

Semantic Processing and Vocabulary Development of Adult ESL Learners

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This experimental study investigates the effects of a semantic processing technique—semantic mapping—on the recognition and production of new L2 vocabulary. Two intact classes (a total of 48 students) from the English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) program in a public school in Maryland participated in this study. One of the two classes was randomly chosen to serve as the treatment group and the other as the control group. In order to investigate the effectiveness of instruction, a word recognition task and a production task were administered prior to the treatment (pre-test) and following the treatment (post-test). Results reveal that while there was a significant improvement over time between the pre- and post-test for the treatment group, the control group did not demonstrate any significant progress. More specifically, results of the study show that semantic mapping is relatively more effective in the case of receptive retrieval processes than in productive retrieval processes. This study suggests that semantic mapping can serve as an effective device in teaching L2 vocabulary.