



Language Learning Approaches: A Review of Research on Using Internet in learning Vocabulary

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vocabulary, internet, language learning

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ABSTRACT Vocabulary is an inseparable part of any language learning process. It would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. This paper investigates the use of internet as a tool in building vocabulary among second language learners in an Engineering College in Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The method involved pre-test and post-test for both experimental and control group of English as second language (ESL) learners. For the analysis of the data, arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test were used. As a result of the research, the experimental group showed good result in learning vocabulary using Internet.

1. Introduction

1.1 Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary building is necessary for learning a second language, which constitutes a great challenge and enormous task for both second language learners and teachers. As Wilkins puts that without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. According to Hatch, "basic communicative competence is largely concerned with the strategies the learners use to solicit the vocabulary they need in order to get meaning across". Therefore, lots of studies have been done on second language vocabulary acquisition.

1.2 Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension using computer

According to Morgan, "the computer explosion and the internet have transformed the environment in which language is used and learning takes place. Thus, the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been a remarkable development in the educational technology. Computer can provide rich, contextual environment for vocabulary learning and consequently allows learners to become active in one-to-one learning environment. Graney and Mokhtari suggested that practice with high frequency vocabulary through CALL does benefit reading. This is because computer as a tool offers great potential to enhance vocabulary instruction; external stimulation, rich graphic, and online rewards. These in turn provide ample opportunities for learners to encounter new words in multiple context by allowing them quick access to text and graphic and immediate access to vast information.

1.3 Using World Wide Web in Learning English

The plethora of resources provided by computer can be exploited for second language learning purposes. Easy access to the World Wide Web has given both teachers and learners the benefits to use it at one's finger tip. Mill stated "there are tremendous search capabilities of the web which allow instant access to up-to-date information on just about any topic imaginable". Thus, it has gained immense popularity among language teachers and learners. Some of the supplemental language activities that could be incorporated in the class rooms are reading tests and comprehension questions, grammar exercises, pronunciation exercises, vocabulary test and so forth.

2. Method

The samples were 30 second language learners in an Engineering college with graduate proficiency level. They were divided into two groups, control and experimental. The study involved in conducting pre-test, treatment and post-test. The vocabulary pre-test was administered so that the data in the form of marks would be used as point of comparison with the vocabulary post-test. The vocabulary pre-test contained 30 multiple choice questions on vocabulary which the learners

came across while completing the reading tasks during the treatment.

Both groups were given the same treatment but in different medium; the control group was given printed reading text together with the reading tasks which were downloaded from the internet, while the experimental group used internet to read the texts and complete the reading tasks online. The website that was used was <http://literacynet.org/cnnsf>. Learners in the latter group were instructed to read specific texts and complete the activities online. Both groups used the same reading texts and tasks. The only difference was the discussion part. The discussion of answers to the reading tasks was done between the teacher and the learners in the control group. On the other hand, learners in the experimental group received immediate feedback from the computer once they completed the reading tasks. So, the teacher's role in the experimental group is more to supervise and monitor.

The post-test was administered at the end of course. The same set of questions for the pre-test was used to see the significance of learning vocabulary using computer.

3. Findings and Discussions

Table 1: Analysis of the pre-test and post-test results for experimental and control groups.

Groups	N	\bar{X} post - \bar{X} pre = \bar{X} difference	Sd	t-value	p-value	Significance Level
Experimental	15	-17	9.23	-3.31	0.001	p<0.05
Control	15	-3.46	3.31			

The progress level which was obtained by comparing of the pre and post test results of the experimental group was \bar{X} difference=-17, and that of the control group students was \bar{X} difference=-3.46. The 13.54 point difference obtained by the experimental group students was found statistically significant in favour of the experimental group at (t=-3.31, p<0.05) level.

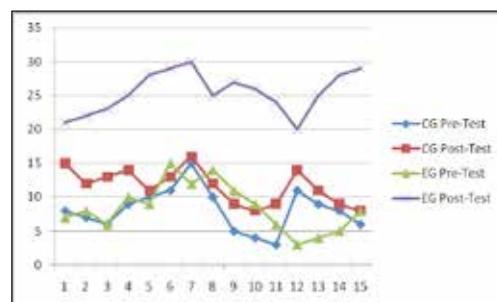


Figure 1: Obtained marks of the pre-test and post-test for experimental and control groups.

From the above figure, it is observed that the performance of experimental group and control group in pre-test almost all same but in the post-test, there is a extreme change between control group and experimental group. By that, students who learned acquiring vocabulary from computer using internet performed very well.

For the experimental group, there was a higher increase of marks and this can be summarized by the learners' better understanding of new vocabulary through the use of internet. Thus, it can be deduced that the experimental group performed better after the treatment of using computer to learn new vocabulary. The use of internet helped learners to perform better in learning vocabulary compared to using the printed materials. The interface of the website could have great effect on learners' performance in understanding the vocabulary. The layout and the 'click' of the mouse may be more interesting to the learners in learning compared to the printed materials. Since the learners were in an Engineering college, computer was frequently used for doing practical or computer programmes. So they have good exposure to computer and using internet.

In experimental group, the findings may also be the result of the immediate feedback that learners get after answering the vocabulary questions that precede the reading text. Each vocabulary question asks for meaning based on the context it is used in the text. The options are in the form of multiple-choice and learners are required to click one answer only. They would obtain a smile icon :-), for every correct answer while an incorrect answer is given an 'X'. This is

the immediate feedback helps learners to better understand the vocabulary in the context it is used. The correct answer is given promptly and this assists in learning the vocabulary. Thus, when learning takes place as they were making errors, they would apply what they had learnt eventually and this is proven in the result of the post-test.

In contrast to the control group, the feedback that the learners received was the discussion of answers with the teacher. This was carried out after learners had answered all the vocabulary and comprehension questions. The delayed feedback given by the teacher may not be as effective as the immediate feedback. Hence, this could be the contributing factor of why the learners in the control group did not perform as good as those in the experimental group.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the experimental group which underwent treatment using the online reading tasks showed tremendous increase in the post-test compared to the control group which used printed material from the same websites. This finding can also be used as reference by second language teachers and learners to enhance the learning process in the language classroom and to boost the mundane and traditional vocabulary learning process. In addition, by integrating the use of computer in the language learning, it is believed that second language learners will be able to learn vocabulary effectively and develop their potential in experiencing different methods of learning. As internet plays a very important role in the life of today's society, it is crucial for second language learners to be exposed to the use of internet and experience its usage in the classroom setting. For this matter, the incorporation of websites and computer in second language classroom will be fruitful especially for vocabulary building.

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