

TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY USING WEB-BASED LEARNING METHODS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English vocabulary using WBLL methods has featured in English as second language. In the same context, English language teachers have used WBLL as a multidimensional tool in the facilitation of both learning and teaching of second language learners. Web-based tools, in this regard, serve as an integrative tool, which schools across the world have and are in the process of utilizing. Literature on the same is adequate on the internet. Therefore, this paper uses a simulated empirical study, which aimed at investigating the efficacy and effect of using Web-Based Language Learning in teaching English vocabulary. Apart from the simulation paper, this paper has further explored information from a variety of reliable journals to support the literature and evidence provided in the simulation paper.

KEYWORDS: Vocabulary, Web-Based Learning, Teaching Methods

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary teaching is a process, which involves the presentation, regular practice and production. In this process, first, the teacher provides both the pronunciation and meaning of the new word (presentation). Then, the teacher will check whether the student has understood (practice). Later, the teacher will attempt to make the student relate the word in their contexts, for example, relating the new word to their personal experience (production). While some will view this process as easy, some will perceive it as difficult (Gorijan, 2012). Apparently, paper-based strategies of teaching English vocabularies have proved ineffective; hence, the question, can WBLL help ESL learners understand new vocabularies? Some may question the efficacy of web-based application in education. Well, to some degree, this is justified, but with the rise of digital devices, and applications, then, it is strategic to utilize these applications in education (Kim and Kim, 2012). Another important thing is that, English language is largely formulaic; hence, traditional methods of teaching may fail to achieve desired results in the current technological world (Meunier, 2012). In light of the rapid technological advancements, the education sector has embraced the use of computer and networks in English language teaching programs (Shen, 2014).

Literature Review

Knowledge of words is a significant component of language knowledge and teaching language is not separable from teaching vocabulary. In the history of language teaching, there is a focus on methods of presenting the lexical items, strategies and techniques for practicing vocabularies and retention. Literature further reports that, until the 1980s, there was no approach for teaching vocabulary except the use of mnemonics (Banisaeid, 2013). However, with the addition of modern languages in school programs, the need for learning and teaching strategies became a necessity. This saw to the development of many strategies. However, their efficacy was in question, considering that, vocabulary learning ignored and only received incidental attention. Currently, the emergence of multimedia learning settings, have provided important platforms for learning and teaching second language (Montero et al., 2014). The use of technology in learning and teaching the English language has become popular and a worldwide phenomenon. While the technological applications featuring in these activities have proven worthwhile, their design and development must enhance or ensure that, students, mainly second English language learners find no difficulty in using those (Paradia et al., 2012; Ludewig and Ludewig-Rohwer, 2013). In this context, these systems must encompass functionalities such as, the ability to evaluate the progress of the student. In such a way, a student can determine his or her progress, including the teacher can assess the same and know the way forward. Some of the tools, which prior studies have recommended for integration in the teaching and learning of English vocabularies, include Moodle, WizIQ, Podcasts, Vodcasts and Wikis. Apart from these, there are varieties of other emerging online dictionaries, which are gaining popularity due to their efficacy (Khany and Khosravia, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A simulation study conducted by Gorijan (2012) is the basis of this study. Subjects used by Gorijan (2012) were adult English Second Learners. The investigator used a pre-test, which contained test items. All the subjects, therefore, were

aware of the contents of the tests prior to the investigation. After two weeks, the same students received a post-test without any notice to evaluate the retention capability of the students. The simulation paper presents a comparative study, which consist of two methods of vocabulary learning, which are Web-Based Learning and the paper-based learning.

Procedure

The investigator used expository passages from the CNN web site, and the students were to view 12 passages, in six sessions lasting an hour each. Students were not told of a test after the observation, with an aim to create a more natural environment. Half of the subjects were introduced to the WBLL method, and the other half introduced to the paper-based method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the study, both groups showed similar results in terms of vocabulary knowledge. In this regard, the investigator conducted a two-tailed independent t-test, which could help in finding out any differences between the two groups.

Table 1. Immediate quizzes results

Test	Groups	Mean	SD	t_{obs}
Immediate quizzes	WBLL	12.45	3.33	3.021*
	Paper-based	10.32	3.29	

Table 1

From the table 1, the value of the t -observed is 3.021, while the critical value was 2.000 at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the difference between the two groups was significant to reject the null hypothesis. However, after testing the long-term memory of the two groups to find out the retention capacity of the vocabularies, the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Results for post-test

Test	Groups	Mean	SD	t_{obs}
Post-test	WBLL	11.25	3.28	-0.101
	Paper-based	11.12	2.98	

Table 2

From table 2, t -observed was -0.101, which is less than the t -critical indicating that, the exposure to both vocabulary-learning methods did not influence long-term retention. Therefore, it is conclusive that, the use of WBLL can help students retain vocabularies in a short term, when compared to paper-based learning methods.

DISCUSSION

Results from the two tables are evident, and they show that, the effect of the treatment on learning retention of the English vocabularies on the long-term was not significant. However, the results from the immediate tests show that, students from the WBLL group experienced a better retention capacity when compared to those from the paper-based group. While the notion that, WBLL does not support retention of vocabulary in the long-term, this is arguable. First, it is important to consider that, the students were only exposed to the vocabularies for a short-term, and they were not aware of a possible test. Therefore, based on this argument, then, it is probable that, when done for longer periods, it is likely that, the retention capacity could increase. However, this is a subject for further investigation (Sagedhi and Dousti, 2014).

Muhanna (2012) supports this ideology by suggesting that, if vocabulary learning became more active, with such web-based approaches in the long-term, including the use of games, then, students are likely not to face difficulties in learning. The author suggests that, the only hindrance in using these web-based applications is the failed cooperation between students. Another study by Shen (2014) supports that, over a long period, the use of web-based technologies can help in vocabulary learning. The author's two-year experiment in a Chinese setting makes clear this evidence. After two years, Shen (2014) was able to find out that, the Chinese college students had improved their performance in the English language.

However, the role of the teacher must evolve to integrate these technological strategies in the teaching and learning of vocabularies. Students, on the other hand, must participate fully to make web-based learning strategies a success in the education sector. Students should learn to observe, evaluate and willing to use the English language vocabularies without fear of pronunciation and spelling mistakes. Apart from this, instructors should provide adequate opportunities for the learners to observe and help them in practicing through meaningful activities. While traditional teaching methods are still crucial, there is a need to evolve with the rest of the world, and employ technology and media instruction strategies (Zhang, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Currently, the world is experiencing a technological evolution. Technology has managed to influence various fields, education being among them. The influence has been positive, and in particular, in the manner in which teaching and learning is conducted. While the evidence in this study shows support for web-based applications in learning and teaching vocabularies, evidence from the simulation paper suggest otherwise. The difference between paper-based and the web-based approach in learning was not significant in terms of retention capability. However, the little evidence did support that, the WBLL approach was more efficient in the teaching and learning of English vocabularies when compared to the paper-based strategy. Nonetheless, there is a need for further research to ascertain the long-term effects of using the WBLL strategy. It is also important to note that, the simulation paper had some deficiencies, such as the effect of the investigation setting as an English second learner context. As such, this research paper is providing future investigators with an opportunity for further investigation on the same.

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