

WORD ASSOCIATION ANALYSIS IN DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY LEVELS

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In this study, we investigate whether there is any difference between high and low proficiency level learners in their use of phonological and semantic strategies in word association in order to understand how mental lexicon works in these two different proficiency levels. Wolter (2002) aims to use word association analysis with the purpose of understanding whether there is any association between psycholinguistic knowledge and the proficiency level in a foreign language. With a similar approach, quantitative and qualitative data were utilized to answer research questions. In quantitative part, a word association test was given to 25 elementary level participants and 25 advanced level participants. For the qualitative part, retrospective interviews were conducted with all participants to figure out the rationale behind the participants' word choices. The results of two groups were analyzed through the statistical tools. As it is recognized from the collected data, the word association concept is not related to the proficiency levels. On behalf of that, the results suggest that word association can be correlated with personal background since the participants of both levels provided the similar response in terms of phonological and semantic despite their different word choices. This research study has revealed that personality and personal background remarkably affect word association. In line with this finding, word association tests we used in applied linguistics can be used in further psychological and psycholinguistics studies.