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**The Effect of Using Sorting Activity  
Strategy on Preparatory School  
Students' Performance in English  
A B S T R A C T**

The purpose of study is to measure the effect of using sorting activity strategy (SAS) on preparatory school students' performance in English .On the other hand this strategy is related to teaching pronunciation of vocabulary for EFL preparatory school students in the classrooms , since sorting words help students to perform the pronunciation of word correctly as well as help them to know the meaning of vocabulary through open sort and closed sort and also through minimal pairs . From this lunched ,this study may explores ways to support teachers' attitudes toward English teaching and also to integrate the process of education . Using this strategy encourages students to understand and memorize more numbers of vocabularies into classrooms.

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**أثر استخدام استراتيجية الفرز على أداء طلبة المرحلة الإعدادية في اللغة الإنجليزية**

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**الخلاصة:**

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو قياس أثر استخدام استراتيجية الفرز على أداء طلبة المرحلة الإعدادية في اللغة الإنجليزية . في الجانب الآخر هذه الاستراتيجية مرتبطة بتعليم تلفظ المفردات لطلاب المدارس الإعدادية دارسي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية . حيث أن فرز الكلمات يساعد الطلاب على أداء لفظ الكلمات بشكل صحيح بالإضافة إلى والإملاء على معرفة معنى الكلمات من خلال الفرز المغلق والفرز المفتوح وكذلك من خلال الأزواج الصغيرة للكلمات المتشابهة في اللفظ والإملاء . من هذا المنطلق هذه الدراسة قد تكشف بعض الطرائق لدعم توجهات المدرسين نحو تدريس اللغة الانكليزية بشكل خاص وأيضا

لأجل تكامل عملية التعليم بشكل عام . إن استخدام هذه الأسئلة يشجع الطلاب على فهم وحفظ أكبر عدد من الكلمات داخل الصفوف.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى :

١-تعريف استراتيجية الفرز .

٢- إيجاد أثر استخدام هذه الاستراتيجية على أداء الطلاب في اللغة الانكليزية .

٣-معرفة الضابطة. كانت هنالك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المجموعة الضابطة. لمجموعة الضابطة.

٤- معرفة الفرز .. بين أنواع الفرز .

٥- إعطاء اقتراح تصوري لأجل التحسين والابتكارات في تدريس اللغة الانكليزية .

لتحقيق هذه الأهداف وضعت الفرضيات التالية :

١- هنالك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين أداء طلاب الرابع الإعدادي في تلفظ مفردات اللغة الانكليزية لصالح استراتيجية الفرز .

٢- يوجد فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية في أداء الطلاب بين أنواع فرز الكلمات التي تكون متشابهة في اللفظ ومختلفة في الإملاء وتلك التي تكون مختلفة في اللفظ ومتشابهة في الإملاء . لأثبت ان استراتيجية الفرز لها تأثير ايجابي أو سلبي على أداء الطلاب في لفظ الكلمات . اختيرت عينه مكونه من اثنين وستين طالبا قسموا إلى مجموعتين تجريبية وضابطة لتحقيق هذه الدراسة . الاختبار التحصيلي مكون من أربعة أسئلة بصدقه الظاهري وموثوقيته طبق على كلا المجموعتين .

تم تحليل النتائج وظهرت النتائج التالية :

١- هنالك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين أداء المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة لصالح المجموعة التجريبية التي درست باستخدام استراتيجية الفرز .

٢- لا يوجد فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية في أداء الطلاب بين أنواع الفرز.

هذه النتائج وضعت أن استخدام استراتيجية الفرز لها تأثير ايجابي في تدريس تلفظ مفردات اللغة الإنكليزية على أداء طلاب المرحلة الإعدادية .

في ضوء النتائج وضعت عدة استنتاجات وتوصيات واقتراحات .

- The current study aims at :
1. Identifying the strategy of sorting activity .
  2. Finding the effect of using sorting activity strategy on the student s' performance in English .
  3. Finding out whether there is any significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their performance .
  4. Finding out whether there is any significant difference between the types of sorting .
  5. Giving a suggested perspective for improvement and innovations in teaching English .

These aims have been achieved through verifying the following hypotheses:

1. There is statistically significant difference in the fourth student s' performance between Experimental and Control groups in English pronunciation in favor of sorting activity strategy.
2. There is a significant difference between students' performance in the types of sorting words that has the same pronunciation but different spelling comparing with that has different pronunciation but similar spelling .

To prove whether (SAS) has a positive or a negative effect on students' performance. Sample of sixty-two students have been selected and divided into two groups experimental and control groups. An achievement test of four questions has been constructed, validated, its reliability is obtained and then applied to each groups of study. The data has been statistically analyzed and show the following results:

1. There are statistically significant differences between the performance of the experimental group and that of the control group , and in favor of the experimental group who are taught by using (SAS) .
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the students' performance in the open sort and close sort .

These results indicate that using (SAS) has influenced the teaching of the pronunciation of vocabulary . Finally, in the light of the obtained results, several conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions have been put forward .

## Section One

### **1.0 Introductory Note**

This section includes problem of the study , aims of the study , hypotheses of the study ,limits of the study , value of the study ,definitions of basic terms and the plan of the study.

### **1.1 Problem of the Study and its Significance**

The prominent developments in communication have made learning foreign languages in general and English language in particular for every learner . English language has become an international language and a means of communication among people all over the- world . In teaching language , there are four skills that we need to enhance our communication : listening , speaking , reading and writing .Evidently vocabulary size influences the four skills .Vocabularies are the building blocks of every language .

Ellis (1997: 33) thought that vocabulary knowledge can help grammar acquisition because knowing vocabularies in some texts and conversations aids learners to acquire the meaning of the text and conversation .Vocabulary teaching is conclusive to foreign language acquisition . Teaching vocabulary always perceived as a boring process , it takes most of the time of each learner.

Rahimi and Sahragard (2008:12-17 ) concept sorting is a strategy to offer learners to the vocabulary of a new topic or book . The teacher gives students a list of terms from reading material .Learners put vocabularies into different groups based on each words' meaning .These groups can be defined by the teacher or students . Gu and Johnson (1996: 643-679) applied this strategy on good learners and found that most successful learners are those who select the most favorable strategy from a scope of available options and decide how to follow the strategy and when to switch another strategy . Since a good knowledge of vocabulary has considerable impact on the student s' enhancement of language skills .

### **1.2Aims of the study**

The current study aims at :

1. Identifying the strategy of sorting activity .
2. Finding the effect of using (SAS) on the student s' performance in English .
3. Finding out whether there is significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in performance .
- 4.Finding whether there is significant difference between the types of sorting .

5. Giving a suggested perspective for improvement and innovations in teaching English .

### **1.3 Hypotheses of the study**

This study hypothesized that :

1. There is statistically significant difference in the fourth student s' performance in English pronunciation in favor of sorting activity strategy.
2. There is a significant difference between students' performance on types of sorting words that has the same pronunciation but different spelling comparing with that has different pronunciation but similar spelling .

### **1.4 Limits of the study**

This study is limited to the fourth year students at Al- Aisalanh Preparatory School for Boys who are studying " English for Iraq Book " during the academic year 2020 -2021 .

### **1.5 Value of the study**

The significance of this study springs from the fact that using (SAS) is much better recalled enjoyed , and understood . Sorting activity strategy requires us make our own meaning , that is developed in our own conceptualization of what we are learning . For this reason , this study is highly significant for :

- Specialists and supervisors ,it stimulates their interest in conducting training courses for enhancing the use of (SAS) in English language teaching .
- Curriculum designers , this study may provide them with any possibility of enriching English language curricula with a variety of activities based on (SAS) .
- Teachers ,this study broaden their awareness of various effective strategies and techniques and provide them with suitable activities to improve student s' performance .

### **1.6 Definitions of the basic terms**

1. Sorting activity strategy is an activity that requires students to sort objects , words , phrases and sentences according to set parameters (Bear , 1996 : 465 ) .

The operational definition of sorting activity strategy is the process of garbling and screening sounds and vocabulary by using similarity features of sounds and words through using sorting activity strategy .

2. Effect : it refers to the degree of change and improvement in student s' performance in English vocabulary as a result of using sorting activity strategy as a teaching and learning tool supportive to the process of performance (Wikipedia,2013) .

The operational definition of Effect it is the change in student s' performance level in English language pronunciation as a result of using (SAS) of vocabulary and its' performance in English language .

3. Performance : refers to "a special skill or ability acquired by training or practice " ( Alvermann , 1989:12)

-Richards and Schmidt (2002 : 392 ) define performance it is the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy , completeness ,cost and speed .

- Performance refers to the student s' accomplishment ,competency or proficiency of a given skill or body of knowledge (Good , 1973 : 7 ).

The operational definition of performance is the student s' ability to pronounce vocabulary and sounds correctly .

### **1.7 The Plan of the study**

The following steps will be adopted in carrying out the research :

1. A survey of (SAS) , pre-test , post –test design of experiment .
2. An experiment will be conducted , the control group will be taught according communication method while the experimental group will be taught by using (SAS) .
3. Two groups are randomly selected from the fourth year students at preparatory school .
4. The groups are equalized according to several variables .
5. A pre – posttest are constructed to equalize the two groups and to find the difference between the experimental and control group .
6. Data will be analyzed .
7. Conclusions and recommendations will be driven .

## **Section Two : Theoretical Background**

### **2.0 Sorting Activities**

They are activities that require students to sort objects ,words , phrases and sentences according to set parameters . Sorting activities are appropriate for use with English language learners because they provide away for students to manipulate objects and written symbols to show understanding of concepts , while acquiring the vocabularies and structures needed for verbal instruction . Sorting activities can be used in a wide range of curricular areas and appropriate from kindergarten through 12 grade with careful planning adaptation (Bear ,1996: 480).

Tompikins ( 2009: 131-149) stated that word walls are lists of words created in the classroom for the purpose of word study vocabulary development . They can be as simple as words written on individual cards and placed on bulletin board or lists of words written on a large sheet of butcher paper . Students in the classroom where they learn English as a second language , it is helpful to create multilingual word walls with vocabulary written in several languages and explained . These word walls then serve as a reference for learners as they interact or write vocabularies .Some teachers favor to create number of different word walls in the classroom , one containing high frequency words , which the learners use for reference in speaking and writing and others related to vocabularies being studied in relation with a literature or science unit . When the class moves on to another literature focus the teacher might collect the vocabularies written on cards .

### **2.1 Word sorting**

Zhang (2008: 77 ) states that using appropriate presentation methods enables students to get impression and richer information about the target words to make them enter the long term memory .

According to Treiman (2006:581-599) emergent , letter name , within word , syllables affixes and derivational relations are drawn from the specific strategies students use at these times , for example letter name spellers often spell vocabularies phonetically using the names of the letters to enable theme pronounce vocabularies , while within –word spellers experiment with vowel patterns within words .Word sorting a method of word study addresses a wide developmental range a variety of needs , picture sorts are helpful tools for

developing phonological awareness in students who are learning vocabulary performance . ( Bradley & Bryant , 1985 :175-190).

Word sorting word study are not only emergent readers . Once students have mastered the basic sound , symbol and correspondences and patterns . Students experience difficulty with morphemes or units of meaning such as affixes and base words ( Henderson ,1990 ).

## 2.2 The Concept of Sorting

Concept sort is a vocabulary and comprehension strategy used to familiarize learners with the vocabulary of a new topic or book . Teachers provide students with a list of terms or concepts from reading materials . learners put different categories based on each word 's meaning . These categories can be defined by the teachers or by the learners . When used before reading , concept sort give a chance for a teacher to get what his learners already know about the given content .when use concept sort through speaking , teachers can evaluate their learners performance of the concepts presented (Meier ,2012).

## 2.3 Types of Sorting

There are two types of word sort :

1. Open Sort : prompt divergent and inductive reasoning .No category or criterion for grouping is known in advance of sorting . Learners must search for meaning and discover relationships among technical terms without the benefit of any structure .
2. Close Sort : in this type learners in advance of sorting know what the main patterns are .In other words , the criterion that the vocabulary in group must share is stated .

The concept of open and closed sorts is expressed in the following examples : A teacher who employs concept sort strategy in teaching vocabulary to his learners may present his students with the following pre-selected words about trees ( Vacca & Vacca ,1989).

## 2.4 Sound Sorts

Sounds are organized by sound patterns . Because some students have some difficulty with sound sorts , the teacher write some example on

chalkboard , and explains how to categorize words by sound .The teacher start with short /a / and short /e/ vowel sound and writes words under each category .

## **2.5 The Definition of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is a set of habits of producing sounds . The habits of producing sounds is acquired by replying it over and over again and by being corrected when it is pronounced mistakenly. The learning of pronunciation in the second language means in building up new pronunciation rules and overcoming the basis of the first language (Cook, 1996) .

Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds which are used to form meaning . Pronunciation contains attention to the special sounds of language ( segments ) aspect of speech beyond the level of the individual sound such as phrasing , intonation , stress ,timing and rhythm ( supra segmental aspects ) , how the voice is predicted ( voice quality ) and in its widest definition to symbols and expressions that are directly related to the way that we are speaking the language . A wide definitions of pronunciation includes supra segmental and segmental features . In spite of these different aspects of pronunciation are dealt in isolation , it is important to remember that they all work combination when we speak and are therefore always best learned as an integral part of spoken language (Gilakjani ,2012: 1-15) .

## **2.6 Importance of Pronunciation**

A lot of teachers do not give sufficient attention to English pronunciation . There are many different reasons for this carelessness . Many learners show that they need to learn pronunciation and learning pronunciation is a losing of time . They state that just communication in English is sufficient and when they are understood nothing else is important . The main goal of learning and teaching pronunciation in each language is to encourage learners to communicate in the target language ,in this situation , communication is an important term to show . Communication means to understand and to be understood . Many learners believe that because they can talk to their teachers and other learners , so they can easily communicate in English , but they may make big mistakes (Harmer ,2001:401-405) .

## 2.7 Pronunciation and Language Skills

There is a direct relationship between pronunciation ability and other skills of language . The comprehension skills are independent of language and these skills cannot be transferred to the second language (L2) . Rather , well comprehended L2 readers can do it since they have accomplished to a stage that they can access from the L2 . They acquired skills in mental rules .Referring to the phonological loop and visual –spatial sketch aped as two underlying systems of working memory . The text is immediately decoded and stored phonologically in the phonological loop , not visually . In addition , due to the limited capacity of working memory , material in the phonological loop is a danger of loss if one fails to quickly distinguish the L2 phonemes from one another when they differ by phoneme such failure makes it difficult to link the sounds with meaning .The poor grasper tend to overload the working memory with phonological aspects of text since they lack a fully elaborated phonological inventory of the working memory impedes reading comprehension ( Walter , 2009:4-7) .

## 2.8 Teaching Pronunciation

Opinions on teaching pronunciation changed compellingly over the last half of the twentieth century . Pronunciation instruction became somewhat incidental to a course of study . By mid 1980 ,with greater attention of grammatical rules as important elements in discourse , to balance between fluency and accuracy , and to the explicit specification of pedagogical tasks that a learner should accomplish , it became clear that pronunciation was a key to gaining full communicative competence . (Brown , 2007 :339 ) .

Ayed (2019:68) says that Teaching pronunciation is teaching about aspects that influence meanings of sentences through segmental phonemes. It is important to teach, because pronunciation is a basic sub skill in speaking. Therefore, good pronunciation avoids misunderstanding in communication. When people say, for example, “soap” in a situation such as a restaurant where they should have said “soup,” the inaccurate production of a phoneme can lead to misunderstand.

## 2.9 Features of Good Pronunciation

Adam Brown ( 2014 : 170-171 ) states that there are two features of good pronunciation they are :

## **2.9.1 Orientation of the syllabus**

Early approaches put grammar entirely at the center of the language syllabus. Grammar bases were the basis of the syllabus, with vocabulary learning being necessary in order to form those rules. No methodic treatment was given to speaking or listening skills. In the Lexical Approach, popular since the 1980s, vocabulary has been placed at the center of the syllabus. Language is said to be grammaticalized lexis rather than lexicalized grammar.

## **2.9.2 Communicativeness**

The communicative revolution, begun in the 1970s, stressed that students learn a language by using it to communicate. That is, concentrate is on the functions that language can convey rather than the shapes of grammar, etc. Learners should therefore be engaged in interesting tasks that symbolize meaningful communication with authentic materials.

## **2.10 Components of Pronunciation**

### **2.10.1 Segmental Features**

According to Bryant (1990 : 52) segmental was assessed by rhyme detection, alliteration detection, and the segmental features involved consonant and vowels.

#### **2.10.1.1 consonants**

Based on the International Phonetics Alphabet (IPA), the formally phonemic symbols using in English language .



**Table (2. 3)**

*Single Vowels and Diphthong*

Single vowels		Diphthongs
Short	Long	
/i/ - bin	/I:/ - see	/ei/ - play
/e/- pen	/a:/ - heart	/ai/ - buy
/æ/-man	/ɔ:/ - four	/ɔi/ - boy
/ʌ/ - fun	/u:/ - blue	/əʊ/ - phone
/ɒ/ - hot		/aʊ/ - loud
/ʊ/ - look		/iə/ - cheer
/ə/ - about		/eə/ - hair
		/ʊə/ - cure

**2.10.2 Supra Segmental Features:** There are many features one of them

**2.10.2.1 Stress**

Altaif (2019 : 5) says that stress is the loudness of a syllable in a word that is different from other syllables, or the loudness of a word in a sentence as contrasted with the other words in the same sentence.

**Section Three**

**Procedures**

**3.1 Experimental Design**

Choosing an appropriate design for research work is one of the most important decisions that should be primarily regarded (Van D, Deaboled , B ,1979 : 232) . Experimental design is the blueprint of the procedures that enable the researcher to test hypotheses by reaching valid conclusions about relationships between dependent and independent variables (Best,1981:68).

**3.2 Population and Sampling**

Population is defined as "a group of individuals who have the same characteristics" (Creswell, 2012:142). Whereas the sample means "any group of individuals that is chosen to stand for a population" (Richards and Schmidt, 2010: 443).

### 3.3 Construction of the Achievement Test

A test is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given domain , with an emphasis on the concepts of method and measuring . Tests are instruments that are usually carefully designed and that have identifiable scoring rubrics ( Brown , 2007 : 445).

The achievement test in this study consists of four questions. The first question deals with word sort and includes two parts , part **A** contains thirteen items and part **B** contains twelve items ,each item in both two parts is given one marks .

The second question deals with sound sort which tests the students' ability of pronunciation and contains two parts , part **A** contains thirteen items and part **B** contains twelve items ,each item in both two parts is given one marks .

The third question deals with spelling sort which includes two parts , , part **A** contains thirteen items and part **B** contains twelve items ,each item in both two parts is given one marks .

While the fourth question consists two parts . Part **A** contains three items deals with how to choose the correct word and sound , each item is given four marks . Part **B** deals with how the students can give the word which contains the correct sound and includes six items , each item is given two marks .

### 3.4 Validity of the Test

Henning (1987:89) states that validity in general refers to the appropriateness of the test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is purported to measure .Validity is seen as an essential quality of a language test because a valid test is a good test . Validity is a quality of a test that is bestowed by testing experts to make a test measure what it is supposed to (Chapell , Fulcher & Davidson, 2012 :21) .

### 3.5 Reliability of the Achievement Test

Reliability is an important feature of a good test. A test is said to be reliable if its degree of accuracy stays stable and consistent in each time is conducted with the same condition for the same sample of students (Verma and Beard, 1981:860).

### 3.6 The Pilot Study

The test has been applied on a sample of twenty students selected randomly from the original population of this study .The pilot test aims at specifying the required time to answer the items of the test ; to know if these items are clear or not; and doing the necessary changes or medications on the items of the test , and also to identify the discrimination power ( DP ) and difficulty level (DL) of each item and its reliability. Findings show that the given instructions are clear and the time involved for answering the test items is about 50 minutes.

### 3.7 Item Analysis

McNamara ( 2000 : 134 ) defines item analysis as " a procedure that is used to analyze the features of test items both in difficulty level and discrimination power". Item analysis can indicate which items may be too easy or difficult and which may be unsuccessful for any reason to differentiate between high and low students . It sometimes suggests why an item has not functioned successfully and how it could be improved ( Ebel & Frisbie , 1991: 225 ).

### 3.8 Difficulty level of Test Items

Items difficulty or the facility value ( F.V ) of an item refers to the percentage of the students who answer the item correctly and it also shows how difficult or easy a particular item in the test is ( Heaton , 1990 : 178 ).

### 3.9 Discrimination Power

It is one of the statistics method which is employed to find the high and low scores of the test . Gronlund (1976:268) indicates that discrimination power (DP) is the degree to which the test items discriminate between students with high and low achievement . the results show that the DP of the test items ranges between ( 0.30) to ( 0.80) which is considered suitable from statistical point of view .

## Section Four

### Analysis of Data, Discussion of Results and Conclusions

#### 4.1 Data Analysis

The obtained scores of the two groups of students have been analyzed in terms of the formulated hypotheses, as follows:

### **1. Comparison Between the students' performance of the Experimental Group and that of the Control Group in the Post-test scores.**

In order to determine whether there is any significant difference between the two mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the total scores of the post – test , The mean scores of the two groups have been compared with each other . The obtained mean scores of the experimental group in the posttest is (61.8333) with standard deviation (7.67029) whereas that of the control group is (46.0938) with standard deviation (9.72313). Then the t-test formula for two independent samples is used to find whether there is any significant difference between the obtained mean scores of the two groups .The Calculated t-value is found to be ( 7.05) whereas the tabulated t-value is (2.00) at the degree of freedom (60) and the level of the significance (0.05)

### **2 . Comparison of the students' performance between pre-test and post – test scores of the control groups .**

It is found that the mean scores of the the students' performance of the control group in the pre-test is (44.88) with a standard deviation of (9.37) . Whereas that of the post-test is (46.09) with standard deviation (9.72) . The calculated t-value is (3.04), which is found to be higher than the tabulated t-value which is (2.04) at (0.05) level of significance when the degree of freedom is (31) . This means that there is no significant difference between the two means scores in the pretest and that in the posttest

### **3 . Comparison of the students performance between pre –test and post – test scores in the experimental group .**

It is found that the mean score of the differences between the students' performance of the experimental group in the pre-test is (45.3333) with a standard deviation of (10.45626) .whereas that of the post-test is (61.8333) with standard deviation( 7.67029 ). The calculated t-value is (9.487) which is found to be higher than the tabulated t-value which is (2.04) at (0.05) level of significance with the degree of freedom is (29) .

The obtained results indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the students' performance in the experimental in the pre- test and their performance in the post-test in favor of using sorting activity strategy . So the first hypothesis is validated .

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