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The Effect of Using Realia in Vocabulary Retention for EFL Learners: A Case Study in a Private Institute in Damascus

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of using Realia (authentic materials used in teaching) on vocabulary retention among adult learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Recognizing the challenges faced by EFL learners in acquiring and retaining vocabulary, this study aims to determine whether the incorporation of real-life objects and materials would lead to improved vocabulary retention and overall engagement in learning.

To this end, this study was conducted at a private language institute in Damascus. It employed a quasi-experimental research design that involved two groups of adult learners: an experimental group that received vocabulary instruction through the use of Realia and a control group that relied on PowerPoint slides containing pictures presented on a screen. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups to assess vocabulary retention.

Results indicated that the experimental group, which was taught through using Realia, showed better vocabulary retention compared to the control group. As students of this group achieved an average score of 87% surpassing the control group students, who scored an average of 74.5%, with a difference of 12.5% in the post-tests. These findings suggest that the use of Realia in EFL instruction for adult learners could enhance vocabulary retention and foster a more engaging learning environment in the Syrian context which suffered from absence of resources and demotivation for 13 years. The study contributes to the existing literature on effective language teaching strategies and offers practical insights for educators aiming to implement innovative strategies in their classrooms.

Chapter One

Introduction

“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.” Frank Smith

Learning a foreign language opens closed doors to new cultures, broadens personal and professional horizons, and facilitates communication, thereby providing access to opportunities that were previously inaccessible.

Acquiring any language starts from learning its vocabulary, which means according to Cambridge dictionary: all the words known and used by a particular person, or all the words that exist in a particular language or subject.

Acquisition of words is the basis for communication in foreign or second language contexts and it is “an essential part of mastering a second language” (Schmitt, 2008, p. 329). In this regard, Wilkins (1972, p. 111) pointed out: “Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. That is why this research was conducted to focus on vocabulary retention through using Realia, which involves using real-life objects or examples in the classroom to enhance students’ understanding of a subject.

1.1 Background of the Research

This study discusses how the researcher’s use of Realia helps EFL learners in vocabulary acquisition and retention in a private English institute in the Syrian context that is really different from other contexts. Syrian students have encountered all kinds of shortage in resources in most educational settings during

the last thirteen years due to the war and its consequences in Syria. Therefore, the researcher who has worked as an EFL teacher in some public and private schools for ten years, has noticed that Syrian students need now, and more than any other time before, to learn this language. However, they have lots of difficulties retaining its vocabulary in the long run. Moreover, studies have shown that acquiring new vocabulary is not an easy task for learners, and most learners have difficulties in remembering new words after a while. As a result, they have troubles in communicating with others (Kun and Mei, 2010; Beheshti, 2011).

Considering that, the researcher has observed that the main concern is how well new vocabulary is taught, and to what extent it could be retained, then recalled when necessary. Thus, she has tried many ways to teach vocabulary, one of which is using Realia in her classes, which has always been fun, even in bad times. That has led her to conduct this study to investigate the effect of using Realia on students` vocabulary acquisition and retention.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate the impact of using Realia on vocabulary acquisition and retention in EFL classes. The study was applied in a private institute in Damascus in which the researcher works, on EFL adult learners. Furthermore, it aims to increase teachers` awareness of the effectiveness of using Realia in teaching vocabulary, seeking to improve the teaching- learning process in EFL classes, through providing the necessary recommendations and suggestions.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

1. The Null Hypothesis

The use of Realia in vocabulary instruction does not enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention among EFL learners compared to other teaching methods.

2. The Alternative Hypothesis

The use of Realia in vocabulary instruction enhances vocabulary acquisition and retention among EFL learners compared to other teaching methods.

1.4 Research Question

This research seeks to answer this question:

How effective is the use of Realia in EFL classes in vocabulary acquisition and retention among Syrian learners in a private institute?

1.5 Research Importance

Teaching vocabulary is an essential aspect of language learning because language is based on words (Alqahtani, 2015). Without a sound knowledge of vocabulary students are not able to understand others or express their own ideas. Therefore, seeking the best strategies to teach vocabulary is invaluable. However, retaining the vocabulary is of a great concern.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, there is a lack of studies on the effect of using Realia on vocabulary retention. Little research was found on this topic. The researcher could not find many studies that show whether there is a

relation between using Realia and retention of words or not, which shows a gap in this field, and the researcher tried to add this new study in this area hoping to make a contribution to the existing literature in this field. Thus, this study could be one of a few studies that relate vocabulary retention to the use of Realia. However, she found many studies on the use of Realia and its effect on the acquisition of new vocabulary or speaking and developing the language.

On the other hand, there are also some studies on vocabulary retention and some strategies to improve it, but using Realia was not mentioned as one of those strategies. Thus, this study was conducted to contribute to filling this gap by highlighting the relation between the use of Realia and vocabulary retention.

This research could be regarded as an attempt made by the researcher to provide a vision of the effectiveness of using Realia in vocabulary acquisition and retention, seeking to develop the reality of EFL classes by enriching the vocabulary teaching practices, and getting the learners to enjoy the learning process through having real experiences. Moreover, it is important as it provides a crucial insight into vocabulary learning and retention.

Findings of this study might be of particular interest to EFL teachers, researchers, material developers, and syllabus designers who are looking for appropriate ways to increase learners' vocabulary knowledge, acquisition and retention.

1.6 Main Terms and Procedural Definitions Used in the Research

EFL: English as a foreign language.

A2: the basic user of the English language according to (CEFR 3.3): The Common European Framework of Reference

Realia: A term used to refer to certain real-life objects and items which are brought into the classroom as aids for presenting vocabulary.

Vocabulary: the body of words and their meanings that students must understand to acquire and retain.

Retention: the fact of keeping something in one's memory.

Vocabulary retention: remembering new words rather than forgetting them. Once a word is retained, it can be retrieved and used later.

1.6.1 Procedural Definitions Used in the Research

EFL: The English language that is used in the institute to teach students of all levels.

A2: according to the institute framework, this level includes 2A, 2B and 3A courses.

Realia: the real objects which the researcher brought to class to teach students of the experimental group, they were some types of clothes and containers.

Vocabulary: some nouns and adjectives that were used to teach clothes styles and containers types.

Vocabulary retention: keeping all the vocabulary learned in the long- term memory, and the ability to recall and utilize them in conversations when needed.

1.7 Research Structure

This research consists of five chapters in which the researcher tried to focus on the effect of using real objects in teaching, and how helpful they could be in terms of vocabulary retention.

Chapter One has established the foundational context for this research by outlining the background of choosing its topic moving to setting the hypothesis and the question of this study. Furthermore, it has clarified the research importance, emphasizing its contribution to the theoretical frameworks about the impact of using Realia to enhance vocabulary retention. Moreover, the key terms defined in this chapter will serve as essential reference points to the reader.

Chapter Two deals with the theoretical part of the research. It discusses the learning styles moving to vocabulary teaching strategies, problems, and knowledge, in addition to indicating the role of engaging students in learning by using Realia, which is the focus of this research. Hence, this chapter presents types of Realia, advantages of using it, and how it contributes to vocabulary retention. It also discusses vocabulary retention with some key aspects of it, besides some tools and resources that enhance vocabulary retention. Moreover, it sheds light on memory strategies, and some factors that influence retention.

Chapter Three talks about the methodology and design of this study which is a quasi- experimental design. It describes the population, defines the sample, and talks about the research instrument and the procedure of collecting data after applying some ethical considerations.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the results of data analysis which are presented in some tables and some bar charts that demonstrate the data analysis.

Chapter Five focuses on answering the research question based on the study's results and the theoretical framework, in addition to providing some implications and suggestions for teachers, and some recommendations for future studies after stating the research limitation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is meant to provide a theoretical framework of the related issues regarding learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies as well as the use of Realia in teaching EFL classes indicating its types and advantages, in addition to discussing vocabulary teaching and its problems, not to mention the great role of engagement in teaching, moving to the language skills. Additionally, this chapter offers a theoretical framework of retention and some key aspects of vocabulary retention, in addition to some memory strategies. Moreover, it reviews literature and previous studies in terms of retention, and points out the relation between using Realia in teaching and vocabulary retention.

2.1 Learning Styles

According to Soo (1999), the concept of learning styles dates back to the 19th century when Johann Pestalozzi, who pioneered the progressive instructional method, believed that education should take learners' differences into account. According to Reid (1987), a learning style is defined as “an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills” (Reid, 1987).

Learning styles can be divided into six interrelated aspects: cognitive, executive, affective, social, physiological, and behavioral (Oxford & Anderson, 1995). According to Oxford and Anderson (1995), cognitive elements include preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning. The executive aspect deals with the degree to which the person seeks order, organization and closure, and

manages his or her own learning processes. The affective aspect reflects clusters of attitude, beliefs and values that influence what an individual pays attention to in a learning situation. The social aspect concerns the extent of involvement with other people while learning. The psychological aspect involves at least partly anatomically-based sensory and perceptual tendencies of the person. The behavioral aspect is concerned with the tendency to seek the best situations with one's own learning preferences. Within the primary aspects of style, many styles have been identified. Oxford and Anderson (1995) stated that individual learners have a composite of at least 20 style dimensions. Soo also points out that "individual learners can have 6–14 strongly preferred styles at the same time" (1999, p.293).

2.2 VARK Learning Styles

Soo points out that "learners may prefer to learn by listening, seeing, or using a hands-on or whole-body-movement approach" (1999, p.295). By using three main channels, Soo implies that both kinesthetic and tactile styles end in one confluence.

Learning styles are crucial in education, and understanding them can come with great benefits. According to Kendra Cherry (2024), various types of learning styles exist. One widely referenced student learning model is the educational theorist Neil Fleming's VARK model (1987). Fleming introduced an inventory in 1987 that was designed to help students and others learn more about their individual learning preferences. The VARK acronym refers to four types of learning styles: visual, auditory, reading/writing preference, and kinesthetic. The VARK model recognizes the diverse ways in which students absorb and process information, commonly referred to as (preferred learning modes). For example, when learning how to build a clock, some students understand the process by

following verbal instructions, while others have to physically manipulate the clock. Learning styles also take into account various methods of understanding and retaining information. According to the VARK model, learners are identified by whether they have a preference for:

1- **Visual learning:** learners who learn best through seeing pictures, movies, and diagrams are visual learners. Oxford and Anderson point out that “visually oriented students like to read and obtain a great deal of visual simulation. For them, lectures, conversations, and oral directions without any visual backup are very confusing and can be anxiety-producing” (1995, p.209).

2- **Auditory learning** occurs when listening to music, discussion, or lectures. That`s what Oxford and Anderson state “Auditory students, on the other hand, are comfortable with oral directions and interactions unsupported by visual means” (1995, P.209).

3- **Reading and writing style:** learners who prefer this style are those who prefer making lists, reading textbooks, or taking notes.

4- **Kinesthetic learning** happens by moving, experimenting, and doing hands-on activities. Oxford and Anderson add that “Hands-on students like lots of movements, and enjoy working with tangible objects, collages and other media. For them, sitting at a desk for very long is uncomfortable. They need frequent breaks and physical action in games and dramatic activities” (1995, p.209).

Oxford and Anderson refer to the kinesthetic and tactile styles as hands-on sensory preference. They, however, consider that visual, auditory and hands-on styles are part of the psychological aspect rather than the perceptual aspect suggested by (Reinert, 1976; Dunn, 1983, 1984; Reid, 1987; Soo, 1999).

The VARK model refers to the four sensory modalities that describe different learning preferences. The model suggests that these modalities reflect how students learn best. However, if no single learning preference calls out to a student or they change preferences based on the situation or the type of information they are learning, they probably have what is known as a multimodal style (Cherry, 2024).

The VARK model is not just about catering to individual preferences and needs, it is about creating equality by recognizing that every student's method of learning is valid. A tailored approach over a standard one-size-fits-all is not a real approach. Thus VARK allows for a more inclusive and effective educational environment. Students become active participants in their education, leading to increased engagement, understanding, and retention.

2.3 The Best Learning Style

Ellis (1994) debates that it is impossible to say which learning style works best. However, Ahsani (2001) argues, “traditional schooling tends to favor some learning styles, such as abstract, perceiving or analytical learning style, communicative learning style, and reflective processing”. The researcher would like to suggest that whatever debate proves right, it is still good to know what a learner’s learning style is so that they can respond most effectively to the material being presented. Even when the material is not presented in the way they prefer, they can use their knowledge of learning styles to adjust, no matter who your teacher is or what the topic might be.

Generally speaking, we can say that teachers should vary their teaching styles so that all learners with different learning styles are involved in the learning process. Soo supports this argument by stating that “students benefit most from a teacher’s understanding of learning styles when as many domains as possible are

integrated into the instruction” (1999, p.297). Learners, on the other hand, should work on extending themselves beyond their ‘stylistic comfort zone’ to use different learning strategies (Oxford & Ehrman, 1993).

2.4 Vocabulary knowledge

Vocabulary is considered “the single most important aspects of foreign language learning” (Knight, 1994, p.285). Scholars have offered a diverse range of viewpoints regarding the dimensions of vocabulary knowledge. According to Richards (1976) and Nation (1990), vocabulary can be categorized into two main types: vocabulary breadth and vocabulary depth. To clarify, there are two fundamental dimensions of vocabulary: the number of words a person knows and the extent of their understanding of those words. As noted by Henriksen (1999), for learners to fully grasp a term, they must establish meaningful connections between the target words and other words they already know. This indicates that students should be acquainted with the semantic network of the target words, as well as their morphological, syntactic, and collocational aspects. According to Schneider et al (2002), vocabulary is composed of four key components: (1) the ability to pronounce or spell words, (2) the ability to differentiate one word from another, (3) the ability to link L2 (which is English in this study) vocabulary with their L1, (which is the first language, Arabic in this study) counterparts, and (4) the ability to identify similarities between L2 and L1. In other terms, vocabulary knowledge includes a wide combination of elements, such as word pronunciation and spelling, word formation, lexical fields, word families, synonyms, antonyms, word combinations, homonym, hyponymy, denotation, and connotation.

2.5 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning has been drawing growing attention from ESL/ EFL researchers, since the mid1980s, particularly, the 1990s, witnessed a noticeable number of publications, vocabulary is now a current focus in ESL pedagogy and research (Wei, 2007).

Oxford defines language learning strategies as, "steps taken by students to enhance their own leaning, they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence" (1990, p.1). She distinguishes between two types of vocabulary learning strategies: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include cognition, memory, and compensation strategies whereas indirect strategies support the learning process by "focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means" (Oxford, 1990, p.151).

In addition to that, according to Schmitt (1997), the most used vocabulary learning strategies are using a dictionary, verbal and written repetition, spelling, guessing meaning from context, and discussing meaning with peers. Besides, learning from context, dictionary use, vocabulary note-taking, rote rehearsal, encoding, word formation, semantic networks, and vocabulary in use are all task-dependent techniques for vocabulary learning, according to (Gu, 2003).

Language learning strategies were divided by Hosenfeld et al (1992) into four categories: metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies. Metacognitive methods are used to plan for language learning and to think about the process. Cognitive strategies are those that deal with the manipulation of various learning processes as well as the assessment of the learning process. Learners' communicative interactions with others are the focus of social

approaches. Affective strategies refer to measures used to deal with emotional problems. In summary, the researcher agrees with Oxford's ideas regarding indirect and direct vocabulary learning processes. Vocabulary can be learned unintentionally through contextual experiences or purposely through well-designed instructions. Vocabulary development is a gradual process. Simply speaking, learners gradually absorb words when they are stimulated. As Rivers (cited in Thornbury, 2002, p.144) states that "vocabulary cannot be taught, it can be presented, explained, included in all kind of activities and experienced in all manner of associations...but it is ultimately learned by the individual."

2.6 Realia: Authentic Materials

Realia, or real-life objects, such as toys, puzzles, and physical models, can make abstract language concepts more tangible. For example, using a toy animal to teach vocabulary related to animals can provide a concrete reference that helps young learners better understand and remember the words (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Realia comprises material such as leaflets, music, pictures, flashcards, menus or maps or any print materials (Gobert, 2018). Realia is a visual aid that uses real-life objects, artefacts, or materials to enhance students' learning experiences. These objects can be anything from everyday items like coins, maps, food, clothes or newspapers to specialized things like scientific equipment or cultural artefacts. Realia can be especially helpful for students who struggle with abstract concepts or have difficulty visualizing complex ideas. Basically, Realia is categorized into two main aspects, namely materials with linguistic elements and materials that promote language production (Martinez, 2008).

By providing concrete examples, Realia can help students connect what they're learning and the real world, leading to deeper understanding and greater engagement.

Realia provides language learners with multi-sensory impressions of the language which, as Rivers (1983) noted, is "learned partly at least through seeing, hearing, touching and manipulating" items. Moreover, the interaction with authentic materials helps in contextually grounding instruction by bringing students into contact with language as it is used in the target culture in order to meet actual communication needs.

Using Realia enhances vocabulary acquisition by providing a practical, interactive approach, increasing retention and understanding through real-life context, making language learning more engaging and memorable. Incorporating Realia into the classroom can establish a more enjoyable, interactive and effective learning atmosphere (Suyanto, 2007; Bala, 2015). Realia is appealing to visual and kinesthetic learners. A teacher of a foreign language often employs Realia to strengthen students' associations between words for everyday object and the object themselves.

The use of Realia, then, can enhance linguistic and cultural comprehensibility, which are both prerequisites for real language learning. Thomas (2005) suggested that The use of Realia falls into three main areas, first, for descriptions, and second, as props in drama and another type of activity is a creative thinking exercise, finding different uses for object, e.g. a ruler could be a weapon, musical instrument, a symbol of authority and so on.

Providing students with rich materials and creating a pleasant learning environment are essential to engage students actively in the process, on the

contrary of the conventional approaches such as text books or exercise books are considered rather outdated (Bala, 2015).

2.7 Types of Realia

According to Yilmaz (2011), Realia is categorized into three main groups of learners' proficiency level, starting from beginners level in which they can use Realia like (recipes or transportation schedules); to the intermediate level in which they can use something like: (manuals or advertisements) as well as the advanced learners who can use it in (research articles or news articles). These could enhance students' mastery of language skills.

Another type of Realia is the virtual Realia, usually presented in a digital format. Virtual Realia comprised of the linguistics and non-linguistics elements could provide students with cultural specific knowledge in the language classroom (Smith, 1997). Virtual Realia are enriched cultural objects used to illustrate and facilitate students' learning experience to expose students with a better understanding of the taught culture. Not only that, it can stimulate student interest and their motivation to learn language by inspiring the sensory experiences (Campbell, 2017).

2.8 Advantages of Using Realia

Many studies and authors encourage the use of Realia in language teaching. Most of these studies emphasized a direct and positive relationship between using authentic materials in language classrooms and motivation as in the studies of (Peacock, 1997; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014).

However, there are some other benefits from the use of Realia, which are as follows:

1- Authentic materials “give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the ‘real’ language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it” (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p.347).

2- Authentic materials “will bring them [learners] closer to the target language culture, and therefore this will result in them making the learning process overall an even more enjoyable and thus, motivating” (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014, p.249).

3- Authenticity “prepares the learners for the real world situations in terms of using the target language” (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014, p.250).

4- Authentic materials “encourage learners to learn a particular language successfully, because they notice they are dealing with the language in real life” (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014, p.253).

5-“Appropriate authentic materials may increase “learners’ levels of on-task behavior, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than artificial materials” (Peacock, 1997, p.152).

6- “One of the main reason for using authentic materials in the classroom is once outside the “safe”, controlled language learning environment, the learner will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom but the real world and language how it is really used” (Berardo, 2006, p.66).

According to Berardo (2006), the main advantages of using authentic materials in the classroom are as follows:

- having a positive effect on student motivation.
- giving authentic cultural information.
- exposing students to real language.
- relating more closely to students' needs.
- supporting a more creative approach to teaching (p.64).

Many research studies were done on the importance of using Realia on students' speaking skills or their vocabulary development. As in the study of ANSAR (2019) which investigates whether or not using Realia can improve students speaking skill at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 2 Sirenja.

The researcher focuses on teaching the speaking skill through Realia. He limits the discussion on fluency and comprehensibility, and keeps the door open to more studies on other aspects of English language learning. The researcher concludes that using Realia can improve students' speaking skill at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 2 Sirenja in fluency and comprehensibility because the students' skill in speaking has developed after applying Realia. Moreover, it can help the students to build their confidence easily.

Similarly, in another study conducted by Fitri Ana Rahmayani, (2022) titled: Vocabulary Acquisition on Young Learners Through the Use of Realia Media, the researcher aims to trace the vocabulary acquisition of young learners through Realia on fifth-grade students of SDN Cangkring Malang 3. The tools used by the researcher were a notebook, a pen, a laptop, and some real objects. The result of the research showed that vocabulary acquisition with using Realia had significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. The learning process was also effective, fun and enjoyable. The researcher concluded that the student

could memorize the object that they meet in daily life, especially equipment of school, clothes, food, snacks and containers. Meanwhile, names of some vegetables were difficult for the students to memorize. The researcher concluded that applying vocabulary teaching using Realia was effective in improving student's vocabulary.

In the same way, the study of Sukrina (2010) showed that using Realia had positive outcomes on vocabulary learning. The studies provided in-depth illustrations on the effective use of Realia. The researcher employed an experimental method where students were given a pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test.

Despite the advantages on how Realia could improve the acquisition of vocabulary, it has its limitation. For instance, the ability of providing the material needed for every class from the schools or the institutions themselves. The lack of materials could hinder the teachers from using Realia in their classes. In this case a few teachers may bring their tools. However, they may need a car, and it's not always available. The flexibility of students' and their learning abilities can also affect the use of Realia. Besides, the big number of students in a class. Moreover, the process of sourcing the appropriate Realia could be time consuming (Benavent & Peñamaría, 2011). Considering these factors, preparations for classroom activities for the teachers might be hindered which may eventually affect the quality of classroom negatively.

2.9 Vocabulary Teaching

Vocabulary is the “building blocks of language” (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001, p. 33). Dellar and Hocking point out “If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very

little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words.” (Thornbury, 2002, p.13).

It is important when learning a foreign language to be aware of elements such as: vocabulary, genre, grammar, phonology, discourse, pragmatic, and socio-cultural knowledge (Thornbury, 2010). For speaking purposes, these six dimensions comprise the following characteristics:

1. **Vocabulary:** the selection of words or phrases should be based on the “frequency” criterion, i.e., the most common words.
2. **Genre:** a type of speech event and how it can be labelled by participants.
3. **Grammar:** direct and simple constructions to favor rapid and real time speech production.
4. **Phonology:** encourage basic differentiations in pronunciation and intonation.
5. **Discourse:** structure utterances according to specific genre’s conventions.
6. **Pragmatic:** interpret, perform, or adjust the message according to the context.
7. **Socio-cultural:** manage and develop intercultural competence (codify socio-cultural rules) (Thornbury, 2010, pp. 11-26).

2.10 The Problems of Teaching English Vocabulary

According to Thornbury (2002), there are some factors that make words difficult to learn, such as:

a. Pronunciation

Words that are difficult to pronounce are more difficult to learn. Potentially difficult words will typically be those that contain sounds that are unfamiliar to the learner.

b. Spelling

Sounds-spelling mismatches are likely to be the cause of errors, either of pronunciation or of spelling and can contribute to a word's difficulty. While most English spelling is fairly law-abiding, there are also some glaring irregularities. Words that contain silent letters are particularly problematic: foreign, listen, headache, climbing, bored honest, cupboard, muscle, etc.

c. Length and complexity

Long words seem to be no more difficult to learn than short ones. But, as a rule of thumb, high-frequency words tend to be short in English, and therefore the learner is likely to meet them more often, a factor favoring their “learn ability”.

d. Grammar

The grammar associated with the word, is also problematic, especially if this differs from that of its L1 equivalent. Remembering whether a verb like enjoy, love, or hope is followed by an infinitive (to swim) or an –ing form (swimming) can add to its difficulty.

e. Meaning

When two words overlap in meaning, learners are likely to confuse them. (Make and do) are a case in point: you make breakfast and make an appointment,

but you do the housework and do a questionnaire. Also words with multiple meanings, such as since and still, can also be troublesome for the learner.

f. Range, connotation, and idioms

Words that can be used in a wide range of contexts will generally be perceived as easier than their synonyms with a narrower range. Thus, put is a very wide-ranging verb, compared to impose, place, position, etc. Likewise, this is a bit safer than skinny, slim, slender. Uncertainty as to the connotations of some words may cause problems too. Thus, propaganda has a negative connotation in English, but its equivalent may simply mean publicity. On the other hand, eccentric does not have negative connotations in English, but its nearest equivalent in other languages may be deviant. Finally, words or expression that are idiomatic (like make up your mind, keep an eye on...) will generally be more difficult than words whose meanings are transparent (decide, watch).

Having said that, according to Siswanto, teachers have to be more creative and active to build memorable learning experiences (Siswanto, 2017). And one of the most effective ways of teaching vocabulary is to implement Realia. Uding in (Patty, 2007) stated that Realia is a visual aid in learning that serves provide direct experience to learners, since it engages students in the learning process.

2.11 The Role of Engagement in EFL Learning

According to The TEFL Institute (2023) engagement is a critical factor in effective learning. Engaged students in the learning process are more likely to retain information, develop necessary thinking skills, and apply what they've learned to real-world situations However, traditional education settings can often need help to keep learners engaged. One of the biggest challenges of conventional education settings is that they often rely on a one-size-fits-all approach to

teaching, leaving many students feeling disengaged. Moreover, traditional teaching methods can be overly focused on memorization and rote learning, leading to boredom and disinterest among students. Another traditional education challenge settings is that they can be limited in terms of the experiences they offer. Hence, teachers should adopt innovative teaching methods like Realia, project-based learning, and technology-enhanced classroom instruction to combat these challenges and promote engagement. Furthermore, by providing students with hands-on experiences and opportunities to collaborate and create, teachers can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that supports higher levels of student achievement and success (The TEFL Institute, 2023).

In other words, using real objects in the process is highly recommended, because students better understand the material being taught. Teachers can present concrete words (mostly nouns) through pictures or Realia. For example, a word like chair (as a noun) is quite easy to teach, by pointing to a chair or by showing a picture. Likewise, related words such as stool, armchair, sofa, deckchair, can be taught in a similar way and the distinction between each can be relatively clear. Even some abstract words can often be conveyed using visuals, for example, a picture of a man and woman plus a heart could be used to convey the word love.

Realia has enriched the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, particularly in the ESL/ EFL classrooms (Percy, 2012; Smith, 1997). Using Realia aims to help students better understand the concept taught by providing tangible examples that they can see, touch, and use.

Realia attributes to bridge between knowledge delivery and the enhancement of real world experience (Percy, 2012). For example, in a social

studies class, a teacher might use Realia to help students better understand a particular culture or period by bringing in artefacts such as clothing, art, or tools used by people of that time or culture. In a science class, a teacher might use Realia to demonstrate scientific concepts using everyday objects like magnets, balloons, or plants. Regarding the English language, presenting information through Realia, helps to make the input as comprehensible as possible, and to build "an associative bridge between the classroom and the world" (Heaton, 1979).

Here are some benefits of incorporating Realia into the learning process, according to The TEFL Institution (2023):

- 1. Enhances engagement:** Realia can captivate students' attention and improve their interest in a subject, making learning more enjoyable and effective.
- 2. Promotes deeper understanding:** It can help students better understand complex concepts by providing hands-on, concrete examples that they can see, touch, and manipulate.
- 3. Develop critical thinking skills:** It encourages students to think critically and make connections between what they are learning and the real world, promoting higher levels of analysis and synthesis.
- 4. Increases cultural awareness:** It can help students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, traditions, and ways of life.
- 5. Provides more authentic learning experiences:** It can make learning more accurate and relevant to students' lives, helping them to apply what they've learned to real-world situations.

According to Macmillan Education, Realia works best with concrete words. However, it is probably ineffectual when it comes to more abstract notions and even some basic areas of vocabulary such as verbs, adverbs and adjectives. On the other hand, these three areas of vocabulary do lend themselves to mime and anecdotes. It is relatively easy **to mime** words such as run and walk and even to differentiate between words that belong to the same category but have quite fundamental differences in meaning, e.g. run, walk, stroll, sprint, jog, wander, etc. It is also relatively easy to use mime to teach adverbs of manner, i.e. quickly, slowly, happily, etc. Getting students to mime various actions in a particular manner is great fun and a good way of making the adverbs memorable. And here are some more ways to present vocabulary according to Adrian Tennant (2021):

1. Telling a short anecdote which contains the new words. This gives the words a context and helps students understand not only the core meaning, but also how the words might be used. It's also quite simple to recycle the words within an anecdote so that students hear the same word more than once. The more times students hear a word, the more likely they are to remember it. Repetition is quite natural in anecdotes and so does not seem out of place.

2. Eliciting words from students is another effective way of activating their memories. In a class of students it is quite possible that one or two may have come across the word before, even with low levels.

3. Using antonyms and synonyms to help elicit words can sometimes be useful. Synonyms and antonyms can also be extremely useful as a framework for recording and remembering vocabulary.

4. Translation also is another technique that has pros and cons. In fact, translation can often save time and help with comprehension. Many students use translation when they record the new vocabulary, whether the teacher likes it or

not. However, it is important to make students aware of some of the shortcomings of translation. It is often the case that there aren't any direct translations (word for word equivalents), or that one language might have more than one way of saying something, depending on the context.

One of the best and probably easiest ways of learning about new words is, **5. Using a dictionary** (especially a good monolingual dictionary such as the Macmillan Dictionary). Encouraging students to use a dictionary in the classroom when reading a text, for example, will be extremely useful for them (Tennant, 2021).

As for the researcher, among these techniques, implementing Realia is always a preferable way for teaching words, and the most enjoyable on behalf of the students. According to TEFL Institute (2022), Realia can captivate students' attention and improve their interest in a subject, making learning more enjoyable and effective.

2.12 Language Skills

Language is an essential component of communication skills. To master language skills, vocabulary knowledge is important (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The teachers should vary their techniques to involve all types of students in the learning process there are four fundamental language skills that allow people to communicate ideas, thoughts, and emotions. They are essentially needed for good communication. According to the British Council (TeachingEnglish, 2024), the basic skills are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These are called the "language skills". The four language skills are related to each other in two ways. Language skills are divided into receptive skills and productive skills, otherwise known as active and passive skills. The passive skills deal with listening and reading while the active skills focus on the speaking

and writing. Without listening, no speaking is possible, without reading no writing is possible. So, the four skills go in pairs.

2.12.1 The Productive Skills

The Productive skills are speaking and writing. The learners who possess efficient productive skills are able to produce something. They are also known as active skills according to the British Council (TeachingEnglish, 2024). Learners need to generate language to communicate their ideas either in speech or text.

2.12.2 The Receptive Skills

The Receptive skills, on the other hand, are the ability to listen and understand a language. Reading and listening are receptive skills. According to (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018, p. 670) “Listening is stage one of responding act of a communicating event. Listening is a sustained effort to receive sound and make meaning. It opens up possibilities for continuing interaction”. Language is received and meaning is decoded for the easy understanding of the message.

2.12.3 Development of the Receptive Skills

The receptive skills can be improved through listening and reading. A student should be a good listener and careful reader as well. Through the interest and search of knowledge, the learner may earn maximum receptive skills. A student may understand a well written essay but he cannot produce it perfectly without practice. According to Field (2008), for a good output, an input is necessary. Absorption and concentration are necessary for listening. The best selection of materials for reading, different ideas on the same subject also help to improve these skills.

While the main skills provide a broad framework for language acquisition, the sub-skills delve deeper, addressing specific competencies within each area. For instance, in reading, while the broader skill focuses on the ability to comprehend text, sub-skills like skimming and scanning enable learners to quickly identify key themes or locate specific information. Similarly, in listening, a crucial sub-skill in listening is understanding of connected speech. Connected speech refers to the way words are pronounced together in natural spoken language. Another vital sub-skill is the ability to grasp the gist, or the overall meaning, of spoken language. It involves listening for the main idea or the general message, rather than focusing on understanding every word or detail (Field, 2008).

When it comes to writing, organizational and editing skills are key sub-skills that greatly impact the clarity and effectiveness of written communication in ESL/EFL contexts. In addition to creativity and accuracy. While accuracy is important for clear communication, creativity allows for the expression of individuality and engagement with the writing process (Kroll, 1990).

In speaking, mastery of sub-skills like pronunciation and intonation enhances clarity and effectiveness of communication, beyond the basic ability to construct sentences. Pronunciation involves the correct articulation of sounds, while intonation refers to the rhythm and pitch of spoken language. Both are essential for conveying meaning accurately and avoiding misunderstandings (Morley, 1991). For instance, incorrect stress in a word can change its meaning, and varied intonation patterns can express different emotions or question types. (Roach, 2009).

Effective teaching of speaking sub-skills such as pronunciation and intonation is fundamental to developing clear and effective oral communication

in ESL/EFL learners. Through a combination of phonetic training, drill exercises, visual aids, listening and imitation activities, role-playing, and constructive feedback, instructors can significantly enhance their students' speaking proficiency.

2.13 Vocabulary Skills

Thornbury (2002, p.18) states, "Acquiring vocabulary requires not only labelling but categorizing skills."

Vocabulary skills refer to the ability to understand and use words effectively in language learning and communication. It involves the competency in lexical items and plays a significant role in learning new concepts.

According to Jim Scrivener, Vocabulary refers mainly to single words like (cat, blue, cut) and sometimes to combination of tightly linked two or three words (bookstore, post office, traffic jam, get up). However, our `internal database` of words and complete ready-made combination of words that we can recall and use it easily and quickly is called lexis (Scrivener, 2005). So lexis is a bigger concept that includes:

- 1- Single word items (book, door).
- 2- Common `going-together patterns` of words as in (Gas station, blonde hair) which are known as collocations.
- 3- Longer combination of words that are typically used together like (I would rather not say) which are referred to as chunks.

Vocabulary has several types, it is very important to understand the language well, and to be able to speak or write a good writing. Learners are

expected to increase their vocabulary about 100 words a year. Similarly, on the Competence Based Curriculum, students are required to increase their vocabulary every year from 1000 to 1500 words so that within three years students have added about 4000 words (Sukrina, 2012).

Vocabulary learning is a natural and lifelong process that occurs through exposure to words in meaningful contexts. It can be developed through various strategies, such as using context clues, semantic definitions, and choral responses. For language learners, vocabulary skills can be categorized into potential vocabulary, which includes words that can be understood but not encountered before, and real vocabulary, which includes words that have been encountered and can be understood and used.

Haycraft (1978, p.44) divides vocabulary into two types, namely:

- 1– **Active Vocabulary**: which means the words that a student understands, and can pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing.
- 2– **Passive Vocabulary**: means the words which a student recognizes and understands when they occur in context. However, he cannot produce correctly. Vocabulary skills are important for reading comprehension, communication, and academic success.

2.14 Retention

According to Cambridge Dictionary, retention is the continued use, existence, or possession of something or someone. It is the ability to recall or remember things.

According to Richards (2002, p.457) vocabulary retention has been defined as the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time. Mohammed

(2009) defines vocabulary retention as the ability to keep the acquired vocabulary and retrieve it after a period of time to use it in different language contexts.

Vocabulary retention is an action of retaining something. According to Hornby (2007, p.368), “retention is an action of retaining something”. In other words, retention means the action to remember things well. In addition, retention is the ability to keep or hold. If you have extraordinary power of retention, you remember everything you hear or learn (vocabulary.com).

Research has shown that the retention of vocabulary is highly dependent on contextual learning and frequent usage. This means that merely memorizing lists of words is not effective. Instead, interacting with words in various contexts—through reading, speaking, and writing—helps reinforce memory pathways. Neuroscientific studies reveal that active usage leads to deeper cognitive processing, making words more likely to be retained in long-term memory. Moreover, the brain prioritizes retaining information that is perceived as important or emotionally charged, which explains why vocabulary related to personal interests or experiences is often easier to remember.

2.14.1 Vocabulary Retention

Vocabulary retention is a critical aspect of language learning, influenced by various instructional methods and tools. Thornbury states “The learner needs not only to learn a lot of words, but to remember them” (Thornbury, 2002, p.23).

Recent studies highlight effective strategies such as computer-assisted learning, flashcards, translation, gamification, and mobile applications that significantly enhance vocabulary retention among learners. Flashcard-based techniques were shown to improve vocabulary recall effectively.

A study by Le and Luong (2023) involving students at a language center revealed that these techniques fostered positive attitudes towards vocabulary retention, despite some challenges faced during the learning process.

2.14.2 Key Aspects of Vocabulary Retention Based on Recent Research

Instructional Methods

1-Contextual Learning: Research shows that teaching vocabulary through context leads to higher retention rates. For instance, a study found that students who learned vocabulary in context performed better in both immediate and delayed tests compared to those taught through synonyms or definitions (Ansarin & Khojasteh, 2013).

2- Concordance-based Learning: This method, which involves using online tools to explore word usage, has been shown to improve retention, particularly in constructing sentences and collocations (Rets, 2017).

2.14.3 Tools and Resources

1- Paper Dictionaries: Despite the rise of digital tools, students reported that using paper dictionaries positively influenced their vocabulary retention, although some faced challenges in utilizing them effectively (Ali, 2021).

2- Cognitive Strategies: Cognitive theories suggest that memory processes play a significant role in retention. Techniques like using illustrated texts can aid in overcoming forgetting (Allanazarova, 2020).

It is essential to recognize that individual learning preferences and contexts can also influence vocabulary retention outcomes. “In language teaching, retention of what has been taught as (grammar rules and vocabulary) may depend

on the quality of teaching, the use of different strategies, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of the materials” (Richards & Schmitt, 2002, p. 457).

2.14.4 Using Realia to Enhance Vocabulary Retention

According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies, traditionally known as mnemonics, have been around since ancient times. They involve linking the word with some previously learned knowledge and their goal is organization and consolidation. Besides, employing meaningful pictures either in the mind or in an actual drawing is believed to lead to better memorization and retention.

According to The TEFL Institute (2023), Realia can be an incredibly effective tool in language acquisition as it allows students to connect words and concepts with real-world objects and experiences. Using Realia can help students not only learn new vocabulary but also gain a better understanding of cultural context. Incorporating Realia into lessons can be an effective way to enhance students’ learning experiences. In addition to the fact that engagement of students plays a vital role in effective learning since it helps them to retain information, develop important thinking skills, and activate their brains in the learning process, then applying what they have learned to real-world situations.

According to Danesi (2003), in traditional language teaching only 4% of learners' brain is activated. Many authors suggest that a deeper level of new word processing will ensure better retention. Thus, using Realia contributes to storing and retaining new vocabulary. However, teachers should be selective when choosing to incorporate Realia into their classes, and here are a few tips according to The TEFL Institute (2023):

1. **Be intentional:** When selecting Realia items to use in a lesson, choose items directly related to the taught topic. This will help students connect the reality and the content they're learning.
2. **Use various items:** Incorporate different natural things into a lesson to keep students engaged and interested. This can include objects from real life, artefacts, images, and other materials.
3. **Make it interactive:** Allow students to interact with the Realia items by touching, exploring, and manipulating them.
4. **Connect to cultural context:** Use Realia items to help students better understand cultural context, since this can include artefacts, food, music, and other things unique to a particular culture.

According to Gelfgren (2008), different students learn in different ways, and it is important to use visual teaching approaches because studies suggest that most students learn visually. Thus, the effect of using Realia in vocabulary retention significantly enhances sensory learners. By integrating real-life objects into the learning process, students engage more deeply, leading to retaining and understanding vocabulary (Robillard et al., 2014).

Realia enhances vocabulary retention by providing direct, hands-on experiences that facilitate comprehension and engagement, making learning more enjoyable and effective for students, (Brown, 2007). Theoretically speaking, the more students are engaged, as when they are learning through Realia, and making connections with vocabulary words, the longer students will be able to acquire and retain the new words, and then use these words correctly in all settings. Thus, the retention of vocabulary will improve their comprehension and general performance. Moreover, choosing the appropriate Realia for each context

enhances vocabulary retention by making contextual learning experiences memorable, increasing student engagement, and facilitating quicker recognition and recall of words associated with tangible objects.

Many studies were conducted on vocabulary retention, a few of which were on the effect of using Realia on vocabulary retention. A study by Le & Luong, (2023) which was conducted on vocabulary retention, and titled “Using Flashcard-Based Techniques to Improve Students’ Vocabulary Retention”, aimed to investigate how flashcard-based techniques are used to improve students’ vocabulary retention as well as the students’ perceptions and attitudes toward using flashcard-based techniques to improve vocabulary retention and the difficulties they faced during their learning process. The four-week study involved 18 students from an entire class at a language center. The data from vocabulary tests, questionnaires, student self-evaluation checklists, and students’ reflections were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The test results and student reflections demonstrated that flashcard-based techniques contributed significantly to the students’ vocabulary recall. The findings of the survey, together with student self-evaluation checklists and their comments, revealed that these students had favorable perceptions and positive attitudes toward their vocabulary retention as a result of the teacher’s use of flashcard-based techniques.

Similarly in another study that was conducted by Nader Asadi Aidinlou at the Islamic Azad University, Iran, (2016) and was titled “Short-term and Long-term Retention of Vocabulary through Authentic Subtitled Videos”, the study aimed to compare two different teaching methods for vocabulary acquisition.

One method involved using traditional techniques, while the other focused on teaching through authentic materials, specifically subtitled videos. This

comparison was made to assess the effectiveness of each method in retaining vocabulary over time. The study involved 36 Iranian students, balanced in gender. To ensure that the participants had similar language proficiency levels, the Oxford Placement Test was administered. The students were randomly divided into two groups of 18. The experimental group learned new vocabulary through watching subtitled videos, while the control group received traditional vocabulary instruction using the same vocabulary items from the subtitles. After the two groups were tested, the findings revealed that the control group, which used traditional methods, performed better in short-term retention of vocabulary. In contrast, the experimental group, which learned through subtitled videos, showed superior long-term retention. This suggests that learning vocabulary through authentic subtitled videos is more effective for long-term mastery.

2.15 Memory Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies, traditionally known as mnemonics, have been around since ancient times. They involve linking the word with some previously learned knowledge and their goal is organization and consolidation. Memory strategies are techniques that help learners to store data effectively. For example, arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing are useful tools to remember what has been learned before and then to recall the information in the present, when necessary. To store a large amount of vocabulary and patterns, rehearsal and awareness on the use of these strategies may lead the student to an automatic skill level (Oxford, 1990).

Memory strategies are divided into four sub-strategies: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action. Some of these are closely connected with cognitive style preferences. Therefore,

these strategies invite learners to take advantage of their own abilities and improve them by practicing these (Oxford, 1990).

Memory strategies are used as mnemonics by learners to make mental linkages that would allow new words to enter, remain, and retrieved for communication in long-term memory. Some researchers suggest that effective instruction requires a deeper level of processing of new words. According to O'Malley and Chamot, (1990) and Oxford (1990), these strategies are more effective than memorization and parrot-like repetition techniques which need shallow processing.

Vocabulary learning is a memory problem (Yongqi, 2003) and one of the major ways of researching vocabulary teaching techniques is doing experimental comparisons of vocabulary learning activities (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001).

Teachers can rely on visual material or Realia, since they can be used as mnemonics in a variety of different ways and with a range of different aims. Maria Papadopoulou (2018) observes that the use of visuals can enhance language learning by bringing the real world into the classroom, presenting a task or a situation in a more authentic way and making learning more interesting and context-based. Then visuals and real items can be: 1- **Illustrative** as they illustrate something. They can also be 2- **Affective**, so they can enhance the students' interest and motivate them. Besides, they can be 3- **Attentive** as they attract and direct attention, and 4- **Didactic**, because they show something that is difficult to convey in words. Visuals can also help and support students, so they are 5- **supportive**. And most importantly, they are 6- **Retentive**, since they facilitate retention.

TESOL professor Brian Tomlinson describes how visualization during the reading process facilitates positive engagement with the text, increasing the

learner's ability to comprehend and retain what they're reading: visualization leads to "unique cognitive and affective consequences that heighten the reader's experience" and is one of the most effective means of achieving understanding, interpretation, representation, retention, and recall (Tomlinson, 2013).

Brian Tomlinson's insights on retention in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) emphasize the interconnectedness of acquisition and retention in language learning. Retention is not merely a measure of memory but reflects the successful internalization of language skills, which can be influenced by various educational strategies and support systems.

2.16 Relationship between Acquisition and Retention

Retention is fundamentally linked to the acquisition of knowledge; without initial learning, retention cannot occur (Farr, 1987). Effective retention strategies involve assessing learners' ability to recall and apply language skills, indicating successful acquisition.

2.17 Factors Influencing Retention in ESL/ EFL Programs

Individual attention during the admission process significantly enhances student persistence and success in ESL programs (Zoranski, 2019).

Factors such as gender, age, educational background, and employment status play crucial roles in predicting student retention (Zoranski, 2019).

Support mechanisms, including mentoring and career counseling, are vital for improving retention rates in educational settings (McMahon, 2006).

While the focus on retention is critical, it is also essential to consider the broader context of education quality and the potential challenges faced by

students, such as socio-economic barriers and varying levels of prior education and knowledge. These factors can significantly impact both acquisition and retention outcomes.

Summary

This chapter has shed light on learning styles in general and vocabulary learning styles, strategies and skills in particular. It has also discussed language skills then vocabulary skills. It has focused on using Realia in teaching vocabulary and how it enhances the role of engagement in the learning process, and as a result, it helps in vocabulary retention. It has also discussed retention and some key aspects that contribute to vocabulary retention, besides talking about memory strategies and some factors that influence retention.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with the ways of investigating the effect of using Realia on students' vocabulary retention for EFL learners at English classrooms at a private institute. Moreover, it includes the adopted research method, sampling, variables, instruments and procedures used in data collection.

3.1 The Quasi- Experimental Method

The quasi- experimental method can be adapted to various contexts, allowing researchers to address specific research questions effectively, especially in educational settings where traditional experiments may not be feasible (Zajić & Maksimović, 2022). In this method, participants are assigned to groups based on pre-existing characteristics rather than randomization, which can introduce bias but is often necessary in real-world settings (Carter et al., 2024). However, quasi-experimental designs can still provide strong evidence for causality when specific assumptions are met, making them valuable in fields like health policy and psychology (Zajić & Maksimović, 2022).

3.2 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the use of Realia can affect the learning process in EFL classes and explore to what extent it can increase the students' vocabulary retention. Therefore, in designing this research, the researcher used Quasi-experimental design. Two classes were used in this

research, an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was given a pre-test in two different topics, treatment, and a post-test of the two topics.

On the other hand, the control group was given the same pre and post-test without treatment. After that, data was collected and analyzed by IBM SPSS (version 26) program.

3.3 Population and Sample

3.3.1 Population

Wiley (2005, p.18) states “The population is all individuals of interest to the researcher”. Population is a complete set of elements (persons or objects) that possess some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher. Hence, in this research the population is A2 EFL learners in a private institute in Damascus. They were six classes. The total number is 110. Those students, like all other students in private institutions, need to learn the English language as a foreign language in order to travel or to have better opportunities when applying for jobs, or for studying at some private universities in Syria.

3.3.2 Sample

Cresswell (2005, p.146) defines a sample as, “a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population”. So, the sample is a small number of population that is selected by the researcher. The sample of this research is class A as a control group which consists of 20 students, 11 males and 9 females, and class B as an experimental group that also consists of 20 students, 11 females and 9 males. The total is 40 students. The groups were selected after consulting the institute’s director. The researcher chose those two classes A and B because they represent A2 EFL

learners, and they almost have the same age group in which the students in both classes vary between 17 to 26 years old.

The following Table No.1 manifests the students` distribution in both groups.

Table 1: Research Sample

Table 1: Research Sample

	males	females	total
Class A (Experimental Group)	11	9	20
Class B (Control Group)	9	11	20

3.4 Research Instruments

A written test was used as the research instrument. The test was conducted by the researcher based on the course book (Interchange1 Fifth Edition). The test consisted of two vocabulary exercises in which the students should fill the given words in the gaps (see appendices exercises 1 and 2).

Twenty words were selected about two different topics in two separate units of the course book, and were presented in two exercises that contained 10 gaps in each exercise on two pieces of paper. The test was used as a pretest and a posttest for both experimental and control groups. The first topic was about clothes, so the researcher used some nouns and adjectives that are usually used to describe clothes. The second exercise that also consisted of 10 sentences was about different kinds of containers. The pre-test was used before the treatment in order to assess the students` vocabulary knowledge, while the post-test was given

a month after the treatment in order to measure the students` acquisition and retention of vocabulary after the treatment.

To ensure the validity of the test, it was presented to two referees, who are experts in EFL pedagogy, and they expressed the validity of the test when implemented.

3.5 Research Variables

A variable is a characteristic or attribute of an individual or a group that can be observed. Creswell (2017) typically describes variables as characteristic or attributes that can take different values or categories among subjects in a study. Dependent variables are those that depend on the independent variables. Related to the title of this research, the independent variable is Realia, while the dependent variable is students` vocabulary retention.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are a set of principles that guide the research designs and practices (Bhandari, 2021). These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential harm, and results communicating. Thus, the researcher ensured that all data taken from participants is password protected, and she explained all the steps needed to her students and assured that any participant can withdraw at any time of the process if he/ she does not feel comfortable. They also have been told about all key elements of the research study and what their participation will involve.

The researcher gave students an informed consent on which they signed. The students showed interest to take part in this research that will contribute to

the body of knowledge, and help teachers and learners in Syria, and other parts of the world.

3.7 Procedure of Data Collection

A Test was the main instrument to gather data in this research. It was used as a pre and a post-test. The test was designed by the researcher based on the course book (Interchange1, fifth edition, Cambridge University). The pre-test was given before the treatment while the post-test was given after the treatment (see appendices 1 & 2). Before employing the pre-test, some steps were taken:

a) Planning

The importance of planning cannot be ignored. Planning the lesson makes the aims clear and list the objectives unambiguously. Planning contributes to the achievement of objectives. Here are steps the researcher prepared in planning:

- 1) The researcher prepared the lesson plan.
- 2) The researcher prepared the Realia needed.

b) Action Taken

The second step was applying the pretest in both groups (A & B). Implementing Realia occurred in group (A) on September 27th in one of the course classes which lasts for 90 minutes. The researcher brought the Realia needed with the consent paper sheets and started her class with the experimental group. She told the student about their participation in this research and explained the consent paper clearly. Then, she gave them the paper which they signed gladly.

The pretest, which consisted of two pieces of paper about the two different topics (clothes and containers) was given to the students, and they tried to answer it individually. The same process took place in the control group class on the same day. After collecting the paper, the teacher started her class with some warm up questions about types of clothing that people wear for different occasions, as a lead in stage in both classes. However, she used Realia to present some different clothing styles only in the experimental group class.

On the other hand in the control group class, she taught the same topic using the screen to show some pictures of different clothing styles in a PowerPoint presentation. However, without showing any real objects. The researcher taught vocabulary related to clothes in one session, on the same day to both (A & B) groups. In the next class, which occurred on September 29th, the researcher brought Realia related to containers, such as: a tube of toothpaste, two tubes of sunblock cream and muscle relaxant cream, a jar of face cream, a can and a stick of deodorant, a can of shaving cream, some boxes of medicine, band-aids, bandages, tissues, in addition to some bottles of cough syrup, vitamin D, perfume, with a bag of cough drops, a pack of tissues, a heating pad that was filled with water, and an ice pack that contains some gel inside. She followed the same steps in teaching vocabulary and she used Realia in the experimental group only.

The researcher observed the students` interaction and engagement in the learning process throughout the two classes in both groups. In these two classes, there were some steps as follows:

1) Pre Teaching Activities

a) Greeting the students and checking on their conditions.

- b) Reviewing the previous lesson.
- c) Talking about the pretest and their participation in the research.
- d) Giving them the informed consents and asking to sign them after explaining the details included in the consent form.
- e) The consent form was printed on pieces of paper and distributed to all students in both groups to sign their names. They signed willingly.

2) While Teaching Process

- a) The researcher used the lesson plan.
- b) The researcher gave the pretest to the students in both groups on which they had to fill the words given in the gaps. Moreover, she made it clear that it would be totally okay if they couldn't understand the meanings of the new words. The students did the task, it was hard for them, though.
- c.1) The researcher taught the first class (A) and used Realia which was a set of clothes of all patterns and qualities needed for that lesson which talked about types of clothing and styles, such as: the Boho style, the streetwear style, the hipster style, casual and formal styles. The words varied from some adjectives that describe clothes like: floral, striped, plain, flowy, baggy, skinny and tight, to some nouns such as: logo, pattern and outfit.

The use of Realia to teach all that made it easier for the teacher to present without explanation, and much easier for the students to get the ideas in a fun and authentic way. They were excited to see all those types of clothing and to find out what their clothes were. Then, they had a group activity, in which they were in

five groups, and they had to take some items of clothes in each group and describe them to other groups using all new words with Realia.

d) The researcher guided the students through another activity, in which every student had to describe his/ her clothes to a partner in order to memorize the new words and put them into practice. The learners were enthusiastic and had fun.

c.2) In the next class, the researcher taught another lesson about health problems, medicine and common home remedies. In this unit, the students had to learn some kinds of containers. So, the researcher implemented Realia which included different kinds of containers. She guided the student through the activity while they used those containers in their groups to make some conversations at the pharmacy or at the doctor`s office.

The learners were pretty engaged in making conversations and acting them out. They also had to make short videos at their home to talk about their medicine cabinets including the types of containers they learned. Moreover, in the next class, they had to tell their partners about their medicine cabinets at their homes and what they contain, in both groups (A& B).

e) The researcher monitored the student, and facilitated any hard task for them. In addition to observing their improvement throughout the process, and taking notes. The students showed interest. They answered all questions and participated in the activities. The experimental group class went smoothly. Students were pretty engaged in learning the new vocabulary until the end of class on the two days.

On the other hand, the same process took place in the control group class but without using Realia. The student were not as engaged as their peers in the

experimental group. They learned and participated the same activities, without Realia, however.

3) Post Teaching Activities.

- a) The researcher asked the students some questions related to the topic.
- b) The researcher observed the students while responding to her question, and making conversations with their peers, and corrected any mistakes and gave feedback to the students.

C) Testing vocabulary Retention

To test students` vocabulary retention, the researcher gave them the same test that was given to both (A& B) groups before the treatment stage after almost a month, however as a post-test for both groups, with the intention of testing the students` long term retention. The researcher asked her students in both classes to answer the same test. They did it fast and confidently. She checked the paper and gave them their marks next class. The researcher noticed that students` scores were higher in the experimental group.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

A successful research study demonstrates a high level of validity and reliability in terms of the scaling tools and instruments it uses (El Zarka, 2013, p.40). Validity is defined as “the extent to which a test measures what we actually wish to measure,” while reliability refers to “the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure,” (Kothari, 2004, p.73) i.e. repeating the study will lead to the same (or at least similar) results.

As for the validity of the present study, it is reflected in two ways. The first one is that two competent referees assured the validity of the tests used in this study while testing the learners' retention of words. The second thing is that the process of data collection in this study is objective, as it was based on testing the students' retention after the treatment with Realia in the experimental group which was selected randomly along with the other control group, because students of both groups were there without the researcher's intervention, which enabled her to avoid subjectivity and bias. As for the reliability scale, the researcher applied two reliability assessing methods in SPSS program to assure reliability of the research tool. The first one was Cronbach's Alpha which suggested good internal consistency, in addition to the split-half reliability measurement which indicated that the research tool is reliable.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the quasi-experimental research design which was used to explore the impact of using Realia on students' vocabulary retention by applying pre and post-tests in two different groups, an experimental group that was treated with Realia, and a control group which was taught without using Realia. The chosen method ensures a thorough examination of the subject matter. The implications of this methodological framework are significant, as they lend credibility to the findings presented in the next chapter which will present the results derived from this methodological approach.

Chapter Four

Results and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the tests in tables of students' score means in both the pre and post- tests, in addition to IBM SPSS (version 26) tables which show statistics of T-Test, Cronbach's Alpha, and Guttman Split-Half Coefficient tests, in addition to the data analysis presented in some figures of bar charts.

4.1 Tables of Students' Tests Scores

The following table No.2 presents the students' pre-test scores in the experimental group.

Table 2

The Pre-tests Scores of the Experimental Group- Two Topics (clothes- containers)

Table 2: The Pre-tests scores of The Experimental Group.

No	pseudonym	Obtained Score (0-10)	Obtained Score (0-10)	Students' Score (0- 20)
		Pre-test 1 (clothes)	Pre-test 2 (containers)	
1	Nad	2	2	4
2	Abb	6	6	12
3	Hab	0	3	3
4	Yos	1	1	1
5	Mal	4	0	4
6	Ran	3	2	5
7	Mah	2	0	2

8	Fad	2	0	2
9	Fat	4	1	5
10	Sar	2	2	4
11	Hib	6	4	6
12	Han	4	3	7
13	Noo	4	2	6
14	Aha	1	1	10
15	Aay	4	0	4
16	Rag	5	4	9
17	Bar	4	1	5
18	Shy	0	0	0
19	Rym	2	0	2
20	Ool	4	0	4
	Total Score	69	32	

Maximum Score= 12

Minimum Score= 0

The following table No.3 presents the students` post-test scores in the experimental group.

Table 3

The Post-tests Scores of the Experimental Group- Two Topics (clothes- containers)

Table 3: The Post- tests of The Experimental Group.

No	pseudonym	Obtained Score (0-10) Post-test 2 (clothes)	Obtained Score (0-10) Post-test 2 (containers)	Students` Score (0-20)
1	Nad	5	6	11
2	Abb	10	10	20
3	Hab	9	9	18
4	Yos	8	8	16
5	Mal	4	7	11
6	Ran	8	7	15
7	Mah	7	9	16
8	Fad	6	7	15
9	Fat	8	9	17
10	Sar	10	10	20
11	Hib	10	9	19
12	Han	10	9	19
13	Noo	10	10	20
14	Aha	8	8	16
15	Aay	8	9	17
16	Rag	10	8	18
17	Bar	10	10	20
18	Shy	10	10	20
19	Rym	10	10	20
20	Ool	10	8	20
	Total Score	171	173	

Maximum Score= 20

Minimum Score= 11

The following table No.4 presents the students` pre-test scores in the control group.

Table 4

The Pre-tests Scores of the Control Group- Two Topics (clothes-containers)

Table 4: The Pre- Tests of the Control Group.

No	pseudonym	Obtained Score (0-10)	Obtained Score (0-10)	Students` Score (0-20)
		Pre-test 1 (clothes)	Pre-test 2 (containers)	
1	Mah	3	2	5
2	Adl	0	0	0
3	Ree	3	1	3
4	Bak	2	0	2
5	DAh	9	5	14
6	Bash	3	0	3
7	Ans	1	1	2
8	Had	3	0	3
9	Ezz	6	1	7
10	Abd	6	4	10
11	Mhd	2	1	3
12	Pim	1	0	1
13	Jom	3	2	5
14	Zen	3	2	5
15	Ham	6	4	10
16	Bash	3	3	6
17	Sha	4	4	8
18	Oby	1	1	2
19	Yam	1	2	3
20	Gal	6	2	8
	Total Score	65	35	

Maximum Score= 9

Minimum Score= 0

The following table No.5 presents the students` post-test scores in the control group.

Table 5

The Post-test Scores of the Control Group- Two Topic (clothes- containers)

Table 5: The Post- Tests of the Control Group

No	pseudonym	Obtained Score (1-10) Post-test 1 (clothes)	Obtained Score (1-10) Post-test 2(containers)	Students` Score (0-20) In both tests
1	Mah	10	9	19
2	Adl	5	4	9
3	Ree	6	8	14
4	Bak	6	8	14
5	DAh	9	7	16
6	Bash	10	7	17
7	Ans	3	8	11
8	Had	6	8	14
9	Ezz	7	5	12
10	Abd	9	8	17
11	Mhd	3	8	11
12	Pim	6	8	14
13	Jom	8	7	15
14	Zen	10	10	20
15	Ham	10	10	20
16	Bash	10	10	20
17	Sha	6	8	14
18	Oby	6	6	12
19	Yam	7	7	14
20	Gal	8	7	15
	Total score	145	153	

Maximum Score= 20

Minimum Score= 9

The following figure No.1 manifests the students` score means in both pre and post-tests in the control group.

Figure 1

Control Group`s Means in Pre and Post-tests

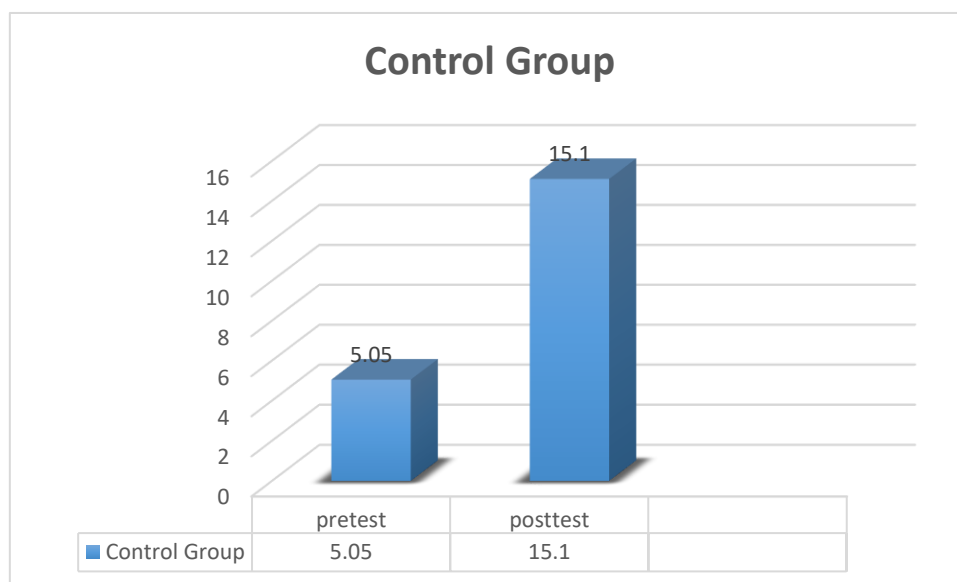


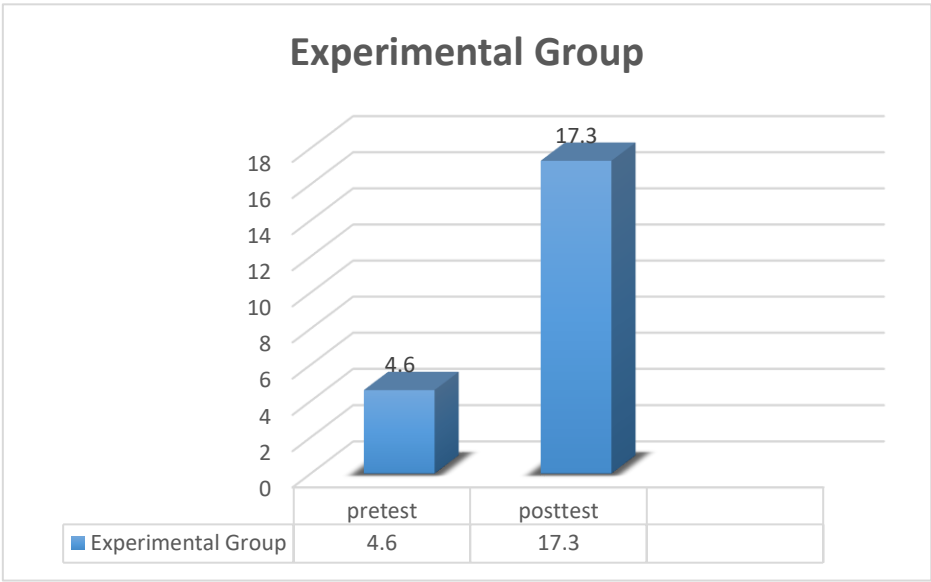
Figure 1: Control Group`s means in Pre and Post- Tests

The following figure No.2 manifests the students` score means in both pre and post-tests in the experimental group.

Figure 2

Experimental Group`s Means in Pre and Post-tests

Figure 2: Experimental Group`s Means in Pre and Post- Tests

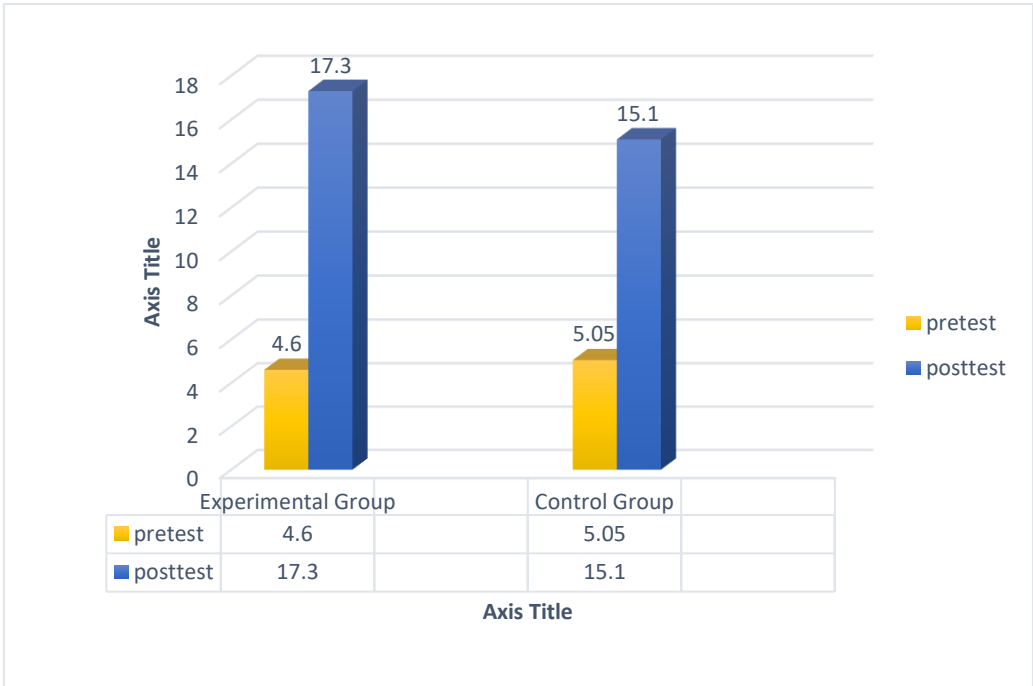


The following figure No.3 presents the students` means differences in pre and post-tests between both groups.

Figure 3

The Means` Differences between Control and Experimental Groups in Pre and Post-Tests

Figure 3: Means Differences between the Control and Experimental Groups



The following table No.6 presents the groups` statistics as shown by IBM SPSS (version 26).

Table 6
Groups` Statistics

Table 6: Groups` Statistics

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	experimental	20	4.6000	2.99825	.67043
	control group	20	5.0500	3.54631	.79298
Posttest	experimental	20	17.3000	2.95760	.66134
	control group	20	15.1000	3.16061	.70673

The following table No.7 presents the Independent Samples T- test as shown by IBM SPSS.

Table 7
Independent Samples Test

Table 7 :Independent Samples T- test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.713	.404	-.433	38	.667	-.45000	1.03841	-2.55215	1.65215
	Equal variances not assumed			-.433	36.977	.667	-.45000	1.03841	-2.55406	1.65406
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.011	.917	2.273	38	.029	2.20000	.96791	.24058	4.15942
	Equal variances not assumed			2.273	37.834	.029	2.20000	.96791	.24029	4.15971

4.2 Data Analysis of tables 6 and 7

- 1.** The mean score of the experimental group in the pretest is (4.6) with a deviation of (2.99825).
- 2.** The mean score of the control group in the pretest is (5.05) with a deviation of (3.45631).
- 3.** The mean score of post-test of the experimental group is (17.3) with a deviation of (2.95760).
- 4.** The mean score of post-test of the control group is (15.1) with a deviation of (3.16061).
- 5.** The T value is (2.27) which indicates a difference between the two groups, it also suggests that the mean of the experimental group is higher than the mean of the control group.
- 6.** The sig. 2 tailed (0.029) is statistically significant at the common Alpha level of (0.05), which indicates a significant difference between the means of the two groups.

The following table No.8 presents Cronbach`s Alpha Reliability Statistics as shown in IBM SPSS (version 26).

Table 8

Table 8: Cronbach`s Alpha

Cronbach`s Alpha	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.722	20

4.3 Data Analysis of Table 8

To assess the internal reliability, Cronbach`s Alpha was applied to the test items that were (20) in SPSS program, the result in table 8 shows a value of (.772) which is considered acceptable, and it demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency.

The following table No.9 presents Guttman Split- Half Coefficient Reliability Test as shown in IBM SPSS (version 26).

Table 9

Table 9: Guttman Split- Half Coefficient

Reliability Statistics-			
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.574
		N of Items	10 ^a
	Part 2	Value	.534
		N of Items	10 ^b
	Total N of Items		20
Correlation Between Forms			.566
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.723
	Unequal Length		.723
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.711
a. The items are: q1, q2, q3, q4, q5, q6, q7, q9, q10, q11.			
b. The items are: q12, q13, q14, q17, q18, q19, q20, q8, q15, q16.			

4.4 Data Analysis of Tables 8 and 9

The results of table 8 suggest that the research instrument has good internal consistency with a Cronbach`s Alpha of (.772). Besides, table 9 results indicate that the research tool is reliable considering the overall reliability of the test which is above (.70).

4.5 Data Analysis of Table 9

The split- half reliability method was applied to the test to assess its internal consistency by dividing the test items into two halves and comparing the scores from each half. The results as shown in table 9 were as follows:

1. The correlation value of part 1 (10 items) is (.574).
2. The correlation value of part 2 (10 items) is (.534).
3. The correlation value between forms is (.566) which suggests that there is a reasonable degree of agreement between the scores from the two halves.
4. Spearman- Brown Coefficient: it shows equal values of (.723) in both equal and unequal length since both halves are equal. Then the Spearman- Brown coefficient confirm good reliability for the overall test.
5. The Guttman split- half coefficient provides a value of (.711) of reliability which suggests that there is good internal consistency in the test items.

4.6 Testing Hypotheses

To test the two hypotheses of this study, the null hypothesis: “The use of Realia in vocabulary instruction does not enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention among EFL learners in a private institute in Damascus compared to other teaching methods”. In addition to the alternative hypothesis: “The use of

Realia in vocabulary instruction enhances vocabulary acquisition and retention among EFL learners in a private institute in Damascus compared to other teaching methods”. The researcher utilized the data analysis that showed the following:

1. The t- test results indicate that there is a statistical difference between the two groups, as evidenced by the probability value (the two- tailed p- value) of 0.029 which indicates that the result is statistically significant at the common Alpha level of 0.05, which leads to rejecting the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis.
2. Furthermore, the positive t value (2.2) indicates that the mean of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group in the posttests, which supports the alternative hypothesis of this research.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from the tests and analyzed statistically by IBM SPSS software (version 26). The key findings indicate that there is a statistical difference between the groups` results in favor of the experimental group.

The next chapter will further interpret these findings and explore their significance in greater depth. Besides, relating them to the existing literature and the theoretical framework.

Chapter Five

Discussion and conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter is dedicated to address the research question through the discussion provided below. It also serves to synthesize and interpret the findings of this research, which aimed to investigate the effect of using Realia in vocabulary retention, in addition to increasing teachers' awareness of the effectiveness of using Realia in teaching vocabulary, seeking to improve the teaching- learning process in EFL classes. The findings contribute to understanding the impact of using Realia in teaching vocabulary, and align with existing literature on this subject.

In this discussion we will explore the implications of these results, and relate them to previous research. In addition to considering any limitations that encountered during the research process, as well as offering some suggestions that can inform practice and guide future research endeavors.

5.1 Discussion

This research was conducted to answer this question:

How effective is the use of Realia in EFL classes in vocabulary acquisition and retention among Syrian learners in a private institute?

To this end, all the collected data was statistically analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics version 26, and the result came as follows: the students' scores in the

experimental group which was treated with Realia surpassed the students' scores in the control group which was not taught by Realia. This indicates that Realia can affect students' vocabulary acquisition and retention. The outcome of this study aligns with some previous studies that were mentioned earlier in chapter two, such as Ansar (2019) and Fitri Ana Rahmayani (2022), in addition to Sukrina (2010), in which they all concluded that teaching vocabulary with using Realia can significantly improve students' vocabulary acquisition and mastery. Moreover, they assured that students can memorize the object that they meet in daily life.

Additionally, the findings of this study and its instrument align with many other studies such as (Riyath, 2019). However, its sample differs in students' age and number. The study of Riyth aimed to shed light on the effectiveness of using Realia in teaching English vocabulary for elementary school students. The researcher tried to focus on a suitable way of teaching vocabulary by using Realia.

In conclusion, the students who were taught through Realia performed better than the others who were taught through another strategy. They were more active, enthusiastic and interested in vocabulary learning. The researcher concluded that Realia can significantly improve students' performance in learning English vocabulary in elementary school. Besides, using real materials helped students feel more comfortable and fruitful in group tasks and activities.

It is observed in all the mentioned studies along with this present one that students were always motivated due to the fact that Realia addresses different types of learners such as kinesthetic, visual and auditory. Thus, it has resulted in increasing the students' memory and their understanding, in addition to decreasing the dullness of teaching-learning process especially in teaching English vocabulary among elementary school students. However, all previously

mentioned studies did not discuss vocabulary retention or relate it to the use of Realia as the researcher did in this present study.

On the other hand, there were some studies that discussed vocabulary retention and related it to some strategies such as using flashcards which are considered as visual learning tools, such as (Le& Luong, 2023) which is mentioned earlier in chapter two, the final result reached by the researchers was that the learners had positive attitudes concerning the flashcard learning experience. A high percentage of the students seemed enthusiastic, motivated, and satisfied with the flashcard-based lessons. All the data from the vocabulary exams, surveys, student self- evaluation checklists, and student reflections support the hypothesis that the teacher's use of flashcard-based vocabulary teaching strategies helps students retain more vocabulary, which aligns with this research hypothesis and result. Moreover, all participants agreed that the efficiency of flashcard-based strategies on vocabulary retention is considerable and significant.

5.2 Implications and Suggestions for Teachers

This research not only aimed to trace the impact of using Realia on vocabulary acquisition and retention in EFL classes but it also sought to increase teachers' awareness of the effectiveness of Realia in teaching vocabulary in order to improve the teaching- learning process in EFL classes.

The result of this study has some significant implications for teachers and educators, as it provides teachers with some insights on using Realia, especially for facilitating the English learning process. Additionally, this study will enrich research in English language education related to the use of Realia and its effect in vocabulary acquisition and retention. Here are some insights to teachers:

Realia can be used for introducing and teaching vocabulary such as nouns, prepositions, and adjectives. The use of Realia in the classroom brings a powerful way to connect students with vocabulary through seeing and feeling the objects directly. Apart from that, Realia can be used to check students' understanding by involving them in certain activities, such as playing games while using Realia.

Furthermore, Realia has some advantages in EFL classes. Firstly, teachers can implement it to get students to be more active and excited during the teaching-learning process. Secondly, Realia helps the learners to maximize their multi-sensory channels to get them to do hands-on experiences which lead to retaining the vocabulary taught in the long-term by using their sensors. Moreover, Realia helps students to increase their communicating skills by expressing their ideas orally when they connect what they're learning to the real world, which leads to deeper understanding and greater engagement.

5.3 Research Limitations

Every research has its limitations, and here are some of which in this research:

- 1. The Time frame:** this study was conducted over a period of 12 weeks, which provided a focused snapshot of the research topic and allowed for timely data collection and analysis. It could have captured longer- term observation of changes in the variables if it had had a longer period of time.
- 2. The Sample Size:** this study utilized a specific sample size that was appropriate for the scope and objectives of this research. It included 40 students who represented A2 EFL adult learners in the institute. However, it would have included a bigger number of students had it been conducted in a public or a private school.

- 3. The Sample representation:** this sample represented EFL adult learners at a private institute in Damascus. It can represent students at other private institutes. It cannot represent EFL learners at public or private schools, though.
- 4. The Study Place:** this research was conducted at a private institute in which the researcher works. Thus, it is limited to EFL private institutes. Its data might have been different if it had been conducted at a school.
- 5. Data Collection Methods:** this research employed pre and post- tests as an instrument which facilitated assessing students` vocabulary retention. However, incorporating additional tests would have provided more accurate results over a longer period of time.

5.4 Recommendation for Future Studies

1. Future researchers might investigate the effect of using Realia in public and private schools in Syria for different age groups, so the data would be richer.
2. They might also contain a questionnaire to gain more perceptions from different perspectives of many teachers as well as students, such as middle or high school students who can share their ideas. Moreover, they might explore more of teachers` perceptions of using Realia in different settings.
3. They can implement other methods of collecting data as interviews and class observation.
4. Future researchers might also design more than one test to assess students` vocabulary retention after implementing Realia, in order to compare the results of tests, especially if the researchers have longer periods of time. They can also include larger populations in different types of schools.

5. Future EFL curriculum designers might consider the findings of this research when designing new books and activities to be research- based in order to improve the vocabulary teaching- learning process.

6. Lastly, future researchers can investigate the use of Realia for English achievements such as writing, listening skill, or even integrated skills.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the results of the quantitative data, it can be concluded that teaching vocabulary by using Realia can significantly affect student vocabulary acquisition and retention. That was evident in the data gathered in the post-tests for both the experimental and control groups. The performance of the experimental group was more distinguished than that of the control group, even though the pre-test results for both groups did not show any significant difference between them. This means that, before the treatment, they had similar proficiency levels.

Furthermore, the fact that there is a difference in the performance of the two groups is due to the use of Realia in teaching vocabulary in the experimental group, as it kept the learning process enjoyable and engaging. Thus, it resulted in enhancing retention of vocabulary which eventually led to improving learners' achievement levels.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Research Consent Form

Title of Study: The Effect of Using Realia in Vocabulary Retention for A2 EFL Learners: A Case Study in a Private Institution in Damascus.

Researcher: Rana MHD Khair Jaffan.

Introduction:

You are being invited to participate in a research study which aims to investigate a teaching technique. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using Realia on vocabulary retention for A2 EFL learners.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete some tasks, such as filling in some vocabulary tasks, and a survey, answering some questions, and engaging in classes.

Confidentiality:

All information collected during this study will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher and authorized personnel. Your identity will be protected, and all the data will be anonymized before analysis.

Benefits:

By participating in this study, you may contribute to the advancement of linguistic research and help researchers gain insights into language learning patterns.

Risks:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable or distressed during any part of the study, you are encouraged to inform the researcher immediately.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty as mentioned previously. You may also choose not to answer any specific questions or tasks that you feel uncomfortable with.

Consent:

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the information provided in this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Researcher's Signature: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

The Research Instrument

(Pre and Post-Tests) based on the course book.

Exercise 1: Clothes

Choose the word that matches the description.

(Floral - baggy – flowy – skinny – plain – striped – logo –tight - outfit – pattern)

- 1- A set of clothes worn together is an
- 2- Any repeated lines, shapes, designs or colors on a surface are called a
- 3- Decorated with flowers means:
- 4- Very big and comfortable pants are
- 5- Simple, ordinary or not decorated.....
- 6- The company`s name or symbol is called a
- 7- Jeans with narrow legs arejeans.
- 8- A dress that moves in a floating nice way is
- 9- A piece of clothes with lines on it is
- 10- A small shirt that fits closely to the body is

Exercise 2: containers

Fill in the gaps with the words given:

(Can- ice pack- bottle- heating pad- tube- stick- box- bag- jar- pack)

- 1- I have a cut on my hand. Could I have a..... of bandages?
- 2- Toothpaste usually comes in a
- 3- Your face is glowing! Can you show me your face cream
- 4- It's important to take a of water when you go running.
- 5- He is sneezing. He can't find theof tissues, however.
- 6- My father is angry. He needs to shave his beard. My brother has taken his shaving cream, though.
- 7- It's summer! Aof deodorant could be a nice gift.
- 8- I have a bad cough. Can I get a.....of cough drops?
- 9- It's a good idea to use awhen your muscles are sore.
- 10- For a fever, it's sometimes helpful to use an.....