

Vocabulary Teaching Strategies and Student Preferences of Elderly EFL Students

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Abstract

Nowadays, elderly students face challenges in the work environment that are new to them, such as learning a second language in order to stay active and working. However, most of the research done focuses on helping younger students achieve success; this leaves teachers with no extra help or guidance when dealing with elderly learners. Vocabulary teaching strategies contribute to a better understanding and acquisition of words for students. It is also important for the teachers to take students' preferences into account, as this action contributes to improve motivation, performance, and confidence. This study examines elderly English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students who are at a beginner level and take part in a special program that focuses on giving adults and senior citizens the opportunity to continue learning in semester-long courses. Two tests, a questionnaire, and an observation form were used to collect data in order to determine which vocabulary teaching strategy is more effective between images and total physical response, and also to discover which strategy students prefer. The preliminary results of the research show that the more effective vocabulary teaching strategy in terms of vocabulary acquisition for this population is total physical response, yet students seem to prefer images when learning vocabulary. Another conclusion drawn is that teachers ought to take into account the preferences of the students when choosing a framework to work with, as this can directly enhance or affect the relationship between the students and the language. Recommendations for future research are presented after a thorough analysis of the research results.

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