

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the discrepancy in the use of the iconic-morphological approach via commonly-used roots, the non-iconic morphological approach via commonly-used roots, and the traditional definition-based teaching method in vocabulary memorization. It also explores the correlation between English vocabulary size, awareness of morphology, short-term memory for words, long-term memory for words, and vocabulary spelling abilities.

The subjects of this study are 91 third-year students studying at the National Overseas Chinese Experimental Senior High School in Taipei County. They received instruction in the iconic-morphological approach via commonly-used roots, the non-iconic morphological approach via commonly-used roots, and the traditional definition-based teaching method, respectively. In the beginning, the three groups took the same pre-test to examine their vocabulary size. Then, subjects were immediately asked to take post-test 1 to examine their awareness of morphology after receiving different instructions. Later, subjects were asked to memorize forty unknown words within twenty minutes and then to take post-test 2 to investigate their short-term memory for words. A week later, post-test 3 was held to check their long-term memory for words. A month later, they sat for post-test 4, used to explore their longer-term memory for the forty words.

In conclusion, the study summarizes the main findings pertinent to the proposed research questions. The students who receive instruction in the iconic-morphological

approach via commonly-used roots finally develop higher awareness of morphology, better short-term memory for words, better long-term memory for words, and better spelling ability than those who learn in the traditional definition-based approach or in the non-iconic morphological approach via commonly-used roots. Among the three groups, the students who display higher awareness of morphology have better short-term memory and long-term memory for words, and vice versa. Moreover, those who have better short-term memory have better long-term memory, and vice versa; those who have better one-week long-term memory for words definitely have better one-month long-term memory for words. Interestingly, students can learn words by rote for a short period of time regardless of their vocabulary size. That is, one person's short-term memory for words is not correlated with his vocabulary size.