homework was assigned to account for optional homework of the other group.

In several respects, this study extends previous research. In their meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental homework studies, Paschal et al. (1984) found that the frequency of homework may be an important factor. This is in line with the results of the present study in which the frequency of various kinds of classroom and homework assignments made the experimental subjects improve their vocabulary acquisition better than the control group.

In line with some earlier studies (Trautwein et al., 2002), I found that frequent homework assignments predicted achievement, even when controlled for prior achievement. In this case, all of the subjects in both groups had their own achievement. As the results indicated in the tables and charts above, the mean differences for the control and experimental group on the pre- and post-test were 5.65 and 10, respectively. It showed that the achievement of the control group was because of the classroom assignments and of the experimental group was because of classroom and homework assignments.

Another study done by Cooper, (1989) reviewed nearly 120 studies of the effect of homework and found that homework had a significant influence on student achievement at the high school level. After treatment and administering the post-test, I found that the scores of the group who did not do the assignments fully or with great effort were much lower than the other subjects', so this study can statistically the significance of homework at all levels of analysis. In general, the findings supported the view that homework was beneficial to students' achievement.

This study was done over a two-month period and contained 20 sessions. In each session all the participants practiced with the taught vocabulary and did classroom assignments with regard to the target words, while the experimental group had their own treatment period and did homework and classroom assignments. This is in line with Cooper's, (1989) study, in which he found that homework requiring practice or tasks distributed over several sessions leads to greater achievement, regardless of subject area or student grade level.

Rutter et al, (1979) examined the importance of homework among secondary school students and reported that the assignment of homework by teachers and the doing of homework by students were positively associated with student academic performance and school behavior. This finding is in line with the findings of the present study in which the researcher as a teacher assigned the homework activities and the students did the assigned homework on their own or with the help of the teacher. In addition, the students given homework assignments showed better outcomes in the post-test than the students given classroom assignments only.

Townsend, (1995) examined the association between homework and achievement in language acquisition. Results from her study indicated that students who were assigned homework, scored higher on vocabulary tests than those who were not. Results of the present study also indicated that students who were assigned homework, had higher scores and better performance in learning the target words than those who were given just classroom activities. Their mean was much larger than the control's (MD=3.85).

Riazi and Alviri, (2004) performed a descriptive, qualitative research and concluded that students who use more different vocabulary strategies learn vocabulary items better and have longer retention. In the present study, the researcher used different strategies and methods in teaching vocabulary in class so that the students could acquire the target words better and more efficiently. One of these strategies was using different kinds of classroom and homework assignments and its results indicated that the group with both homework and classroom assignments acquired the taught vocabulary better and had higher scores than control group.

CONCLUSION

Classroom and homework assignments provide a channel of communication between students and teachers to evaluate and improve the quality of the work being done in the classroom. By using such activities, students are encouraged to do the activities with great care and to communicate to the teacher about any problems encountered with homework assignments. Besides, teachers should check or correct assignments and provide effective feedback to students' answers in a timely manner, provide students with an awareness of their homework responsibilities, identify both individual and group needs and assign homework as appropriate to meet these needs, incorporate the results of homework assignments into the grading of student progress, assign purposeful homework, and design homework to maximize the chances that students will complete it.

Assigning students different types of homework makes them accept the responsibility of participating in their learning process. As an experienced teacher-I have been teaching English for 16 years- I think in our province i.e. Ilam, as well as our country, high school students are heterogeneous in English classes since a lot of students attend

English classes in Institutes, so choosing different types of homework assignments depends on the language level of the students. The teacher is responsible for assigning the right homework type to the students with regard to their capabilities and needs.

Comparing achievement of the two groups, the researcher found that the experimental group learned the vocabulary better than the control group. The results also showed that the means of the two groups on the pre-test were almost equal (24.5 and 25 out of 50 for experimental and control groups, respectively,) and they were almost homogeneous. After the treatment, the means of the groups were 34.5 and 30.65 for the experimental and control groups, respectively. The comparison of test scores showed that homework on vocabulary increased the students' understanding of the words. It revealed that giving well-designed homework assignments, grading their papers carefully, giving feedback to their answers, and assigning different kinds of classroom and homework assignments encouraged the students to do the assignments with great care, and this made them learn the vocabulary better. According to the results of the present study, doing much homework and practicing the target words frequently by doing different kinds of activities make the materials be learned better.

Assigning activities plays an important role in learning the new-taught materials in all instructional levels. According to the results of the present study, the researcher found that doing assignments helps the learners to learn the materials better. Doing homework assignments also helps the students work with the new vocabulary more, use them over and over in the different kinds of exercises and in the new contexts, and remember them easily whenever needed. As the mean scores of the two groups showed, those who did more assignments- both classroom and homework- understood the target words better and had the higher scores than those who just did the classroom activities.

Most words that we teach will be forgotten over time if the students do not work with them. So, the researcher made the students work with new words by using different kinds of assignments such as matching, gap-filling, multiple choices, filling the blanks by their own words or by the words given, and short passages. Because the experimental group dealt with all these kinds of activities and assignments more than control group, the researcher considered it as the most important reason for outperforming the experimental group.

According to the results of the study, any individual in the experimental group had an outstanding achievement on the posttest in comparison to their pretest, although the subjects in the control group had achievement, too. It seems that the achievement of the both groups was because of the instruction and classroom assignments, but the more achievement of experimental group was as the result of homework assignments since the only difference between two groups' conditions was the extension homework assigned to the experimental group.

The final goal of any teaching is to enable the learners to reach a position higher than where they are. According to the scores and the means of the two groups in this study, it is shown that the experimental group learned the vocabulary significantly better than the control group.

It is therefore essential that classroom teachers make every effort to ensure that assignments are (1) necessary and useful, (2) appropriate to the ability, interest, and maturity level of students, (3) well explained and motivated, and (4) clearly understood by the students and their parents. The teachers should also plan homework assignments as carefully as classroom instruction, carefully evaluate and grade assignments and give appropriate feedback and return them in the appropriate time, and never assign homework as punishment.

Pedagogical Implications

This study was an attempt to investigate one of the most important issues in EFL instruction, i.e., vocabulary acquisition. The study revealed that assignments have a lot of potentials, which can be of great use in EFL classroom settings. Based on the findings of this study, the following pedagogical implications might be presented.

This study provided data that reflects the essential needs of our classrooms. The results provided can be of some help to high school language teachers. Most of us as teachers concentrate on using methods- old or new- and neglect the influence of other factors such as interaction, feedback, and classroom and homework assignments.

Feedback is one of the most important factors in learning. Implementation of positive feedback into the instruction of vocabulary is very useful. Most teachers consider positive feedback for both evaluating and developing language classes. Feedback to students' assignments helps them to be motivated to do the activities with great care. The teachers as well as school personnel and parents should pay much attention to their feedback to the students' assignments and behaviors. Interaction is also an important factor in the relationship between teacher and learners. The teachers should consider this matter and try to have a good and relaxed relationship with the learners in order to build a comfortable and suitable atmosphere for teaching in the classroom. Having friendly relationship with the students also helps the teacher to face less difficulties in his/her instruction process. This makes the students do willingly what their teacher says especially for doing homework assignments.

The findings of this study have practical implications for EFL vocabulary instruction. It shows that vocabulary exercises- whether classroom or homework activities- might be a better option for EFL teachers who are bent on enhancing students' word knowledge acquisition and long-term retention, especially for teaching the frequently used words. These vocabulary enhancement activities can enable students to focus their attention on specific vocabulary items and help them to understand the word meanings and functions, thus enhancing their vocabulary acquisition. The findings in this study also showed that the use of varied vocabulary assignments can provide multiple and successful encounters with target words. Therefore, teachers can develop lexical instruction that would help students focus their attention on a selected set of words in any lesson in their English books and to increase their vocabulary knowledge during a short period of time.

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