

Study on the Application of Annotation Type in Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract

Learning vocabulary with annotation is not a new topic in language learning research area ever since linguistics and language teachers wanted to solve the problem of low efficiency of vocabulary learning. However, controversy on whether single annotation like text annotation or multiple forms of annotation such as text plus picture annotation is more helpful still exists. This passage tries to figure out the reasons behind it, including learner differences, Vocabulary learning with different combinations of annotation type and task type and not separate vocabulary into receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. And we are eager to find out solutions to solve this problem.

Keywords

Vocabulary Learning; Annotation Type; Task Type.

1. Introduction

Low efficiency in vocabulary learning has always been a problem in language learning and teaching. Many researchers and scholars have done a lot of researches to improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning ever since there was language learning. Different measures have been put forward to solve the problem, including creating according learning situation around the theme of the teaching unit, accumulating and learning vocabulary through reading, the application of mind map in English vocabulary learning [1, 2]. Even though various solutions to vocabulary learning problems are more or less conducive to the improvement of previous poor vocabulary learning situation, we must understand that not every solution is equal useful to all of the students. Some might be helpful to some students while not to the other students. Therefore, constant research on a variety of other solutions to improving vocabulary learning is vital. Learning vocabulary with annotation type and task is not new in this area, attempts on effect of annotation type on vocabulary learning experienced the change from initial single text annotation type to multimedia annotations owing to the advent of computer- and mobile-assisted language learning, which has created great opportunities for multimedia-based vocabulary learning [4]. However, research on vocabulary learning using multimedia annotations has not arrived without controversy. Studies have found that integrating verbal input (e.g., video) together with visual input (e.g., images) is more beneficial for vocabulary learning than either verbal or visual input alone. Other findings have shown no significant differences between the different glossing conditions [5]. Therefore, it is important to find out the reason to above described controversy and try to find out what is the best way of applying annotation in vocabulary learning.

2. Literature Review

As for the research on superior annotation type in vocabulary learning, different researchers have drawn different conclusions. Many researchers have compared the effectiveness of using text-plus-picture annotations with text annotations. Chun and Plass and Plass et al were two early studies of this type, both finding that text-plus-picture annotations were superior to text

annotations in promoting target word learning. Jones investigated annotation-enhanced L2 listening when learners were listening to a passage [5, 6].

However, conflicting findings comparing text-plus-picture annotations and text annotations have also appeared. For example, Boers, Warren, He, and Deconinck, conducted a pen-and-paper experiment on three sets of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners, Chinese, Malaysian, and Belgian. Participants read a narrative text to learn six pseudo words with or without pictures included in the marginal annotations. After reading, the participants completed tests of meaning-recognition, form recall, and content comprehension. The results showed no benefits of including pictures in the annotations for target vocabulary retention in the three sets of learners [7].

Except for above research results, some new researches on vocabulary learning with annotation type enlightened us a lot. Zou and Teng [8] also found this problem and put forward the idea of researching the interaction effect between annotation type and task type, which provided a good way for us to solve the problem.

3. Possible Causes

3.1. Learner Differences

Second Language Learning is a complex process involving many factors such as language, psychology and society. In recent years, with the development of psychology, psycholinguistics and second language learning theory, the focus of second language teaching research has changed from “How to teach” to “How to learn”. The concept of “Learner-centered” teaching has been widely accepted. A lot of teaching practice and analysis results show that the learners’ individual differences directly affect the second language learning effect. One of the learner differences is reflected from different learning strategies. Learning strategies include cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, emotional strategies and social strategies. Different learners prefer different vocabulary learning strategies. Some may find one single annotation is more concise so that there are not other distractions impeding vocabulary learning. However, some other learners may find it is easier to learn vocabulary with multiple types of annotations. Therefore, it could explain to some degree why different researches would draw different conclusions on whether multiple annotations are more helpful to vocabulary learning.

3.2. Vocabulary Learning with Different Combinations of Annotation Type and Task Type

Existing researches on the application of annotation type in vocabulary learning are often conducted with accordingly task type. Thus, it is possible different task types may exert an influence on the effect of the annotation in vocabulary learning. The idea of considering the task type is drawn from Zou and Teng [4], they considered the interaction effect of annotation type and task type, which is the first research on mutual effect between annotation type and task type. The results shows that these exists interaction effect between annotation type and task type. This could help explain previous controversy on different results in superior annotation type n vocabulary learning from its’ own perspective.

3.3. Did not Separate Vocabulary into Receptive Vocabulary and Productive Vocabulary

Another possible cause of above mentioned controversy is that there is no research separating vocabulary into receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. It’s known to us all the distinction between receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. Therefore, results on more useful annotation type may differ with the tested vocabulary changing from receptive vocabulary to productive vocabulary. According to Nation [5], mastering receptive vocabulary

knowledge means perceiving and extracting word meaning, while mastering productive vocabulary knowledge means extracting and writing word forms. We could see that receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary put forward different requirements on vocabulary learning, thus when conducting research on the application of different annotation type, it is also significant to separate vocabulary into receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary.

4. Problem Solutions

considering possible causes provided above, solutions to existing problem should also be put forward in terms of them. Therefore, some relevant solutions are scheduled as follows.

4.1. Provide Various Annotation Type for Students to Choose by Themselves

Just like what was mentioned above, learners differ from one to another, they would definitely be used to learning vocabulary with different annotation type. Therefore, the very first step for the teacher is to prepare a variety of annotation type for students to choose the one they prefer, including single text annotation, text annotation plus picture annotation, video annotation plus text annotation and so on.

4.2. Find out the Best Combination of Annotation Type and Vocabulary Type

It was mentioned that the effect of annotation would differ with the change of the task type. In most cases, accordingly task type would be conducted at the same time to examine the effect of any annotation. Common task types are cloze, reading comprehension, sentence writing and so on. To find out the best combination, we need to match different annotation type with different task type and do an experiment to see which combination is better. Of course the choose of annotation type and task type used for experiment should be selected based on published journals.

4.3. Separating Vocabulary into Receptive Vocabulary and Productive Vocabulary

Another possible cause of different results on better annotation type in vocabulary learning is that there is researchers did not separate vocabulary from receptive and productive vocabulary. But how could we conduct such researches on two different types of vocabulary? It would may depend on the test part. The effect of the acquiring of vocabulary is decided by the test in the research, which could help us separate the test of receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. According to Nation [4], the perception and extraction of word meaning is the mastery of receptive vocabulary knowledge, and the extraction and writing of word forms is the mastery of productive vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, setting according tests to examine receptive and productive vocabulary to find which annotation type is more suitable in which vocabulary learning is essential.

5. Conclusion

Whatever, the above possible solutions are worth trying in order to help prompt the application of annotation in vocabulary learning. Even though it may takes a lot to solve the problem, more attention should paid to how to help leaners learn vocabulary more easily. After all vocabulary is a key factor deciding whether one is capable of learning a language well or not.

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