



Improving Vocabulary Acquisition: Technology-Integrated, Gamified, and Contextualized Approaches in EFL Learning

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Abstract

The aim of this study is on contextualized, gamified, and technology-supported approaches to vocabulary learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situation. Contextualized learning greatly improves understanding and retention by placing terminology in relevant contexts. Quizlet and other gamified tools increase vocabulary acquisition and student motivation, while multimedia resources like movies with subtitles enhance receptive vocabulary and cultural knowledge. According to quantitative pre- and post-test results and qualitative data from interviews conducted using a mixed-methods approach, cooperative and culturally sensitive approaches promote participation and useful language usage. Blended approaches that combined conventional and digital methods proven to be quite successful in spite of obstacles including disparities in digital literacy and unequal access to technology. These results demonstrate how flexible instructional approaches are necessary to meet the demands of a wide range of students. The study results to the conclusion that EFL vocabulary training may be revolutionized by integrating contextualized, interactive, and technology-enhanced approaches. To guarantee inclusive education for all students, recommendations include removing obstacles to technology access and conducting further research on scalable approaches.

Keywords: Vocabulary Acquisition, EFL, Gamification, Blended Learning.

1. Introduction

The foundation of language acquisition and communication is vocabulary. McCarthy (1990, as cited in Hestiana & Anita, 2022) asserts that one of language's most important elements is vocabulary, without which communication is nearly impossible. This concept emphasizes how important vocabulary is in situations when students are learning English as a foreign language (EFL), because they frequently find it difficult to acquire the lexical resources required for clear communication. In addition to helping students express their thoughts, vocabulary also promotes understanding of all language abilities, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Conventional approaches of teaching vocabulary, such rote memorization and translation-based activities, have come under fire for having little effect on practical application and long-term retention. According to (Hestiana & Anita, 2022), exposure to language in circumstances that are both relevant and engaging improves vocabulary development. Fluency requires that students understand the subtleties of word meanings and their collocations, which contextualized learning enables them to do.

The introduction of technology in recent years has completely changed the way that language is taught. Gamified learning experiences have been provided by mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) systems like Quizlet and Duolingo, which boost students' motivation and engagement. These technologies increase the effectiveness of language acquisition by utilizing elements like spaced repetition, multimedia material, and instant feedback. In contrast to conventional approaches, mobile devices greatly improve vocabulary learning outcomes, as (Mahdi, 2018) points out in his meta-analysis.

Multimedia resources like movies and videos with subtitles have also been successfully included into vocabulary training. (Hestiana & Anita, 2022) discovered that watching films with subtitles increased listening comprehension and cultural awareness in addition to vocabulary development. These approaches fit well with theories of incidental learning, which hold that exposure to language in context helps students organically pick up vocabulary.

Despite these developments, there are still challenges in addressing the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge. While depth entails a more sophisticated comprehension of word meanings, collocations, and use, breadth relates to the quantity of words that students know. Even highly proficient students may have a little vocabulary, according to

research by (Wero et al., 2021), which emphasizes the necessity for focused teaching approaches to develop both vocabulary knowledge domains.

One important component affecting vocabulary development is motivation. Gamified applications like Quizlet greatly boost student interest and lessen the boredom frequently connected to conventional vocabulary acquisition, as highlighted by (Rizky Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020). In a same vein, interactive approaches like role-playing games and group projects promote cooperative learning settings, which increases the effectiveness and engagement of vocabulary learning.

Teaching vocabulary requires a thorough understanding of cultural context since language is ingrained in cultural norms and practices. Tools like Webtoon, a digital comic platform, introduce students to new vocabulary while also offering cultural insights that improve their overall language comprehension, claim (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021). Learning how to utilize language in a variety of circumstances requires the use of culturally sensitive instructional strategies.

Nevertheless, there are some challenges in using technology into language training. For certain students, obstacles may include things like unequal access to digital devices, disparities in digital literacy, and the price of sophisticated technologies. According to (Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020), online dictionaries such as the Cambridge Dictionary have many advantages, but they also need a degree of digital competency that not all students have. To lessen these problems, a hybrid strategy that incorporates both technology and conventional approaches is frequently advised.

Assessment is also a crucial factor. Conventional vocabulary assessments, including multiple-choice questions, might not fully reflect how well students understand a subject. Alternatives such as contextual use evaluations and open-ended activities offer a more thorough picture of students' aptitudes. Feedback from these tests is essential for helping students progress in their vocabulary acquisition.

Two main research topics are the focus of this project in order to meet these various opportunities and challenges: (1) Which concepts and approaches work best for teaching vocabulary to EFL students? (2) What effects does technology integration have on vocabulary acquisition in EFL settings? By examining these issues, the study hopes to further the developing area of vocabulary training and offer educators useful insights.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study's participants were selected from a variety of EFL student communities, representing a range of educational settings, ages, and skill levels. Students from elementary school, high school, and universities were among them. In order to offer a representative sample of students experimenting with different vocabulary teaching approaches, participants were chosen. A comprehensive approach to vocabulary learning was ensured by the diversity of their language origins and past English experience.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Instrument of Collecting Data

The main tools used to gather data were interviews, pre- and post-tests, and questionnaires. The purpose of surveys was to collect qualitative information on students' attitudes and views of vocabulary teaching approaches. By measuring language acquisition and retention, pre- and post-tests provided quantifiable information on the efficacy of particular strategies. Participants' and teachers' structured interviews yielded detailed qualitative information about the difficulties, inclinations, and environmental elements affecting language acquisition.

2.2.2 Techniques for Collecting Data

A mixed-methods strategy was taken to data collecting. To provide accessibility for participants in various regions, surveys were disseminated electronically. To guarantee uniformity in measurement, pre- and post-tests were given in a controlled environment. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for freedom while keeping the major points of interest. By combining information from many sources, the study topics were fully understood.

2.3 Data Analysis

To assess the effectiveness of different vocabulary teaching approaches, quantitative data from tests and surveys were evaluated statistically using approaches like paired t-tests and effect size computations. Thematic analysis of qualitative interview data revealed themes and patterns in the replies of both teachers and students. These studies combined to produce solid results that connected certain approaches to quantifiable vocabulary learning

outcomes. By using a multifaceted method, the research was able to include both the experiential and numerical components of vocabulary development.

3. Results

The results show that contextualized vocabulary instruction improves student understanding and retention considerably. Compared to conventional approaches, contextual teaching approaches, such as placing words into relevant settings, resulted in quantifiable gains in vocabulary retention. Gamification-based tools such as Quizlet enhanced mastery and motivation, with significant improvements shown in pre- and post-test results. The use of multimedia programs, such as movies with subtitles, improved students' listening comprehension and receptive vocabulary. The necessity for mixed approaches to guarantee inclusion is highlighted by persistent issues including uneven access to technology and disparities in digital literacy.

Furthermore, students who engaged in cooperative exercises like role-playing and group discussions showed a stronger comprehension of language usage. Students' understanding of linguistic context and cultural subtleties was enhanced by the incorporation of cultural aspects, including digital resources like Webtoon. These approaches shown their efficacy for a variety of student groups by promoting engagement and long-term retention in addition to making vocabulary learning easier.

Quantitative analyses demonstrated the quantifiable impact of these approaches by confirming that students exposed to these novel ways fared better on vocabulary examinations than their counterparts. The motivating elements of gamified resources and interactive approaches, which made learning fun and less tedious, were also highlighted in participant qualitative comments. Together, these findings imply that the secret to successful vocabulary training is a multifaceted approach that incorporates collaborative, contextual, and technology-supported approaches.

4. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the importance of contextualized vocabulary instruction as a crucial tactic for enhancing EFL students' understanding and retention. Learners were able to connect words with practical uses by embedding them in meaningful situations, which supports (Hestiana & Anita, 2022) focus on the importance of meaningful exposure in vocabulary development. In addition to aiding in memory, contextualized

learning develops the capacity for effective vocabulary usage in conversation.

The popularity of apps like Quizlet shows that gamification has become an innovative approach in language instruction. These technologies greatly increase motivation and engagement by including game-like features like challenges, prizes, and interactive feedback. According to (Rizky Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020), gamification promotes active engagement and lessens learning monotony, which increases vocabulary mastering. The effectiveness of this approach is supported by the increases in pre-test and post-test scores among Quizlet users.

Additionally, multimedia resources—especially movies with subtitles—had two functions in vocabulary learning. They improved listening comprehension and cultural awareness while also expanding students' receptive vocabulary. This twofold advantage is supported by (Hestiana & Anita, 2022) research, which highlights the importance of multimedia as a teaching and cultural instrument. Watching movies with subtitles exposes students to real-world language usage, which facilitates and engages vocabulary development.

Even with technology's potential, there are still challenges in the way of providing equal access to digital resources. Barriers including restricted device availability and disparities in digital literacy are common for students from under-resourced backgrounds. (Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020) point out that in order to accommodate all students, these differences call for a hybrid approach that incorporates both technology and conventional approaches to teaching. For both educators and legislators, ensuring inclusion is still a top priority.

It was also shown that cooperative exercises like role-playing and group discussions improved vocabulary learning. Sociocultural theories of language learning, which emphasize the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, are consistent with these approaches. Through group projects, students improved their communication abilities and strengthened their vocabulary. This research backs up the inclusion of social and interactive learning opportunities in vocabulary training.

The experiences of students were further enhanced by the inclusion of cultural components in vocabulary instruction. Students were able to comprehend the subtleties of language usage in certain circumstances because to resources like Webtoon, which exposed them to both lexical elements and cultural contexts. The study by (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021) emphasizes the value of culturally sensitive instruction, which improves vocabulary acquisition and cultivates intercultural competency.

Immediate feedback features, which are frequently incorporated into mobile-assisted learning systems, have been shown to be quite helpful in assisting students in recognizing and filling up knowledge gaps. These technologies supported self-directed learning and ongoing development by offering real-time information. Since feedback helps students reach their linguistic objectives, it is an essential part of good education.

Assessment procedures need to change in order to reflect the breadth of students' vocabulary. The capacity of students to utilize terminology in context is frequently not reflected in conventional multiple-choice exams. Open-ended questions and real-world simulations are examples of contextualized examinations that offer a more accurate gauge of students' competency. These different strategies fit perfectly with modern educational systems that place more emphasis on meaningful application than mindless memorizing.

For teaching vocabulary, blended learning methods have proven to be the most successful and inclusive technique. Teachers may maximize engagement and results while meeting the different requirements of their students by fusing the advantages of conventional and digital teaching approaches. This strategy guarantees that all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic status or level of digital competency, may benefit from technology innovations.

Future studies have to concentrate on how sustainable and scalable these approaches are in various educational settings. Important insights into the efficacy of contextualized, gamified, and multimedia-enhanced teaching practices will be gained via longitudinal studies that look at their long-term effects. It will also be essential to overcome structural obstacles to technology access in order to guarantee that all students can take use of these cutting-edge strategies.

All things considered, this study emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate creative, inclusive, and culturally sensitive teaching approaches into vocabulary training. Teachers may design dynamic and productive learning settings that enable EFL students to meet their language objectives by utilizing the advantages of contextualized learning, technology, and teamwork.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes by showing how contextualized, gamified, and technologically augmented vocabulary teaching approaches may have a transformational effect in EFL environments. Contextualized learning helps students make strong links

between words and practical uses, while gamified resources like Quizlet greatly improve motivation and memory. Multimedia materials, especially movies with subtitles, have two functions: they increase vocabulary and raise cultural understanding. Technology disparities and digital literacy gaps persist despite these developments, underscoring the significance of hybrid strategies that use both conventional and current approaches.

Teaching approaches that are collaborative and culturally sensitive emphasize the value of inclusive and participatory activities while also adding to a thorough vocabulary learning experience. Students' progress is continuously tracked and directed through the use of contextualized assessments and feedback approaches. To increase the effectiveness and reach of these approaches, systemic obstacles to technology access must be addressed. These results also highlight how vocabulary learning has to continue to be innovative. Teachers must continue to be flexible in order to meet the changing requirements of students by incorporating new educational approaches and technologies. Future studies should look at scalable ways to solve educational inequalities throughout the world and guarantee that all students, regardless of circumstance, have access to chances for successful language acquisition.

Teaching vocabulary may become more inclusive and effective by using a diverse approach that incorporates context, culture, technology, and cooperation. These realizations lay the groundwork for developing future instructional approaches that will give students the abilities and self-assurance they need to communicate effectively in a worldwide society. A thorough vocabulary learning experience is further enhanced by collaborative and culturally sensitive approaches to teaching, which highlight the value of inclusive and participatory practices. Contextualized exams and feedback systems guarantee that learning for students is continuously tracked and directed. Expanding the breadth and efficacy of these approaches requires addressing structural barriers to technology access.

The results of this study provide a basis for future research and innovation as teachers continue to adjust to the varied needs of students, guaranteeing that vocabulary training changes to satisfy the requirements of modern language acquisition. Future studies should concentrate on these approaches' scalability and long-term efficacy in order to offer long-term solutions for a range of educational environments.

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