

COMPARING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF L1 AND L2 GLOSSSES IN PROMOTING INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN A CALL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Reading in a second language (L2) depends on the single most important factor- vocabulary knowledge. However, second language learners face a large number of unknown vocabulary items they encounter when a text either in print mode or on computer screens read. This problem is severer when low proficiency learners are considered. Often the solution is provided by creating or providing glosses either in the learners' first language or in the target language. To investigate the problems encountered by these learners in a computer assisted language learning environment as a result of lack of vocabulary knowledge and to help enhance the incidental acquisition of second language (L2) vocabulary, this study was established to investigate the effectiveness of first language glosses (L1) and (L2) glosses in promoting incidental vocabulary acquisition and retention in a computer assisted language learning environment. 64 freshmen from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka participated in the study. The participants read a passage on computer screens with 18 highlighted target words which were pretested and found to be unknown to the participants. 9 of the target words were glossed in L1 meaning and the other 9 in L2 meaning using the special software developed for this study. The results of the t-tests employed on the data collected through the post tests revealed that L1 glosses are more effective than L2 glosses in promoting incidental vocabulary acquisition and retention in a computer assisted language learning environment and the difference is statistically highly significant.

Keywords: *Acquisition, Glossing, Incidental, Retention, Vocabulary*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading and understanding academic texts is perhaps the most important skill (Egbert, 2005) that university students of second language (L2) need to acquire and it “can be, and in academic settings nearly always is, the basis for writing” (Carson and

Leki,1993:1). However, L2 reading is a more complex skill than the first language (L1) reading skill (Koda, 2007). Further, with the introduction of information technology into the field of second language teaching and learning the nature of reading environment has been extended from print