

The Effect of Storytelling in Developing Vocabulary Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

The current research goaled at exploring one of the problems encountered by the young EFL learners which is epitomized in the lack of having a repertoire of vocabulary to enable them to progress their studies or develop their language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, the descriptive analytic method was adopted for fulfilling the research purpose, answer the research question and attain the results. The researcher reviewed the available literature to reach a conclusion concerning the feasibility of storytelling in developing the vocabulary acquisition. The results of the research revealed that storytelling was an effective technique for enhancing the EFL young learners' acquisition of vocabulary. The study concluded that storytelling should be placed in the classroom as an essential tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among young learners.

Keywords: Storytelling, Vocabulary, Acquisition.

أثر السرد القصصي في اكتساب المفردات

اعداد

خلف فراج الزعبي

الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب

المستخلص

هدف البحث الحالي إلى استقصاء إحدى المشكلات التي يواجهها متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الصغار والتي تتمثل في عدم وجود حصيلة كافية من المفردات تمكنهم من التقدم في دراساتهم أو تطوير مهاراتهم اللغوية، مثل الاستماع، والتحدث، والقراءة، والكتابة، ولقد اعتمد البحث على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحقيق الغرض من البحث، والإجابة على سؤاله للوصول إلى النتائج، كما قام الباحث بمراجعة الأدبيات المتوفرة للتوصل إلى استنتاج حول جدوى السرد القصصي في تنمية اكتساب المفردات، ولقد كشفت نتائج البحث أن سرد القصص كانت أحد الأساليب الفعالة لتعزيز اكتساب المتعلمين الصغار للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمفردات، ولقد خلصت الدراسة إلى أن السرد القصصي يجب أن يعتمد كأداة أساسية في الفصل الدراسي لتعزيز اكتساب المفردات بين المتعلمين الصغار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرد القصصي، المفردات، الاكتساب.

Vocabulary and Language Learning

Vocabulary is one of the most essential components in learning a language whether a foreign language or a native one. Vocabulary is the building blocks or the words which must be known by the individual to be able to communicate in an effective way and deliver the proper meaning to the reader or to the listener. Furthermore, having a considerable repertoire of vocabulary is of paramount importance for the writer or the speaker as having fluency, and richness of vocabulary are key aspects of being a distinguished writer or speaker (Marulis, & Neuman, 2010).

With this in mind, the meaning of vocabulary in this research is *all the words the individual knows to be able to run a conversation or to produce a piece of writing and express himself which varied greatly according to the age and maturation*. Consequently, without vocabulary no meaning can be achieved for the audience and without fluency and vocabulary richness, the meaning can be incompletely achieved. Bearing that in mind, language learners should pay the due attention to vocabulary acquisition (Tellier, 2008).

Nation, & Webb, (2011) stressed the significance of vocabulary acquisition and learning in order to produce a complete meaning in speaking and writing. Moreover, learning vocabulary plays a significant role in developing other language skills, mainly speaking, listening, reading and writing. The language learner needs a store of vocabulary to be able to achieve the intended meaning and deliver it smoothly and without misunderstanding.

Vocabulary Learning Significance

In the past, vocabulary was not giving the due attention in language learning, but now it is one of the critical hot topics which attract the educationalist attention for achieving the aim of using language, mainly communicating effectively (Nation, Webb, 2011). The following lines depict the significance of vocabulary in language learning:

1) Vocabulary is the Base of Language

David Wilkins pinpointed that: “without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” Thus, vocabulary is considered the constitutes or the building blocks of the language that cannot be neglected when expressing feelings and emotions in a spoken or written language. Another point, although grammar is of considerable importance, but the communication could be completed without accurate use of grammar (Maiguashca, 1993).

2) Vocabulary Learning Helps Developing Other Language Skills

The expert readers have a considerable amount of vocabulary which enable them to figure out the intended messages of the text within hands. Without massive word store, the reader will struggle and find difficulty to get the meaning; Thus, vocabulary is significant for having a good reading skill (Nation, & Coady, 1988).

On the same line, the English listening skill needs sufficient knowledge of vocabulary to enable the listener to receive the intended message in an accurate way and avoid misunderstanding. The encountered vocabulary is easy to be recognized, but the new ones are difficult to be handled in the communication. Subsequently, vocabulary is very crucial for having a perfect listening skill (Matthews, 2018).

To add more, one of the worst problems encounters foreign language speakers is that they may, in many situations, be unable to recognize the accurate word for the situation or has not the ability to remember it; consequently, because of vocabulary, the speaker cannot express the meaning. Thus, vocabulary is of crucial importance for the speakers (Koizumi, 2012).

Over and above, having amount of vocabulary enables the writer to adapt his writing, to suit his language for his language audience via choosing the appropriate vocabulary, and to make use of the vocabulary related to the genre of writing and the type of register. The good writer has the ability to make variations in his vocabulary while writing. Accordingly, learning vocabulary is of considerable importance for the writers (Olinghouse, & Wilson, 2013).

3) Vocabulary Richness Means Great Academic Performance

Those who have substantial amount of vocabulary show advancement in their academic performance. They development that they can achieve in the four language skills will be reflected in achieving the objectives of the teaching learning process. The learner can best utilize the materials and make use of any extra materials (Lemmouh, 2008).

4) Vocabulary Richness Means Occupational Success

As vocabulary is linked to the all the aspect of personal relationship, it is related to all the aspects of life related to the labor market. As good amount of vocabulary guarantees good communication skills which are critical skills in the 21st century and they are connected the occupational success (Brown, 1995).

Vocabulary Learning Aspects

Nation (2001), one of the prominent figures in vocabulary learning field, claimed that there are three main aspects of vocabulary learning. The following lines portray those aspects in details:

- 1) Form
- 2) Meaning
- 3) Use

Form: learning vocabulary or a word entails learning many components about the form of vocabulary which are related to the formation of the word itself. Such important aspects include:

- The word pronunciation.
- The word spelling .
- The word derivation .
- The word inflection .

Meaning: one the same line, learning a word entails, after controlling the form, learning the meaning of the word as the form and meaning are two faces for one coin. Learning the meaning of the word includes knowing the target concepts and the references and the word association.

Use: to learn the use of the word, the learner is required to know the following components related to how such a word is used in a meaningful context. The word knowledge includes the following items:

- The diverse grammatical functions (negation, interrogation, passive, ...)
- The collocations of the word.
- The conditions of use.
- The word register (formal, semi formal, informal).

Types of Vocabulary

The target vocabulary learning can be categorized into different types as follows (Webb, 2008):

Receptive Vocabulary: receptive vocabulary is relevant to the level of recognition as the learners' job is to recognize the meaning of the target word. Such type of vocabulary learning is connected to the skills of listening and reading where the learner's job is to figure the meaning of target vocabulary. Such type of learning vocabulary may be referred to as passive vocabulary learning as the learners' job is only recognizing the target vocabulary, and not using such word in a meaningful context.

Active Vocabulary: this form is the opposite to the previous one as in this mode of learning, the learners is using vocabulary actively when using the language. S/he makes use of vocabulary in a meaningful context, namely speaking and writing. The productive vocabulary learning can be retained after a long time of learning the target vocabulary. Such type of vocabulary learning is known as active vocabulary learning. The job of the learner is to make use of the target vocabulary in a meaningful context. Such usage enables the learner to practice vocabulary and to be able to use them in different contexts and situations.

Vocabulary Learning and Young Learners

Young learners, especially those in the primary stage are in a dire need for building their vocabulary knowledge in order to be able to use the language and such use will help them to develop their linguistic skills in the future (Greene Brabham, & Lynch-Brown, 2002). More than that, the development of vocabulary among young learners means that they one day will be a successful learner in the following learning stages (Marulis, & Neuman, 2010).

With this in mind, a plethora of studies pinpointed that young learners suffer from a clear weakness of vocabulary as they do not have sufficient vocabulary which enable them to advance their study or to enable them to comprehend the teaching process or the materials submitted to students (Marzban, & Firoozjahantigh, 2018; EI- Barbary, 2018; El-Nokrashy, 2016; Ghanem, 2016).

Storytelling for Vocabulary Learning

Gere, Kozlovich, & Kelin, (2002) identified storytelling as “the act of using language and gesture in colorful ways to create scenes in a sequence”. When students are learning via stories, they develop their oral language and literacy skills. Furthermore, storytelling is considered a feasible technique for enhancing imagination and thinking skills and creative skills. To add more, storytelling enables the learner to identify the form and build his or her meaningful knowledge which in turns enhances learning. Finally, storytelling helps the teacher to identify the learners’ background and their interests and attitudes (Palmer, Harshbarger, & Koch, 2001).

Storytelling Inside the Classroom

Storytelling has a great value in developing the learners', especially young ones, cognition, emotions and skills. Through storytelling, the teacher can create relaxed environment and atmosphere in which he can enhance the students' different skills and abilities. A number of benefits which can be attained from using storytelling technique in the classroom (Ahrens, 2011):

- 1) Storytelling provides the students with a number of concepts which are considered the bases of literature like themes, characters, plot and poetic justice.
- 2) Some stories can be used to increase the students' interaction and sense of humor inside the classroom, especially the shy students.
- 3) Stories help students acquire new vocabulary in context.
- 4) It encourages the students to pose questions and take parts in the discussion used in the classroom.
- 5) It enables the students to be creative and learn the prediction and guessing skills.
- 6) Stories in learning were proved to increase the students' motivation in learning.

Storytelling and Vocabulary Learning

Teaching the young learners' linguistic skills is not an easy task as such skills are difficult to be practiced by pupils as they are not mature enough to do activities, or tasks, make drills, manipulate language or doing meaningful home assignments. On the other hands, those pupils need to be immersed in language use and vocabulary learning as vocabulary is the base of language learning in order to develop their linguistic skills. They need interesting activities which can help them be more engaged in language learning. With this in mind, storytelling can provide the learners with great assistance to be able to manage their vocabulary learning (Johnsson, 2006):

- 1) Stories, from an affective perspective, increase the students' motivation and help them form positive attitudes towards language learning and desire to take part in the instructional process.
- 2) Imagination is one of the important skills that can be acquired via using storytelling in the classroom.
- 3) Listening to stories empowers the teacher to provide new vocabulary and to revise old ones in a meaningful context.
- 4) Through stories, students learn the most frequent words that are very important to their cognitive and linguistic development.
- 5) Storytelling enables the students to form connection between the meaning and form of the new vocabulary.

Problem of the Research

The young EFL learners suffer from severe shortage in their vocabulary repertoire, which hinders them from progressing for developing their language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Consequently, the present research sought to present storytelling as a feasible technique for enhancing the young EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition which might be reflected later in their linguistic skills.

Accordingly, the present research goaled at finding an answer for the following research question:

What is the impact of utilizing storytelling technique in developing vocabulary among the primary student in English?

Research Method:

For fulfilling the research main purpose, the present research made use of the descriptive analytic approach for answering the research question and attain the results. Procedurally, the researcher revised the available literature related to storytelling and vocabulary learning in order to form conclusions about the impact of storytelling in developing vocabulary.

Results of the Research:

A large number of studies and research projects were investigated in order to answer the research question and develop a cut and dried answer for the research question. The results of about all the research encountered by the researcher showed that storytelling technique was an effective instrument that enabled in developing vocabulary among young learners. To the best knowledge of the researcher, most of the researches about storytelling were conducted on young learners' samples as they are the target population who can benefit from listening to stories from their teachers. Added to that, most of the studies recommended using such techniques with children at schools and at homes as they also enable the teachers and the parents to help children acquire a lot of morals. Finally, selecting stories must emerged from the students' real life and the items covered in the story must be concert and the abstract items must be avoided.

Research Conclusions

In the light of the results attained and the nature of the research, the following conclusions seem appropriate:

- 1) Developing the young learners' vocabulary is of crucial importance for young learners as vocabulary acquisition is one of the principle components in the development.
- 2) Vocabulary learning must take more space in the English language schedule using effective techniques and vocabulary sessions might be specialized for teaching only vocabulary every week.
- 3) The technique of storytelling should be adopted by teacher for developing the young learners' vocabulary according to the results of the current research.
- 4) Storytelling is one of the feasible techniques which ought to be taken into consideration when designing instruction among young learners and the materials of the young learners should include lots of stories.
- 5) Learners should be given the chance to select stories which might suit their interests and attitudes under the supervision of teachers or parents.

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