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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SOCIAL SCIENCES

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ASOSCONGRESS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

18-19-20 MAYIS/MAY
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İÇİNDEKİLER

LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY BY HYPERGLOSSING AND NARROW READING: READLANG

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ferit KILIÇKAYA

Mehmet Akif Ersoy University

Abstract

Hyperglossing -textual and/or pictorial representations of lexical items is found to be aiding the development of decoding, and narrow reading is a useful strategy for L2 reading pedagogy. Although the research on glossing provides mixed findings regarding the benefits, it is also acknowledged that glossing improves especially incidental vocabulary acquisition. The current study aims to investigate the perceptions of beginner students of English towards learning English vocabulary by narrow reading on *Readlang*, a Web 2.0 tool that allows language learners to translate words and phrases into learners' mother tongue. The participants included 55 Turkish learners of English enrolled in the department of Public Administration at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. The participants were asked to choose five words and/or phrases from a different text on public administration each week during the study, which lasted 12 weeks. The interviews held with the participants at the end of the study indicated that the participants perceived that their reading comprehension improved dramatically since using *Readlang*. The results also indicated that the spaced repetition through flashcards helped them recycle the previously learnt lexical items.

Keywords: Hyperglossing, narrow reading, vocabulary, English, Readlang

ANLAM AÇIKLAMA VE DAR KAPSAMLI OKUMA YÖNTEMİYLE İNGİLİZCE KELİME ÖĞRENİMİ: *READLANG*

Öz

Anlam açıklama yönteminin, kelimelerin metinsel ve/veya resimsel sunumları, kelimelerin çözümlenme sürecinde etkili olduğu ve dar kapsamlı okumanın ikinci dil okuma pedagojisinde yararlı bir teknik olduğu belirlenmiştir. Anlam açıklama üzerine yapılan araştırmalarının bu konuda farklı sonuçlar vermesine rağmen, anlam açıklama yönteminin özellikle tesadüfi kelime öğrenmeyi olumlu yönde geliştirdiği kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışma, başlangıç seviyesinde İngilizce öğrencilerinin, dar kapsamlı okuma çerçevesinde kelimelerin ve söz öbeklerinin Türkçe anlam açıklamalarını öğrenmelerini sağlayan ve Web 2.0 uygulaması olan *Readlang* uygulamasına yönelik görüşlerini incelemektedir. Çalışmaya, Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Kamu Yönetimi programında öğrenim gören 55 öğrenci katılmıştır. Katılımcılar 12 hafta süren çalışma sırasında kamu yönetimiyle ilgili her hafta verilen farklı bir metinden beş kelime veya söz öbeği seçmeleri istenmiştir. Çalışma sonunda katılımcılarla gerçekleştirilen yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin sonucunda, katılımcılar *Readlang* uygulamasının okuduğunu

anlama becerisini geliştirdiğini ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca sonuçlar, bilgi kartları vasıtasıyla yapılan aralıklı tekrarın, öğrenilen kelimeleri tekrar etmede faydalı olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anlam açıklaması, dar kapsamlı okuma, kelime bilgisi, İngilizce, Readlang

Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills to be improved in any language since it is widely acknowledged that the more learners read, the more they will face high frequency words as well as learn content knowledge in the text they are reading. Thus, narrow reading in which learners read around the same topic for some time receives attention as it allows both increasing the change of vocabulary on the same topic for several times and recycling the previously learned lexical items. However, it may not be possible for each student to notice the important and frequent words through repeated exposure. Strategies such as guessing from the context may not work, as some of them may appear hard work for learners.

Narrow Reading

Narrow reading can be defined as reading thematically-related texts as well as the books or texts written by the same author (Krashen, 2004; Bryan, 2011; Krashen, 2013). The examples include a reader doing the readings on the global warming or the writings by the same author. In this way, it is suggested that readers will be exposed to the same structures as well as the vocabulary, especially jargon, frequently used in that topics. This is especially useful learners enrolled in a study program willing to learn the vocabulary as well as the ideas frequently used in their field of study. Several studies (e.g. Kang, 2015) indicated that when learners do reading on thematically related texts, they are more likely to understand the meanings and to use more appropriate words, which helps them improve their receptive vocabulary knowledge.

Technology, hyperglossing, and vocabulary teaching

Compared to the learning and teaching practices in the past (Kılıçkaya & Krajka, 2010), language learners have more opportunities to learn a target language due to the various technological advances as well as new ways of learning. It goes without saying that language learning and technology have been intertwined (Chun, Smith, & Kern, 2016). This is especially valid for learning how to read in another language since technology provides easy access to written materials in a variety of channels. Vocabulary knowledge is believed to be playing an important role in reading comprehension. Thus, learners are provided with different ways and techniques that benefit from technology to improve their vocabulary knowledge. The technological tools available range from text-to-speech technology to teach pronunciation (Kılıçkaya, 2011), concordance-based electronic glosses (Lee, Warschauer, & Lee, 2017) to hyperglossing. Hyperglossing is basically providing the meaning of a word in a text in an electronic environment, and this meaning can be provided in a variety of ways that benefit from audio and video files (AbuSeileek, 2011).

The studies conducted on hyperglossing yield positive results regarding vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. AbuSeileek (2011), for example, analyzed the effect of presenting vocabulary annotated in hypermedia environment. The participants of the study included seventy-eight EFL learners that read and summarized texts in which lexical items were presented glossed words at different places in the text. The results of the study indicated that the participants improved text comprehension and vocabulary when the words in the texts were

glossed right after the word. Another study conducted by Dizon and Tang (2017) compared the efficiency of digital and paper flashcards in learning receptive and productive lexical items in English. Although no significant difference was found to exist between the two groups studying through these two different ways of using flashcards, the participants in the experimental group voiced more positive attitudes towards using digital flashcards, stressing the ease of use. Conducted on the effects of providing concordance lines with definitions as glossary information, the study carried out by Lee, Warschauer, and Lee (2017) have found that when students are presented with concordance lines in which the unknown word appears paired with the confirmation of the meaning of the word glossed, they are more successful at meaning-recall and improving receptive vocabulary. Regarding the use of technology in vocabulary instruction, Deveci's (2017) study included various ways of teaching lexical items such as vocabulary lists created by the lecturer, quizzes prepared by other students, and vocabulary journal. The results indicated that the activities that benefited from using technology such as vocabulary games and online vocabulary exercises appeared to be at the bottom of the students' favorite lists. The results of the study indicate that the students preferred more traditional techniques or activities as opposed to the ones integrating technology, which can be attributed to the fact that the traditional activities appeal more to the students as they comply with their previous learning experiences. Another reason that was underscored in the study was related to the time and efforts required to learn and to get used to how technological tools work before using them in learning vocabulary. While it goes without saying that any kind of activity, be it a paper-based or online, requires practice and time to learn its basic, the key point is to select the ones that do not require much from learners as well as teachers.

Purpose of the study

There is a variety of studies investing the effects of technology on vocabulary learning; however, to the best knowledge of the author, there is not any study conducted to integrate narrow reading and hyperglossing to improve L2 vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the perceptions of beginner students of English towards learning English vocabulary by narrow reading on *Readlang*, a Web 2.0 tool that allows language learners to translate words and phrases into learners" mother tongue.

Methodology

Research context and participants

The participants of the study included 55 Turkish learners of English (35 female and 20 male undergraduate students) enrolled a first-year class entitled 'English II' at the department of Public Administration at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. The class aims to develop and improve students' English in daily contexts at the beginner level.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The data collection adopted a qualitative approach considering the aim of the study. The data were collected through the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants based on their views on integrating narrow reading and hyperglossing through *Readlang*. Having agreed to participate in the study, the students were asked to choose five words and/or phrases from

each text on public administration each week during the study, which lasted 12 weeks. These twelve texts were selected from the website, Breaking News English (http://breakingnewsenglish.com/), a website dedicated to creating lesson plans on the current news for students at varying levels. A selected text (185 words on average) was provided to the participants through a blog accessible online each week, and the participants were asked and encouraged to use *Readlang* (Figure 1) while reading the text for comprehension and determining the words/phrases to learn and practice. The participants were also asked to create flashcards (Figure 2) using the website for further practice.
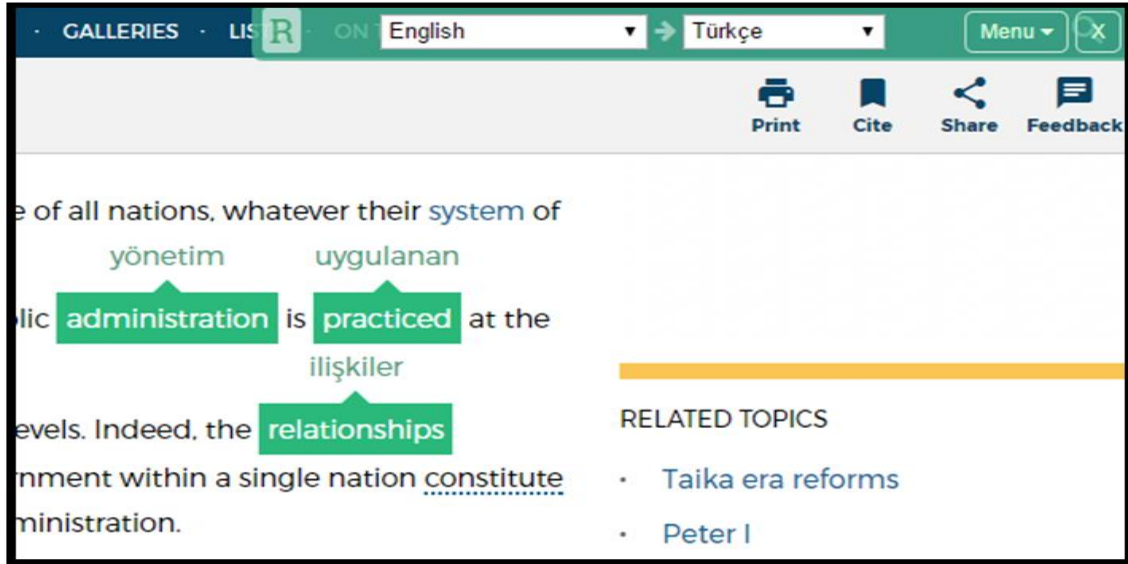

Figure 1. A screenshot of an example reading text hyperglossed on *Readlang*
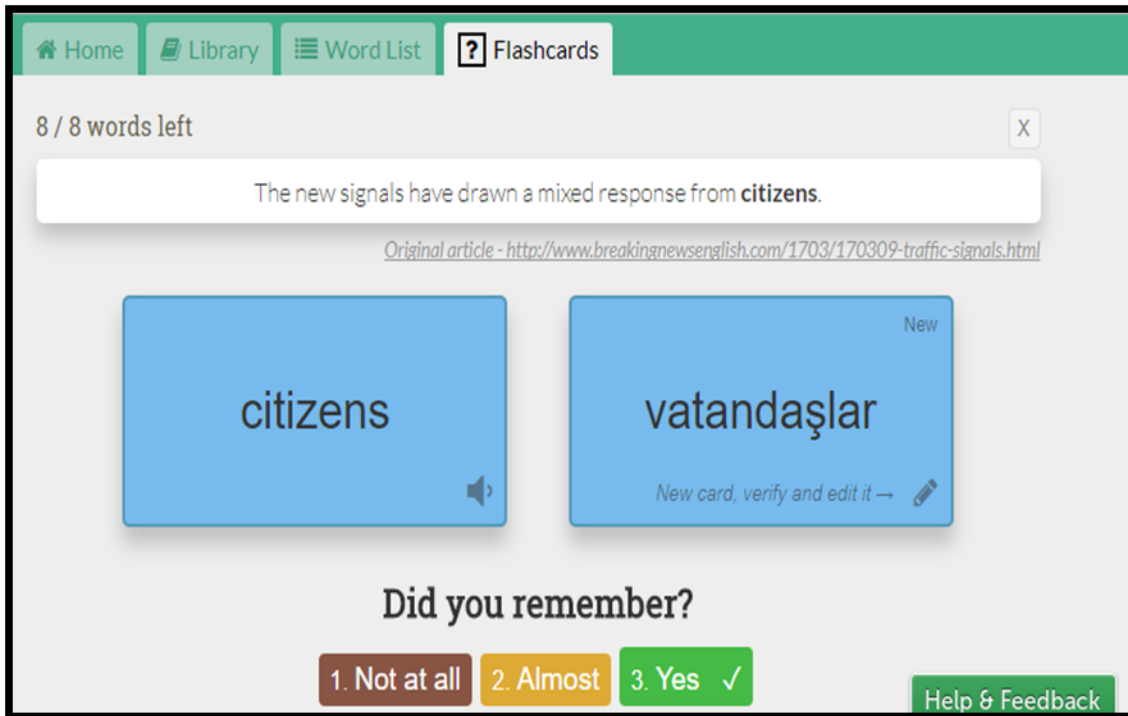

Figure 2. A screenshot of flashcard created via *Readlang*

After the study was completed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 randomly selected participants. The interviews were conducted in the participants' mother tongue (Turkish) in the researcher's office and lasted 8 minutes on average. The interviews included questions regarding the process of reading texts through *Readlang*, the use of hyperglossing as well as other issues that emerged during the study. The data collected through the interviews were subject to content analysis to determine the themes and patterns.

Findings and Discussion

The themes that emerged in the analysis of the responses provided during the content analysis and the illustrative selective responses (translated from Turkish to English) have been provided in Table 1. The quotations have been selected to illustrate the most representative of the findings of the study.

Looking up words easily. The responses provided regarding the main benefit of using *Readlang* while doing the narrow readings underscore the feature of the website, glossing any word in the text. *Readlang* provides text-based glosses in the mother tongue or other available languages. Whenever a participant clicked on a word in the target language, the definition of this word appeared in the mother tongue (Turkish), which was viewed favorably the participants.

Table 1. Selected responses and themes

Theme / Codes	Selected response
Looking up words easily	*Trying to figure out the meanings of unknown words was a lengthy process for me. While I was reading something in English, I hated to check a dictionary. Now I do not have to look up words. It is so easy and enjoyable.*
Improved reading comprehension	*I feel that I improved my reading. I did not read much in English because there were many words that I did not know. But when I used Readlang, it was easy to learn the meaning, which led me to read and understand more.*
Spaced repetition through flashcards	*It is difficult to remember words after certain time. But I used the flashcards created on Readlang easily and studied them. I think this helped me a lot not to forget the words that I learnt.*
Improved receptive vocabulary knowledge	*After six weeks, I noticed that I remember the words and their meanings. I cannot use them in a sentence, but at least I know their meanings.*
Learning frequently used words on a topic (narrow reading)	*I was reading different texts but on similar topics. The readings were related to our field of study and I learnt many words in my field. I think this is better than reading different texts.*
Friendly website (Readlang)	*The website is very easy. I just click on the words, and the meanings appear though it is limited to 10 words. I also use it on my mobile phone and it works.*

Improved reading comprehension. Almost all of the participants interviewed (n= 14) expressed that they improved reading comprehension. This might be attributed to the fact that the participants read the texts with similar themes and recycled the words as well as the ideas presented in the previous texts. This finding corroborates the findings of the studies conducted by Kang (2015) and AbuSeileek (2011). However, a word of caution is due here. Since this finding is based on the participants' own responses, it may not be the case. Therefore, further research is needed regarding this point.

Spaced repetition through flashcards. As the great majority of the participants (n= 13) indicated, *Readlang* helped the participants to practice the previously looked-up words as well as the definitions. During the study, the participants were asked to select five words and/or phrases and based on the selected ones, *Readlang* prepared the flashcards for the participants to practice based on a spaced repetition algorithm. This finding is consistent with that of Dizon and Tang (2017), indicating that the participants have more positive attitudes using digital flashcards while learning L2 vocabulary.

Improved receptive vocabulary knowledge. The participants (n= 10) expressed that they improved their vocabulary knowledge; however, this improvement was determined to be more related to receptive vocabulary, which is consistent with that of Kang (2015). In other words, based on the responses, the participants could not produce these words but recognize them in a given text. This is actually what is expected due to the nature of the website and the way the participants practiced reading and vocabulary learning activities. Therefore, the participants can be encouraged to transform the vocabulary from receptive to productive through activities that focus on speaking and writing.

Learning frequently used words on a topic (narrow reading). As the students read twelve texts around the similar topics in their field of study, they were exposed to many instances of similar structures as well as words. Therefore, all the participants interviewed stressed that it was one of the most enjoyable reading experience.

Friendly website (Readlang). All the participants indicated that *Readlang* was user-friendly, and they managed to interact with the website and the plug-in easily while doing the readings and using the flashcards generated. Moreover, the participants also stated that they were able to use the plug-in of the website on their mobile phones, though on a specific browser. However, the participants noted that the website allowed only ten phrases a day in the free version. Several participants also pointed out that several times the plug-in froze and had to close the browser and run it again to make the plug-in work.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to investigate the views of beginner students of English towards learning English vocabulary by narrow reading on *Readlang*, which allows language learners to translate words and phrases into learners' mother tongue through glossing and creating flashcards. The overall findings from this small study support the use of online glossing website, creating flashcards and doing narrow reading. Based on the findings, the following suggestions can be put forward:

- Learning vocabulary can be improved through encouraging learners to read on similar topics, especially in their field of study and/or interest. In this way, they can be exposed to more

frequently used structures and words, which may improve their reading comprehension and enable them to take pleasure.

▪ Recycling previously studied and/or learnt lexical items can be enhanced through re-reading on a regular basis (spaced repletion) using websites such as *Readlang*. In this respect, vocabulary lists and flashcards presented in contexts can be of great help.

▪ As Deveci's (2017) study has indicated, when teachers are willing to infuse technological tools into the classroom, they should make sure that the tool selected should not a burden for students by requiring efforts and time.

Limitations and further research directions

The current study suffers from the limited number of participants as well as the limited responses provided during the interviews. Since the findings are only based on the responses provided, further research can triangulate the data obtained though longitudinal as well as experimental studies to better understand whether the processes applied in this study reveal improved reading comprehension.

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