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Vietnamese Children's Retention of English Vocabulary Aspects via the Input-Based and Output-Based Instruction

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Abstract: The present study investigates aspects of English vocabulary knowledge retained by young Vietnamese EFL learners under the comparative impacts of the input-based and output-based instruction. Participants were 26 Vietnamese children from a Foreign Language Center in Vinh Long City, South of Vietnam. Instruments were pre-post tests and the treatment program, during which the input-based group of 13 children got input-oriented tasks/activities, while output-oriented ones were delivered to the other group, 13 children. The treatment focused on 5 basic knowledge aspects of English target words/phrases, i.e. the knowledge of (1) conceptive, (2) pragmatic, (3) orthographic, (4) receptive and (5) phonological aspect. The pre-post test results showed that both approaches equally had positive impacts on the learners' gains on vocabulary retention. Notably, both groups had better gains on the aspects of (1), (2) and (4) than the other two. It is, therefore, suggested that more practice should be directed toward aspects (3) and (5) if in-class time is permitted, as such for children's better vocabulary retention and effortlessly recalling when needed for later use.

Keywords: input-based, output-based, instruction, aspect, task.

INTRODUCTION

Several foreign language centers in Vinh Long City, South of Vietnam, have used the course-book of "Let's Go" to teach young EFL learners. The course mainly focuses on developing the learners' English vocabulary knowledge, basic grammatical structures/sentences and language skills. However, most teachers in charge usually find it quite challenging for their learners to automatically recall the words they have learnt in previous lessons, which thus might impede the flow of classroom activities requiring the use of related words, and sometimes cause certain frustrations among teachers. As a consequence, several types of techniques have been introduced and tried to teach English vocabulary better. However, it is still a demanding job for EFL teachers at this center. It cannot be denied that the decision on what kinds of instruction are more effective in teaching vocabulary so as to enhance learners' vocabulary acquisition and retention is necessary for language instructors. The present study was, therefore, conducted to investigate whether the input-based or output-based instruction had more positive effects on young Vietnamese EFL learners' English word retention in terms of vocabulary knowledge aspects.

Research Aims and Questions

The present study as mentioned above aimed to examine whether the input-based and output-based instruction enhanced young Vietnamese EFL learners' English word acquisition, and which one had more positive effects on the target learners' vocabulary retention. Therefore, this study was done to seek answers to two specific research questions: (1) *Do the input-based instruction and output-based instruction enhance young Vietnamese EFL learners' vocabulary retention*? (2) *Which of the two approaches appears to have stronger enhancements with reference to vocabulary aspects?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children's Characteristics and Multiple Intelligences

Pinter (2006) proposed 5 basic characteristics of children as follows: Children (1) understand meaningful message, but they cannot

analyze language yet; (2) have lower levels of awareness about themselves as well as about process of learning; (3) have limited reading and writing skill even in their first language; (4) have limited knowledge about the world; (5) enjoy fantasy, imagination, and movement.

Meanwhile, Gardner (1999) identified eight types of intelligence, which should be taken into in-depth consideration and applied to educating children at large: **(1) Linguistic intelligence** - the ability to learn and use language to accomplish certain goals; **(2) Logical-mathematical intelligence** – the ability to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically; **(3) Musical intelligence** - the skill in performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns; **(4) Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence** - the potential of using one's whole body/parts of the body to solve problems, the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements; **(5) Visual-Spatial intelligence** involves the ability to recognize and use the patterns of wide space, more confined areas as well as to form mental images about it; **(6) Interpersonal intelligence** – the ability to understand other people's intentions, motivations and desires; **(7) Intrapersonal intelligence** – the ability to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations; **(8) Naturalist intelligence** - the ability to understand and organize the patterns of nature.

Though distinctively listed, all eight intelligences are equally significant and potential to an individual's holistic development. The development in one area often enhances the development of another (Gardner 1999). Therefore, to be successful in teaching language to children, teachers are advised to purposely design various tasks; use different teaching techniques to strengthen learners' strong intelligences as well as to wake up underutilized ones, to integrate intelligences into lessons appropriately so as to make the best use of every child's own intelligences. Briefly, multiple-intelligence-based instruction results in more positive effects in comparison with traditional methods, especially when it is applied to teach children who are naturally dynamic and willing to engage in language learning activities of various types.

Vocabulary Role and Retention

Retention is "the ability to remember things" (Hornby 2004, 1091). And vocabulary retention refers to the ability to acquire vocabulary and store vocabulary in short-term or long-term memory, and the ability to remember/recall the words learnt after a period of time. Vocabulary acquisition has been regarded as both implicit learning and explicit learning, which means the focus being either on the meaning or form of the new words.

Vocabulary undoubtedly plays a key role in the language acquisition process. Lewis (1993) claims that vocabulary should be the centre of language teaching because language includes grammaticalized lexis, not just lexicalized grammar. In addition, Zimmerman (1997) observes that vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learners. It is obvious that vocabulary knowledge plays a key role to a person's success in language learning. This is because vocabulary is more significant than grammar (Flower 2000) although both grammar and vocabulary should not be ignored (Allen 1983). Nation (1990) suggests that learners cannot communicate successfully if they do not have enough words they need. Consequently, learners have to face lots of difficulties in both receptive and productive language use due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Briefly, vocabulary retention involves how much knowledge about a word/phrase one has, and involves various aspects of knowing a word. Since there are no unanimously accepted tests to measure every aspect of word knowledge, for the working measurement frame the present study focused on 5 basic aspects of a word/phrase proposed by Cameron (2001): (1) ***conceptual knowledge***— to use it with the correct meaning; (2) ***pragmatic knowledge***— to use it in the right situation; (3) ***orthographic knowledge***— to spell it correctly; (4) ***receptive knowledge***: aural/decoding— to understand it when it is spoken/written; (5) ***phonological knowledge***— to hear the word and to pronounce it acceptably, on its own, and in phrases and sentences.

Input-Based and Output-Based Instruction

Input-based instruction has a long history of input comprehension, highlighted by the input hypothesis (Krashen 1985). It involves the manipulation of the input in which learners are exposed to or are required to process (Ellis 2012). There are different forms of input-based instruction. According to Van Patten's model (2003), input-based instruction pushed learners to process input by being asked to show that they have understood the meaning of a target feature in input by providing a non-verbal or minimally verbal response (e.g., listening and choosing between two pictures to a sentence that describes one of the picture). Meanwhile, the output-based instruction supported by the output hypothesis (Swain 1993) requires learners to produce meaningful output through productive activities. This approach is regarded as one form of practice in traditional audio-lingual classrooms where target language is practiced without any communicative context through various types of mechanical drills (Rassaei 2012).

The input-based activities may include (i) *Matching the words or sentences and the pictures given* - The task includes two columns in which words or sentences are put in one column A and pictures in another column B. Students draw lines to match one item in column A with one item in column B*;* (ii) *Look, read and decide whether the picture and the sentence are matched* - Students are required to look at the picture and read the sentence. Then, they put the tick ☑ if the picture and the sentence are matched, and put ☒ if they are not matched in the box; (iii) *Listen and circle the correct picture a, b,* or *c.*

Typical output-based activities are (i) *Listen, choose the pictures, and call out the words* -Teacher divides class into small groups of 5 or 6 students, and gives each group a set of the same pictures. Students listen to teacher's word, choose the correct picture, and call out the word at the same time they raise the chosen picture; (ii) *Read and write complete sentences* - Students are provided with sentences in which there is one blank in each sentence without any pictures. They read the sentences and decide what words are appropriate to fill in the blanks; (iii) *Write complete sentences/questions* - Teacher gives the word cues

of sentences or questions. Students are required to add more words where necessary and write complete sentences or questions.

Previous Relevant Studies

Benati (2001) examined the effects of the input processing instruction with the output-based. The input instruction involved grammar explanation and comprehension practice directed at altering the way L2 learners processed input, while the output-based involved the explanation of grammar rules followed by written and oral practice directed at altering the way L2 learners produced the target language. The test result showed that input instruction had positive effects on acquisition of Italian verbal morphology, and greater effects on the developing system than the output-based. R. Erlam (2009) explored the effects of the input-based and output-based instruction on the acquisition of implicit and explicit knowledge of English indefinite article "a". The result indicated both input-based and output-based groups improved their implicit and explicit knowledge of the target form. But other studies such as by Maftoon and Haratmeh (2012), Erturk (2013), and Yamauchi (2014) displayed positive or stronger effects of the output-based on the learners involved. As a result, the observation in question is not by any means coming to a conclusive end and thereby calls for further research in the concerned field for a thorough knowledge about second language acquisition with regard to input-output dimensions.

The present study (to its researchers' awareness) was one of the first, at least in Vietnamese setting, and certainly the first one in Vinh Long City, to examine and measure specific aspects of vocabulary acquired and retained by young Vietnamese EFL learners via the input-based and output-based instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

They were 26 Vietnamese children from two EFL classes at a foreign language center (in Vinh Long City, South of Vietnam). Both classes were studying the same course-book (*Let's go 2A*, 3rd edition by

Nakata et al. 2013) at the time of investigation. One class was randomly chosen as the input-based group (IBG) of 13 children with 6 males and 7 females. Their ages ranged from 8 to 11. The output-based group (OBG) had the equal number of 13 children (8 males, 5 females aged between 8 and 11).

Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of a pre-post test. Moreover, to measure the effects of the target approaches on young learners' vocabulary retention, the vocabulary treatments were implemented on both groups. The pre-post test was designed as achievement test, and also to measure vocabulary retention.

The pre-post test was based on the contents in the treatment program. Specially, it focused on 26 words taught in the treatment, and the sentence patterns or questions used to treat these words. The task types in the test were based on those found in Workbook- *Let's Go 2A*- 3rd edition by Nakata et al. (2013) and in Cambridge Young Learners English Test: Examinations on papers from University of Cambridge- Cambridge Starters- 2nd edition (Cambridge ESOL 2007). The children participating in the study did practice these task types during the treatment.

The test consisted of five tasks containing 50 items with each task of 10 items for 20 points (see Appendix). The time allotted for each test was 45 minutes. The five tasks designed in the tests were based just on five aspects of vocabulary knowledge: (1) ***conceptual***; (2) ***pragmatic***; (3) ***orthographic***; (4) ***receptive***; and (5) ***phonological***.

In each aspect-task, the children were required to do specifically the following:

TASK (1) - draw lines to match pictures and words.

TASK (2) - put a tick ☑ if the picture and the sentence given are matched, and put ☒ if they are not matched in the box.

TASK (3) – fill in the missing letters in a word to complete sentences.

TASK (4) - listen to the listening script read aloud by the teacher and to circle the correct letter below the picture.

TASK (5) - sit face-to-face with the teacher and answer the teacher's questions about the pictures given to them such as *"What does he/she have?", "Does he/she have a tissue in his/her hand?",* or to speak out school activities (e.g., *I erase the board at school*), and someone's ability (e.g., *She can swim/ dance*). Each child had 2 minutes for this task.

The treatment program for both groups lasted 7 weeks with the first 4 weeks for the vocabulary treatment (6 meetings for the treatment), the last 3 weeks for revision of what the children had learnt as well as for the delayed time before the post-test was employed. Both groups met twice every week (on Saturday morning and Sunday morning). Each meeting lasted two periods (90 minutes). IBG had meetings from 7AM to 8:45AM; whereas OBG from 9:15AM to 11AM. One single teacher taught both groups. During the treatment she provided the children with the same input (26 words with the sentence patterns and questions used to treat 26 words included in Unit 1 and Unit 2 in the course-book *Let's go 2A*) for the same duration of time, but implemented different techniques and tasks/activities to teach vocabulary to the two groups.

IBG received the input-based tasks/activities focusing on the children's comprehension of English input so as to achieve the outcome through tasks, e.g. listen and circle; listen and number the pictures; listen and put the pictures in correct order; read and check, match the pictures and the words; listen and act out the actions; slap the board; bingo game.

OBG had to do output-based tasks/activities in speaking and writing English, e.g. listen and repeat; call out the hidden words; listen and write the words; look at the pictures and complete the words or answer the questions; write complete sentences from the given words; put the words in correct order; jumbled words; look at the pictures and speak out; look at the pictures, ask and answer.

Research Materials

The research materials were (1) the course-book Let's Go 2A, 3rd edition (Nakata et al. 2013) including Textbook, Workbook, Teacher's book, Teacher's Cards, CDs, cassette player, used for vocabulary instruction during the treatment and for designing the pre-test, post-test; (2) the course-book *Cambridge Young Learners English Test: Examinations on papers from University of Cambridge-Cambridge Starter* (Cambridge ESOL 2007), additionally used for designing the pre-post test. Moreover, for the treatment, the researchers designed 6 lesson plans for each group. Each lesson plan lasted 90 minutes (two periods). In each lesson plan, there were three stages: introducing new vocabulary, getting familiar with spellings and pronunciation of the words, and using the words in contexts. After the first stage of the lesson – introduction of new vocabulary, 9 or 10 different tasks/activities were manipulated to help the children practice spellings and pronunciation of the target words as well as using them in contexts. Tasks/Activities in input-based lesson plans aimed to focus on English input comprehension through receptive skills (listening and reading). Meanwhile, output-based tasks/activities focused on the children's English production through productive skills (speaking and writing).

Research Procedure

First, piloting the pre-test was conducted two weeks before the pre-test was administrated in order to ensure whether or not the test was reliable and whether the test needed to be revised. The researchers chose five children sharing fundamental characteristics with those of the two experimental groups in terms of age, educational background, and English proficiency level. For tasks 1, 2, 3, the children performed the tasks on papers by themselves. For task 4, the teacher read the listening script three times, and they listened and chose the correct pictures. For task 5, the teacher invited one child each in turn to sit face-to-face with the teacher and respond the teacher's questions. Each correct item was scored 1 mark and an incorrect one was marked zero. Two teachers gave marks independently and then shared their marks to come to an agreement. The result of the piloted test (pre-test) analyzed by SPSS

Version 20 showed that the reliability of the pre-test was α=0.77. It was assumed that this result was the same for the post-test because the pre-test and post-test were similar in content and format with dissimilar task orders only. The result of the piloted test indicated that the pre-post test was reliable and could be used for collecting the data of the study.

Next, on the first meeting of week 1, the pre-test was administered to both groups. The teacher was there to clear out problems if any concerning the test instructions (Vietnamese translation was given just in case). After the pre-test was collected, no corrective feedback was provided until the completion of the post-test. From the second meeting of week 1 to the second meeting of week 4, the treatment was conducted by the same teacher for both groups in the same classroom on the same days. There were 26 target words/phrases, from (1) to (26) (based on the course-book), taught during the treatment. They were purposely distributed as follows:

Week 1 – Meeting 2: (1) write my name, (2) speak English,
(3) erase the board, (4) read books.

Week 2 – Meeting 1: (5) pencil sharpener, (6) paper clip,
(7) clock, (8) door, (9) window, (10) calendar;

Meeting 2: (5) – (10) again, but in plural forms.

Week 3 – Meeting 1: No word/phrase treatment, a dialogue lesson given;
Meeting 2: (11) run, (12) swim, (13) sing, (14) dance.

Week 4 – Meeting 1: (15) candy bar, (16) comic book, (17) comb, (18) coin,
(19) tissue, (20) watch;

Meeting 2: (21) calculator, (22) train pass, (23) umbrella,
(24) lunch box, (25) wallet, (26) key chain.

In weeks 5, 6, 7, different revision lessons (input-based and out-based lessons) were run. At the second meeting of week 7, the post-test was administered to both groups as planned.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Pre-Test

Table 1. Pre-Test Mean Scores

	Groups	*N*	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.*
Pre-test	IBG	13	16	44	30.77	07.812			
	OBG	13	14	66	30.15	16.522			
	IBG vs. OBG						.121	24	.904 (p> 0.05)

Although the min., max. and standard deviations were not equal between the two groups, no statistically significant difference was found in the mean scores of 30.77 (out of 100) and 30.15 (out of 100) with p=0.904>0.05. The notice should be that both means were less than 50 (out of 100), i.e. below the average.

It then showed that both groups' initial knowledge of the target words in the present study was low and almost the same at the beginning of the treatment. There were, however, slight differences found in Table 2 (input-based group) and Table 3 (output-based group) below in terms of the 5 aspects in point.

Table 2. IBG's Pre-Test Mean Scores in 5 Aspect-Tasks

	Aspect-Tasks (AT)	**N**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**
Pre-Test	(1) Conceptual	13	00	10	7.53
	(2) Pragmatic	13	2	14	10.00
	(3) Orthographic	13	00	6	2.30
	(4) Receptive	13	6	12	9.53
	(5) Phonological	13	00	4	1.38

AT (2) got the highest mean score (10 out of 20 points, the average), followed by AT (4) and AT (1) respectively, while AT (5) scored the least (1.38).

Table 3. OBG's Pre-Test Mean Scores in 5 Aspect-Tasks

Pre-Test	Aspect-Tasks (AT)	N	Min	Max	Mean
	(1) Conceptual	13	2	12	7.53
	(2) Pragmatic	13	4	14	7.53
	(3) Orthographic	13	00	8	2.77
	(4) Receptive	13	2	20	8.46
	(5) Phonological	13	00	18	3.84

Unlike Table 2, Table 3 found AT (4) came first with the mean score 8.46 (out of 20 points), but still below the average, while AT (1) and (2) shared the mean score (7.53 each). AT (3) got the lowest mean score (2.77).

As seen in Table 2 and 3, regarding the 5 aspects of the target words, both groups were relatively stronger in AT (1), (2) and (4), between 7 and 10 out of 20 each, indicating that these aspects were fairly easier for them to process. Naturally, intelligent guess might be present in the processing. On the other side, it looks like they were very weak in AT (3) and (5), less than 4 out of 20 each, i.e. those two aspects might cause problems for them in comparison to the other three. Accordingly, in terms of sequential take-in it more or less reveals that children tend to cognitively notice/take in words/phrases as whole units or gestalts at first hand, while their ability to physically acquire/retain words (spelling, pronouncing) appears to come later.

The Post-Test

Table 4. Post-Test Mean Scores

Post-Test	Groups	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	t-	df	Sig.
	IBG	13	50	94	78.92	11.124			
	OBG	13	56	96	83.69	11.940			
	IBG vs. OBG						-1.054	24	.303 (p> .05)

As seen from Table 4, although OBG's mean score (83.69) was higher than that of IBG (78.92), the difference was not statistically significant (p=.303>.05). But, both groups' post-test mean scores were

significantly higher than their pre-test mean scores correspondingly found in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Pre-Post Tests in Comparison

Group	Tests	N	Mean	SD	t	dt	Sig.
IBG	**Pre-test**	13	**30.77**	07.812			
	Post-test	13	**78.92**	11.124			
	Pre vs. post		-.48154		-16.335	12	.000 (p< .05)
OBG	**Pre-test**	13	**30.15**	16.522			
	Post-test	13	**83.69**	11.940			
	Pre vs. post		-.53538		-11.819	12	.000 (p< .05)

It is evident that both the input-based and output-based instruction did cause a change in the children's vocabulary aspects acquired and retained. That is both approaches made a significant improvement in the target learners from the pre-test to the post-test regarding vocabulary gains and retention. Next are 5 aspects in the post-tests:

Table 6. IBG's Post-Test Mean Scores in 5 Aspect-Tasks

Post-Test	Aspect-Tasks (AT)	N	Min	Max	Mean
	(1) Conceptual	13	14	20	**19.38**
	(2) Pragmatic	13	12	20	**18.30**
	(3) Orthographic	13	2	18	12.15
	(4) Receptive	13	10	20	**16.92**
	(5) Phonological	13	6	16	12.15

Recalling from Table 2 and 3 above, again AT (1), (2) and (4) were all higher than the other two AT (3) and (5) for IBG's post-test (Table 6). The case is the same for OBG's below:

Table 7. OBG's Post-Test Mean Scores in 5 Aspect-Tasks

Post-Test	Aspect-Tasks (AT)	N	Min	Max	Mean
	(1) Conceptual	13	14	20	**19.23**
	(2) Pragmatic	13	6	20	**16.92**
	(3) Orthographic	13	6	20	14.00
	(4) Receptive	13	14	20	**19.23**
	(5) Phonological	13	10	18	14.30

It is clear that regardless of whatever instruction was utilized (either input-based or output-based), the common sequence explicitly is cognitive/mental aspects (conceptual, pragmatic and receptive, i.e. the ability to take in and recognize meanings of words/phrases in certain environments) are much likely to promptly find their way first, then followed by the physical aspects (orthographic, phonological, i.e. the ability to write out and pronounce words).

That is why it might be a problem for children to physically recall (write out or pronounce correctly, fluently) words/phrases that they have already learnt (and thus teachers often complain about it as they mostly expect children to do the job immediately well). In other words, physical aspects of vocabulary knowledge generally need greater lengths of time to be sufficiently acquired and retained by children in comparison to cognitive aspects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in the present study, it should come to the conclusion that either input-based or output-based instruction can be manipulated for young EFL learners to process, acquire and retain aspects of English vocabulary knowledge. In other words, both approaches are equally beneficial to the target learners' goals in point. This finding is generally consistent with those of previous relevant studies elsewhere outside Vietnamese setting such as Erlam (2009) and Shintani (2011).

The new finding is that with regard to sequential acquisition cognitive aspects (conceptual, pragmatic, and receptive) of vocabulary knowledge tend to be acquired earlier and better retained than the physical ones (orthographic, phonological), i.e. the former aspect group is more or less easier than the latter one. As a result, more practice should be focused on physical aspects (if in-class time permits) for learners, especially the weak ones/classes, to firmly acquire/retain and

effortlessly recall or recite learnt words/phrases accurately and fluently (that is both cognitively and physically) for use when needed. Thereby, it calls for in-charge teachers' whole-hearted involvement and patience as well in redesigning and manipulating lesson plans in a new format with purposely more weight for physical aspects of vocabulary knowledge via a wide variety of friendly input/output-based alternating activities in classroom, stimulating multiple-intelligences naturally and helpfully.

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APPENDIX: PRE - POST TEST (45 minutes)

TASK 1: ***Matching the words and the pictures.***

1 

2 

3 

4 

5 

6 

7 

8 

9 

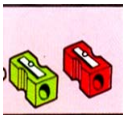
10 

- a watch
- a paper clip
- sing
- a window
- a clock
- a coin
- a candy bar
- a train pass
- run
- a key chain

TASK 2: ***Look, read and decide whether the picture and the sentence are matched. Put the tick ☑ if they are matched, and ☒ if they are not in the box.***

1. He has a train pass in his hand □

2. I erase the board at school □



3. These are pencil sharpeners □

4. I have a lunch box □

5. I read books at school□

6. He has a tissue in his hand □

7. She has a candy bar in her hand □

8. Those are paper clips □

9. This is an umbrella □

10. That is a calendar □

TASK 3: ***Look at the pictures and complete the words.***

1. These are c _ _ _ _ _

2. I s _ _ _ English at school

3. She has a ti _ _ _ _ in her hand

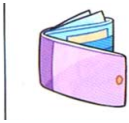
4. He can s _ _ _

5. Those are d _ _ _ _

6. She can d_ _ _ _

7. I have a co _ _ _ book

8. He has a cal _ _ _ in his hand



9. I have a w _ _ _ _

10. He has a c_ _ _

TASK 4: ***Listen and circle the correct picture A, B, or C.***

1.

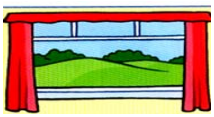


A B C

2.

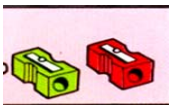
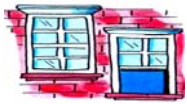

A B C

3.


A B C

4.

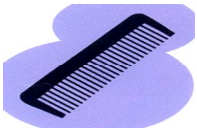

A B C

5.



A B C

6.


A B C

7.



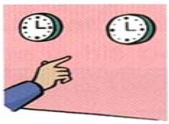
A B C

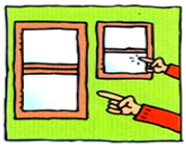
8.



A B C

9.





A B C

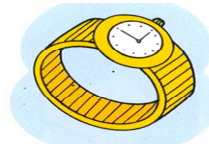
10.



A B C

TASK 5: *Look at the pictures and speak.*

1. 

2. 

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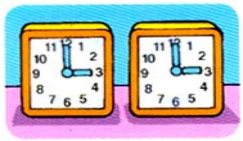
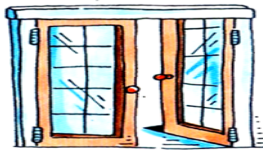
4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10.