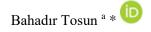


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From students' viewpoint: Integrating contextual micro-grammar revision with contextual vocabulary teaching consistent with constructivism



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Abstract

The present study is a quantitative research that attempts to scrutinize the place of students' views on integrating contextual micro-grammar revision with contextual vocabulary teaching consistent with Constructivism. Therefore, the study investigates the first and the second-year students' attitudes towards a new technique that attempts to consolidate these two techniques into one while taking their individual differences and age factor into account. In compliance with the purpose of the study, a case-specific scale was developed to provide a better projection. It was applied to the first and second year university students at the English Language and Literature Department of a state University in Grammar II and Oral Communication II courses simultaneously. As the results of the data were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics, also in light of the previous studies in the literature, the technique turned out to be sound and promising for the interests of the field of foreign language teaching.

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Keywords: Contextual micro-grammar revision; contextual vocabulary teaching; constructivism; foreign language teaching; attitude scale.

1. Introduction

Context is the major factor that defines meaning. It confines the meaning of a word to be grasped by the learner in a definite way. On the other hand, it depends on both the grammatical structure selection and vocabulary use. While different grammatical structures may be used to encode the same meaning, it is also possible to utilize synonyms or antonyms to do the same process. Hence, both the flexibility of grammar structures and vocabulary use are profoundly substantial.

Grammar and vocabulary, in this sense, constitute two indispensable aspects of language. While grammar forms the skeleton of a language, vocabulary at this point can be resembled to flesh that covers this skeleton. Thus, starting from the early days of language teaching history all theoreticians and practitioners have sought to come up with a method that may handle these two sides of the language. In fact, the first method attempts in the early 20th century were focusing rather on the teaching of

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grammatical aspects of a language as knowing a language those days meant knowing its grammatical patterns in detail (Richard & Rogers, 2003). Then in the mid-1960s, through the evolution of language teaching, experts started considering new ways to teach how to use the language instead of teaching the grammatical rules of it, which opened a new debate on whether grammar should be taught or not. If yes, to what extent and how it should be taught in the classroom would be the next questions on the agenda until the early 20th century (Krashen, 1993; Fotos, 1994; Ellis, 2001; Erlam, 2003). The hot debate about the "How?" of grammar teaching also implicated vocabulary teaching in the agenda next. More recently, with the advent of post method condition, constructivism enabled contextual studies to make grammar and vocabulary teaching converge on the same plain (Canestray & Marlow, 2010). The flexibility that Constructivism brings in the classroom provides another opportunity to combine both contextual grammar teaching and contextual vocabulary teaching within the same course through analyzing meaning with different grammatical solutions and vocabulary usage from several aspects. In other words, keeping the semantic aspect of the context, multifarious new contexts are created integrating both parallel and discrete grammatical structures together with synonyms. At this point, the technique that is the subject of the current study provides a proper solution for the viability of this theoretical framework while paying utmost care to encourage student participation to amplify all the possible series of patterns and synonyms available for the new contexts. Thus, as one of the musts of Constructivism, students' attitudes should also be monitored to provide them the entailed opportunity to build their selfesteem during all the process.

All in all, the present study aims to contribute to the studies in the literature investigating the following research questions:

Q1. Is there a statistically significant relation between the students' attitudes towards the technique and their gender?

Q2. Is there a statistically significant relation between the students' attitudes towards the technique and their achievement scores?

1.1. Literature Review

The relationship between context and grammar whether it is narrow or wide has long been on the agenda (Stanley, 2002; Bach, 2004). What is more, to clarify this relation linguists have opted even for domain restriction regarding its semantic connection with different types of grammars such as categorical, formal, logical or generative (Steedman, 2000; Jager, 2005; Heim & Kratzer, 2005). The first definite term as "Contextual Grammars" was coined by Solomon Marcus in 1969 (My&Paun, 1982). A type of generative grammar that tries to define the exact interaction between strings and contexts through mathematics opened a new way to formularize contextual grammar in a more logical way (Georghe, 1997). However, contextual grammars as a type of generative grammar only accentuates the connection between the dynamic patterns of grammatical structures and context mathematically. As for teaching, generative models of grammar teaching were not preferred to be useful for teaching because they had not much to do with teaching the mastery of the language. Instead, both theoreticians and practitioners are in favor of descriptive grammar teaching models that are designed for the development of productive skills (Ellis, 2006). Yet, context is still of great importance to descriptive grammar teaching since the connection between form and meaning is the most important case (VanPatten, Williams & Rott, 2004). Both form and meaning must inevitably be connected using predetermined grammatical structures in a communicative way through context (Samuda, 2001).

Context being the case, another important aspect of language development is vocabulary building (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2003). Vocabulary building is necessary for any kind of language skill to be developed (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). As far as vocabulary development is

concerned, like grammar teaching, vocabulary teaching must embrace 'meaningful use' (Smith, 2008, p.21), which requires the contextual use of the words while teaching. Context, in this way, restricts the meaning for a specific purpose shaping it to be more proper for its retention in mind (Scott, Nagy, & Flinspah, 2008). Therefore, the more different contextual activities are used, the better vocabulary depth is reached (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006). On the other hand, the more vocabulary depth means the better contextual inference the learners make (Nassaji, 2003; Carlo et al., 2004; Nassaji, 2006; Pulido, 2007; Barcroft, 2009; Montero, Peters, Clarebout, & Desmet, 2014; Restrepo Ramos, 2015). Contextual inference is a constituent of metalinguistic word learning strategies beside syntactic awareness. These are also the premise of academic vocabulary building (Scott, Nagy, & Flinspah, 2008).

There is, nevertheless, a body of research that indicate negative sides of depending context too much as Frantzen reports (2003, p.168); L1: Beck, McKeown, & McCaslin, 1983; Carnine, Kameenui, & Coyle, 1984; Dubin & Olshtain, 1993; McKeown, 1985; Pressley, Levin, & McDaniel, 1987; Schatz & Baldwin, 1986; Shefelbine, 1990; L2: Bensoussan & Laufer, 1984; Haynes, 1984; Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Hulstijn, 1992; Kelly, 1990; Parry, 1993; Seibert, 1945; Stein, 1993.

Although the aforementioned research suggests much about the importance of context in terms of both grammar and vocabulary teaching, there is still need for empirical research as regards their consolidation especially as far as Constructivism is concerned.

2. Method

The current quantitative study aims to explicate the role of integrating contextual micro-grammar revision with contextual vocabulary teaching in teaching students both grammar and new vocabulary. Consistent with the purpose of the study Grammar II and Oral Communication II courses of the English Language and Literature department of a state university was selected as a model. After a period of 14 weeks a questionnaire specifically developed for the purpose of the study was distributed to the first and second year students of the department. The data secured were analyzed through inferential statistics to reveal any relation between the students' attitudes with their gender and achievement scores.

2.1. Sample / Participants

The number of the participants in the current study was 97. As a usual rule, the female students that attend English Language and Literature Department outnumber male ones. Thus, the majority of the participants were females (n=69). Prior to their admission to the department they are due to be successful in a placement test that vindicates them to be proficient in English although they are non-native speakers of the language. Last but not least, they were all supposed to be approximately at the same proficiency level.

2.2. *Instrument(s)*

The measurement of the current study was realized through Likert-type scales (1 = Strongly Agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree) that consist of 31 questions. The entire items of the scale were constructed in compliance with the theoretical components of both contextual micro-grammar revision and contextual vocabulary teaching. During the arrangement of the scale items, 3 experts in the same field were consulted. Moreover, for more precision factor analyses were carried out to avoid any convergence of the scale items. During the measurement of the results both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to detect any possible association of the students' attitudes with their gender and their achievement scores.

2.3. Data collection procedures

Contextual micro-grammar revision and contextual vocabulary teaching were applied in an integrated way through randomized texts in both Grammar II and Oral Communication II courses for a period of 14 weeks before the distribution of the questionnaire to the third-year students. The students were informed about a specific type of academic vocabulary which they were expected to learn during the course. As a second way to help them learn this specific academic vocabulary that usually interferes with the comprehension of the academic texts they were also recommended an additional guide-book for self-study. Additionally, they were notified that both thesaurus and language dictionaries would be obligatory during the course. As for the grammar revision task, it was the lecturer 's responsibility. The students, therefore, were supposed to do nothing but attending the course regarding the grammar revision aspect of the lesson. The content of the technique consisted of the contextual micro revision of eight specific grammar units in an integrated way while supporting the students with at least 5 to 7 synonyms in different contexts. Meanwhile, the students were free to ask any kind of vocabulary question to their lecturer for quick access to the academic vocabulary usage. Hence, it was of necessary to instantaneously respond to the students concerning the meaning of any academic word by heart, which makes it compulsory for the lecturer to be predominant over the vocabulary content of the selected guide-books.

Ultimately, following the permission procedure of the relevant University in the Fall term of 2017-2018 both the first and the second-year students of the English Language and Literature Department were distributed 97 copies of a four-page questionnaire.

2.4. Data analysis

The first questionnaire comprised 36 items. Yet, the pilot study carried out during the development of the scale made it clear that 2 items should be taken out since they were overlapping in their purpose, so they were removed from the scale. As an additional process, the rest of the items were also investigated by other experts in the field.

The data analysis of the current study was executed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0. Both the reliability and the validity of the scale of the study were measured through statistical procedures separately. The statistical results are all submitted in the tables with the abbreviations: number of participants with (N), mean with (Mean), mean difference with (Mean Diff.), standard deviation with (Std. D.), standard error with (Std. Err.), standard error mean with (Std. Err. Mean), standard error difference with (Std. Err. Diff.), F statistics with (F), degrees of freedom with (df), significance (p) value of Levene's Test (Sig.), 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference with (95% Con. Inter. Diff.), the two-tailed p value associated with the t-test with (Sig. (2-tailed)).

2.4.1. Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha analysis signified the internal consistency of the scale to be .929 reliable. Despite the close mean and standard deviation values of the scale items, an explanatory factor analysis was realized. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix showed either positive or negative correlation with absolute minimum and maximum values between 0.12 and 0.60. Then, ANOVA with Tukey's Test for Non-additivity was executed for the items of the scale and the results showed that the items possessed additivity (p<0.001). Also, Hotelling's T-Squared Test validated that the scale items possessed homogeneity. Finally, Intraclass Correlation Coefficient criterion was tested and both the internal consistency for items (p<0.001) and the average measure (p<0.001) screened reliable results.

2.4.2. Validity Analysis

Construct validity of the scale was measured through exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Before PCA was conducted, the factorability of the scale was measured

through the tests; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity respectively. The KMO result was 0.86, which was acceptable. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity had a significant test value (p<0.05), which necessitated an explanatory factor analysis. Then a factor analysis by PCA was carried out to measure the construct validity of the scale. 7 factors with eigen values greater than 1 were detected. The factors accounted for the total variance with a value of 66.5 % cumulatively. Each factor accounted for the total variance with the percentages of 34.6 %, 8.2%, 5.6%, 4.9%, 4.6%, 4.5%, and 3.9% respectively. Still, the Scree Plot singled out the first factor from the others with a sharp decline in the plot. Thus, the scale indicated a one-factor pattern, which enabled the study to disregard factor rotation process. Instead, the factor analysis was repeated with the fixed number of factor extraction. As a result of the repeated factor analysis all the factors taking part in the Component Matrix were over .30 and the explained percentage of variance was 34.65. This was slightly over the acceptability criterion 30%. Taking these results into consideration two items were supposed to be either reclaimed or discarded from the scale. Since the study was a psychometric one the scale items were reclaimed instead of being discarded. In this way, the validity of the scale was preserved.

3. Results

3.1. Q1. Is there a statistically significant relation between the students' attitudes towards the technique and gender?

Table 1. reveals no significant correlation between the students' gender and their attitudes (m= 1.93 for males; m= 1.94 for females). The slight difference between the mean values of the two groups denotes no significant diversity between the male and the female students. Thus, in statistical terms, there is no significant correlation between the students' gender and their attitudes towards the technique in general.

	Gender of the Participants	Ν	Mean	Std. D.	Std. Err. Mean	
	Female	69	1.94	0.47	0.05	
Attitudes Mean	n Male	28	1.93	0.55	0.10	

Table1. Descriptive Statistics for Gender and Attitudes

Table 2 signifies no diversity between the variances of males and females in terms of the results in Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. Then, the t-test for Equality of Means justifies the H0 –null hypothesis- which assumes no relation between the students' gender and their attitudes. The Sig. (2-tailed) value (0.95) is greater than p value=0.05 so the H0 hypothesis may not be rejected. Therefore, no significant correlation between the students' gender and their attitudes towards the technique appears to be present.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						t-te	st for Equali	ty of Mean	s
Attitudes Mean	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Con. Int	95% ter. Diff
								Lower	Uppe
Equal variances assumed	0.52	0.47	0.05	95	0.95	0.006	0.11	-0.21	0.22
			0.05	44.35	0.95	0.006	0.11	-0.23	0.2
Equal variances not assumed									

Table2. t-test for two Independent Samples in terms of Gender

3.2. Q2. Is there a statistically significant relation between the students' attitudes towards the technique and their success?

Table 3. denotes no significant correlation between successful and unsuccessful students (m=1.90 for successful students; m=1.97 for unsuccessful students). The two similar mean values screen no difference between the two groups, which also means there is no significant correlation between the students' success and attitudes towards the technique.

Table3. Descriptive	Statistics	for Success	and Attitudes
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	Successful / Unsuccessful	Ν	Mean	Std. D.	Std. Err. Mean
	Successful	54	1.90	0.47	0.06
Attitudes Mean	Unsuccessful	43	1.97	0.53	0.08

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances in Table 4 reveals no significant difference between the variances of two groups in terms of success (Sig. value= 0.49), which requires that t-test for Equality of Means be taken into consideration. Accordingly, the H0 –null hypothesis- that assumes no correlation between the students' success and their attitudes is tested. As the Sig. (2-tailed) value (0.48) is greater than p value=0.05, the H0 hypothesis is accepted, which means there is no significant correlation between the students' success and attitudes towards the technique.

					t-test for Equality of Means			
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Con. In	95% ter. Dif
0.46	0.49	0.70	95	0.48	0.07	0.10	Lower -0.12	Uppe 0.2
		C	C	C	F Sig. t df (2-tailed)	F Sig. t df (2-tailed) Diff.	F Sig. t df (2-tailed) Diff. Diff.	F Sig. t df (2-tailed) Diff. Diff. Con. In Lower

Table4. t-test for two Independent Samples in terms of Success

4. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed no correlation between students' gender and their attitudes towards the technique, which suggests that the technique would be useful for both genders. Usually in the literature gender is acknowledged to be the most dramatical individual difference as far as language teaching/learning is concerned (Sunderland, J., 1992, 1994; McMahill, 2001; Flood, 2003; Norton, & Pavlenko, 2004). However, when the case is the correlation between students' attitudes and gender it is not possible to give a long list of references (Oxford & Ehrman, 1992, Ellis, 1994). On the contrary, there is little evidence that vindicates such an assumption (Sunderland, 2000; Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Kobayashi, 2010). Studies which indicate a strong association between gender and language teaching/learning have relatively much to do with the correlation between students' gender and their achievement scores instead of their attitudes. At this juncture, the current study is due to provide further projection for the studies that investigate the relation between gender and student attitudes in the field of language teaching.

Correlation studies usually do not yield results showing connection between students' attitudes and their achievements especially as foreign language teaching is the subject Cotterall, 1999; Zimmerman & Dale, 2001; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Wenden, 2014). Consistent with this common literary conception the present study did not detect any significant correlation between students' attitudes and their achievement. One reason behind this specific result of the current study may be the cognitive evaluation skill levels of the students. As a general acknowledgement, university students do not complete developing their abstract thinking and evaluation skills earlier than the last term of their third year at least. This leads to the assumption that the same study would give different results with the third or fourth year students of the same department.

5.Conclusions

This study is based on a quantitative foundation which utilized a Likert scale developed for its purpose specifically. Then the data gathered through the scale were mined by means of inferential statistics, which in the first place appears not so proper in this context as the study does not cover merely descriptive statistics. After all, Likert scales are known to be ordinal scales that are most becoming for descriptive studies. Yet, the scale was adapted to inferential applications after a couple of statistical procedures. Anyway, despite the scale is viable for the general course of the research, it is not a certain choice as the nature of the scale makes it hard to decide what sort of statistical tests are to be taken; more precisely, it makes it hard to decide whether parametric or non-parametric tests. Thus, although there is research validating both parametric and non-parametric tests with Likert scales, the study should be considered limited within its statistical foundations to this end.

Then in the second place, the present study has been implemented in EFL environment. In this respect, the same study may give different results in ESL environment because there would be many changing factors such as cultural aspects, learner strategies, learner motivation etc. depending on the changing environment.

All in all, it is supposed that the current study within its limitations would provide new contributions to the literature regarding the association between students' attitudes and their individual differences beside their success in the field of foreign language teaching.

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Öğrencilerin bakış açısından: Yapılandırmacılığa uygun bağlamsal kelime öğretimi ile bağlamsal mikro-dilbilgisi revizyonunun bütünleştirilmesi

Öz

Mevcut çalışma Yapılandırmacı Bilgi Felsefesi'ne uygun olarak bağlamsal mikro-dilbilgisi tekrarını ve bağlamsal sözcük bilgisi eğitimini birleştirme üzerine öğrencilerin görüşlerini detaylı olarak inceleyen niceliksel bir çalışmadır. Böylelikle çalışma, öğrencilerin bireysel farklılıklarını ve yaş faktörünü de göz önünde bulundurarak, bu iki tekniği birleştirmeyi amaçlayan yeni bir teknik hakkında birinci ve ikinci sınıf öğrencilerinin tutumlarını incelemektedir. Daha iyi projeksiyon sağlayabilmek için çalışmanın amacına uygun olarak vakaya özgü bir ölçek geliştirilmiştir. Ölçek bir devlet üniversitesinin İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümünün birinci ve ikinci sınıf öğrencilerin sonuçları hem betimsel hem de çıkarımsal istatistik yoluyla analiz edildiğinde, alan-yazında yer alan önceki çalışmaların da ışığı altında, tekniğin sorunsuz ve yabancı dil eğitimi alanına katkıda bulunabilecek bir teknik olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bağlamsal mikro-dilbilgisi tekrarı; bağlamsal sözcük bilgisi eğitimi; yapılandırmacılık; yabancı dil eğitimi; tutum ölçeği.

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