

## The Effect of Teaching Vocabulary through the Diglot –Weave Technique and Attitude towards This Technique

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**Abstract** Using a variety of techniques such as the diglot weave technique can reinforce the teaching points without boring the students. The present study aimed at investigating the effect of teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique. 60 numbers of students were chosen and were divided into two groups of 30. The control groups received traditional method of teaching vocabulary such as definition and synonyms, etc. and the experimental group was exposed to the diglot weave technique as a treatment. The treatment of the study took 5 sessions of 45 minutes. At the last session of the treatment a post test was administered to check how much students have improved. The result of ANCOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups in both pretest and post test which implied that the application of the diglot weave technique can reinforce the subjects' vocabulary learning.

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### 1. Introduction

In learning a foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing altogether. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately.

Vocabulary acquisition is increasingly viewed as crucial to language acquisition. However, there is much disagreement as to the effectiveness of different approaches for presenting vocabulary items. Moreover, learning vocabulary is often perceived as a tedious and laborious process. Although there have been great changes in views toward the nature of vocabulary, there is much more need to the expansion of the methods of teaching vocabulary.

Practitioners in the field of EFL / ESL suggest several types of “deliberate vocabulary teaching” techniques, including ‘collocation activities’, ‘pre-teaching of vocabulary’, ‘post-listening/reading vocabulary exercises’, ‘using word cards’, and ‘studying word parts’ (See Nation, 2003 for examples). But a very influential view of vocabulary acquisition claims that we acquire most words through exposure to language input, particularly reading input, rather than by deliberately committing words to memory. (Laufer, 2001)

A great deal of attention has been drawn to the study of teachers' alternation between the target language and the first language in the classroom.

According to Jingxia (2008), as a common phenomenon in foreign language classrooms, code-switching between the target language and the first language is widely adopted by teachers in the process of teaching to build a bridge from known ( the first language) to unknown ( the target language).

### 2. Literature review

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. As Steven Stahl (2005) puts it: vocabulary knowledge is the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the sentence. Vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and depends over the course of a life time. Instruction in vocabulary involves more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence (Cited in Yip & Kwan, 2006, p. 235).

Code-switching as a specific phenomenon and strategy of foreign language teachers received attention in the 1980s. From then on, there has been the heated debate between different views on whether it is helpful or impeding to switch back and forth between the target language and the native language in the foreign language learning classroom. Advocates of intralingua teaching strategy, Lightbown (2001), believe that teachers should aim at creating a pure foreign language environment since they are the sole linguistic models for the students and that code switching will result in negative transfer in FL learning. On the contrary, researchers

in support of cross lingual (code switching) teaching strategy including Levine (2003), Chen Liping (2004), etc., argue that L1 can promote the learning of TL and L1 deserves a place in FL classroom. Code-switching is a good strategy of efficiency in FL teaching.

Scholars have suggested many ways to cope with the problem of vocabulary in teaching reading classes. The Diglot Weave, from the Greek 'di', meaning 'two', and 'glot', meaning 'language', is a breakthrough in language learning. Diglot weave is related to code-mixing and code-switching which are common and well-documented processes in the speech of multilingual individuals. Among these, the diglot-weave technique can be extremely useful way of employing students' L1 to emphasize important concepts, reacquire the students' attention when they become distracted, and to praise and reprimand as required (Cook, 2001). The use of the L1 in the classroom can be gradually phased out as students become more proficient in the L2. Code switching can also involve using the L1 to supply vocabulary items which the students are unfamiliar with, and then gradually remove them as the student's progress. This can be especially useful when employing storytelling activities (Bradley, 2003). Permitting the use of some words from students' first language may keep the class moving forward, by allowing the students to express themselves, while making the class more fun and helping them to anchor new L2 vocabulary to L1 concepts. Diglot weave is a term which is used to refer to this procedure.

This methodology smoothly weaves the new language into learners' own, taking them from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Gradually moving from their own language to the target language quickly builds comprehension skills and increases confidence. Best known for the promotion of this concept is the work of Robins Burling (1983) who developed the diglot weave model for an experimental class in reading French (cited in Blair, 1991). Taking the text of French novel, Burling changed its lexical and grammatical expressions in the early pages to a form of English heavily influenced by French syntax, yet understandable. Then, page by page, he modified the text by adding more French features, but never so many as to hinder the comprehensibility of the text (Blair, 1991). In the diglot weave technique, the teacher start with familiar sentences in the student's native language which are followed by gradual word by word translations into the target language. The context provides the meaning and thus makes the learning an almost effortless, natural process. The diglot method addresses the low second language vocabulary threshold and the beginner's paradox by embedding

new second language vocabulary within a familiar first language text. The first language strengths are used for allowing students to access context clue strategies and develop a scheme while reading. More complete comprehension is achieved since the first language surrounds the new vocabulary. Using these method students read a native language text with second language vocabulary and grammatical structures are increasingly embedded within text.

### **3. Research question**

The study is going to answer the following questions:

1. Does teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique impact vocabulary learning of Iranian first year high school students?

2. Does teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique have any significant effect on first year high school student's language attitude towards using code switching as a way of teaching vocabulary in the class?

### **4. Methodology**

#### **4.1. Participants**

The participants in this study were 60 female Iranian EFL students of High school, in Babol city, Mazandaran province, Iran. All in first year, divided randomly in two groups of experimental and control groups. The experiment took place in the natural classroom setting, within regularly scheduled class and was run by the researcher. 30 students were assigned to experimental and 30 students were assigned to control groups, randomly.

#### **4.2. Instrument**

First, a vocabulary test was constructed based on vocabulary item selected randomly from pre-university English book made by researcher herself. The researcher selected 30 words from pre-university English book in the form of M/C item to both experimental and control groups.

The second instrument was student's language attitude regarding code switching as a way of teaching adopted and modified from Alenezi (2010). The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part will elicit information about the background of the students such as name, family and age. The second part consists of 13 questions about attitude of students regarding English and Persian code switching. The third part consists of open ended questions which demonstrated student's preferences for language of instruction, consisting of two items. The questionnaire comprised both structured (closed) and unstructured (open ended) questions. Students were requested to give heir honest views in a 4-Likert scale. The scale was comprised as follows; Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

In this study pre-test, post test two group design will be used.

The first part elicited the background information regarding students' gender, students' educational language, and the language they use in communication with each other. The second part elicited the students' views about the medium of instruction. The students' views about the language of teaching were assessed using the Likert type scale consisting of 13 questions. On each questions, students indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements related to language attitudes. Score on each question range from 1 to 4 with lower values indicating more negative attitudes.

The third part sought students' responses from the Open-Ended questions. This section of questionnaire consisted of two open-ended question. All the responses to these questions were gathered. The responses are interpreted and presented below. This section presents preferences, explanation of these preferences, and the comments, regarding language of instruction.

### 5. Procedure of the study

Before the treatment a pre test was conducted. The allocated time was 15 minutes. In order to prevent the effect of chance in handling the test, the subjects were told to avoid attending the test by guessing. In the treatment phase from beginning, the two groups received five weeks of instruction: one session in a week, each session 1.45 hour. Every session six new vocabulary items were taught to the participants to learn. Since the purpose of this study was to compare the two groups, they were given the same materials. Subjects in the experimental group were given the diglot weave technique for learning vocabulary that means presenting the target language vocabulary items in source language context, and the subjects in control group were given the conventional method for learning vocabulary for example definition and synonym in target language. The learning conditions were the same for both groups. In teaching phase, at the beginning of every session the students of both groups were at different class. The researcher was the teacher herself, the selected vocabularies will be taught to both control and experimental groups in different ways. As the class moves ahead during the lesson in question, the researcher weaves more and more English words into Farsi sentences, until almost all the sentences are uttered in English. The researcher starts with sentences in the student's native language and gradually shifts, word by word, into the target language. The context provides the meaning and thus makes the learning an almost effortless and natural

process. In each session after teaching new vocabularies the researcher asks comprehension questions using the technique to check the students' grasp of the new words; the researcher encourages the students to use the technique in answering such questions to promote students' ability in producing the words in question.

Attitude questionnaire was given to the students of experimental group as the post test again to achieve the effect of the diglot weave technique in learning vocabularies after treatment. While the control group was exposed to conventional method. After finishing the treatment in both experiment and control groups, the post test will be conducted for both groups. The same multiple choice vocabulary tests will be administered as the post test to assess the participants' achievement after the treatment.

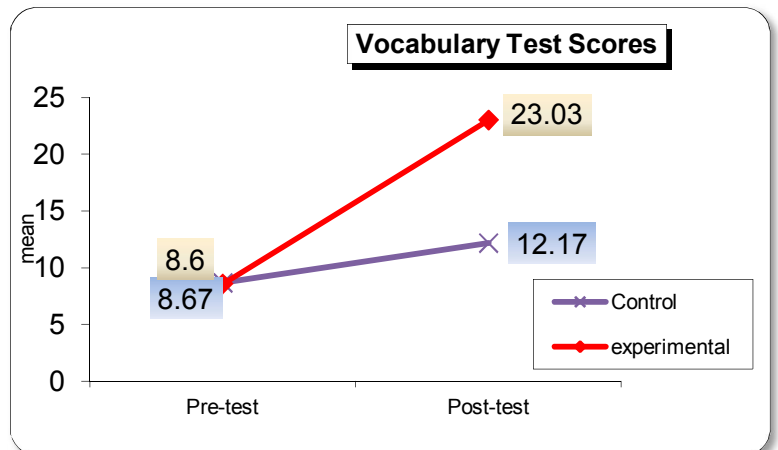


Figure 1. The scores of the experimental group increased from the pre-test (8.60) to post-test (23.03) in contrast the score mean of control group improved in the post test but not as much as the experimental one.

### 6. Data analysis

As mentioned before, 60 subjects attended this study. Since they were first year high school students and selected according to they graduated from guidance school, divided randomly in two groups. The researcher investigated the homogeneity of groups according to the result of the pre test. An economical way of dealing with the data is decreasing the volume of it from hundred of test sheets of paper into a score group and finally into a graph. Therefore, the following table shows the means and standard deviations of CSA and test scores for two groups of cases in pre- and post-test.

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that the scores of the experimental group increased from the pre-test (8.60) to post-test (23.03) in contrast the score mean

of control group improved in the post test but not as much as the experimental one.

To answer first question, the vocabulary test scores as dependent variable was used. Firstly to assure the equivalence of two groups' means in pre-test, the t-independent test was used. The result of t-test is achieved for comparing scores between two groups in the pre-test. Since the obtained p (0.891) is greater than 0.05, the test is not significant at 0.05 level and it indicates that there was no significant difference of the scores between the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of CSA and Score for two groups of cases

Variables	Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Score	experimental	8.60	1.993	23.03	3.057
	Control	8.67	1.768	12.17	3.563
CSA	experimental	33.00	2.924	36.10	2.187
	Control	-	-	-	-

The effect of teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique, taking into account the pre-test individual differences was analyzed based on the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The necessary condition for the ANCOVA is the homogeneity of two groups which can be tested by the Levene's test.

Table 2. The Levene's test of homogeneity of two groups in post test

Statistics group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Mean Diff.	T	Df	p
Pre-test	30	33.00	2.924	0.534	3.10	7.35	29	0.001
Post-test	30	36.10	2.187	0.399				

Result in Table 2 shows that the Levene's test was not significant ( $p=0.920>0.05$ ). This means that two groups had equal error variances and were homogenous. Therefore the ANCOVA can be applied.

Table 3. ANCOVA for the effect of diglot weave technique on scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	161.018	1	161.018	19.196	0.001
Group	1789.960	1	1789.960	213.396	0.001
Error	478.115	57	8.388		
Total	20996.000	60			

The results of ANCOVA in Table 3 indicated that there was a significant ( $p<0.01$ ) linear relationship between the pre-test and the post-test scores. On the other hand, the main effect of the

group was significant on the scores in the post-test after controlling for the effect of the pre-test ( $p<0.01$ ). This implies that scores differed significantly between the experimental and control groups (controlling for the pre-test effect). Consequently, it can be inferred that the teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique leads to increasing of the vocabulary test scores in Iranian first year high school students.

To answer the second question the CSA variable was compared between the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group. The comparison was done by the paired t-test.

Table 4. the paired t-test for comparing CSA means between pretest and post test

F	df1	df2	Sig.
0.010	1	58	0.920

The result of paired t-test for comparing CSA between pre-test and post-test is shown in Table 4. Since the obtained p (0.001) is less than 0.01, the test is significant at 0.01 level and it indicates that CSA in the experimental group differed significantly between pre-test and post-test. Thus, we infer that the teaching vocabulary through the diglot weave technique leads to increasing of the attitude towards using code switching as a way of teaching vocabulary in Iranian first year high school students.

Section three of questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions. All the responses to these questions were gathered. The responses are interpreted and presented below. This section presents preferences, explanations of these preferences, and the comments regarding language(s) of instruction.

Question 1. Which of the following languages do you prefer to be used in your English class?

In the figure 2, there was a strong and evident agreement in the opinion expressed by students. The majority of students ( 19 out of 26) preferred Persian/ English code switching to the sole use of English language, which was preferred by only 5 students. This demonstrates a strong preference for the Persian/ English code switching as a medium of instruction. The following statements are some of the student's response:

*"it is better to use mainly English because this makes us understand future references about the subjects, however, difficult concepts should be explained in Persian first then translated to English"*.

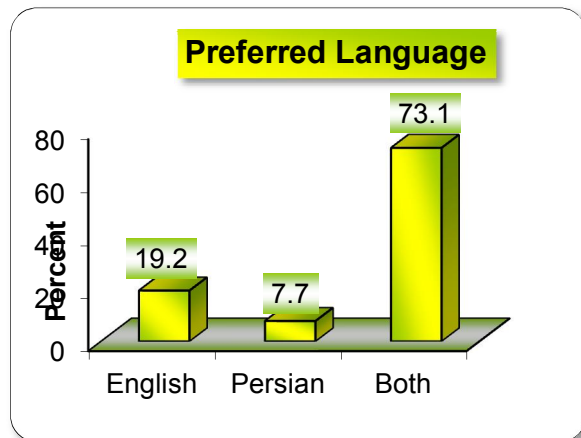


Figure 2: language preferred to be used in English class

Question 2: Why do you prefer the following languages to be used in your English class?

The explanations were given by respondents who expressed their preferences for the Persian/English code switching instructional approach. This is substantiated by the following statement: "because some information needs to be explained in Persian for more understanding". Another reason suggested by a student is "Persian in the first year helps me to understand because I studied my high school in Persian".

Four students did not express their opinion, while 19 students express their preference for English / Persian code switching. It can be inferred that English / Persian code switching was regarded as a good medium for vocabulary learning of high school students. There were five students who preferred the English language to be the medium of teaching and these students explained their preference of teaching in English as being "because we want to improve our English language for conversation and reading the foreign journals". Majority of students preferred code switching for understanding the meaning of vocabulary and it help them to reflect what I learned in my real environment. Correlated with Persian world as I can explain it to the general public in a language they understand.

Figure 3 shows frequencies for student's reasons for their preference of languages used in the English class. As seen in the figure, most of students (42.3%) considered understanding as their criteria choose either of language in the English class. The next important item is complementary effect of using both English and Persian in the class

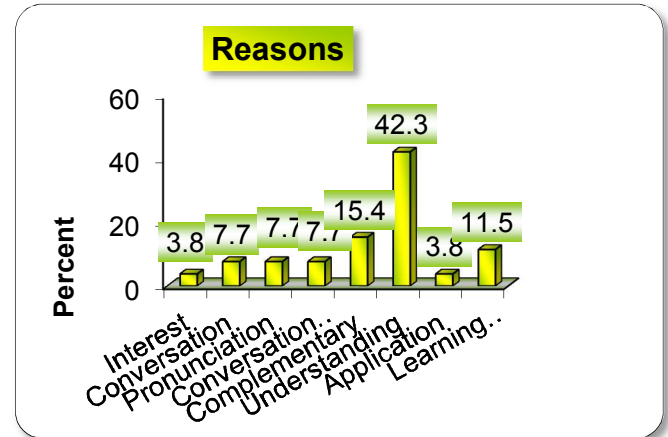


Figure 3. Reasons for preferring English/Persian to be used in English class

## 7. Conclusion

This article has attempted to describe and justify the use of the diglot weave technique which is believed to assist language teachers in teaching target language vocabulary in EFL classes. Diglot weave involves the use of an L2 words in L1 utterance; this exclusive technique smoothly weaves the new language into student's own. A gradual immersion into the target language and the sense of involvement builds comprehension and increase confidence and enthusiasm among the learners; it is related to code alternation, variations of which can be found in code switching and code mixing.

Some authors like Yuhua (1999) believe that because sandwich stories (using the diglot weave technique to tell stories) provide children with interesting and comprehensible input, intake occurs easily and in large quantities. As children acquire more and more words and their sentences change from sandwich to monolingual, from short to long, their ability to express themselves and to communicate in the large language increases. Using this technique teacher can use L2 as a meaning-making tool for communicating ideas rather than an end in itself. It also reduce anxiety and enhances the effective environment for learning. Traditional classroom activities mostly emphasis grammar rule (forms). Teachers in these classes imagine that learning the grammar is equated with learning the language while students are not pleased with grammar. But in communicative approach like the diglot weave technique, the emphasis is on the learning L2 in the context of L1. Most of the traditional classroom activities consist of many drills which emphasis accuracy and consume a lot of time but communicative activities develop communication skills which stress fluency.

Finally in classes conducting mainly through traditional beliefs in learning, teacher are the sole knowledgeable person who decide what and how activities should be done in class, ignoring students' capabilities, interests, needs, etc. but in communicative-based classes, teachers just monitor the class while caring students not spoil the class. Teachers involve students in class, caring their needs, interests, etc. and students are comfortably drawn to the learning. All these points imply that the diglot weave technique is superior to the traditional methods of teaching. But it should be clarified whether there is difference between the diglot weave technique and the traditional methods of teaching vocabulary, in retention. The EFL teacher needs to bear in mind that, in foreign language classroom, the target language input by the teacher is considered as an important factor in language learning, but at the same time the level of students and their need for comprehensible input should be taken into consideration. However in most language classes, children's needs for comprehension appropriate to their level of development are neglected. Decisions about appropriate L1 use depend on the classroom circumstances and cannot be predetermined nor easily generalized from one context to another. The present researcher agrees with Jingxia (2008) that it is hard to set a fixed criterion on the amount of L1 use, but teachers need to consider lesson contents to make a judicious and principled decision on how much L1 will best suit student's needs in different contexts and this way avoid the overuse of the L1. At last this technique is seen as a way to take this need for appropriate input into account.

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