



The Effect Of Games On Vocabulary Learning Of Young English Learners: A Case Study Of Algerian Efl Learners At Hassan Ben Thabet Primary School In In Salah

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Abstract:

Teaching new vocabulary to young learners is a challenging task. However, it can be facilitated by applying some instructional games. This study aimed to examine the efficiency of using games as an instructional tool to help children learn English vocabulary. It was conducted with 34 Algerian third grade pupils at Hassan Ben Thabet primary school in In Salah. The researcher adopted a quasi- experimental method based on forming two matching groups , assessing the learners by means of pre and post tests and comparing the results. The results of the study revealed a significant improvement in the performance of the experimental group in the post test as compared with the control group taught using the traditional method (PPP). Games created a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment, increased learners' participation and facilitated vocabulary learning.

Keywords: vocabulary; learning; games; PPP; young English learners.

Introduction

Today, English is the first international language used in all domains of life and learning it has become a necessary skill to get a good job and better future. Therefore, many developing countries seek to promote the status of English by introducing it at all levels of education. Last year, the Algerian government issued a decision of teaching English starting from third grade at primary school.

Young EFL learners face difficulties in learning and remembering new English vocabularies, and games can be an effective tool to help them memorize and practice English vocabularies. This study aimed to examine the effect of using games as a teaching tool on vocabulary learning. To provide objective results this method was compared with the traditional vocabulary instruction method (PPP).

1. Theoretical Background of the Study

A large body of literature provides support to using games as an effective teaching tool to teach vocabulary. A number of studies have explored the effectiveness of incorporating games in language classrooms. The majority of these studies proved that using games has a positive impact on language learning. According to Riahipour and Saba (2012), traditional activities such as memorizing long lists of vocabulary, repetition, translation and filling in gaps activities are boring for learners. Derakhshan and Davoodi Khatir (2015) stated that using vocabulary games

is more effective; they make vocabulary learning more enjoyable and help learners to retain new words quickly.

Alemi (2010) conducted a study to examine the effect of five educational games (twenty questions, charades, definition games, passwords and cross puzzles) on vocabulary development of third grade high school students. She divided the subjects into experimental and control groups. She found that the experimental group taught using games overperformed their counterparts in the control group taught using traditional methods in the test.

Similarly, Dolati and Mikaili (2011) investigated the effect of word games on facilitating vocabulary acquisition. The results of their study indicated that games motivate learners especially the quiet and passive ones. Ulberman (1998) claimed that games provide a meaningful context for language learning. By learning and practicing new words through games, the learners have the opportunity to use the language in a non stressful way. This helps them to learn vocabulary more easily.

2. Statement of the Problem

Vocabulary is a crucial element in learning any language. Young EFL learners face difficulties in remembering and recalling English vocabularies they learn; especially, as English is taught as a second foreign language in addition to French in Algerian primary schools. Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), especially to young learners, requires creative and motivating methods and techniques to address common difficulties with vocabulary and pronunciation. This study investigated the efficiency of using games as a teaching tool on improving vocabulary learning of young English learners.

3. Research Question and Hypotheses

The study addressed the following research question:

Is using games to teach vocabulary to children more effective than the traditional method (PPP)?

To answer this question, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0: There is no significant difference between using games and using traditional method (PPP) to teach vocabulary to young English learners.

H1: Games are more effective to teach vocabulary to young English learners than traditional method (PPP).

H2: Traditional method (PPP) is more effective than games to teach vocabulary to young English learners.

4. Limitations of the study

Despite the insightful findings brought about by this study, some limitations need to be acknowledged. The study was undertaken with only one level at one primary school in Algeria. Further studies with different levels in different contexts are needed to increase the generality of the results.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Subjects of the Study

A total of thirty four Algerian third grade pupils at Hassen Ben Thabet primary school in In Salah participated in the study. They were divided into experimental and control groups. The researcher used games to teach the target vocabularies to the experimental group; whereas, the control group was taught these vocabularies using the tradiional method (PPP).

5.2 Data collection tools

The study was conducted during the spring of 2023. The researcher used classroom observation, pre-test and post test to collect the data for the study. Thus, before instruction phase took place, the researcher administered a preliminary English interview as a proficiency test to make sure of the homogeneity of the subjects. The interview which functioned as a pre-test confirmed that the learners in both groups didn't have any background knowledge about the target vocabularies. After four weeks of instruction, both the experimental and the control groups were re-tested.

5.3 Methods of data analysis

The researcher adopted a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative methods for data analysis. The researcher calculated the means of scores obtained by the experimental and control groups in the post test and compared them using a statistical t-test.

The t-test is an inferential test that determines if the difference between the means of two groups is significant. It allowed us to decide if the difference between the control and experimental groups was the result of the treatment applied to the experimental group and not due to chance. The t-test formula as cited in Hatch and Lazaraton (1991, p.261-262) is:

$$t_{obs} = \frac{\bar{X}_e - \bar{X}_c}{s(\bar{X}_e - \bar{X}_c)}$$

$$s(\bar{X}_e - \bar{X}_c) = \sqrt{\frac{S_e^2}{n_e} + \frac{S_c^2}{n_c}}$$

$$S_e = \sqrt{\frac{\delta (X - \bar{X}_e)^2}{n_e - 1}}$$

$$S_c = \sqrt{\frac{\delta (X - \bar{X}_c)^2}{n_c - 1}}$$

Where :

\bar{X}_e : the mean score of the experimental group.

\bar{X}_c : the mean score of the control group.

S_e : the standard of deviation of the experimental group.

S_c : the standard of deviation of the control group.

n_e : the number of subjects of the experimental group.

n_c : the number of subjects of the control group.

X : the student's score.

We chose the t-test because it is appropriate to be used with small samples. T-tests are about probability not certainty; therefore, we had to decide on the probability alpha level before carrying out the test. The p level is arbitrary chosen, 0.05 is the most frequently used by researchers. Thus, we set the alpha value at this level which means that 95% the results are not due to chance.

6. The Results of the study

6.1 Results of the Pre-test

The teacher asked pupils some questions about the target vocabularies. Learners in both the control and the experimental groups didn't have any prior knowledge about the vocabularies. They tried to answer the questions but their answers were in their mother language (Arabic).

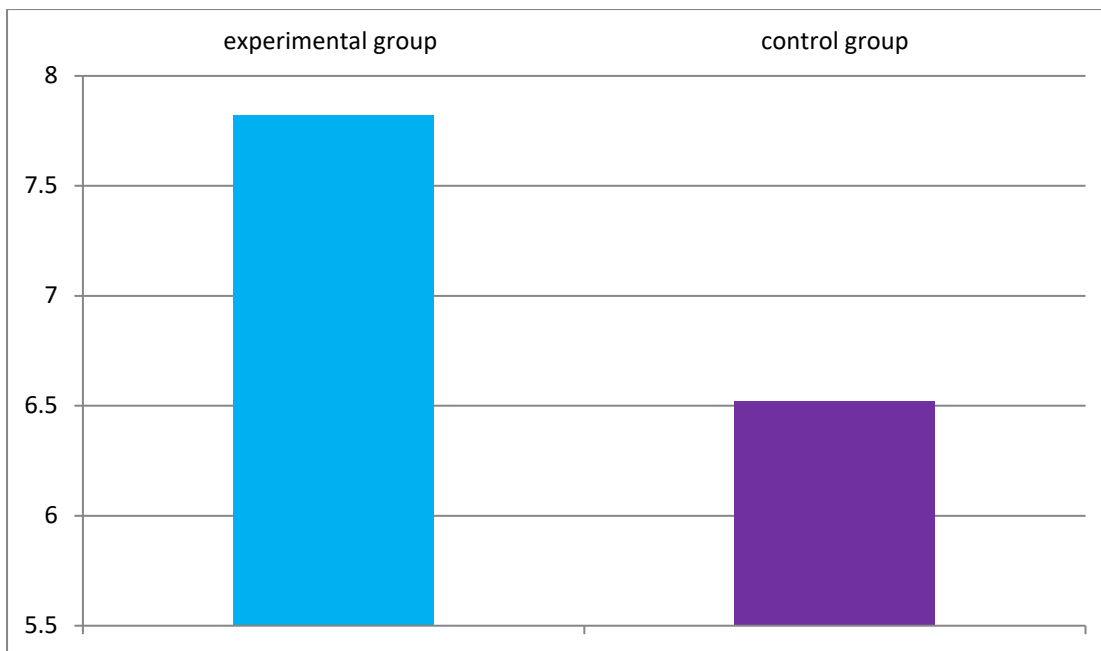
6.2 Results of the Post test

The results obtained in the post-test are summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Results of the Post Test

Experimental group		Control group	
Learner's Score/10		Learner's Score/ 10	
L1	08	L1	08
L2	10	L2	10
L3	05	L3	06
L4	09	L4	05
L5	06	L5	09
L6	07	L6	04
L7	10	L7	07
L8	04	L8	05
L9	08	L9	05
L10	05	L10	07
L11	09	L11	06
L12	08	L12	08
L13	07	L13	05
L14	09	L14	04
L15	10	L15	09
L16	08	L16	07
L17	10	L17	06
Sum of scores	133	Sum of scores	111
Mean	7.82	Mean	6.52

Figure 1. Means of Scores of the experimental and the Control groups in the Post Test



The results indicated that both methods were helpful for teaching vocabulary; however, the mean of scores obtained by the experimental group taught using games was higher than the mean of scores taught using the traditional method (PPP). The researcher applied the results to a statistical t-test to determine if the difference was significant.

6.3 Results of the T-test

Taking that the number of subjects in experiment is seventeen in each group, the researcher calculated the degree of freedom (df) for the t-test:

$$df = (n_e - 1) + (n_c - 1)$$

$$df = (17 - 1) + (17 - 1)$$

$$df = 32$$

The t crit of df= 28 at 0.05 level is 1.694 which means that the t obs needs to meet or exceed 1.694 so that the difference between the two groups was significant.

The results of the t-test are presented in table 2 below:

Table 2. T-test Results

				$\alpha = 0.05,$ t-crit= 1.694		
Groups	N	Mean	S	t obs	Df	P
C	17	6.52	1.813	2.034	32	S
E	17	7.82	1.912			

t obs > t crit

As table 2 shows, T obs was higher than t crit. As a result, H1 was confirmed. Games were

more effective to teach vocabulary to young English learners than traditional method (PPP).

The researcher observed that games were very liked by the children. Learners in the experimental group were happy and more interactive than those in the control group. They didn't get bored during the learning process.

The results of this study contributed to the existing literature showing that games can be used as an effective pedagogical tool to teach vocabulary to young EFL learners. They provide a fun and enjoyable learning environment for both teachers and learners.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends using games as a pedagogical tool to teach English vocabulary in primary schools. Games can promote vocabulary development in EFL classes providing a comfortable learning environment and fun way to learn language. However, the teacher should be very careful in selecting games appropriate for his learners' needs and level.

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