DEVELOPING SAUDI STUDENTS' LEXICAL ITEMS THROUGH USING SYNONYMY AND HYPONYMY-A CASE STUDY OF TAIF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *This study is intended to help Saudi students to develop their lexical items and to provide insights into the use of lexical items especially synonymy and hyponymy. It discusses the role of sense relations in general and synonymy and hyponymy in particular in teaching the meaning of English lexical items. It is going to involve the concepts of semantics, reference, sense and sense relationships in addition to synonymy and hyponymy. A list of words is presented through a student test to participants, who are asked to respond. 30 Saudi students are considered as participants involved in this study. The researchers used SPSS program to analyze the data collected by the tools of the study. By using these concepts Saudi students will develop their language lexical items.*

KEYWORDS: lexical items**,** synonymy, hyponymy, semantic features, sense relations

INTRODUCTION

Semantics
Crystal (1997: 100) defines semantics as "the study of meaning in language". In the past, meaning was dealt with as a concept on its own right. In modern linguistics, however, new ways of exploring meanings emerged. Lyons (1977: 201) adopts a similar definition for semantics. In fact, what linguists disagree upon is not the definition but the interpretation of the term "meaning". Linguists view semantics in a wide range of considerations. Different techniques are followed to free the point of the interpretation of 'meaning' from controversy. Lyons (1977: 202) approves the technique of substitution; a word is alternated with an equivalent. The meanings of the two sentences are then tested i.e. whether they manifest the same interpretation or not.

Reference
One way to specify the meaning of a word is to represent the object it refers to. Here, there is one to one correspondence between name and object (Kempson, 1986: 12-13). But Crystal (1997: 102) criticizes the use of reference asserting that "this would be of limited help". Reference, moreover, cannot be utilized in demonstrating the meaning of all, not even most, lexical items.

Sense
Sense is defined by Crystal (1985: 276) as "these systems of linguistic relations (sense relations) which a lexical item contracts with other lexical items". On the other hand we find Lyon (1977: 197) who believes that: "sense is the term used for what others would describe as descriptive

meaning". For a lexical item to be clearly explained a sort of a network is required. This network subsumes all possibly related words to the issued lexical item in different ways and various concepts. Green (2001:3) said that "relationships are involved as we combine simple entities to form more complex entities, as we compare entities, as we group entities, as one entity performs a process on another entity, and so forth. Indeed, many things that we might initially regard as basic and elemental are revealed upon further examination to involve structure, or in other words, internal relationships.

Synonymy
The word synonymy is a compound noun. It is of Greek origin consisting of two nouns 'syn' which means 'same' and 'nym' which means 'name'. The total result of this addition is the literal translation 'same name'. The words are referred to as 'synonyms' and the relation is 'synonymy' and the lexical item is said to be 'synonymous' to another.Jackson et. al (1996: 39) believe that two lexemes are only synonymous only if "their meanings overlap to a considerable extent and they can be substituted for each other in appropriate contexts". Synonyms are usually treated as reflexive, symmetrical and transitive, though Murphy (2003) has argued that they are not always so.

It is worth mentioning here that the term synonymy is used in almost all the levels of linguistics: phonetics/ sounds, grammar/syntax, and semantics. Synonymy is sometimes referred to as free variation. It is defined in the Dictionary of Modern Thought (1977: 332) as "units…which are different in form but not thereby different in meaning". In "Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms" (1984: 24 -25), synonyms are defined as lexemes "having the same or very nearly the same essential meaning". It is believed that different lexemes may have some concepts in common, nevertheless cannot be identified as synonyms.

Hyponymy and Word Meaning
The fact that hyponymy is often explored in dictionaries has been stated earlier in this chapter. Experts and scholars have often recommended hyponymy as having a positive influence on the mastery of word meaning. On other hand antonymy, or opposites, is one of the well-studied relations, and is the relation that people find easiest to learn and process (Jones, 2002). Eco. (1984: 49) assumes that for learners to command the meaning of a lexeme a number of lexemes have to be explored. These lexemes are referred to as 'primitives'. Primitives are the simplest concepts. These simplest lexemes or co-hyponyms are unspeakably useful in explaining the meanings of more comprehensive concepts: 'superordinates'. The example set out is the super ordinate 'mammal' and the co-hyponyms human and dolphin. The words human and dolphin can contribute to the definition of the word mammal enormously. On some occasions the meanings of the simplest concepts co-hyponyms are explained via super-ordinates. The sparrow is defined as: a kind of bird'. The view point concluded is that the learners find no difficulty in acquiring a word meaning using another hierarchically related one.

METHODOLOGY
participants
The participants of this study are 30 Saudi students who involved in semantics English course in the College of Sciences and Arts in Taif University, the seventh level, in the academic year 1435/1436.

Tools of the study
Pre-test and post-test were run to measure Saudi students' lexical items development. The pre-test was introduced in the Mid-term 1436. Then, after students have exposed to the intensive semantic program, the post test was run to measure students' development.

Methods
After the data collection, SPSS program has been used as a tool to analyze the pre-test and posttest to check if there are statistical significance or not.

Data analysis
The pre-test and post-test were administered to a group which consists of thirty students.
In the pre-test the scores of more than fifteen students (50%) clustered between (35.5 – 45.5) out of one hundred. The frequency curve of the scores is bell shaped but it is skewed to the left reflecting a very weak level for the students. The scores of the students clustered below the pass mark. Figure (4.1.1) shows the frequency histogram of the pre-test scores.
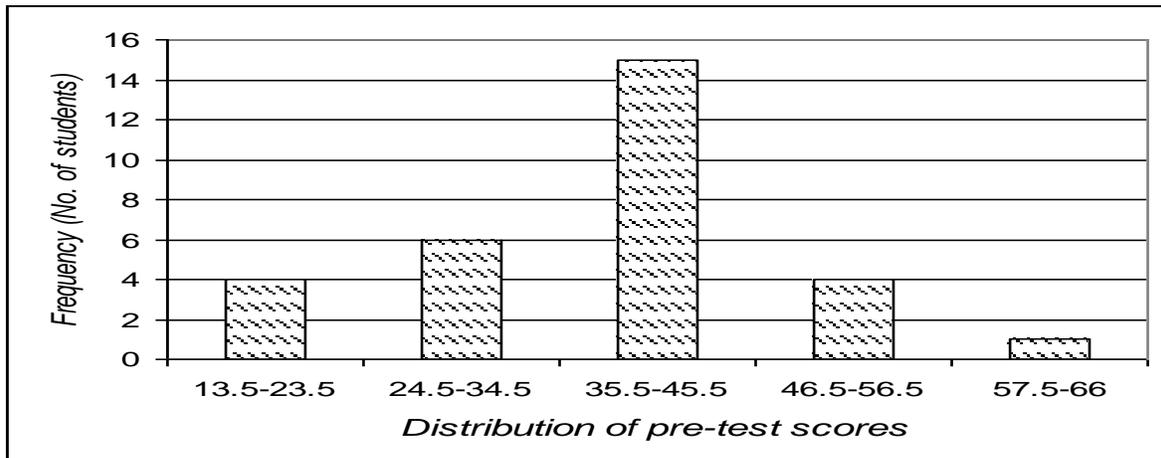
Figure 4.1

In the post test the scores of more than twenty three students range between (57%-90%) . The bell shaped curve here is skewed to the right which indicates far better results than those in the pre-test.
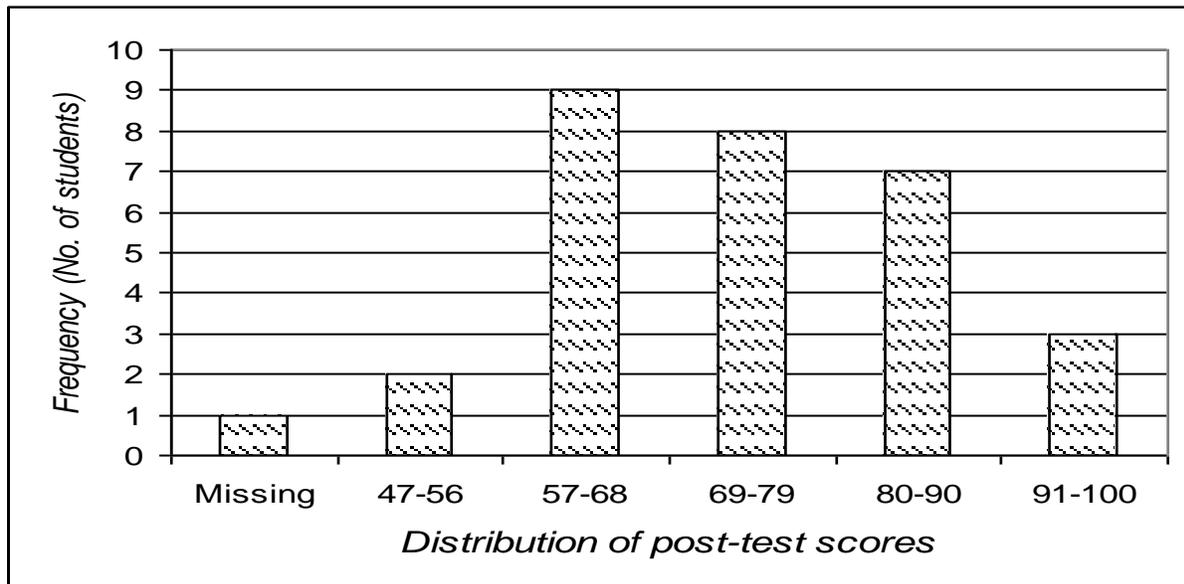
Figure 4.2

Analysis and interpretation of the tests data.
The questions of the tests were all set with the aim of measuring the effect of the use of synonymy and hyponymy in teaching the meaning of English words.The mean of the students' scores of the pre-test was (36.73). This indicates a poor achievement on the behalf of the students. The mean was far below the pass mark (50).On the other hand, the mean of the scores of the students in the post test was (72.85), which is approximately twice the mean of the pre-test scores. This increase in the mean pronounces an overt enhancement in the standard of the students.The t-test analysis at the two tests scores shows the ideal significant differences (p = 0.000) table (4.1) illustrates the mean the standard deviation, and the t-test analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores.

Table (4.1) T.test analysis of the tests

Version	Mean	S. D	T. value	T. prob.
Pre-test	36.73	11.50	-17.86	0.000
Post-test	73.85	12.37		

Perfectly significant   p=0.000
Highly significant $p \leq 0.01$
Significant $p \leq 0.0$

FINDINGS

The findings arrived at are as follows:
1- The meaning of the English lexical items is a difficulty that hinders the teaching process.
2- The use of synonyms and hyponyms in particular and sense relation in general facilitates recalling the meaning of English words.

4- Saudi EFL learners find difficulty in learning the meaning of the English lexical items.

5- Saudi EFL learners learn the meaning of English words quickly when words associations are used in presenting the meaning of the words.

6- Saudi EFL learners easily recall words that have been introduced accompanied with their synonyms and / or hyponyms.

7- Learning/teaching the meaning of lexical items in lists is time consuming and less profitable.

8- Using sense relations in the exercises and drills is helpful and beneficial for EFL teachers and learners respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

In reference to the findings, the current study concluded the following: the difficulty in teaching/ learning the meaning of the English words is an obstacle that hinders the teaching/ learning process. This difficulty can best be overcome by the use of synonymy and hyponymy in teaching/ learning the meaning of the English lexical items.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommended that:

1. Syllabus designers should provide the English courses with synonymy and hyponymy and other sense relations as effective techniques in teaching lexical items meaning.
2. EFL teachers should elaborate on words associations and word family when teaching lexical items meaning.
3. Teacher trainers should draw the attention of trainees to the necessity of utilizing sense relations in their teaching techniques.
4. Reading comprehension texts should be followed by exercises using synonyms, hyponyms and other sense relations.
5. Tests or at least standardized tests should be provided with sufficient lexical items questions since words are the corner stone of learning English language.

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Appendices

Appendix (1)

Pre-test

Q. 1: Read the passage and answer the question:

Margaret Thatcher (1925)

She was born above a shop in the small English town of Grantham. Her father was a grocer. He worked very hard for little money. Margaret also worked very hard, and she went to Oxford University where she studied chemistry. In 1951 she married Denis Thatcher, a rich businessman. They had twins, a girl and a boy. The love of her life was politics. She didn't have much time for other interests. She said she only needed four hours sleep a night.

She became a politician in 1959 and Prime Minister of Britain in 1979. A lot of people were afraid of her and she was called 'The Iron Lady'. In 1984 Irish terrorists bombed her hotel, but she survived. She was Prime Minister for eleven years. She finally resigned in 1990, but she didn't want to, and she was in tears when she left 10 Downing Street.

A) True or false:
1. She came from a rich family.
2. She loved being a politician.
3. She worked hard.
4. She had a lot of other interests.
5. She had a good education.
6. She didn't have children.
7. She was Prime Minister for eight years.
8. she was tired of politics and resigned
9. What was her father job?

B) Answer the following questions:
10. When did she marry Denis?
11. How many children did they have?
12. How much sleep did she need?
13. When did terrorists bomb her hotel?
14. How long was she Prime Minister?

15. Was she happy when she left 10 Downing Street?

Q. 2: Put a circle round the letter of the best answer: a, b, c or d.

1-" I went to Kosti by ferry"; ferry means:

a. train   b. plane   c. boat   d. bus

2-"She is very successful in her career", career means:

a. job   b. family   c. course   d. house

3-"Climbing mountains is 'scary" scary means:

a. easy   b. exciting   c. difficult   d. frightening

4-"The internet is infinite" infinite means:

a. modern   b. pleasure   c. unlimited   d. invented

5-The word rich means:

a. famous   b. young   c. coach   d. wealthy

6-Cinema is the place where people see:

a. sardines   b. films   c. boats   d. phones

7-The chauffer is (a):

a. driver   b. singer   c. traveler   d. player

8-Baseball is a…

a. colour   b. bar   c. game   d. ship

9-Cancer is a…

a. design   b. disease   c. bookd. fruit

10-The coach is the one who….

a. trains   b. writes   c. drives   d. travel

Q.3 Match the words with their synonyms:

A	B	C
Famous	Known	Job
Beautiful		Foolish
Wealthy		Expensive
Extravagant		Grow
Necessary		Weather
Exciting		Good looking

Scary		Interesting
Career		Important
Atmosphere		Frightening
Silly		Rich
Plant		Known

Q.4: Match the words with their antonyms:

Cheap	Expensive	Hate
Easy		Rude
Empty		Uneasy
Master		Seen
Export		Difficult
Relaxed		Expensive
Love		Clean
Single		Slave
Dirty		Married
Invisible		Full
Polite		import

Q.5: Place the words below undo the following headings:

Silver	Warm	Counselor	Anger	Love
Herrings	Admire	Grains	Sausages	Hate
Winter	Wet	Autumn	Worried	Noodles
Strawberries	White	Chauffer	Designer	Like
Nurse	Green	Rice	Nutritionist	Yellow
teacher	Grey	spring	season	red

Weather	Colours	Food	Jobs	emotions

Q.6 Underline the different/odd word:

(A)

1. Hamburger	sandwich	pizza	recipe
2. Fax	e-mail	C.D. player	mobile phone
3. brown	green	delicious	blue
4. talk	speak	chat	laugh
5. century	clock	season	month
6. funny	shy	hate	worried
7. fall in love	get married	get engaged	go to a play
8. apple	orange	career	strawberries
9. driver	river	teacher	doctor

(B) Use the words in (A) to complete the conversations:

1. Y: Why didn't you……….. at my joke?

    X: Because it wasn't very………. . That is why!

2. Y: Hello. Hello. I can't hear you. Who is it?

    X: Oh, Jonathon! Hi ! Sorry, I can't…. …now. I'm in a hurry.

3. Y: Good luck in your exams!

    X: Oh, thank you. I always get so……….. before exams.

4   Y: Mmmm! Did you make this chocolate cake?

    X: I did. Do you like it?

Y: Like it? I love it. It is ……... Can I have the ………..? Because I would to make it.

5   Y: Come on, Tommy. Say Hello to Auntie Maris. Do not be…………..

    X: Hello, Auntie Maris.