

The role of using Facebook in improving English

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Abstract: The study aimed at investigating the role of using facebook in improving Ajloun College English Students' Achievement, It attempted to answer the following main question: What is the role of facebook in improving English vocabulary?

To answer the question of the study, the researcher prepared a project based on facebook for the experimental group. Forty female students were purposefully chosen from Ajloun College- English Department in the summer semester of the academic year 2012. The participants of the study consisted of two assigned sections. The experimental group was taught according to facebook; while the control group was taught according to the conventional way (Lecture Method). The researcher used a test as an instrument. A suitable statistical treatment was used to find out the effect of the instructional program on the students' achievement in vocabulary. On the basis of the results of the present study, the researcher proposed a number of recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Computer assisted language learning, achievement, instructional program, facebook.

Introduction

Computer assisted language learning (CALL) is an approach to teaching and learning. Nowadays, web sites that cater to foreign language learners especially those learning English are so numerous and varied (Graham, 2007). Stockwell's study (2007) investigates mobile-based intelligent vocabulary learning system, learners completed vocabulary activities through either their mobile phones or personal computers. Results of the study revealed that mobile phones were less preferred than computers in vocabulary learning and students achieved better scores on computers.

Facebook technology has an impressive role in people's social life and it could play a distinguished role in foreign language learning and teaching. It has become more and more popular such as a main means of communication. One of the basic causes for the popularity of the facebook is the fact that it is free and available wherever internet is connected on mobile phones, laptop or desktop computers. Therefore, the possibility of using facebook as a tool for learning increases. More than any aspects of language learning vocabulary can be efficient taught by facebook. British council launches English vocabulary App for Facebook - Pic - Your - Wits is the latest in a number of free English language learning for vocabulary- to help learners build vocabulary and improve their English language skills (Ann Foreman)

Learning vocabulary is the primary step to learn a foreign language so many studies are conducted to increase efficiency of vocabulary learning (Akin & Seferoğlu, 2004; Bruton, 2007; Erten & Tekin 2008; McCarten, 2007; Newton, 2001; Tang & Nesi, 2003). Vocabulary has been one of the most commonly taught language areas through technology in recent years (Dodigovic, 2005 and Yoshii, 2003).

Several studies investigate using different technologies and CALL in learning and teaching, in particular, L2 learning. In fact, rare studies conducted about the role of facebook in L2 learning. In Jordan there is no study dealt with L2 learning or learning vocabulary using facebook. This study is considered a pioneer in this domain. Therefore, more studies should be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using facebook in language learning. In this respect, this study was designed to determine the role and effectiveness of facebook use in vocabulary learning in Al-Balqa' Applied University.

Statement of the Problem

The learners in the Jordanian universities, (private and the public) still have problems in acquiring vocabulary. Many children still face difficulties in acquiring the vocabulary. The researcher believed that this might due to the strategies used in teaching vocabulary. At this stage, it is known that the most widespread and free technology is facebook wherever the internet is available in Jordan at universities, cafes, houses, and on mobile, as well. Thus, language teachers and researchers have started to consider this technology. Learners show very little effort to deal with their problems about newly learned words (Meara, 1980). During the lesson teachers often tend to have an attitude to make the students deal with this problem outside the class on their own (Baykal and Daventry, 2000). However, learners do not have enough knowledge about the vocabulary learning techniques and they have difficulty in dealing with this problem themselves (Akin and Seferoglu, 2004).

Questions of the study

The study attempts to answer the following question:

- Are there any statistically significant differences between the students' vocabulary achievement test attributed to the instructional method of teaching (traditional and facebook)?

Significance of the Study

To the researcher's mind, studies about facebook instruction in Jordan are not existed. The study attempts to use facebook in teaching and learning vocabulary. Moreover, it may help EFL curricula designers and EFL methodologists develop teaching materials which suit various ways of teaching and match students' level of achievement in vocabulary.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the following:

- The EFL learners in the summer semester 2012 at Ajloun University College.
- The study is restricted to the vocabularies in Cause and Effect course for reading.
- The sample consisted of 40 participants.

Definition of Terms

Facebook: An approach to language learning that is enhanced through the use of the internet and provided the ability to use/write vocabulary items via interaction.

Achievement: the scores obtained by students in vocabulary post-test.

Related studies

Warschaur (1995) stated out that learners could have more opportunities to expose themselves to real communication and they can acquire independent learning and enrich their experience of an institution could encourage using e-mail system in language learning Nader (1996) pointed out that it would be a challenge for teachers to find individual and group activities that draw both , upon the internets resources and the students interest in searching them using the internet is fairly beneficial for exploring different cultures more directly and effectively . Students and teachers collaborate and share ideas relevant to their interests and concerns by communicating with friends all over the world (Choi & Hilary .1998). Call offers an excellent opportunity for task in this type of learning. Felix (1997) suggests that teaching grammar through computer may be useful and that a benefit of this type of language learning is that students are able to work at own pace.

A study conducted by Kaya Tadayoshi (2006) about the effectiveness of adaptive computer use for learning vocabulary aims at investigating the benefit of the adaptive computer application for language learners' benefit in the field of second language acquisition. The researcher designed two types of learning-style based materials for English vocabulary learning. The sample consisted of 145 Japanese university students received computerized vocabulary instruction based on their learning

preferences. The findings indicated no significant differences on vocabulary achievement between the experiment group and the control group. Another study conducted by Palmberg (2008) about CALL, the internet, and the foreign language teacher aims at investigating the importance of CALL and Internet methodology in motivating the learners in oral communication and vocabulary development. The researcher designed a pedagogical meaningful CALL program an online program. The sample consisted of 162 university students. The findings showed a profitable educational point of view by the learners in their vocabulary exercise performance. A study conducted by Kraijka (2008) about using the internet in ESL writing instruction aims at investigating the use of the internet in enhancing the classroom learning. The researcher proposed web pages, emails connection and created class websites. The results of the study showed great enhancement and enrichment in learners' choice, variety, and authenticity in writing. The study conducted by Kyoko (2003) about the effects of three computer assisted programs on the acquisition of the transitive/intransitive verbs by beginning level Japanese language students aims at investigating the effects of animation on beginners' learning of Japanese vocabulary (transitive and intransitive verbs). Three types of multimedia CALL vocabulary enhancement exercises were used for the treatment. Forty three participants were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. The results indicated no differences on the posttest and the retention test in learning Japanese transitive/intransitive verbs among the learners who used ANIME, PICT and TEXT. The questionnaire responses indicated that the students who received ANIME and PICT found the learning process more interesting than the students who received text.

Reviewing the related literature implies many studies about CALL in teaching and learning language aspects: grammar, writing, vocabulary and pronunciation. The researcher did not find studies conducted on using facebook in enhancing English or vocabulary learning. Therefore, this study is different from the previously mentioned studies because the researcher herself redesigned the syllabus of "Cause and Effect". To the researcher's best knowledge, no studies were conducted on teaching vocabulary through facebook in Jordan. For this purpose, the researcher developed an instructional program for teaching vocabulary via facebook.

Methods and Procedures

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study was the university EFL learners at AL Balqa' Applied University – Jordan. The participants are English major. The sample consisted of 40 university learners enrolled in Ajloun University College – public AL Balqa' Applied University. The participants of the study consisted of two groups: the experimental group and the control group, each consisting of 20 learners. The experiment started on the tenth of June and ended on 20th August during the summer semester of the academic year 2011-2012.

Instruments of the Study

The researcher has developed two types of instruments: an achievement test, and a facebook instructional program.

The Achievement Test

The test was designed by the researcher. It was used as a pre-test and a post-test to find out the effect of the facebook instructional program on students' vocabulary achievements. The test comprises (30) multiple-choice items of four alternatives. The students' previous knowledge was assessed by the pre-test administered to both groups (control and experimental) before the study started. The objective of the pre-test was to assess the students' background knowledge of words. The same pre-test was used at the end of the study as a post-test to assess the students' achievement on the topic, the vocabulary items. The objective of the post-test was to assess the effect of both instructional methods (facebook and conventional) on learners' achievement.

The Facebook Program

For the purpose of this study, the researcher designed an instructional program to teach the vocabulary items by using the students' facebook. A lesson plan also was included in the instructional

program. The program was based on the content of Cause and Effect course for reading. The program included the following:

- Introduction
- Construction
- Use
- Vocabulary Preview
- Guess the meaning from context
- Understanding parts of speech
- Expanding vocabulary
- Finding related words
- Compound words
- Suffixes and prefixes
- Expressions and idioms
- Drills and practice
- Test yourself.

The program also provided model answers for the items presented in the exercises. In addition, the learner receives feedback for his/her achievement simply because the program contains a system for correction. The learner can easily get his/her scores when s/he finished any exercise.

Validity and Reliability of the Test

The test content was validated by a group of English language specialists in teaching, CALL and language acquisition. The judge jury validated the suitability of the test and the objectives of the study, the number of questions and the suitability of the time allocated to the test. All comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and the demanded modifications were done. The test reliability was verified through a test-retest method which was applied on a pilot study of (20) participants randomly chosen from the population of the study and excluded from the sample.

The test reliability was obtained through a test-retest method, which was applied on a pilot group of (20) students who were randomly chosen from the population of the study and excluded from the sample. The reliability was computed using Pearson correlation formula. The obtained value was (0.80) which is considered suitable and accepted for the purpose of the study.

Validity of the Facebook program

The content of the program was validated by TEFL and curricula designing specialists. The validating committee consisted of six Ph.D. holders in curricula and instruction, the two of them are specialized in educational technology, and two highly qualified instructors of English and supervisors in the ministry of education in Jordan.

The conventional method is used in the lecture in which the instructor presents new words and uses open pair work involving a pair of students in class participation while the other learners listen. The general procedures for teaching vocabulary items are as follow:

- The instructor puts the new vocabulary items in meaningful sentences and writes them on the board, then reads those sentences and asks the students questions to help them build up answers using such new items.
- The instructor also uses flash-cards for the pictures of the new words and asks the students questions to urge them to build up meaningful sentences using the new words. The instructor uses the difficult words in real situations to make such words familiar to the students' mind.
- Before reading the text, the instructor asks the students to talk about the topics of the text. The instructor uses the title of the text and illustrations and asks those learners to describe a scene in the picture by using familiar words.
- The instructor uses the pre-reading while reading and post-reading questions.
- The instructor sets each student read the whole text silently on his/her own to examine the meaning of the words and aloud reading to check the pronunciation.
- The instructor asks the learners to memorize vocabulary items from pre-determined lists.
- Learners should complete vocabulary workbook exercises, which were discussed only one day each week.

- The instructor uses flash cards, written definitions, blank filling sentences. The learners write sentences for the vocabulary items.
- Learners also have to do several exercises by choosing the correct words to be put into pre-made sentences or writing their own sentences using the weekly vocabulary items.

Design of the study

Participant were divided into two groups the first experimental group, called "the facebook group" and consisted of 20 participants. The second control group consisted of 20 participants. The experimental group was taught through the facebook program, whereas the control group was taught through the conventional method (lecture method). The two groups were given a pretest to ensure that they were comparable. The study consisted of two variables the independent variable (facebook) and the dependent variable (vocabulary items).

Procedures

The researcher implemented the following procedures in conducting her study during the summer semester of the academic year 2011-2012:

- Reviewing the related literature about the roles of using CALL in teaching and learning vocabulary.
- Designing the instruments of the study.
- Establishing the validity and reliability of the instruments.
- The pre-test was administrated to both groups before implementing the strategy.
- Holding a meeting with the participating students to clarify the purpose of the study.
- Before the experimental process was started, a vocabulary acquisition program to be operated on facebook was selected.
- All the details and objectives of the experiment were explained.
- Starting the experiment under investigation in the first semester of the year 2011-2012.
- Keeping in touch with the students. So as to guarantee that they are applying the treatment correctly.
- The test was administrated as a post-test to both groups after implementing the strategy.
- Analyzing statistically the obtained data to reach conclusion and suggest pedagogical implications and possible recommendations.

Statistical Procedures

The study aimed to investigate the effect of facebook in improving English, on teaching vocabulary. The mean scores, standard deviations and t-test were done to detect any significant differences between the two groups (experimental and control) on the achievement pre-test.

Findings and Discussion of the study

To make sure that there were no statistically significant differences between vocabulary achievement of the experimental group and control group due to the instructional strategies (facebook and conventional), the students were given a pre-test. Table (1) shows the mean scores, standard deviations and t-test for both groups on the achievement vocabulary test.

Table 1: Result of Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test on the Achievement Vocabulary Pre-Test for Both Groups, Experimental and Control.

Pre-Test	Group	N	Mean Score	St. deviation	F-value	T-value	Sig.(2.tailed)
	Experimental	20	13.4000	1.78885			
	Control	20	13.6000	1.69830			

It is clear from Table(1) that there were no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha 0.05$) between the performance of the two groups (experimental and control) on the vocabulary achievement pre-test where t-value was (0.363) in a references degree of (0.719). This shows that there were no differences in the pre-test for both groups.

To answer the question of the study: Are there any statistically significant differences between the students' achievement in vocabulary attributed to the instructional method of teaching (facebook and traditional)?

The mean scores, standard deviations and t-test were done for two independent samples, both groups: experimental and control. Table (2) shows that.

Table 2: Result of Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and T-Test for Both Groups Experimental and Control on the Vocabulary Achievement Post-Test.

Post-Test	Group	N	Mean Score	St. deviation	F-value	T-value	Sig.(2.tailed)
	Experimental	20	16.3500	1.18210	1.467	8.459	0.000
	Control	20	12.7000	1.52523			

It is evident from Table (2) that there were statistically significant differences between the performance of both groups the experimental and control on the achievement vocabulary post-test. The mean score of the experimental group was (16.35) in a standard deviation of (1.1821); whereas the mean score of the control group was (12.7) in a standard deviation of (1.52523). The t-value was (8.459) in a statistical reference of (0.000). Those differences are in favor of the facebook instructional strategy, for the experimental group. This means that the facebook strategy in teaching vocabulary is more effective than the conventional (current) method.

Conclusion

The studies of vocabulary teaching and learning problems and needs have been neglected for a long time. This neglected area has been reported by many researchers. Wilkins (1972) emphasized that in order to use language correctly you need mastery of grammar and vocabulary. "We could not accept that vocabulary word be initially less important that grammar. The fact is that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". (Wilkins, 1972:111).

The intent of this paper was to investigate teaching vocabulary through facebook. It has been argued that CALL systems should be used as instructional tool for vocabulary teaching it also has been argued that this type of learning is beneficial for second language learners, that it considerably increases learners' confidence. The reasons could be found in frequency of exposure due to a larger input, students' control of learning. The study showed that EFL students significantly improved in vocabulary performance and confidence after being exposed to call vocabulary case for students that had similar teacher fronted instruction. The participants in the study favored this type of vocabulary instruction and supported students' control of learning immediate feedback provided by the system. They were really motivated to challenge themselves to improve their English by building up good sentences using the right words. Moreover, the participant began commenting and sending some ideas to their instructor on facebook.

The findings of the study are in congruent with Brown (2008) and Baki (2010) who studied the effectiveness of using Mobile strategy on vocabulary and showed that there were significant differences in increasing vocabulary abiliyu in favor of the experimental group. The lessons delivered via facebook are more appealing to students. Working on the internet and dealing with each other through facebook anytime and anywhere is trendy among all people, in particular learners. Hence, the facebook can be a more effective medium for self-learning English vocabulary than the paper material. This study is also congruent with the British Council vocabulary App that improves the learners' English skills. The students also made improvement in their achievement test and in their performance as a whole. The findings of the current study are in harmony with the theoretical and practical studies previously mentioned.

Based on findings of the study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations:

- Adopting the facebook strategy by the instructions at universities in teaching English skills and components for the effectiveness of it in improving students' academic achievement.
- Conducting similar studies on other language aspects and skills so that the generalization could become more valid and widely applicable.

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