The Efficacy of Procedural and Declarative Learning Strategies on EFL Students' Oral Proficiency

Dr. Ali Zahabi

Overview

- Language students require to use their own unique way of learning as learners have different learning preferences (Oxford,2003, p. 3).Using particular styles and strategies for language learning could help teachers in attaining the awareness of their preferences and of possible biases as it is evident that the more teachers try to understand and learn about the learner style preferences, the more effectively they can orient their L2 instruction.
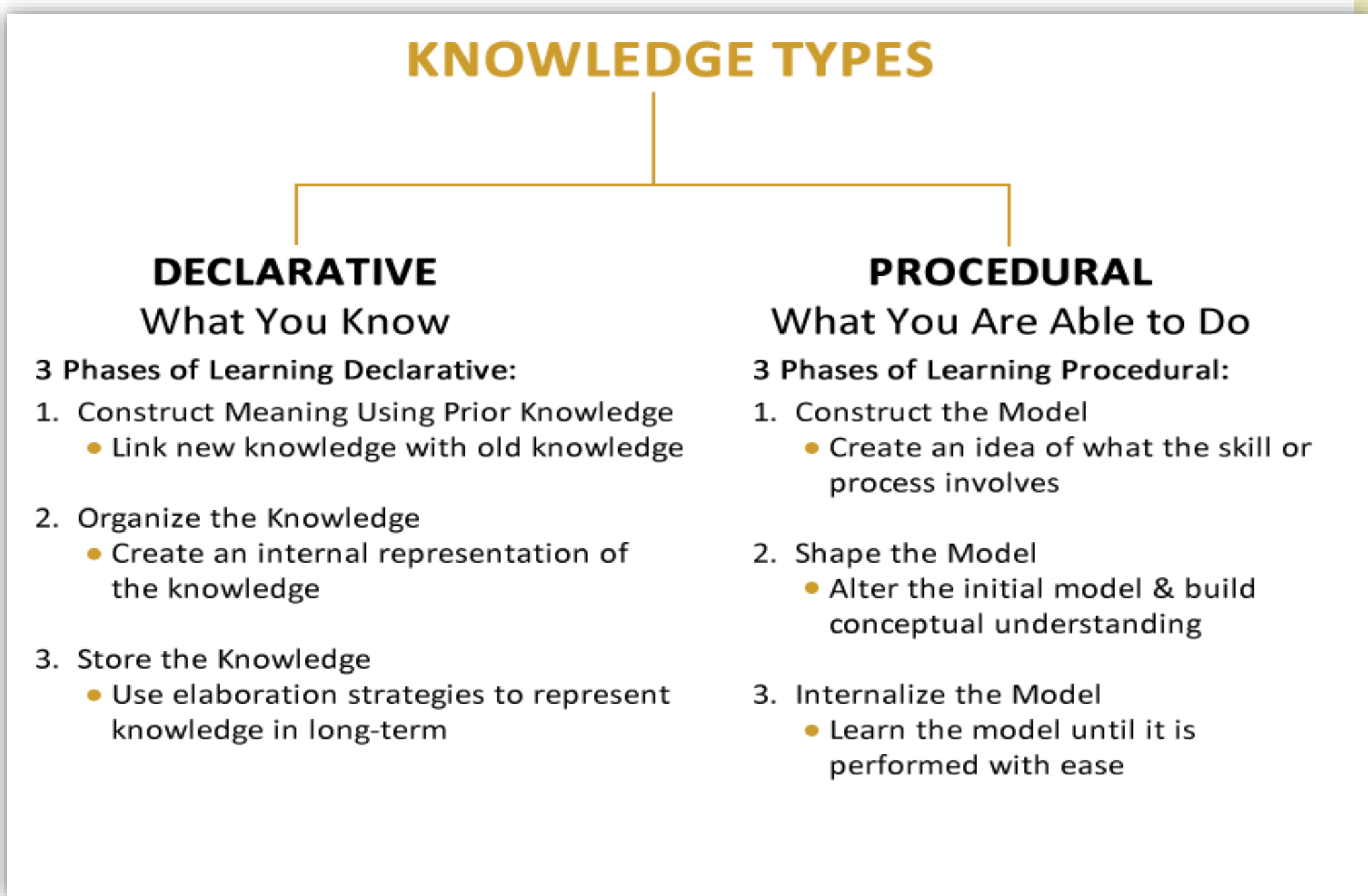
Aims and objectives

- Due to the scarcity of the existing literature over the role of the two core aspects of language learning: procedural and declarative knowledge, and to what extend the results in foreign language performance vary over the same course among the participants of the study, the current research aims to investigate the role of these two aspects in EFL context of Thailand at university level. Meanwhile, the research tried to find out if there is any effect on individuals' performance over the pre-/post-test and delayed post-test and finally to what extend foreign language learning could be more effective using either one of these strategies.

Outcome

- The treatments had an effect on general acquisition of language grammar. Both experimental groups outperformed the control one in their post- and delayed posttest results. In the meantime, the tasks mainly had effect on acquisition of grammatical items only. There was no difference between the oral and audio-visual tasks on acquisition.

Activity

- There were two different types of activities which were used as treatment in the experimental group A (procedural) and B (declarative). Each treatment provided participants with both focused audio-visual and written input on general interest topics that covered the target structure (past tense). There were a total of 10 written and audiovisual samples of the target structure across the treatment period. Participants in each group, depending on their group either procedural or declarative received instructions on task completion only through student-teacher and peer negotiation in each group except the control one. The teachers made sure that all the participants completed these tasks through reading the passages in the form of group activity and reproducing them with their own words or watching an episode and trying to narrate the story to the class.

KNOWLEDGE TYPES

DECLARATIVE
What You Know
3 Phases of Learning Declarative:
1. Construct Meaning Using Prior Knowledge
   - Link new knowledge with old knowledge
2. Organize the Knowledge
   - Create an internal representation of the knowledge
3. Store the Knowledge
   - Use elaboration strategies to represent knowledge in long-term

PROCEDURAL
What You Are Able to Do
3 Phases of Learning Procedural:
1. Construct the Model
   - Create an idea of what the skill or process involves
2. Shape the Model
   - Alter the initial model & build conceptual understanding
3. Internalize the Model
   - Learn the model until it is performed with ease

Further development

- One clear outcome is that these activities prove to have effect on language proficiency in general and specifically on grammatical knowledge. It is possible that such tasks to be accompanied with either more explicit types of instruction or more extended exposure may be needed to have an effect on the oral production skill as well. Another outcome was the differential effect the treatments had on EFL general language enhancement. Successful performance on a classroom activity is thus not necessarily a good predictor of ultimate language development. Of course, the benefits for acquisition are not the only consideration for teachers. Tasks that lead to better immediate performance may motivate learners more.

Impacts

- As is represented in the following table, the post-test results showed a significant gain when compared to the control group, which in turn proves that the treatment each group received over the entire course was effective.

Table 4. Post-test Comparison between Groups

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CONTROL	70.05	40	14.87719	2.35229
EXPERIMENTAL A	75.00	40	9.87096	1.56074
EXPERIMENTAL B	74.82	40	7.95464	1.25774

Building upon the obtained results, research question 2 stating if there is any effect on individuals' performance over the pre-/post-test and delayed post-test proved that application of these two strategies in EFL context was significantly effective in enhancing the general knowledge of the participants in experimental groups. Meanwhile further analysis of the interview data will provide even more academically sound justification over the efficacy of either of these strategies between experimental groups.

References

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