

USING GAMES TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY RETENTION

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ABSTRACT

Learning vocabulary was a constant battle of memorizing and forgetting. To help English non-majored sophomores at Tay Do University reviewed their vocabulary effectively, the researcher conducted a study about the effect of using games on students' vocabulary retention. The participants were 86 non-English majored sophomores at Tay Do University. Pretest and posttest were used as the main instruments in this study. The results showed that in general the students' vocabulary stock in two groups was similar through the pretest. During the time applied educational games for the experimental group, they not only got fun and but also recalled more vocabulary. It was illustrated through the posttest in which vocabulary stock of experimental group was improved obviously. This proved that using games to recall students' vocabulary retention was effective.

Keyword: Using Games, Vocabulary Retention, Vocabulary, Games

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary, vocabulary, and more vocabulary: that is what English learners must own and apply cleverly during their studying and working English. English conversations in person or tests in school will throw a plenty of words which relate reading, listening, speaking, and writing sections. Since it is a certainty that students will never be able to remember all the words in the English language and since it is unavoidable that they will encounter new words on the studying process, they will often need to make educated retention as to the meaning of their knowledgeable words. (Buckhoff, 1997).

Retention is one of the primary activities of students in learning new words. Reviewing is only in the right way to lead the effective retention. Good learning atmosphere and good recalling method can guide the students to remember more and meaningful and effectively. To accomplish this, teachers must create various and attractive retention methods for the class.

What should the teachers do if their students get bored? Using various games can be an alternative solution to handle this problem. Games, as a matter of fact, can help and encourage many students to sustain their interest and work. By this research, the researcher want to investigate into how students recall English vocabulary through using games.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of lexicology and vocabulary

Lexicology (from lexiko-, in the Late Greek lexikon) is that part of linguistics which studies words, their nature and meaning, words' elements, relations between words (semantical relations), words groups and the whole lexicon. Person's vocabulary is the set of words they are familiar with in a language. A vocabulary usually grows and evolves with age, and serves as a useful and fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge (Wikipedia free encyclopedia).

Many lexicologists affirm that a good vocabulary is essential for success in life. Indeed, a person's vocabulary is one of the strongest points of their career and life success. If you own a large stock of words, you can easily choose the most effective word to apply in your own aim as a conversation, an essay, a lecture, ect. As everyone says "The more words you know, the easier your words will flow." Moreover, vocabulary also transmits your opinion, thought. Grammar structures' functions is only combinations words together but almost significances in words. So you know as many words as you will communicate more.

2.2. Game and its importance

Games are activities that you do to have some fun (Hornby; 1995: 486). Indeed, most of educational

games applied in teaching English can make the students, particularly the Basic English classes; focus on recalling their vocabulary stock, because they do feel that they are forced to revise what words they are taught.

Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely (Richard-Amato; 1988: 147). They are motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunities express to opinion and feelings (Hansen; 1994: 118). They also enable learners to be more dynamic within learning the foreign language which are not always possible during traditional lessons.

According to Lewis (1999) the usefulness of games attracts the students to review English because it is fun and makes them want to experiment, discover and interact with their environment. Games add variation to a lesson and increase motivation by providing a plausible incentive to use the target language. Games can provide this stimulus (Lewis; 1999). The game context makes the foreign language immediately useful to the learners. It brings the target to life. The games make the speaking plausible even to reluctant students (Lewis; 1999).

2.3. The relationship between using games and vocabulary retention

So far, there have been a lot of researches, books, newspapers mentioned about the different aspects of using games in teaching and learning in general. But seldom have I seen as well as read researches written about the relationship between using games and recalling English vocabulary. So in this part, my objective idea about the relationship is much more than anyone. Besides that, I can not but maintain a few researches which are related with this relationship.

According to Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2005), language learning is a process that requires continuous efforts to learn and games to create relaxing atmosphere help learners are interested in learning. To realize that this is right and suitable, so most teachers think this is the best method to them help their students revise English vocabulary effectively. In addition, in the book "How to Use Games in Language Teaching", Shelagh Rixon stated the importance of using games in vocabulary retention to students and how to conduct this game in class. Continuously,

teachers must look for and create themselves how to apply these games in their classes in the simpler ways. Moreover, games also help the teachers more easily to create a dynamic atmosphere in their English learning classes.

Most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms (W. R. Lee, 1979: 2). Games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching programme, Lee also says. Richard-Amato also shares the same idea with W. R. Lee that games are to fun but warn against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching.

Many advantages of using games in vocabulary revision are expressed by lexicologists; that are, games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely (Richard-Amato 1988:147). They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings (Hansen 1994:118). Furthermore, they add diversion to the regular classroom activities, break the ice, they are used to introduce new ideas (Richard-Amato, 1988:147). Relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better (Wierus and Wierus, 1994: 218). S. M. Silvers says many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as a teaching device, yet they often perceive games as mere time-fillers, a break from the monotony of drilling or frivolous activities. He also claims that many teachers often overlook the fact that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and students use the language they have been exposed to and have practised earlier (S.M. Silvers, 1982:29). Further support comes from Zdybiewska, who believes games to be a good way of practising language, for they provide a model of what learners will use the language for in real life in the future (Zdybiewska, 1994:6). Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson. Yet, as Lee observes, a game should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do (Lee, 1979:3). Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. Rixon suggests that games be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they are suitable and carefully chosen.

Moreover, games have been shown to have advantages and effectiveness in learning

vocabulary in various ways. First, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. Second, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. These create the motivation for learners of English to get involved and participate actively in the learning activities. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way. Therefore, the role of games in teaching and learning vocabulary cannot be denied. However, in order to achieve the most from vocabulary games, it is essential that suitable games are chosen. Whenever a game is to be conducted, the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and the classroom settings are factors that should be taken into account.

In conclusion, the relationship between using games and recalling English vocabulary is one effective and interesting way that can be applied in any classrooms. Through the part, I judge that games are used not only for more fun but also for the useful practice and review of vocabulary.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research question

This study was conducted in order to answer the following question:

Does using games have positive effects on students' English vocabulary retention?

3.2. Participants

Populations in this study were 86 sophomores of Finance and Banking majored class in Tay Do University. They were divided into two groups. One group was the control Group with 43 students, and the other group was the experimental Group with 43 students also. They all spoke Vietnamese as their mother language and English was considered as their foreign language.

3.3. Instruments

Vocabulary pretest and posttest were used as main instruments in my study. The pretest was conducted to judge the first stage on two groups (Experimental and Control group). In other words, the pretest examined participants' vocabulary stock before applying the method of using games in students' English vocabulary retention. Posttest

was used to compare their vocabulary stock between control group and experimental group after applying games to recall English vocabulary.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Results of pre-test

The results from the pre-test were presented in the following table.

Table 1. Results of the pre-test

Mark scales	0-4	4.5-5.5	6-7	7.5-8.5	9-10
Control group	9.30	27.90	27.90	34.90	0.00
Experimental group	2.33	30.22	30.22	34.90	2.33

The pretest showed that there was not a significant difference between students' in the control group and experimental group. Particularly, the percentage of students' cores from 0 mark to 4 marks was 2.33 % for the experimental group and 9.30 % for the control group. From 4.5 – 5.5 marks to 6 – 7 marks, it was 30.22 % for experimental group in comparison with 27.90% for the control group. 34.90 % of students in both control group and experimental group got the 7.5- 8.5 marks. Besides, the percentage of students in experimental group got the 9- 10 marks was 2.33% and that of control group was 0 %. The following chart showed the percentage of two groups in the pretest:

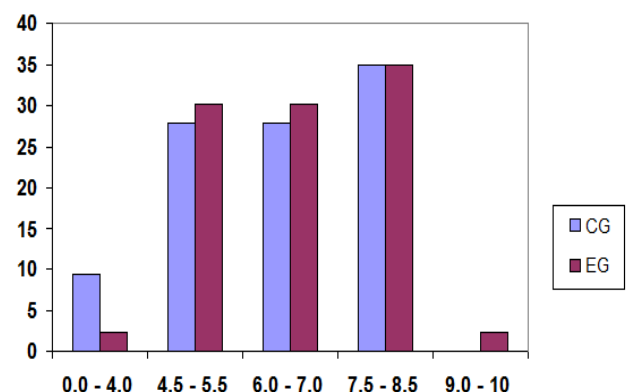


Fig 1. A comparison of the results of 2 groups in the pre-test

As we could see in figure 1, the poor and fair level of experimental group was 5% higher than those

of the control group. However, the number of the high - mark participants in control group (very good: 35%) was higher than the experimental group (very good: 30%). It proved that in the initial stage, the writing skill of the control group was better than the experimental group.

4.2 Results of post-test

The results from the post-test were presented in the following table.

Table 2. Results of the post-test

Mark scales	0 – 4	4.5 – 5.5	6 – 7	7.5 – 8.5	9 – 10
Control group	32.56	18.59	34.89	6.98	6.98
Experimental group	0.00	4.65	30.23	32.56	32.56

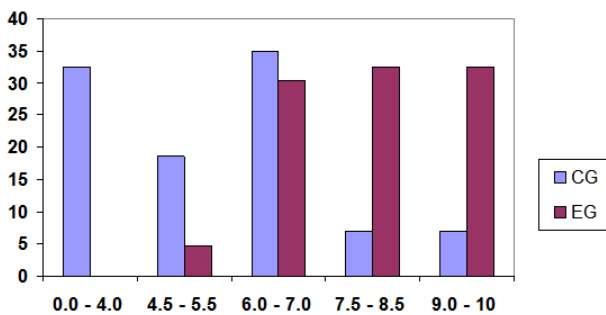


Fig 2. A comparison of the results of 2 groups in the post-test

The posttest affirmed that using games in recalling English vocabulary to non-English major sophomores in Tay Do University was very effective. Particularly, the percentage of students' scores from 0 mark to 4 marks was 0.00 % for the experimental group and 32.56 % for the control group. There were 4.65 % of students in experimental group got 4.5 – 5.5 marks in comparison with 18.59 % of ones in control group. Meanwhile, the percentage of students got 6 - 7 marks of two groups was rather balanced. It was 30.23 % for experimental group and 34.89 % for control group. It was so surprised that the gap of the 7.5 – 8.5 marks and 9 – 10 marks between two groups were not so balanced, specifically, experimental group was 32.56 % and control group was 6.98 %.

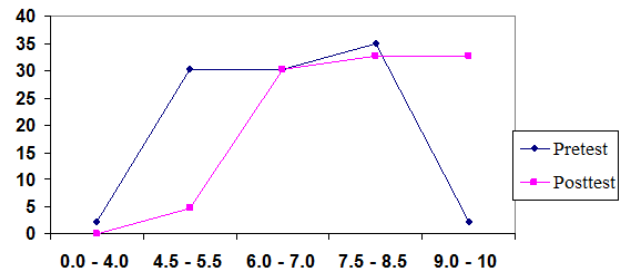


Fig 3. A comparison of the results of the experimental group via pretest and posttest

Figure 3 showed that there was a big change in the scores of the experimental group. The line charts showed that vocabulary stock of experimental group was improved obviously. This proved that using games to recall students' vocabulary retention was effective.

5. CONCLUSION

The study indicated that non-English major sophomores at Tay Do University could recall their vocabulary through games effectively. Particularly, thanks to this educated method the students could deal with recalling vocabulary easily that it did not take too much time for this activity. Moreover, some bad students' behavior such as impatience in correcting mistakes, shyness, laziness, dependence on the teacher and refusal to work in group were made better. All in all, the effectiveness of applying games in recalling vocabulary for non-English major sophomores was proved specifically. Games give both teachers and students the chance to interact with each other, understand each other and like the process of teaching and learning a language.

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