

# International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



## Vocabulary Acquisition among Taiwanese Learners: A Comparison of the Effects of Input Presented in Word Lists and in the Context of Literature

[PP: 31-44]

**Feng-Ru Chang**

The University of Queensland  
Brisbane, Australia

### ABSTRACT

Under the influence of globalization through cultural and technological exchange, English viewed as a medium of international communication enjoys its privileged status around the world. In Taiwan, English is the only foreign language tested in the entrance examinations and English is the most popular foreign language which Taiwanese people desire to master. However, many learners in Taiwan agree the fundamental and crucial role vocabulary plays in the language learning, but they think learning vocabulary is very difficult under the current method of instruction based on the use of word lists. This study aims to investigate the learning outcomes of presenting vocabulary in contexts, specifically in the contexts of literature and imaginative texts, and compare them with the use of word lists only. In the present research, two experiments were designed to investigate Taiwanese learners' attitudes and perceptions concerning the way in which vocabulary is presented and compare their opinions about the effect of the use of word lists and literature in the foreign language classroom respectively. Questionnaires were used in both of these two experiments. The results indicated that most of the learners' opinions agreed that the delayed presentation of words is not helpful for them in vocabulary learning as well as showed that the use of literature in the foreign language classroom is perceived as a productive and valuable resource for vocabulary learning. Implications were drawn concerning the design of textbooks used in Taiwan and also for curriculum and methodological innovation.

**Keywords:** *Simultaneous presentation, Delayed presentation, Guessing strategy, Vocabulary learning, Learners' perception*

### ARTICLE INFO

The paper received on: **20/10/2015**, Reviewed on: **17/01/2016**, Accepted after revisions on: **06/02/2016**

### Suggested citation:

Chang, F. (2016). Vocabulary Acquisition Among Taiwanese Learners: A Comparison of the Effects of Input Presented in Word Lists and in the Context of Literature. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 4(1), 31-44. Retrieved from <http://www.eltjournal.org>

### 1. Introduction

Under the influence of globalization through cultural and technological exchange, English viewed as a medium of international communication (Crystal 2003)

enjoys its privileged status. Despite its global status, the mastery of English is also related to an individual's development (Lu 2011) and associated with national competitiveness (Lin 2012). In response to



the important status and function of English, Taiwan government announced many English education policies in order to improve Taiwanese people's English competence and English is viewed as the most popular foreign language that Taiwanese people desire to master (Tsou 2013). With regard to language acquisition, it is generally agreed that lexis plays a crucial, essential and central role in the process of language learning. West (1930) noted that the primary thing in learning a language is the acquisition of vocabulary and practice in using it (p.514). West's claim is also supported by Zimmerman (1997a) who considered that vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner (p.5). Nation (1990), similarly, suggested that giving attention to vocabulary is unavoidable and states that vocabulary is seen as a very important element in language learning by both researchers and students (p. 2).

Learning vocabulary is considered to be the most crucial and important key point in mastering a language. However, Shen (2003) pointed out that when it comes to learning a foreign language, many students think that learning vocabulary is fundamental, important, but difficult. Most of the English learners in Taiwan voiced that it is difficult to learn vocabulary. Reasons why Taiwanese English learners feel that learning vocabulary is an area of concern and difficulty are as follows: the differences in the writing system of learners' first language and target language, the organization of vocabulary in textbooks, the traditional teaching method used in vocabulary instruction, and the assessment methods within the educational system in Taiwan. Learning English in Taiwan has long been a compulsory part of the

curriculum in the secondary and tertiary education, including junior, senior high school and the first year of Freshman English. Additionally, in Taiwan, English is the only foreign language tested in the entrance examinations, Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students and College Entrance Examination (Chen and Tsai 2012). Learners' reading comprehension and writing ability are the primary concern of these entrance examinations, which further implies the crucial role vocabulary plays in Taiwan English education system due to the close connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. (Zhang and Annual 2008). In order to improve English competency of Taiwanese people, some educational policies have been made, but there is no obvious change in the presentation of words in textbooks used in Taiwan. Words are still arranged in word lists, teachers still adopt the traditional method to lead learners to learn vocabulary and students still feel it difficult to learn vocabulary.

Due to the crucial and central role that vocabulary plays in the language learning process and the difficulties Taiwanese learners suffer from, this study aimed to investigate the learning outcomes of presenting vocabulary in contexts, specifically in the contexts of literature and imaginative texts, and compare it with the use of word lists only. Two experiments were designed to investigate Taiwanese learners' attitudes and perceptions concerning the way in which vocabulary is presented and compare their opinions about the effect of the use of word lists and literature in the foreign language classroom respectively.

## [2. Literature Review](#)

### *2.1 The relationship between reading and vocabulary learning*

The relationship between reading and vocabulary learning is very close and they seem to have a reciprocal impact on each other. As Grabe and Stoller (1997) pointed out, reading can develop vocabulary knowledge and then vocabulary knowledge can support reading improvement. In addition, reading is regarded as an effective way to assist learners to learn vocabulary. Krashen (1989, 1991, 1993a, 1993b) suggested that reading is the most helpful and effective method to acquire new words. In Zimmerman's study (1997 b), he also indicated that 'reading is one way that learners gain lexical knowledge' (p.123).

### *2.2 The connection with reading and incidental vocabulary acquisition*

Second and foreign language learners are believed to have to acquire their first few thousand words intentionally since beginner learners lack enough proficiency in the target language to just pick up the meanings of new words (Alavi and Keyvanshekouh 2012). Moreover, with the basic knowledge of the target language, learners' vocabulary size is developed through some unconscious ways, such as reading activities. Nation (1997) and Shokouhi (2009) pointed out the close relationship between reading and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Nation (1997) also emphasized that teachers can help promote their students' incidental vocabulary learning by involving the learners in tasks such as listening or reading. Shokouhi (2009) also claimed that learners acquired vocabulary incidentally in other activities- especially those related to reading, intensive or extensive- during the later learning process.

### *2.3 The presentation of vocabulary*

Despite the association between reading and vocabulary learning, the presentation of words also influences effects of vocabulary learning. Though word lists are one of the most common ways to arrange words in books, some researchers still argue the effects of the use of words lists. Nation (1982) concluded in his study that word lists are effective for learning a great deal of vocabulary in a short time. However, Schouten-van Parreren (1989) gave some criticisms of providing the following arguments against presenting lists of isolated words to learners.

- (1) Words which are presented as isolated elements provide no support and no cognitive hold for learners. They are quickly forgotten again though there is some considerable learning effort.
- (2) If the words are presented in word lists either in thematically or in alphabetically order, learners will often suffer from interference.
- (3) In most cases, the meaning of a word is partly defined by the context. However, isolated words do not present a linguistic reality.
- (4) Despite a linguistic reality, isolated words or words in isolated sentences do not provide a psychological reality because a message is not carried by them. For this reason they cannot evoke emotions or involvement in the learner, a factor which plays an often underestimated, but yet important part in long-term acquisition. (Schouten-van Parreren 1989)

She continued to argue that texts, in contrast, present a linguistic and psychological reality for learners to learn vocabulary and words presented in the context of a text can provide support and reduce the interference caused by separating words from the context (Hedge 2000). Based on Schouten-van Parreren's research, it seems that the best way to learn words is to present them in the context of a text rather than isolate them in word lists. However, it could also be argued that it is not totally negative to learn vocabulary



from word lists since in fact we know that words taught in isolation are retained very well indeed both in large quantities and over long period of time (Nation 1982: 22). Besides, it will be meaningless for learners to learn vocabulary by using the context of a text if the context itself is not rich enough with clues to enable them to guess (Schmitt and McCarthy 1997) and it is not selected carefully to meet learners' language level.

With respect to the arrangement of vocabulary in the textbooks, looking back at early studies, Lado, Baldwin and Lobo's research (1967) suggested that words accompanied with the meanings in the learners' first language are consistently superior for learners to learn them than those presented through the foreign language alone by the use of a synonym or definition. As Mishima (1967) pointed out, at the beginning stages of learning new words, translations will be more meaningful and helpful for learners because they can provide more association for them. In addition to the accompanying with the translation in learners' first language, how to present the translation with the words also affects the effects of vocabulary learning. The 'simultaneous presentation' means that the word and its meaning are presented simultaneously to the readers, and the 'delay presentation' means that the word and its meaning will not be presented at the same time to the readers (Nation 1982).

According to some studies, they indicated that 'if there is a delay between the presentation of a word form and its meaning, learners have an opportunity to make effort to guess the meaning, and presumably this extra effort will result in faster and longer retained learning' (Nation 1982:21). In other words, learners will have more chances to use the clues from the

context of the text to help themselves guess the meanings of unknown words and it can make their learning faster and help them retain words longer. But the guessing can only be successful if the foreign word form gives learners a good clue to its meaning, such as the foreign and native words are cognates or the word form and its translation have been previously seen together (Nation 1982). Nation's study (1982) implied that the guessing involved in the use of delayed presentation of words will not be effective and successful for learners in Taiwan because of the completely different writing systems of Chinese and English and lack of shared cognates.

Under the assumption concluded by Nation (1982) mentioned above, it is not reasonable to include the delayed presentation of words in textbooks used in Taiwan for learners whose first language shares no common features with the target language. Furthermore, words in Taiwanese teaching materials are presented by using 'delayed presentation' in which the words are accompanied with only the pronunciations but no Chinese translations and words with Chinese translations are provided in the vocabulary index at the end of the textbook. I think the presentation of words in textbooks used in countries of which first language shares almost nothing with English affects the learning outcomes of learners a lot. Hence, I would like to find out the effects of the delayed presentation of words used in Taiwanese textbooks and argue that the use of delayed presentation of words has limited effects on learners' vocabulary learning. Therefore, Experiment 1 of this study intended to investigate Taiwanese learners' attitudes towards the use of the delayed and simultaneous presentation of words in reading

comprehension and investigate whether they can infer the meanings of unfamiliar words under the delayed presentation methodology.

#### 2.4 Use literature in ESL/EFL

In addition to the organization of vocabulary, there are numbers of other factors affecting the acquisition of vocabulary learning. Hedge divided these numerous factors into three areas, features of input, the relationship between input and storage, and cultural factors (Hedge 2000). How to overcome the difficulties caused by these factors is always a significant part in the field of learning and teaching language. Moreover, the use of literature in the second language classroom can not only compensate these factors affecting learners' vocabulary learning but also foster the development of vocabulary acquisition. The value, importance and various merits of using literature in the second language classroom are described below.

Much research has suggested that literature does indeed have a place in the ESL classroom (McKay 1982). First of all, as Povey (1972) indicated, 'literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of *extensive and subtle vocabulary usage*, and the complex and exact syntax' (p.187). Literature can be viewed as a starting point to develop learners' entire language skills.

Secondly, 'literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use' because 'literature presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined and language used in literature illustrates a particular register or dialect which is embedded within a social context which provides a basis for students to determine why a particular form is used' (McKay

1982:530). In other words, literature can not only expand students' linguistic knowledge but also provide clear explanation about how to use the language correctly and appropriately, which can assist learners to develop both the level of *usage* and the level of *use* of linguistic knowledge (Widdowson 1978:3). Learners can not only develop the knowledge of linguistic rules but also know how to use them accurately and properly.

Thirdly, literature also supplies the affective, attitudinal and experiential factors which will motivate learners to read and their reading proficiency will be fostered (McKay 1982), which further indicates that the use of literature can increase learners' motivation in language learning. Concerning the merits of the use of literature in language learning, the other part of this study aims to explore Taiwanese learners' perception to the advantages of using literary works in the vocabulary learning process.

#### 2.5 Research Questions

Assuming that the contexts of texts provide more useful information for learners to use guessing strategies well to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words, then it certainly would follow that learners find it difficult to learn words presented in word lists. This study investigated learners' opinions on the learning outcomes of presenting vocabulary in the contexts of literary texts, specifically, in the contexts of literature and imaginative texts, and made a comparison with the traditional method, the use of word lists only. Four research questions were addressed below.

- (1) Does the delayed presentation of words accompanying the reading text help learners to deal with the meanings of the unknown words?
- (2) Which method, word lists or textural contexts, helps Taiwanese students learn vocabulary more effectively?



- (3) Based on carefully selected texts, are the textural contexts of texts helpful for Taiwanese learners at the beginning level to successfully use guessing strategies to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words?
- (4) Word lists or contexts: which one is more useful for learners in Taiwan to develop receptive or productive vocabulary knowledge?

### **3. Methodology**

A survey aiming to explore Taiwanese English learners' attitudes towards the influence of different presentations of words and the use of literature on vocabulary learning was conducted at a public junior high school in Tainan, Taiwan. Two experiments of this study, Experiment 1 and Experiment 2, were designed in order to answer the four research questions which have been identified above. The data were collected through the use of questionnaires.

#### **3.1 Description and selection of subjects**

The purpose of Experiment 1 was to explore Taiwanese English learners' attitudes towards the influence of the different presentations of words, with Chinese translation or pronunciation only, on the reading comprehension and the effect of the delayed presentation of words in vocabulary guessing. The participants of Experiment 1 were limited to learners who have learned English in Taiwan and have been instructed under the use of the textbooks in which words are arranged by delayed presentation. There were eighty participants in Experiment 1.

My investigation is a response to Nation's suggestion that the guessing strategy could only be applied to a group of students in possession of at least two or three thousand vocabulary items (Nation 1990), which emphasizes that learners can successfully guess the meanings of

unfamiliar words in unsimplified texts only when the coverage is comparatively high.

Thus in Liu and Nation's study (1985), they indicated that learners need a vocabulary of around 3,000 words providing coverage of at least 95 per cent of a text before they can learn from context with unsimplified text effectively. Since the aim of Experiment 2 was to investigate if learners whose English competence is at the beginner level (in possession of fewer than two or three thousand vocabulary words) can use the guessing strategy effectively in reading a carefully selected simplified literary text, participants were limited to students who have not passed the elementary level of GEPT (General English Proficiency Test: a language test developed to test people's English language proficiency). According to the GEPT word lists for elementary level announced by LTTC (2003), learners need to acquire at least 2263 words to pass the elementary level of GEPT. Hence, thirty-one students who have not passed the elementary level of GEPT were chosen to participate in Experiment 2.

#### **3.2 The procedure of this research**

In Experiment 1, one text abstracted from a textbook used in Taiwan was used to investigate Taiwanese English learners' opinions about the presentation of vocabulary accompanying the reading text in the reading comprehension and the relation between the presentation of vocabulary and vocabulary learning. Two versions of the same text were showed to the participants to explore English learners' opinions on the connection between the ways how vocabulary is presented and the efficiency of vocabulary learning. Vocabulary with Chinese interpretation, Taiwanese learners' first language, was presented with the text together

(simultaneous presentation) in one version while vocabulary with English spellings and phonetic symbols was presented in the other version (delayed presentation).

The aim of Experiment 2 was to investigate the possibility of whether Taiwanese learners at the beginning level can apply the guessing strategy effectively and successfully to improve vocabulary learning under the assistance of a carefully selected simplified literary text. In the beginning, one literary text was distributed to students to read individually and no word list was provided with it. After that, students were requested to complete the questionnaire 2 comparing the traditional way of using word lists to learn vocabulary, and the other approach of vocabulary learning, namely making use of the context of a literary text.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The results of the questionnaire 1 and 2 were presented below under two broad themes of the presentation of vocabulary and the benefits of acquiring vocabulary in the literary texts. The results were summarized as following. Moreover, this study was designed to be primarily descriptive, so the numerical data from the questionnaire were not intended to be strictly quantitative and they were presented by percentage.

*Table 1: Learners' perception on the presentation of vocabulary.*

Question	Agree/ disagree	Number of students (percentage)
The presentation of words with Chinese translation is much helpful for me to comprehend the reading text better than that with no Chinese translation.	Agree	90%
I can usually guess the meanings of unknown words by the presentation of words with no Chinese translation.	Disagree	80.50%
I can usually use the pronunciation of the word without Chinese translation to guess the meaning of it successfully.	Disagree	66.25%
I can usually use the written form of a word without Chinese translation to guess the meaning of it successfully.	Disagree	88.75%

Based on the results presented in Table 1, Taiwanese learners depended heavily on

the Chinese translations provided in both the reading comprehension and vocabulary lists to comprehend the meanings of new words. They voiced that it is difficult and often impossible for them to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words successfully only based on the pronunciations and written forms provided. Students' perception gained in this questionnaire also corresponded to what Nation (1982) proposed in his research: the delayed presentation of words accompanying the reading text is not helpful for learners whose first language shares nearly nothing with the target language to deal with the meanings of the unknown words and the first research question was answered based on this finding. Additionally, most of the participants agreed that they cannot benefit from the way in which words are presented solely by pronunciation, which indicated that the way by which vocabulary is presented in Taiwanese textbooks is not helpful for learners.

*Table 2: Learners' opinions towards the relationship between reading and vocabulary and the role of vocabulary in language learning.*

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (percentage)
It is fundamental to learn vocabulary when learning a foreign language.	Agree	72%
Learning vocabulary is the most important part in language learning.	Agree	91%
Vocabulary knowledge helps me to understand the reading text.	Agree	83%
Reading is beneficial for me to learn vocabulary.	Agree	68%
Extensive reading helps me to expand my vocabulary size.	Agree	71%
The meanings of a considerable amount of words can be picked up through reading.	Agree	63%

The results of the questions on exploring learners' opinions towards the role of vocabulary in language learning showed that they generally agreed vocabulary plays a crucial, fundamental, and essential role in reading comprehension. Moreover, in response to the relationship between reading and vocabulary learning, more than half of the



participants responded that reading is helpful for them to learn vocabulary.

*Table 3: Learners' opinions about learning vocabulary through word lists and context of the reading text.*

Question	Agree /Disagree	Number of students (percentage)
The best way to learn vocabulary is to memorize words in the word lists	Disagree	83%
I can learn a number of words in a short time and retain them well through word lists.	Agree	76%
There is no semantic relationship between words listed in word lists and it will increase the difficulties in vocabulary learning.	Agree	89%
Words presented in thematically ordered word lists help me to learn them effectively.	Agree	54%
Word lists with Chinese translation are more useful and helpful to foster the speed of vocabulary learning than those with English definition.	Agree	77%
I think one word has only one corresponding meaning as it is presented in the word list.	Disagree	59%
I can use the words learned from the word lists appropriately and successfully to write an English essay.	Agree	48%
I can only recall the meanings of the words I learned from the word lists.	Disagree	63%
Guessing the meanings of words in context is the best way to learn vocabulary.	Agree	74%
Repetition of a word in the context can help me to remember the word.	Agree	88%
The context of the reading text with a lot of clues can help me to guess the meanings of unknown words and learn them.	Agree	79%
The context of the literary text reduces the vocabulary learning problems caused by cultural differences.	Agree	61%
It is much more effective to learn vocabulary by using the context of the reading text rather than just following the word list given.	Agree	85%
Learning words through the context of the text is more interesting, enjoyable, and motivating than following word lists.	Agree	86%
Getting involved in the reading context helps to learn vocabulary effectively and successfully.	Agree	72%
The emotional responses to the context of the text can help me to remember the word easily.	Agree	66%
I can only recall the meanings of the words I learned from the context of the text.	Disagree	78%
I can use the words I learned from the context of the text appropriately and successfully, such as in a writing or speaking class.	Agree	67%
I agree that I can still use the guessing strategy to guess the meanings of unknown words with the assistance of the context of the text even though my vocabulary size is limited	Agree	82%

The purpose of section two of the questionnaire 2 was to investigate the participants' opinions towards the use of word lists and literary contexts in

vocabulary learning. According to the analysis from questions 7 to 14, most of the subjects still agreed that there are many advantages of using word lists to improve vocabulary learning even though they did not agree that memorizing words presented in the word lists is the best way to learn vocabulary. In terms of the result of question 16, participants responded that they benefitted from the repetition of vocabulary in the text. The contexts of literary texts can create more repetition of words than word lists. The repetition indeed improves learners' vocabulary learning as what Waring and Takaki (2003) and Brown, Waring and Donekaewbua (2008) claimed in their research that the retention might not last longer than 3 months if a word does not been met ten to fifteen times or more.

Moreover, based on their responses to questions 8, 13, and 14, they also agreed that word lists are indeed beneficial for learners to expand their vocabulary size in some ways. For example, in terms of the result of question 8, nearly two thirds of them voiced that they can learn a number of words in a short time and retain them well, which indicated that learners, especially beginners, can still benefit from the use of word lists. Also, from the results of questions 13 and 14, subjects voiced that the use of word lists is beneficial to develop both receptive and productive knowledge.

More participants responded that they can better use a word which is learned through the context of the literary text than through the use of word lists based on comparing the results of questions 13 and 24. The comparison also illustrated that most learners agreed that it would be more effective to encourage the development of both receptive and productive knowledge by the use of literary contexts rather than word lists, which further supports the

advantages of the use of literature in the second and foreign language classroom discussed earlier. In short, based on the results of questions from 7 to 14, participants did agree on the values of the use of word lists as Nation's claim (1982): word lists are useful for beginners to expand their vocabulary size in a short time and retain them well, but they still pointed out that word lists are not the best way to learn vocabulary. Moreover, participants responded that the use of literary texts can assist them to learn vocabulary in a more interesting, enjoyable, effective, and motivating way because they can get involved in the literary text, make responses to it and reduce the burden caused by cultural differences, which decreases the difficulty in vocabulary learning.

#### 4.1 Findings

Based on the results gained from the questionnaires, the participants indicated that the effect of the delayed presentation of words accompanying the reading text is very limited for learners whose native language shares almost nothing with English. This finding corresponds to Nation's (1982) claim that the delayed presentation of words is not helpful for learners whose first language has nothing in common with the target language as well as the first research question of this study was also answered.

According to the result of question 19, the second research question was answered and from learners' perspectives, it is more effective to learn vocabulary by the use of the context of a reading text instead of following word lists. Moreover, they suggested that the textual contexts can assist them to learn vocabulary in a more interesting, enjoyable, effective, and motivating way in terms of getting involved in the texts and having emotional responses

to the contexts, which corresponds to the claims of previous research: personal involvement and emotional responses to the texts can facilitate the development of vocabulary learning (Maley 1989; Carter and Long 1991; Hedge 2000). However, the advantages of the use of literary contexts do not imply the use of word lists is completely worthless. For example, the responses to questions 8, 13, and 14 indicated that the use of word lists is still helpful for learners to expand their vocabulary size in a short time, which corresponds to Nation's (1982) suggestion that word lists are effective for learning a great deal of vocabulary in a short time. As well, the participants also pointed out that they can retain the words they learn from word lists well, which is against Schouten-van Parreren's (1989) criticism of word lists: words presented as isolated elements without any 'cognitive hold' are quickly forgotten. Though the participants agreed that they can benefit from the use of word lists, they did not agree that memorizing words presented in the word lists is the best way to learn vocabulary.

In terms of the possibility of applying the guessing strategy, the result of question 25 suggested that the participants in this study voiced that they can still apply the guessing strategy to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words in a carefully selected literary text even though their vocabulary size is limited, which answered my third research question: Based on carefully selected texts, are the textural contexts of texts helpful for Taiwanese learners at the beginning level to successfully use guessing strategies to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words? Nevertheless, this finding suggests that learners with a smaller vocabulary size can still benefit from the guessing strategy to improve vocabulary learning as long as the reading material is



carefully selected to meet their English level. Therefore, I think the focus of the design of the curriculum for beginners should not be limited to expand their vocabulary size by the use of word lists only, but encouraging learners to do some reading meeting their level to learn is also important.

Drawing on the results of questions 13 and 24, the participants showed the use of literary contexts is more effective for them to develop not only the receptive but also productive knowledge rather than the use of word lists, which also supports Widdowson's (1978: p. 3) claim: literature can not only expand student' linguistic knowledge but also provide clear explanation about how to use the language correctly and appropriately. For example, they can use the words learned from literary texts appropriately in writing and speaking. Hence, based on the participants' perspectives, the last research question was answered: the use of literary texts is more useful to facilitate both the development of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the result of question 13 also pointed out that learners (48%) responded that they can also use the words they learned from word lists properly in writing. This further illustrated that learners can still benefit from the use of word lists, which contradicts Schouten-van Parreren's (1982) criticisms of presenting lists of isolated words to learners. Hence, though the participants in this study voiced that the use of literary texts is more effective for them to develop both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, they also indicated that word lists are not completely useless and worthless.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the discussion above, the results of Experiment 1 indicated that most

of the participants agreed that they did not benefit from the words presented with its pronunciation solely and they also consented that both the pronunciation and Chinese translation are needed in the word lists accompanying the reading text. With regard to the results from Experiment 2, most of the participants agreed that learning vocabulary through the context of the literary text is more effective, enjoyable, interesting, and motivating than word lists. Additionally, they can still apply the guessing strategy to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words in the carefully selected literary text under the indirect learning approach even though their vocabulary size is limited. Although most of them in Experiment 2 admitted the values of the use of literature in second language classroom, they also thought that word lists are also beneficial for them to learn a number of words in a short time and retain them well.

Moreover, the results showed that the use of either word lists or the literary contexts can foster the development of not only the receptive but also productive knowledge. However, the results of question 13 and 24 showed that learners' opinions indicated that they can better use a word if they learn it in the literary texts rather than meet it in a word list, which suggests that the use of literature improving the effects of vocabulary learning should be encouraged. Moreover, based on the findings, apparently, word lists are not as useless as Schouten-van Parreren's claim (1989) presented in the literature review.

### *5.1 Implications for the compilation of the textbooks used in Taiwan*

In order to improve learners' vocabulary learning efficiency, two suggestions were made here to achieve this goal. Firstly, it is necessary to include word lists in textbooks used for beginners since

they can help learners to expand their vocabulary size in a short time. Both the pronunciation and the Chinese translation should be included in the word lists based on the opinions expressed by the participants in Experiment. Furthermore, the phonetic transcriptions of words are not needed in the future since more and more students are taught to pronounce words by the use of phonics and it is likely to suppose that they know nothing about the phonetic transcriptions. In addition, there should be some semantic relationship among words presented in the word lists because words are not stored in isolation (Richards 1985) and it would be more helpful and effective to learn vocabulary with the help of semantic association among words.

Secondly, some literary texts are suggested to be included in textbooks for beginners but the literary texts should be carefully selected to meet learners' language level. This recommendation is based on the results gained from Experiment 2, which indicated that learners can apply the guessing strategy to infer the meanings of unknown words successfully even though their vocabulary size is very limited. Additionally, the literary texts selected to be included in the textbook should be rich in contexts, such as to facilitate learners' engagement with it, make personal or emotional responses to it or link it to their prior life experience, all of which can not only improve vocabulary learning but also foster learners' motivation. The rich contexts of literary texts create more opportunities for learners to meet an item several times, which is one of the best ways to assist learners to learn vocabulary more effectively. As Hedge (2000) pointed out, 'repetition of words in materials can aid the process of lexical inferencing' (p.119). Similarly, depending

on the results of Experiment 2, learners voiced that learning vocabulary becomes more interesting, enjoyable, effective and motivating by the use of literary texts so that the use of literature in the second and foreign language classroom can stimulate the increasing development of learners' motivation, thus encouraging learners to enjoy learning through reading rather than being forced to learn. With the great value of the use of literature in the second language classroom, including some literary texts in the textbooks is recommended.

### *5.2 Pedagogical implications*

In terms of pedagogy, two pedagogical implications are suggested as follows. Firstly, the participants in this study agreed that the relationship between reading and vocabulary learning is very close, so encouraging extensive reading is one of the most effective ways to help learners to improve their vocabulary learning ability. Moreover, the reading materials are suggested to be literature in accordance with most of the participants' positive opinions about the advantages of the use of literature from Experiment 2. According to the results of the questionnaire 2 discussed above, the data showed that most participants believed that the use of literature in the language classroom is beneficial for them to learn vocabulary more successfully and effectively. Hence, teachers are suggested to encourage learners to read extensively outside the classroom and they can assist learners to choose the literary texts which are suitable for their language levels instead of forcing all the students to read the same literary book. Also, teachers should give students more freedom to choose what they are really interested in, which can cultivate their learning autonomy, increase their



learning motivation and expand their vocabulary size in a more effective and enjoyable way.

Secondly, teachers should be aware that the focus on the use of literary texts should be regarded as a kind of teaching material that is used to foster learners' language motivation to learn instead of asking students to study the language used in them. Therefore, during the teaching process, teachers should encourage learners to get involved into literary texts, make their personal or emotional responses to them and express their own opinions towards them, which can encourage the depth of semantic processing further making vocabulary learning more effectively as Craik and Lockhart (1972) similarly noted that learners will learn vocabulary better when a deeper level of semantic processing is required.

### *5.3 Limitations of the present research and suggestions for future research*

Even though two experiments were designed in the present research to find out the possible answers to the four research questions set up, yet some limitations are expected to be solved in the further research. Three limitations and suggestions are introduced below.

Firstly, this is a small-scale study with only 80 participants in Experiment 1 and 31 in Experiment 2. Therefore, in the further research, researchers are suggested to expand the number of the participants. Also, the participants of Experiment 2 in this study were limited to students whose English competence is at the elementary level. Further research are suggested to expand the range of the subjects to students whose English competence is at the intermediate or advanced level and to make a comparison among the results of the students' opinions. Through more detailed

comparisons, more reliable and objective implications about the compilation of the textbooks and curriculum development could be provided.

Secondly, the questionnaire is the only instrument used in this study to investigate learners' opinions towards the effect of the use of word lists and literature respectively. And the findings in this study are based on students' perceptions, not ability. As it is widely known, the questions in the questionnaire are necessarily limited and it is difficult for researchers to find out more in-depth reasons for some questions. For this reason, in the further research, both the questionnaire and the interview can be adopted simultaneously.

Thirdly, the present research emphasizes on investigating students' perception only. I think it would be worthy exploring both teachers' and students' opinions and making a comparison between them in the future research, which can make the research richer and more complete.

### References

- Alavi, Sepideh and Keyvanshekouh, Afsaneh.** (2012). Using the MoodleReader as an Extensive Reading Tool and its Effect on Iranian EFL Students' Incidental Vocabulary Learning. *English Language Teaching*, 5, 6, 135-145.
- Brown, D. E.** (1980). Eight Cs and a G. *Guideline* 3:1-17
- Brown, J. D.** (2001). *Using Surveys in Language Programs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Brown R., Waring, R., and Donekaewbua, S.** (2008). Incidental vocabulary acquisition from reading, reading-while-listening, and listening to stories. *Reading in a foreign language*, 20, 2. Retrieved January 5, 2011, from <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2008/brown/brown.pdf>

- Carter, R., R. Walker and Brumfit, C.** (1989). *Literature and the Learner: Methodological Approaches*. Modern English Publications in association with The British Council.
- Carter, R. and Long, M.** (1991). *Teaching Literature*. Harlow: Longman
- Chen, Y. J.** (2006). *A Study of Compiling Process and Post-Use Evaluation of Senior High School English Textbooks*. Master Thesis. Graduate Institute of English. National Taiwan Normal University.
- Chen, S. and Tsai, Y.** (2012). Research on English teaching and learning: Taiwan (2004-2009). *Language Teaching*, 45, 2, 180-201
- Craik, F. I. M. and Lockhart, R. S.** (1972). Levels of processing: A framework for memory research. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour*, 11, 671-684.
- Crystal, D.** (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2nd Edition.
- Day, R. R. and Bamford, J.** (1998). *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grabe, W and Stoller, F. L.** (1997). Reading and vocabulary development in a second language. In J. Coady and T. Huckin. (eds.) *Second language vocabulary acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hedge, T.** (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Huckin, T. and Coady, J.** (1999). Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition in a Second Language: A Review. *SSLA*, 21, 181-193.
- Huckin, T and Haynes, M.** (1993). Summary and future directions in T. Huckin, M. Haynes, and J. Coady (eds.) *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Krashen, S.** (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S.** (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *Modern Language Journal*, 73, 4, 440-464.
- Krashen, S.** (1991). The input hypothesis: An update in J. Alatis (eds.) *Georgetown University round table on language and linguistics*, 427-431. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press .
- Krashen, S.** (1993a). The case for free vocabulary reading. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50, 1, 72-82.
- Krashen, S.** (1993b). *The power of reading*. Inglewood, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Lado, R., Baldwin, B. and Lobo, F.** (1967). *Massive vocabulary expansion in a foreign language beyond the basic course: the effects of stimuli, timing and order of presentation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Project NO.5 5-1095.
- Lin, H-Y.** (2012). Local responses to global English: perceptions of English in Taiwan. *English Today* 111, 11, 3, 67-72.
- Liu, N. and Nation, I.S.P.** (1985). Factors affecting guessing vocabulary in context. *RELC Journal*, 16, 1, 33-42.
- LTTC** (2003). *GEPT Word Lists for Elementary Level*.  
<https://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/wordlist.htm>
- Maley, A.** (1989). *Literature and the Learner: Methodological Approaches*. Carter, R., R. Walker and C. Brumfit (eds.) Modern English Publications in association with The British Council.
- McKay, S.** (1982). Literature in the ESL Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16, 4, 529-536.
- Mishima, T.** (1967). *An experiment comparing five modalities of conveying meaning for the teaching of foreign language vocabulary*. Ph.D. thesis. Georgetown University.
- Nation, I.S.P.** (1982). *Beginning to Learn Foreign Vocabulary: A Review of the Research*. *RELC Journal*, 13, 14-36.
- Nation, I.S.P.** (1990). *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Boston: Heinle and Henile.
- Nation, I. S. P.** (1997). The language learning benefits of extensive reading. *The Language Teacher*, 21,5, 13-16.
- Oxford, R. L. and Scarcella, R. C.** (1994). Second Language Vocabulary Learning among Adults: State of the Art in Vocabulary Instruction. *System*, 22, 231-243.



- Povey, J.** (1972). Literature in TESL programs: The language and the culture in H. Allen and R. Campbell (ed.) *Teaching English as a second language*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1972.
- Schmitt, N and M. McCarthy.** (1997). *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schouten-van Parreren, C.** (1989). Vocabulary learning through reading: which condition will be met when presenting words in texts? *AILA Review*, 6, 75-85.
- Shen, W. W.** (2003). Current Trends of Vocabulary Teaching and Learning Strategies for EFL Settings. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 187-224.
- Shokouhi, H.** (2009). Learners' incidental vocabulary acquisition: A case on narrative and expository texts. *English Language Teaching*, 2, 1, 13-23.
- Tsou, S-Y** (2013). Taiwan University Students' Perceptions toward Native and Non- Native English-Speaking Teachers in EFL Contexts. Doctoral thesis.
- Waring, R. and Takaki, M.** (2003). At what rate do learners learn and retain new vocabulary from reading a graded reader? *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 15, 2, 131-163. Retrieved January 5, 2012, from <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2003/waring/waring.pdf>.
- West, M.** (1930). Speaking-vocabulary in a foreign language. *Modern Language Journal*, 14, 7, 509-521.
- Widdowson, H. G.** (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G.** (1985). The Teaching, Learning and Study of Literature in P. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (eds.) *English in the word*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zhang, J. and Anual, B.** (2008). The Role of Vocabulary in Reading Comprehension: The Case of Secondary School Students Learning English in Singapore. *RELC*, 39, 1, 51-76
- Zimmerman, C. B.** (1997a). Historical trends in second language vocabulary instruction in Coady, J. and T. Huckin (eds.) *Second language vocabulary acquisition: A rationale for pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zimmerman, C. B.** (1997b). Do reading and interactive vocabulary instruction make a difference? An empirical study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 1, 121-140.