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The Effects of Task-Induced Involvement on L2 Academic Word Acquisition in Korea

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The study investigated the effects of task-induced involvement on academic vocabulary acquisition at both short- and long-term periods after treatment. Twenty-nine college students in Korea were randomly assigned to one of the three tasks: Read-without-glossary, Gap-fill-with-glossary, and Gap-fill-without-glossary. The ANCOVA statistics showed no significant differences among the three tasks, but the learning gains between pre-test and post-test was the most significant statistically in the input task (Read without glossary), compared with the output tasks (Gap-fill with glossary and Gap-fill without glossary). The finding could be due to the fact that academic vocabulary requires more intensive reading than general vocabulary, leading to more vocabulary learning gains.

Keywords: involvement load hypothesis, academic vocabulary, EFL college contexts,

1. Introduction

There has been a growing awareness of the importance of academic vocabulary for students' success in school (Nagy and Townsend 2012). The students, especially ESL or EFL, struggle to develop academic vocabulary, but research showed positive effects of the intervention on academic vocabulary learning (Gablasova 2014, Grim 2008, Joe 2010, Jozwik and Douglas 2017, Nagy and Townsend 2012, Roling 2017). As Peters, Hulstijn, Sercu, and Lutjeharms (2009) mentioned, the successful intervention on L2 vocabulary acquisition through reading was dependant upon three factors, discovering the meaning of unfamiliar words; processing the meaning elaboratively; and being reinforced through repetition.

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Significant strands of research have explored the effects of word exposure frequency (Joe 2010), word elaboration (Eckerth and Tavakoli 2012), L1 instruction (Gablasova 2014), and focus-on-form instruction (Grim 2008) on academic vocabulary acquisition. In addition to academic vocabulary learning, general L2 vocabulary acquisition has been broadly studied through the effects of learners' relative elaboration of word processing. Since the original proposal of the involvement load hypothesis by Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), some empirical studies have supported the hypothesis fully (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, Kim 2008), partially (Keating 2008, Kim 2015, Park 2017), or did not confirm it (Li 2014, Park and Oh 2015).

Academic vocabulary acquisition has been investigated extensively in the second language contexts or content-based language programs (Gablasova 2014, Grim 2008, Joe 2010, Jozwik and Douglas 2017, Nagy and Townsend 2012, Roling 2017). However, there has been no research concerning academic vocabulary learning in the context of English as a foreign language even though a lot of research on general vocabulary acquisition has been studied in L2 contexts (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, Keating 2008, Kim 2011, Peters et al. 2009, Schmidt 2008). Therefore, this current study aims to investigate the effects of tasks with different involvement loads on academic vocabulary acquisition in Korean college contexts.

2. Literature Review

There was a growing body of research on instructional interventions to help students develop academic language at school, especially in the content-based programs. According to Nagy and Townsend (2012), academic language was defined as "the specialized language, both oral and written, of academic settings that facilitates communication and thinking about disciplinary content" (p. 3). Grim (2008) tested focus-on-form instructions in L2 content-enriched lessons. The findings showed the significant advantages of the planned focus-on-form treatment in grammar, vocabulary, and culture over incidental focus-on-form, and focus-on-meaning.

Others studied academic vocabulary acquisition through L1 instruction (Gablasova 2014) and word definition (Jozwik and Douglas 2017). Gablasova (2014) found that L1-instructed high school students acquired the meaning of the specialized vocabulary better and longer than the L2-instructed counterparts. Jozwik and Douglas (2017) also discovered that a multicomponent academic vocabulary intervention helped English

learners in academic settings to improve their abilities define words.

Joe (2010), and Eckerth and Tavakoli (2012) showed the important role of frequency in academic vocabulary learning. Eckerth and Tavakoli (2012) further investigated the differential effects of frequency and elaboration of word processing on L2 vocabulary acquisition. Whereas the results showed equal effects for both variables on initial word learning, subsequent word retention was more contingent on elaborate processing of form-meaning relationships than on word frequency.

On the other hand, Schmitt's (2008) review on second language vocabulary learning revealed that the key principle for maximizing vocabulary learning was to increase the amount of engagement that L2 learners have with lexical items. For example, Peters et al. (2009) discovered that the enhancement techniques such as looking up unknown words and processing their form-meaning relationship elaborately ("input plus") helped to develop vocabulary acquisition. These findings were based on the task-induced involvement load hypothesis proposed by Laufer and Hulstijn (2001). That is, the degree of task involvement by the learners will determine the retention of the new words.

Since the original proposal of the involvement load hypothesis (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001), a lot of studies have tested it, but showed some mixing results, supporting the hypothesis fully (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, Kim 2011, Soleimani and Rahamanian 2015), partially (Keating 2008, Kim 2015, Park 2017, Sung 2016), or no positive findings (Li 2014, Park and Oh 2015).

First of all, Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) tested and supported the Involvement Load Hypothesis in vocabulary acquisition. They found that words were retained in tasks with higher involvement load (composition) better than in the tasks with lower involvement load (fill-in gap and reading-only). The subsequent study by Kim (2011) also supported the hypothesis regardless of proficiency levels. That is, the amount of retention depended on the amount of task-induced involvement load. However, Keating (2008) revealed that the advantages in vocabulary learning associated with the tasks with the higher involvement task load diminished considering time on task.

Other studies showed that the Involvement Load Hypothesis could explain the short-term effect, not the long-term one. For example, Sung (2016) and Park (2017) tested the Involvement Load Hypothesis with EFL college and adults respectively. The results also supported the task-induced involvement hypothesis in the short-term, but not on the long-term retention. Kim (2015), on the other hand, found that the hypothesis would be applied to vocabulary learning of low levels of English learners on

through task-induced involvement of three tasks. In addition, the recent study by Yang, Shintani, Li, and Zhang (2017) indicated an interaction between working memory and different types of vocabulary tasks (gap-fill, sentence-writing, comprehension-only, and a control), where the participants' working memory significantly predicted the gain scores of the comprehension-only and the gap-fill groups.

In other studies, the involvement load hypothesis was not confirmed at all (Li 2014, Park and Oh 2015). For example, Park and Oh (2015) showed no statistically significant differences in vocabulary retention among the three groups: Reading a glossed text, filling-gap with a glossary, and filling-gap without a glossary. Li (2014) studied the effects of task-induced online learning behavior on incidental vocabulary acquisition based on the Involvement Load Hypothesis. Each task elicited different patterns of on-line learning behavior in terms of frequency of look-ups and amount of time spent on target words. In addition, tasks assumed with higher involvement load hypothesis did not necessarily lead to higher retention scores.

3. Method

3.1 Participants and Research Questions

Twenty nine students studying majoring at Department of English Language & Literature at a university, Seoul, participated in this study during spring semester in 2019. All of them took Cambridge-online test and their proficiency levels ranged from intermediate (B1 and B2, scores 16—19) to advanced (C1 and C2, scores 20—25) levels. On average, the participants were considered as High Intermediate or Low Advanced Level since their mean score was 19.03 (B2) according to Cambridge Proficiency Level.

The present study addresses the issue of task-induced involvement on academic vocabulary learning through pre-, post-test, and delayed post-test design. The three experimental groups participated in this study: Read-without-glossary; Gap-filling with a glossary; and Gap-filling without a glossary. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

(1) Do three tasks with different involvement loads lead to differential gains in academic vocabulary?
(2) How different are their reading comprehension scores among the experimental groups?

3.2 Research Design

For the study, the researcher chose a reading text from the academic reading text (Richards and Rodgers, 2014) that they did not study during the course (See Appendix for the reading text). Then, thirteen unfamiliar academic words were selected from the reading text and pilot-tested them with a sample of five students before the research. Finally, the participants were pre-tested before treatment, post-tested right after treatment, and then post-tested a month later after treatment.

The students were assigned into each of the following three tasks, as shown in Table 1: Task 1 Read-without-glossary (Index 2); Task 2 Gap-filling with a glossary (Index 2); and Task 3 Gap-filling without a glossary (Index 3)[1]. All three groups were given the same amount of time (40 minutes) to finish their own tasks.

TABLE 1. Types of Tasks

Task Types	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
Sample Size	11	7	9
Treatment	Reading no glossary	Gap-fill with glossary	Gap-fill with target word list
Involvement load	moderate need (1), search (1), no evaluation	moderate need (1), no search, moderate evaluation (1)	moderate need (1), search (1), moderate evaluation (1)

The group in Task 1 was required to read the text with the 13 target words highlighted in bold without any glossary, and answer the accompanying five reading comprehension questions (Kim 2011). To control time across tasks, the participants in Task 1 were provided extra vocabulary questions (5 items) so that they could focus on the bold-typed target words in the text (see Appendix). The reading comprehension questions induced a need of vocabulary and search to find the meaning

[1] The original design included Task 4, Write-Sentence (Loading Index 3), but the initial participants dropped out in the middle of the research (Just three left). Hence, the researcher deleted the group in the final analysis.

the target words in the dictionary to comprehend the text. Therefore, in terms of involvement load, Task 1 induced moderate need (1), search (1), and no evaluation indicating an involvement index of 2 (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001).

The group in Task 2 was given the same text as those in Task 1. However, the thirteen target words were deleted from the text and they were given only five reading comprehension questions to control for time in Task 2, excluding the five extra questions focusing on target vocabulary used in Task 1. They were asked to read the text, fill in the thirteen gaps with the words in the glossary, and answer the comprehension questions. This task induced moderate need (1), no search, and moderate evaluation (1) in the provision of the context indicating its involvement load index 2.

Task 3 was similar to the gap-filling activity in Task 2, but with the word list provided instead of a glossary. The experimental group was encouraged to search for the meanings of the target words in the dictionary to fill in the blanks with the appropriate words. Thus, its task involvement load was 3.

Min's (2008) suggestion was adopted to assess receptive and productive knowledge of the thirteen academic words, as shown below. The participants were given zero or one depending on the correct answers to the following two items.

Receptive knowledge: I know this word. It means _____.
(Write in English or in Korean)
Productive knowledge: I can use this word in a sentence.
(Write a sentence in English.)

4. Results

4.1. Learning Differences among Tasks with Different Involvement Loads

The following descriptive statistics in Table 2 showed the vocabulary scores of the pre-test, the post-test, and the delayed post-test of each experimental group. Overall, all groups improved their scores on the immediate post-test, but they decreased on the delayed post-test. It seems that the pre-test scores differ from group to group, which means we need to control the pre-test score as covariance. The researcher conducted ANCOVA to compare vocabulary scores among the three groups.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics

Task	Vocabulary	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed test
Read without Glossary	Receptive	5.00	10.00	7.45
	Productive	5.58	9.25	6.73
	Sum	10.58	19.25	14.18
Gap-fill with Glossary	Receptive	3.63	10.13	5.57
	Productive	3.25	9.75	4.00
	Sum	6.88	19.88	9.57
Gap-fill with Target Words	Receptive	4.11	8.67	4.67
	Productive	3.11	6.33	3.22
	Sum	7.22	14.78	7.89

ANCOVA statistics in Tables 3, 4, and 5 showed how different the participants' vocabulary learning gains were in the receptive, productive, and sum of vocabulary knowledge among the three groups respectively. The analysis in the receptive vocabulary in Table 3 produced no significant results for both immediate (F = .85, p = .439) and delayed (F = 2.58, p = .097) post-tests. The independent variable, task-effect, explained only 6.9% and 18.3% of the variances in the dependent variables (post-test and delayed post-tests) (eta squared = .068 and .183) respectively.

The same statistics was performed with the productive vocabulary and sum of vocabulary knowledge, as shown in Tables 4 and 5 respectively. The analyses also showed the statistically non-significant results for both immediate (F = 2.15, p = .139) and delayed (F = 2.20, p = .134) post-tests for the productive test, and (F = 2.16, p = .138) and (F = 3.14, p = .062) for the sum. The task differences explained only 15.8% and 16.0% of the productive vocabulary (eta squared = .158 and .160), and only 15.8% and 21.4% of the vocabulary sum (eta squared = .158 and .214), respectively. To summarize these results, task involvement load (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001) did not seem to explain the academic vocabulary learning.

TABLE 3. ANCOVA Statistics of Receptive Vocabulary

Source		Type Ⅲ Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Post-test	40.00	3	13.33	2.77	.065	.265
	Delayed	159.54	3	53.18	12.56	.000	.621
Intercept	Post-test	406.45	1	406.45	84.42	.000	.786
	Delayed	36.75	1	36.75	8.68	.007	.274
Pre-test Receptive	Post-test	29.60	1	29.60	6.15	.021	.211
	Delayed	119.02	1	119.02	28.10	.000	.550
Task Type	Post-test	8.22	2	4.11	.85	**.439**	**.069**
	Delayed	21.89	2	10.95	2.58	**.097**	**.183**
Error	Post-test	110.74	23	4.82			
	Delayed	97.42	23	4.24			
Total	Post-test	2597.00	27				
	Delayed	1241.00	27				
Corrected Total	Post-test	150.74	26				
	Delayed	256.96	26				

Note. Delayed indicates Delayed Post-test.

TABLE 4. ANCOVA Statistics of Productive Vocabulary

Source		Type Ⅲ Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Post-test	112.16	3	37.39	4.62	.011	.376
	Delayed	174.89	3	58.30	21.45	.000	.737
Intercept	Post-test	265.93	1	265.93	5.19	.032	.588
	Delayed	14.11	1	14.12	6.89	.015	.184
Pre-test Productive	Post-test	55.76	1	55.76	6.89	.015	.231
	Delayed	107.22	1	107.22	39.45	.000	.632
Task Type	Post-test	34.82	2	17.41	2.15	**.139**	**.158**
	Delayed	11.95	2	5.98	2.20	**.134**	**.160**
Error	Post-test	186.13	23	8.09			
	Delayed	62.52	23	2.72			
Total	Post-test	2190.00	27				
	Delayed	873.00	27				
Corrected Total	Post-test	298.30	26				
	Delayed	237.41	26				

TABLE 5. ANCOVA Statistics of Vocabulary Total (Receptive & Productive)

Source		Type Ⅲ Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Post-test	261.33	3	87.11	4.26	.016	.357
	Delayed	616.74	3	205.58	20.39	.000	.727
Intercept	Post-test	1272.00	1	1272.00	62.15	.000	.730
	Delayed	94.70	1	94.70	9.39	.000	.290
Pre-test Total	Post-test	136.78	1	136.78	6.69	.017	.225
	Delayed	404.31	1	404.31	40.10	.000	.635
Task Type	Post-test	88.55	2	44.27	2.16	**.138**	**.158**
	Delayed	63.32	2	31.66	3.14	**.062**	**.214**
Error	Post-test	470.75	23	20.47			
	Delayed	231.93	23	10.08			
Total	Post-test	9301.00	27				
	Delayed	4050.00	27				
Corrected Total	Post-test	732.07	26				
	Delayed	848.67	26				

Even though there was no significant differences among the three groups in the ANCOVA statistics, we need to figure out how significantly the participants in each group improve from the pre-test to the post-test or delayed post-test after treatment. The paired-samples t-statistics in Tables 6—8 showed the results of each experimental group's learning gains between the pre-test, and both immediate and delayed post-tests after treatment. First of all, all types of vocabulary knowledge of the Read-without-glossary group significantly improved on the immediate post-tests from the pre-test (p = .000), as shown in Table 6 below. Though the learning gains decreased in the delayed post-test, they showed the significant learning gains from the pre-test except the productive vocabulary knowledge (p = .072).

TABLE 6. Paired Samples T-Statistics of a Read-without-glossary Task

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	t	p
Receptive Pre-test — Post-test	-5.00	2.63	-6.59	.00
Productive Pre-test — Post-test	-3.67	1.78	-7.16	.000
Sum Pre-test — Post-test	-8.67	4.08	-7.37	.000
Receptive Pre- — Delayed-test	-2.55	2.77	-3.05	.012
Productive Pre- — Delayed-test	-1.27	2.10	-2.01	.072
Sum Pre-test — Delayed-test	-3.82	4.31	-2.94	.015

According to Table 7, the Gap-fill-with-glossary group showed the similar, positive learning gains as the previous group. However, the learning gains in the

Read-without-glossary group were more significant than those in the Gap-fill-with-glossary group even though both tasks were assigned the same index of the involvement loading (2). On the other hand, both tasks in Tables 6 ad 7 have one thing in common. That is, even though the experimental tasks helped to improve significantly the vocabulary knowledge after treatment, both groups could not maintain the productive knowledge on the delayed post-tests.

TABLE 7. Paired Samples T-Statistics of a Gap-fill-with-glossary Task

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	t	p
Receptive Pre-test — Post-test	-6.50	2.27	-8.11	.000
Productive Pre-test — Post-test	-6.50	4.44	-4.14	.004
Sum Pre-test — Post-test	-13.00	6.48	-5.67	.001
Receptive Pre- — Delayed-test	-2.00	1.53	-3.46	.013
Productive Pre- — Delayed-test	-.43	1.51	-.75	.482
Sum Pre- — Delayed-test	-2.43	2.37	-2.71	.035

Finally, Table 8 showed the learning gains of the Gap-fill-without-glossary group with the highest involvement load (3). The Gap-fill-without-glossary task helped to retain the words in the short-term period after treatment (p = .001, .008, and .002), but those effects disappeared in th long-term period on the delayed post-test (p = .179, .782, and .347). It was unpredictable that the learning gains of the gap-fill-without-glossary group were the least among the three groups in terms of the view of the task-inducement involvement. Therefore, it seems that the academic vocabulary requires a different processing from the task-inducement involvement which can be applied to general vocabulary.

TABLE 8. T-Statistics of a Gap-fill-without-glossary Task

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	t	p
Receptive Pre-test — Post-test	-4.56	2.83	-4.82	.001
Productive Pre-test — Post-test	-3.22	2.73	-3.54	.008
Sum Pre-test — Post-test	-7.56	5.17	-4.38	.002
Receptive Pre-test — Delayed-test	-.56	1.13	-1.47	.179
Productive Pre-test — Delayed-test	-.11	1.17	-.29	.782
Sum Pre-test — Delayed-test	-.67	2.00	-1.00	.347

4.2 Reading Comprehension among Different Tasks

The following descriptive statistics in Table 9 showed the reading comprehension scores of each experimental group. The Read-without-glossary group scored the highest (M = 2.92) out of the total score (M = 5), followed by the Gap-fill-without-glossary (M = 2.22), and then the Gap-fill-with-glossary group (M = .63).

TABLE 9. Descriptive Statistics

Groups	N	M	SD
Read without Glossary	12	2.92	.90
Gap-fill with Glossary	8	.63	.52
Gap-fill without Glossary	9	2.22	1.92

Note. N indicates the number of participants; M, mean; and SD, standard derivation.

The ANOVA was conducted to compare their reading comprehension scores among the three groups, as shown in Table 10. The statistics produced a statistically significant result (F = 8.22, p = .002). The independent variable of task effect explained 38.7% of the variance in the dependent variable of reading comprehension (eta squared = .387). Post-hoc Dunnett Tests in Table 11 revealed that the only difference between groups was found between the Read-without-glossary (M = 2.92) and the Gap-fill-with-glossary (M = .63). The reading-oriented task helped students to focus on reading comprehension better than the reading combined with writing task (the gap-fill tasks).

TABLE 10. ANOVA Statistics of Reading Comprehension

Source	Type Ⅲ Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	25.52	2	12.76	8.22	.002	.387
Intercept	104.00	1	104.001	67.02	.000	.720
Reading Comprehension	25.52	2	12.76	8.22	**.002**	**.387**
Error	40.35	26	1.55			
Total	190.00	29				
Corrected Total	65.86	28				

TABLE 11. Post-hoc Test

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	p
Read — Gap-fill with Glossary	2.29	.000
Read — Gap-fill without Glossary	.69	.688
Gap-fill with Glossary — Gap-fill without	-1.60	.106

Note. Read and Gap-fill without indicate A Read without Glossary and A Gap-fill without Glossary respectively.

5. Conclusion

The ANCOVA statistics in the current study showed that there were no significant differences on academic vocabulary acquisition of tasks with different involvement loading: Read without glossary group (Index 2), Gap fill with glossary (Index 2), and Gap fill without glossary (Index 3). However, the paired-samples T-statistics between pre-tests and post-tests indicated that the learning gains in the read without glossary group (Index 2) were more significant than those in the other two groups: Gap-fill with glossary (Index 2) and Gap-fill without glossary (Index 3). Regarding the involvement hypothesis (Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001), it was surprising that the learning gains of the gap-fill-without-glossary group with the highest involvement index (3) were the least among the three groups.

This finding might be due to the reading comprehension in the task performances. The Post-hoc Test revealed that the reading score of the read without glossary group was significantly higher than that of the gap-fill-with-glossary, while there was no significant difference between the gap-fill with glossary and the gap-fill without glossary. If we look at the task in more details, Task 1 was input-oriented, while Tasks 2 and 3 were output-oriented (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001). Here is the point revealing the differences between general vocabulary and academic vocabulary. In case of the general vocabulary, the output tasks, which usually induced more in-depth processing, were found to lead to better performances than control or input tasks (Alavinia and Rahimi 2019, Bao 2015, Maftoon and Haratmeh 2013, Soleimani and Rahimi 2015, Tahmasbi and Farvardin 2017). However, it seemed that academic vocabulary required understanding of the text more than the general vocabulary because the former was more context-reduced than the latter. Therefore, input tasks helped students to focus on reading comprehension better than output tasks (the gap-fill tasks), eventually leading to more retention of the academic words.

This finding offers some pedagogical implications because academics requires intensive reading to better understand the meanings of academic words. The reading-oriented tasks could help the learners to comprehend the text better and to retain the target words more than the reading-writing or writing tasks. So the intensive reading in academics was much more important in not only reading comprehension, but also academic vocabulary acquisition.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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Appendix. A Read-without-glossary Task

Directions

1. Read the following passage. You can look up the numbered words in the dictionary if you are nor familiar with them.
2. Based on the reading, answer the questions that follow.

Suggestopedia was developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozanov. Suggestopedia is a specific set of learning recommendations derived from **Suggestology**[1], which Lozanov described as a "science . . . concerned with the systematic study of the nonrational and/or nonconscious influences" that human beings are constantly responding to. Suggesotopedia tries to **harness**[2] these influences and redirect them so as to optimize learning. The most **conspicuous**[3] characteristics of Suggestopedia are the decoration, furniture, and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music, and the authoritative behavior of the teacher. Music is an especially important element of Suggestopedia, and both intonation and rhythm are coordinated with a musical background, which helps to induce a relaxed attitude. The method has a somewhat **mystical**[4]air about it, partially because it has few direct links with established learning or educational theory in the West.

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<Reading Comprehension Questions>

1. Which of the following most closely expresses the main idea of the passage?
   ① theory of language in Suggestopedia
   ② the background knowledge of Suggestopedia
   ③ relationship of Suggestopedia to current learning theory
   ④ critics comments of nonrational approach in Suggestopedia
2. What does Suggestology refer to according to the passage?
   ① a language teaching method ② a scientific study of suggestion
   ③ using positive suggestion in pedagogy
   ④ human being's conscious approach in science

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