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YouTube in an EFL Composition Class

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which the gap between the passive/receptive and active/productive vocabulary of EFL learners was narrowed in a college freshman composition class with the YouTube video clips incorporated and examined its effect on advanced vocabulary use in writing. To measure the vocabulary used in the videos and the compositions as well as 101 Taiwanese students' lexical proficiency, the RANGE software and the Vocabulary Size Test were utilized. The results show that there was a higher percentage of more sophisticated vocabulary use in timed paragraph writing after viewing the YouTube video clips. The average increasing proportion was 6.02% in turning higher-level vocabulary in the reservoir of passive vocabulary into free active vocabulary. Higher proficiency brings about a greater extension of productive vocabulary as a consequence of better uptake from English exposure. The increased productivity of advanced vocabulary ranged from 2.86% to 7.99% for learners of low- to high-intermediate English proficiency. The research implies that there is a need for activating less frequent words in students' passive vocabulary but not yet fully part of their active vocabulary. The positive effect of YouTube confirms that multiple exposures to English before writing may boost productive vocabulary development.

Keywords: Passive/receptive vocabulary; active/productive vocabulary; vocabulary levels; lexical frequency profile