A Modern Approach to Application of Abbreviation and Acronym Strategy for Vocabulary Learning in Second/Foreign Language Learning Procedure

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Abstract

Understanding some key notions of how vocabulary is acquired, can help the learners of the other languages to have better and easier learning, longer retention, and even help the teachers deliver more realistic and effective vocabulary teaching.

The purpose of research described in the current study to investigate on particular approach as a theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy which is an easy, simple, powerful, and applicable strategy for learners of the other languages .The facility of such approach lead to make some of psycho-background in the mentality of the learners to feel the vocabulary learning procedure as an easy procedure; and learn new vocabularies easier and better, and have longer retention. Such approach on abbreviation and acronym strategy can be suggested to be applied in both learning and testing of vocabulary in the condition which is possible to have high correlation to find out the correct results. Important is that such approach can spread the positive view on the learners' vocabulary knowledge, the vocabulary learning procedure and the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge of the learners. The suggestion of such approach is based on the high correlation among many abbreviations and acronyms which was studied. The application of such approach is discussed in the present study.

Keywords: vocabulary learning, vocabulary learning strategies, vocabulary testing, abbreviation and acronym strategy

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1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning in second/foreign language procedure is an important pedagogical area which is under discussion of three circles:

a) The importance of vocabulary learning in second/foreign language learning procedure is emphasized and even focused in many studies (Bensossan, Sim, & Weiss, 1984, Bogaards, 2001,Cook, 1991, Ellis, 1995, Ellis & Beaton , 1993, Gairns & Redman, 1986 , Hu & Nation, 2000,Kojic-Sabo & Lightbrow, 1999,Lewis, 1993, McCarthy, 1986, Meara, 1980, 1987, Morgan & Rinvoluncri, 1986, Nassaj, 2006,Nation, 1993, Pulido, 2004, Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997, Stern, 1992, Swanborn & Glopper, 2002).

b) The importance of effect-degree of vocabulary learning strategies in second/foreign language procedure attracted the attention of many scholars in doing research on it (Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002, Brown, 1994, 2007,Chomat, 1993, 2004, Claxton & Murrell, 1987, Cohen, 1998, Ehraman, 1996, Ehraman, Schmitt, 2000, Ellis & Barbara, 1994, Ellis, Lawson & Hogben, 1996, Fleder & Silverman, 1988, Green & Oxford, 1995, Griffith, 2003, Gu & Johnson, 1996, Laufer, 1989, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003, Macaro, 2001, Nation, 1990, 1994, 2001, Naunan, 1991, O'Malley & Chomat, 1990, Oxford, 1990, 1992, 1996, Oxford & Crokail, 1990,Oxford & Crookall, 1989, Schemeck, 1988, Stern 1975, Wenden & Rubin, 1987, Williams, 2006).
c) The importance of reliability and validity of the test in estimating the learners' vocabulary knowledge is discussed by many scholars (Bachman, 1995, Beebe, 1998, Coady & Huckin, 1997, Cohen, 1990, Ellis, 2004, Horst, 2005, Horst & Meara, 1999, Hughes, 2003, Jiang, 2000, Koda, 2005, Mobarg, 1997, Read, 2000, Webb, 2005).

In number 'c', regarding reliability and validity of testing of learners' vocabulary knowledge in second/foreign language learning procedure, there are different formats of test which are applied to test the vocabulary knowledge based on the type of materials to be tested and the goal of examiner in testing. In this way, the examiner may apply one or more formats in order to determine the particular circle of learners' vocabulary knowledge. Such determination occurs through one of the following three styles of relations:

a) When the teacher and examiner are the same person, such a person can adjust between both formats of the materials to be taught and tested.
b) When the teacher and examiner are not the same person, the examiner must fix the format of test based on the format of teaching and the materials are taught.
c) When the teacher and examiner are not the same person, the teacher must fix the materials and the format of teaching accordingly.

The abbreviation and acronym can be applied as a strategy in correlated conditions of both teaching and testing in order to develop some code as a connection to lead to better learning, and especially longer retention on both short-term and long-term procedures. In such situations, it must be high correlation as much as possible for both types of format of teaching and testing to have correct decision about determination of the grade of the learners' vocabulary knowledge (as it will be discussed regarding abbreviation and acronym strategy in the current study).

2. Statement of nature of theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy

In second/foreign language learning procedure, the concept of knowing abbreviations and acronyms includes one of the three following dominions:

a) Knowing abbreviations and acronyms includes knowing abbreviations and acronyms at the alphabetical level only (alphabetically only).

b) Knowing abbreviations and acronyms includes knowing meaning or explanation of abbreviations and acronyms without knowing what words are abbreviated.

c) Knowing abbreviations and acronyms includes either meaning aspect of abbreviations and acronyms (or explanation), and what words are abbreviated.

Putting emphasis on one of the three mentioned dominions can show the importance and even focus on application that can be applied in both teaching and testing for determined and defined purposes which can be categorized as:

a) In automated and memorizing type of learning, which is lack of process of meaningful learning, knowing abbreviations and acronyms at the alphabetical level is enough.

b) For the purpose of understanding and comprehension only, knowing meaning or explanation of abbreviations and acronyms as a key role is necessary.

c) In meaningful learning, successful and complete communication regarding different situations related to application of abbreviations and acronyms, knowing both of alphabetical level and meaning level and their connection to each others must be processed.

In the process of vocabulary learning, the procedure steps of abbreviations and acronyms can be as:

a) Step one: Knowing at the alphabetical level
b) Step two: Knowing at the meaning level
c) Step three: Knowing at the connection and use level

The first step can be beginning of the development, the second step covers the quality knowledge and the third step is as covered knowledge.

In such situations, the first step is as passive knowledge which the learner has, the second step can be analyzed as both passive and active knowledge depending on the type of consideration to its' process, but the third step is considered as active knowledge.

Therefore, in teaching, the teacher can focus on passive knowledge in the beginning of teaching the procedure of abbreviations and acronyms at the alphabetical level because such passive knowledge can

be the basis. In continuation of the procedure, the meaning and connection facility will occur. In such situations, in testing as well as teaching, the process of testing includes three steps which are testing of passive knowledge at the alphabetical level, testing of meaning level, and testing of connection of alphabetical and meaning levels together regarding the scale of application of materials, level of difficulty of test, and language proficiency level of the learners.

3. Types of abbreviations and acronyms in theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy in English

In the current study, the abbreviations and acronyms are categorized as two main types.

A) Type One

The general norm of abbreviations and acronyms are available as a common aspect in dictionary type sources normally. Such type includes such following states:

a) The acronyms may come from English or non-English words.
″AD″ = ″Anno Domini″ (non-English words)
″DC″ = ″Direct Current″ (English words)

b) The acronyms can include two unrelated concepts of meaning.
″PC″ = ″Police Constable″, ″Personal Computer″

c) The application of slash, point or capital type written form of alphabet can be used regarding from what words come from and what meaning they have.
″C/O″ = ″Care Of″   <=>   ″C.O. ″ = ″Commanding Officer″
″PC ″= ″Percent″   <=>   ″PC″ = ″Personal Computer″
″dec. ″ = ″deceased″   <=>   ″Dec. ″ = ″ December″

d) The acronyms can include two or more words.
″IC″ = ″Integrated Circuit″
″ADD″ = ″Attention Deficit Disorder (s) ″

e) Acronyms can be attached to one word.
″D -Day″

f)The abbreviations can include one or more words of related meaning.
″ch. = ″chapter″
″ht″ = ″height″
″fig. ″ = ″figure″, ″figurative″
″ed. ″= ″edited″, ″edition″, ″editor″

B) Type Two

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Pedagogically assumed abbreviations and acronyms in learning and testing of vocabulary procedures can be developed in order to have easier and better learning and longer retention of meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure for the learners. It is assumed that through the abbreviation and acronym strategy, the teacher aims to code the meaning of one or more words by some extracted alphabets as symbol of some meaning, and through experience the learners acquire skill to decode the meaning which is wanted. Such facility can make some psycho-background in the learners to feel the vocabulary learning easier and better, especially when they are on the low level of language proficiency and the vocabularies to be learnt are on difficulty level.

In two types of abbreviations and acronyms, three situations can be considered:

a) The abbreviations and acronyms can be used from unchanged forms from dictionary type source.

b) The abbreviations and acronyms cannot be found in dictionary type source and they are teacher self-developed abbreviations and acronyms type.

c) The abbreviations and acronyms can be combined, compounded or mixed of both dictionary type source and teacher self-developed types.

The goal in type two of abbreviations and acronyms is teacher self-developed type; but the teacher can use dictionary type source as a facility to use abbreviations and acronyms from this source, or develop some model based on this source in order to develop abbreviations and acronyms. Therefore, the dictionary type source can be helpful and useful instrument to make better development of teacher self-developed type of abbreviations and acronyms.

4. Consideration types of theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy

Shifting the approach can facilitate better and easier learning, and longer retention of vocabulary meaning. In learning of vocabulary, two types of consideration occur:
a) The first type of consideration

The learner should learn the form of vocabulary whether written or spoken (pronunciation) alongside knowing of the meaning of vocabulary.

b) The second type of consideration

The learner can learn the meaning of vocabulary without knowing written or spoken (pronunciation) form of vocabulary.

In later consideration (second type), the focus is on meaning as the most necessary aspect of vocabulary learning to be learnt. However, in the former consideration (first type), the focus is on both meaning aspect and form aspect (whether written or spoken). The scale of emphasis on one aspect can be equal to the other aspect or one aspect is more emphasized than the other aspect, but such emphasis cannot be significant.

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The type of campaign in vocabulary learning procedure in both considerations depends on difficulty level of vocabulary (such difficulty depends on language proficiency level of the learners), frequency use of vocabularies (the frequency is compared with the situations that learners deal with) and off list words (off list words from the point of view of the learners' vocabulary knowledge).

Such campaign can be due to difficulty or even impossibility in vocabulary learning procedure that learners face in order to learn vocabularies. In such situations, from teaching and testing point of view, the teacher and examiner can shift the type of consideration from the first type of consideration to the second type of consideration to have easier and better campaign in the vocabulary learning procedure that leads the learners to be more successful.

The level of difficulty in such campaign can be varied depending on language proficiency level of the learners, the materials to be taught and on the purpose of course design. Some other sub-factors also can interfere alongside the three mentioned factors. Naturally it is clear that the mentioned shift should help the learners to have easier and better learning, and longer retention of meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure. In other words, the focus on the meaning aspect of vocabulary learning through presentation by some abbreviations and acronyms as a code to present the meaning of vocabulary will help the learner to be more successful in the campaign that he has in vocabulary learning. The nature of second type of consideration is based on having high correlation as much as possible between the meaning aspect of vocabularies to be learnt as one parallel aspect and the abbreviations and acronyms of such vocabularies as a code to present the meaning of new or unknown vocabularies as another parallel aspect.

5. The reason for application of abbreviation and acronym strategy

The vocabulary items, vocabulary learning strategies, and evaluation of vocabulary knowledge are three considerable goals among the recent studies regarding vocabulary learning procedure. Not having emphasis and correct application regarding every one of them can be due to wrong effect on the results of the procedure. Researchers, teachers and examiners should find out why and how this happens. In such situations, from teaching and testing point of views, the teacher and examiner, whether he is a same person or not, must fix the type of material format to be taught and the type of format of testing in order to have correlation as much as possible. Hence, changing one of these two formats changes the other one automatically. The important point is that the type of consideration (which was discussed in part four) affect the format of testing and immediately the application of such format in testing will lead the learners to feel that they must have more focus on such type of consideration.

In vocabulary learning procedure, teaching and testing should be considered along side the following process (as five steps) in the current study.

a) Aspect one

It must focus on helpful and useful aspect of vocabulary learning strategies to be suggested to the learners.

b) Aspect two

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The suggested vocabulary learning strategies must have the facility to help the learners to become more successful regarding the vocabulary learning procedure (as it was discussed in part four).

c) Aspect three

It must be development of a special strategy or strategies regarding to help the learners to learn meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure (as it was discussed in part four).

d) Aspect four

Success in meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure must be evaluated as learning and scored as a positive point.

e) Aspect five

In testing based on teaching procedure, it must be high correlation as much as possible in both types of strategies in teaching and testing.

In this way, abbreviation and acronym strategy

a) can be useful and helpful strategy for the learners to have easier and better learning.
b) can facilitate easier and better learning, and longer retention of meaning aspect of vocabulary learning.
c) can show some positive view on vocabulary learning procedure and the learners' vocabulary knowledge regarding meaning aspect of vocabulary.

6. Pedagogical application of abbreviation and acronym strategy

Theoretical explanation can be base for practical procedure, but the application of such theoretical explanation is varied from the nature of what is supposed as theoretical explanation. Knowing and application are two connected sides of the same concept that it must focus and empirically putting attention on how to formulate needed formulation, and how to apply such formulation.

We discussed some theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy. now it is time to know how to have application of such discussion empirically.
The application includes three categories which are elementary level of application, intermediate level of application and advanced level of application.

The elementary level of application includes two sub-categories:

a) Low proficiency level learners,
b) The supposed easy vocabularies to be learnt.

The intermediate level of application includes two sub-categories:

a) Intermediate proficiency level learners,
b) The supposed intermediate vocabularies to be learnt.

The advanced level of application includes two sub-categories:

a) High proficiency level learners,
b) The supposed advanced vocabularies to be learnt.

Teaching and testing of vocabularies as both correlated sides of a particular process can show the level of application of such theoretical format. In this way, the selection of vocabularies to be abbreviated will be decided will depend on the language proficiency level of the learners and the difficulty level of the vocabularies.

Also testing should depend on the language proficiency level of the learners and the difficulty level of vocabularies. Therefore, the circle of selection of vocabulary items to be abbreviated and the type of process for developing abbreviations and acronyms are varied depending on particular factors; however, along side such factors, the teachers and examiners' approach in analysis of such theoretical format can be very useful.

In such situations, development or use of abbreviations and acronyms as a code to present meaning of one or more vocabularies can lead the learners to focus on application of such development.

Let's explain the application of abbreviation and acronym strategy through some examples. If we define that ″Vocabulary″ = ″V″, ″Learning″ = ″L″ and ″Strategy″ = ″S″, we can also show ″Vocabulary Learning Strategy″= ″VLS″. In such cases, it is claimed that ″V″ is as a code for ″Vocabulary″, ″L ″is as a code for ″Learning″, "S" is as a code for "Strategy", and "VLS" is as a code for ″Vocabulary Learning Strategies″. Such codes are presentations of particular   meaning aspect of vocabularies that must be learnt.

Learning of codes is a shortcut of vocabulary learning, and in this way it can be helpful in better and easier learning, and longer retention of vocabulary. The obtained shortcut makes the campaign in the learning of meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure easier.

Or let's consider from another view that a teacher asks learners to learn the meaning aspect of concept of ″Prime Minister″. Clearly the meaning aspect of concept ″Prime Minister″ can be learnt better and easier, and be retained longer through ″PM″ rather than "Prime Minister." Suppose that same learners were asked to find equal vocabularies acronym for ″DC″ in some text which is given to them. If the learners found ″Direct Current″ in the text, they can attach ″Direct Current″ to″ DC″, and learn the meaning aspect of the concept ″Direct Current″ as ″DC″. Obviously such learning can be easier. It must be mentioned that the teacher must help the learners to know how they can be successful in their finding of vocabularies to be abbreviated.

In simple words, a teacher can suggest the application of abbreviation and acronym as a strategy to be used by learners in order to develop facility of better and easier campaign in vocabulary learning procedure. In such strategy, the meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure is more emphasized,

and such emphasis is shown when the results of knowing the meaning aspect is scored as a positive point when even learners do not know the correct written or spoken form of vocabularies. Therefore, the teacher can teach the learners how to code the meaning of vocabularies which are difficult and connect the obtained code with the meaning of vocabulary. Or, in testing, the examiner develops the importance in coding the meaning of vocabulary through asking the learners to decode.

Abbreviation and acronym strategy is an easy applicable strategy for learners to code the meaning of new vocabularies, especially when they find difficulty in learning them.

7. Conclusion

The current study suggests that one dominant topic in the recent studies regarding vocabulary learning is vocabulary learning strategies which include abbreviation and acronym strategy that can be helpful and useful for learners to be more successful in learning the meaning aspect of vocabulary learning procedure. Such strategy is an easy, applicable and powerful instrument for the learners to be help when they deal with difficulty of new or unknown vocabularies.

Although this study, clearly contributes to our understanding of theoretical format of abbreviation and acronym strategy in learning vocabulary in second/foreign language learning procedure, but there is limitation to consider which ones are common in the literature such as different experiments with different language proficiency level learners. Further research is needed to better determine the strength of the association among other strategies regarding such study.

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