Implementation of the Keyword Method to Improve Foreign Language Vocabulary Recall Among Iranian EFL Learners

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This study aimed to investigate the effect of the keyword mnemonic technique on the retention of English vocabulary among Iranian EFL learners in natural classroom setting and to explore if the keyword method would enhance the learners’ motivation in foreign language learning. Totally, 90 intermediate-level EFL male and female learners (in 3 groups: 2 experimental and 1 control group), participated in this study. Intermediate-level EFL learners were selected using the Jahad Daneshgahi institute’s placement test. The experimental groups received the keyword strategy training, whereas the control group went through the conventional process of vocabulary learning. In the experimental group, (1) the keywords were provided by the teacher, whereas the learners in the experimental group (2) provided the keywords on their own. For data collection, a pretest, an immediate posttest and a questionnaire were conducted. The statistical measures used and applied to the data were descriptive statistics, correlation, t test and one-way ANOVA. A quantitative analysis of vocabulary pretest and vocabulary immediate posttest and the questionnaire scores was conducted. The statistical results showed that the performance of the intermediate-level students in the experimental groups was not statistically different from the performance of the learners in the control group. Finally, analysis of the attitudinal questionnaire carried out in this study demonstrated that the majority of the participants had particularly positive attitudes towards the application of the keyword method as a vocabulary learning technique and while applying the keyword method in the classroom; those participants who provided the keywords and the associative images for each vocabulary item by themselves obtained better scores on the motivation questionnaire.