

The Effect of Using Online Tools on Ninth Grade Jordanian Students' Vocabulary Learning

Abdallah Ahmad Baniabdelrahman
Curriculum and Instruction Department
Yarmouk University
Irbid/Jordan

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of using integrating online tools - games, You Tube and digital storytelling, which are embedded in a wiki, on students' vocabulary learning in EFL classroom. The participants of this study consisted of two ninth grade male students classroom sections and two female classroom sections of the same grade (70 male, and 70 female students) in Irbid city in Jordan. One male and one female ninth grade classroom sections were assigned to be the experimental group and the other two sections (one male and one female) to represent the control group. The study tried to answer the question: Are there significant differences in EFL students' achievement in the vocabulary post-test due to the method of teaching: method of using integrating online tools and the traditional method?

Performance results on the post-test revealed that the experimental group showed better improvement in their vocabulary achievement in comparison with the improvement of the control group regardless of their gender. The study recommended to examine the effect of using these online tools on students' achievement in the other language skills, sub-skills and language components.

Key words: CALL, Online tools, EFL students writing

Introduction

In the twenty first century, students live changes in the aspects of technology life and find themselves enjoy the World Websites. They also found themselves in an urgent need to improve their learning for English language. For schools in a country like Jordan, to survive in the fast changing technology environment, and to avoid having a gap between students' life inside and outside the school, it is an essential matter to use the digital technologies in teaching and have the students practice the language.

Learning vocabulary is a fundamental component of learning any language. Many ESL/EFL scholars emphasized the importance of learning vocabulary in ESL and EFL. Wilkins (1972) believed that, without learning grammar very little can be conveyed and without learning vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed. Harmer (1994) also claimed that language structures make up the skeleton of language and it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. EFL figures look at vocabulary teaching through different perspectives. McKeown, Beck; Omanson, & Pople (1985) believed that repetitions are required to learn new words; and acquiring a new word requires seven or more encounters with the word which online tools meet. There are different strategies and methods for learning vocabulary of a second or a foreign language but learning through using technology has a great deep effect on motivating students to have a better learning. Learners need an explicit introduction to vocabulary, accurate and effective support in interpreting new vocabulary, and practice for remembering vocabulary. Using CALL helps teachers to work towards these goals for vocabulary teaching and learning (Chapelle and Jamieson, 2009). Providing EFL learners with different online tools gives them chances to choose the suitable tool for their own learning style. On the other hand, it gives them more opportunities to encounter the new words in many different situations.

Online tools can provide background pictures, objects, characters, sound effects and even music to be integrated into storytelling, Teachers can use You Tube and games as online tools to enhance language teaching situation. Besides, with the online tools, teachers can easily integrate the culture knowledge of the English language through them. In other words, with the unique features of the Internet, teachers can easily gather authentic materials of English speaking cultures, such as songs, pictures and activities. Furthermore, online tools can provide creative classroom activities for use after using the online tools. For instance, the teacher or students can select a set of pictures and sound effects to design You Tube clips or to create other stories. Furthermore, the online tools also allow students to use them again and again for reviewing purposes.

You Tube, video games, speaking avatar and interactive stories are more attractive technology tools for students that they use in their lifetime. Therefore, using these educational technology tools to improve students' achievement and attitudes towards learning EFL is essential. Applying this new method of teaching vocabulary through online tools might motivate students and attract their attention towards learning vocabulary or any other language components and skills which might lead hopefully to a better learning (Jitsupa; Nilsook; and Piriyasurawong, 2012).

A wiki is a free web site that can gather all the different online tools such as, links for games, interactive stories, and useful sites providing various kinds of authentic materials. Moreover, it provides teachers with the opportunity to add their power point slides and other files for their classes. It is a fertilized place which offers learning through different contexts. For example, the clips on You Tube may improve students' achievement in the four language skills; they also help to learn real English vocabulary as spoken by real native speakers. They provide the students

with attractive authentic materials which lead to a comprehensible input. Digital games, whether computer, game console, or handheld-based, are characterized by rules, goals and objectives, outcomes and feedback (Prenkys, 2001). Interactive stories help students to understand words in an interesting way. New vocabulary needs to be learned both receptively and productively (Corson, 1997) which can be done effectively through the use of these online tools in an integrating way. Moreover, Brady (2004:1) believed that "multimedia education improved both comprehension of the lesson material and students' interest in the lesson topic".

The aforementioned functions of the online tools demonstrate their significant value and importance in education, especially in foreign language teaching and learning. Because of its convenience, these online tools hold great potential for solving problems which teachers typically encounter when attempting to introduce new vocabulary or new terms for the students in a foreign language classroom.

Students in the Arab world in general and Jordan in particular still face difficulties in English language learning which might be due to the methods of teaching and the shortage use of the different technology devices of which wiki is one. A study of the effects of using integrating online tools may participate in improving the English language teaching and learning situation in Jordan.

Statement of the Problem:

The researcher noticed through his experience in teaching the English language that most students complain from the difficulty of remembering the words they have learned which may be the result of the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods which EFL teachers use. As a result, the researcher feels that students need a material that helps them to build their vocabulary through entertainment, games and social website practice. Could integrate online tools be suggested as an applicable solution for this problem? Could the use of integrating online tools increase the motivation and create an enjoyable atmosphere accompanied with useful learning? In order to answer these questions, this study is conducted to investigate the effect of using integrating online tools on students' vocabulary learning.

Research Objective and Question

This study investigates the effect of the use of integrating online tools on students' vocabulary learning. It addresses the following question:

Are there significant differences in EFL students' achievement in the vocabulary post-test due to the method of teaching: method of using integrating online tools and the traditional method?

Significance of the Study:

Although this study is limited to the EFL male and female ninth grade students and its findings might not be generalized for other grades or places, the present study familiarizes the English language teachers with the importance of using integrating online tools in their classes which may enhance the chances to learn new vocabularies through different contexts. It is also expected to provide language instructors and curriculum designers with a systematically designed educational wiki. Furthermore, it may prove the literature in a way that wikis help students to acquire new English vocabulary in a collaborative learning environment through allowing students edit each other's work.

Learning English Using Technology and Computers

CALL is “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997:1). It is used extensively in teaching English as a foreign language (Davies, 2010). Using technology in teaching English requires integrating technology tools to teaching English language in order to facilitate learning and motivate young learners to learn English. It is an approach to language teaching and learning in which the computer is used as an aid to the presentation, practice and assessment of material to be learned and usually involves an interactive element. Because CALL has profound and lasting impacts on education, it has received considerable attention from researchers (Bataineh & Baniabdelrahman, 2006). Aweis (1994) found that American learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language who received computer-mediated instruction improved their reading comprehension more than those who received instruction only via a teacher. Similarly, Bataineh & Bani Hani (2011) found that there were significant differences between the achievement of sixth grade students studying English in Jordan CALL as opposed to traditional learning alone, in favor of those using technology. According to Masie (2002) the most advantageous and preferable way of using CALL is to use it to supplement traditional face-to-face teaching.

CALL can be considered to be advantageous over traditional teaching methods alone for a number of reasons. It has been found to develop students’ ability to learn independently, analyze information, think critically, and solve problems (Chavez 1997). It is also thought to promote visual, verbal and kinesthetic learning, higher-level thinking, and problem-solving (Turnbull & Lawrence 2002). It can help students progress at their own pace and study alone without being dependent on others as it gives immediate feedback, correction and error analysis (Hanson-Smith, 1997). Lam and Lawrence in Luik & Kukemelk (2008) found that the use of computers in the language classroom can shift the traditional teacher-student role and provide a more learner-centered classroom. Learners are more able to manage their own learning process by making their own decisions and being responsible for their own learning, whereas the teacher becomes a “facilitator, a resource person and a counselor rather than the only authority and decision-maker” (p. 305).

CALL has also been found to have positive effects on the learners' attitudes towards learning a language. Almekhlafi, and Almeqdadi (2010) reported that the use of CALL has positive effect on Emirati students' attitudes towards studying English. In addition, Klassen and Milton (1999) found that attitudes of university students in Hong Kong learning English improved when multi-media devices were included in their learning program.

In spite of the benefits of CALL mentioned above, there are some limitations to its use. Since the computer is a human-made tool, without a competent user, it cannot guarantee successful achievement in the classroom (Dündar, 2005:196). External barriers to the use of CALL such as time constraints or inadequate teacher training can limit its use; and internal constraints such as the teacher’s attitude towards technology may also place a barrier to the use of CALL in the classroom (Baniabdelrahman; Bataineh; and Bataineh, 2007)..

Games and Vocabulary Learning

To have good outcomes of learning, students should be motivated to learn. Learning through games encourages students to enjoy the learning situations. Musei (2002) studied the effect of using educational games on the motivation of EFL Tenth Grade learners. Findings revealed that the educational games could increase significantly the self-reported motivation of the students and the overall class observed motivation. Calao (2010) investigated the effects of playing

educational games on kindergarten achievement. The results revealed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher than the control group in vocabulary and overall achievement. Students who play educational games, can learn better than who do not play such games. Moreover, using games reduces the anxiety level between the peers as it is proved in a study of Wang, and Briody (2011). The results also revealed that using games in vocabulary teaching had positive effect on the students' acquisition of English vocabulary.

Al Neyadi (2007) claimed that using games in vocabulary learning improves the memorization of English vocabularies. Games help students to use the words in meaningful context. They also have a great effect on improving the students' vocabulary building skills. Dehaan (2010) examined the effect of interactivity with a music video game on second language vocabulary recall. The results revealed that both the players and the watchers of the video game recalled vocabulary from the game, but the players recalled significantly less vocabulary than the watchers. The players perceived the game and its language to be significantly more difficult than the watchers did. Qteefan (2012) proposed that it is important to have the students an access to the use of video games before they advance to higher education. There are also some limitations to the use of video games. In addition to the lack of time for teachers to know how to use and apply these games, there is sometimes a mismatch between video content and the content of the curriculum (McFarlane; Sparrowhawk; and Heald, 2002).

You Tube and EFL learning:

You Tube can provide students with authentic materials which are beneficial in EFL classes. Mekheimer (2011) examined the impact of using videos on whole language learning in EFL context and found that using you tube can improve the linguistic proficiency of EFL students at university levels.

You Tube is a good resource for promoting authentic vocabulary development through providing students with lively content and online videos (Watkins, Wilkins, 2011). Al-Seghayer (2001) examined the effectiveness of the use of image modalities (dynamic video or still picture) in aiding vocabulary acquisition. The results revealed that a video clip is more effective in teaching unknown vocabulary words than a still picture.

Hines and Silverman (2002) studied the effects of using multimedia video (YouTube) in conjunction with traditional read aloud methods on improving the growth of English language learners' vocabulary. They found that the results of the study supported the effective role of multimedia in supporting vocabulary instruction.

Abidin; Mohammadi; Singh; Azman and Souriyavongsa (2011) investigated whether learners expose to songs using YouTube would experience a change in vocabulary competence compared to those exposed to the traditional teacher-fronted approach. Results revealed that the learners who exposed to song using You Tube experienced a significant improvement in their vocabulary competence compared to the control group.

Storytelling and Vocabulary Acquisition

According to Krashen (1989) vocabulary is incidentally acquired through stories because (1) familiar vocabulary and syntax contained in the story provide meaning to less familiar vocabulary and (2) picture illustrations clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words. Tavit and Selmin (2008) examined the effect of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition to very young learners in Kindergartens. The pre and post-tests showed that the students could not point to the mentioned words before the application but they were all successful in recognition of the

selected words. Moreover, the results revealed that Storytelling is a great tool to teach vocabulary to very young learners as words are best learnt in context.

Elley (1989) examined the effect of listening to stories on vocabulary acquisition to Elementary school children in New Zealand. The results showed that reading stories aloud to children is a significant source of vocabulary acquisition than teachers' explanation of words.

Raines & Isbell in (Louise Phillips, 1999) conducted a storytelling study that compared two groups of three to six year olds over an eight week period. One group had a story read to them three times a week and the other had stories told to them three times a week. When the students who had stories told to them were asked to retell the story, they were more capable of retelling it. They included more story conventions; told longer and more sequential stories; and employed more diverse vocabulary, than those that had been read to.

Mason (2004) studied the effect of interactive storytelling on vocabulary acquisition. The participants were first year English majors at a four- year-private college in Osaka, Japan. He compared the effects of interactive storytelling and the traditional method on vocabulary acquisition. The result confirmed that listening to stories leads to the acquisition of vocabulary. Moreover, stories are far more pleasant than traditional instruction, and students can gain other aspects of language from stories, as well as knowledge.

Wikis and Collaborative Learning

Wikis enhance the chance of being the students independent and give them the opportunity to share responsibility with their peers (Franco, 2008). Wikis promote the different kinds of learning styles and helps teachers to be fair in their assessment through using the icon provided in each wiki page to see the contributions and changes each student makes (Elgort; Smith & Toland 2008).

Xiao and Lucking (2008) studied the effects of a wiki-based peer assessment method on university students' writing performance, and found that the experimental group revealed greater improvement in their writing than the control group and the experimental group exhibited greater satisfaction with the peer assessment method. Moreover, Wikis, being student-centered, give students a chance to work together and collaborate on their work without strong presence of the teacher. Wikis can facilitate interaction between learners (Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes, 2009).

Coyle (2010) discussed how Wikis encourage students to have cooperative learning and networked interaction. He found that students were encouraged more with their weekly post assignments than with cooperative ones.

Wikis can be used as a source of information and knowledge, as well as a tool for collaborative authoring. Wikis allow visitors to engage in dialogue and share information among participants in group projects, or to engage in learning with each other by using Wikis as a collaborative environment in which to construct their knowledge (Boulos et al, 2006). In their study of "the use of Wikis to support group project work" Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes (2009) found that Wikis encourage individual and group responsibility. Moreover, Wikis help in solving the problem of free riding in group work where one person controls the project and does all the work.

Chen (2008) investigated the effectiveness of applying Wikis in terms of students' learning outcomes. He also investigated Wikis effect on students' attitude towards language learning. He found that EFL student groups in Taiwan using Wikis performed better in listening and reading abilities. Students reported having a more favorable attitude towards cooperative learning.

The previous studies confirmed the positive effect of Wiki on the collaborative learning. Wiki encourages students to learn because it provides them with the opportunity to learn together in a cooperative way.

Similarities and Differences between the Present Study and the Previous Ones:

The present study agrees with the previous studies with regard to the positive effect of games, storytelling and YouTube on vocabulary acquisition. Previous studies examined the effect of each of them on the English language vocabulary learning separately. This study is different from the previous ones in the way in which these different tools were used. They were used as online tools. Furthermore, they were used in an integrating way. In this way, the researcher enhances the chances to the students to choose the suitable tool that suits their own learning style. Moreover, this study provides students with different opportunities to learn new vocabularies through different contexts. These reasons are the core importance of the present study.

Methodology

This study is a quasi-experimental one because of the impossibility of identifying the study sample randomly. The independent variables were the teaching methods- the use of integrating online tools versus the traditional method without using online tools and the students' gender. The dependent variable was the ninth grade students' achievement in the vocabulary post-test. After reviewing the related literature, suitable online tools were chosen to be used in the study. They were interactive stories, educational games and You Tube clips. These online tools were selected according to various criteria such as having comprehensible lyrics and not being popular among the students. The topics of the selected online tools were associated with the units studied in the class. The study covered the units from unit two to five which covered the topics "In the Public Eye, Around the World, Travelers' tales, and Enjoy Reading." Then, interesting activities related to the vocabulary competence based on the selected online tools were planned out and included. Some of these activities were: guessing the meaning of new vocabulary through context, giving synonyms and antonyms, and paraphrasing the meanings of vocabulary. The lessons then were carried out and data were collected through vocabulary tests.

Context and Participants

This study was classroom- based. The participants of this study consisted of two ninth grade male students classroom sections (70 students) and two ninth grade female classroom sections (70 students). One male section (35 students) and one female students section (35 students) were randomly assigned to be the experimental group and were taught English vocabulary throughout the use of integrating online tools. The other male students section (35 students) and female section (35 students) were assigned to represent the control group and were taught the new vocabulary throughout traditional way in which the teacher explains new words in classroom without using online tools. Students there studied "INTERPRISE 3 textbook" which is a dynamic British English series for international communication designed for pre-intermediate students. The book integrates the four English language skills, presents grammar in context and

helps students develop natural conversation. They learn English five hours weekly, one hour per day. The experimental group sections were taught by a male and a female non native experienced teachers of English and the same thing was done for the control group.

In order to ensure the equivalence of the experimental and the control groups before the experiment was carried out in vocabulary, the two groups sat for a pre-test after establishing its validity and reliability. The test was of two main parts: vocabulary and reading chosen from what the students were taught in the second semester while they were in the eighth grade. The test consisted of 40 multiple choice questions in its final form. The results are presented in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the students' Results in the Pre-test

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Male	70	63.69	9.41
Gender			
Female	70	64.11	9.36
Experimental	70	63.92	9.39
Group			
Control	70	63.87	9.37

Although there were observed differences between the mean scores of the two groups regardless of their gender, they were close. To ensure that the two groups were equivalent, ANOVA test was used. The results are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Results of ANOVA Test of the pre-test

Source	DF	Type III	Mean Square	F=Value	Sig
Gender	1	6.42857143	6.42857143	0.07	0.788
Group	1	0.11428571	0.11428571	0.00	0.9714
Error	137	12142.06	88.63		
Corrected Total	139	12148.60			

The results in table 2 show that there were no significant differences between the two groups regardless of their gender. The post test also consisted of two sections (reading and vocabulary). It consisted in its final version, after being validated and its reliability was established, of 40 multiple choice items. It was built out of the vocabulary which the experimental and control groups were taught throughout the treatment. As the case in the pre-test, the post test was also marked out of 100. Two points and a half were given to each correct choice and zero for the wrong choice.

Material and Data Collection Procedure

The researcher designed the Wiki which was provided by PBWorks (<http://pbworks.com/>). It is designed to provide students with different helpful online tools to learn English vocabulary. These online tools (You Tube, Interactive Stories, Educational Games) enhance the chances for the students to learn a bigger number of vocabulary in different contexts (Hines and Silverman, 2002; and Tomin and Liu, 2008).

In the introductory class, students were given access to the Wiki web space and were asked to navigate and explore the Wiki. Then during the experimental classes, the students were asked to learn vocabularies which were categorized in different themes through using the selected online

tools. To ensure their learning, they were asked to complete selected activities based on the studied ones. The Wiki content was updated daily and based on the theme covered that week in the class. The study lasted for eight weeks. Finally, the post test was conducted on the two groups to measure the students' vocabulary achievement.

Validity and Reliability of the Tests

In order to make sure that the pre-test and the post-test measure what they were designed to measure, they were given to a jury of specialists in educational studies and EFL Experts. Their views and comments were taken into consideration and the tests items were modified according to their suggestions.

As for reliability, the pre-test and post-test were applied on one male and one female ninth grade students sections from outside the sample of the study at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2012/2013. Three weeks later, both of the two tests were applied again on the same students. Then, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to test the reliability of the pretest and posttest. The total value for the pretest was 0,84 whereas , the total value for the posttest was 0 .82.

Results and discussion

Table 3: *Means and Standard Deviations of the Students' Results in the Post-test*

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Gender Male	70	71.06	9.58
Female	70	70.61	10.18
Group Experimental	70	73.04	9.87
Control	70	68.63	9.39

The results show that there are seen differences between the control group mean scores and the experimental group means scores. ANOVA test was then run to check if the differences were significant.

Table 4: *Results of ANOVA Analysis of the Post-test*

Source	DF	Type III	Mean Square	F=Value	Sig
Gender	1	6.86	6.86	0.07	0.788
Group	1	682.007	682.007	7.30	0.0078
Error	137	12802.35	93.45		
Corrected Total	139	13491.22			

The results of ANOVA test do not reveal any statistically significant differences between the experimental group mean scores and the control group mean scores due to the students gender (F- value= 0.07, P= 0.788) but the results show statistically significant differences between the two groups mean scores due to the method of teaching in favor of the experimental group (F- value = 7.30, P= 0078). This result is in harmony with most of the previous studies. The positive

effect of the use of the integrating tools might be due to the fact that Wikis help in creating an innovative learning environment where students are interested and engaged in the learning process. Wikis encourage individual and group responsibility. Moreover, wikis help in solving the problem of free riding in group work where one person controls the project and does all the work (Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes, 2009). Wikis enhance the chance of being the students independent and give them the opportunity to share responsibility with their peers (Franco, 2008). Wikis can be used as a source of information and knowledge, as well as a tool for collaborative authoring. Wikis allow visitors to engage in dialog and share information among participants in group projects, or to engage in learning with each other by using wikis as a collaborative environment in which to construct their knowledge. Wikis give students a chance to work together and collaborate on their work without strong presence of the teacher. Furthermore, wikis can facilitate interaction between learners.

Integrating online tools is a major resource for teaching the *Net Generation* and for drawing on their multiple intelligences and learning styles to increase the success of every student. There is a match between the media and the students' intelligences (Gardner, 2000).

It seems that using online tools such as games, You Tube and digital storytelling offers the students a chance to follow their own desire with the use of online tools instead of that everything will be mastered by the teacher. Furthermore, online tools can also be used in non-entertaining areas such as education. It could teach and convey knowledge and cultural values to students interactively instead of the old traditional methods.

The content of the online tools provides comprehensible input while learners interact in the group, allowing students to clarify meanings of words in such contexts. The use of online tools also enhanced students' motivation to learn vocabulary. This might be because the students have experienced new methods of teaching, as they have been used only to learning the new language through drilling the vocabulary. The strategy which the researcher adopted also allows them to interact with peers, which is also a new experience for them since they are used to teacher-centered methods for the whole of their learning experience. The online tools also provided a challenge, where they need their concentration to get the activities done which strengthen students' mental work. Such activities were also new to students' experience, and they think carefully to get the right answers.

Based on the results of this study the English language teachers are recommended to integrate online tools in their lessons in order to motivate their students to learn the target language and to make the whole teaching process more fruitful. To have better outcomes of learning, teachers should choose online tools that suit the students' level, condition, culture and meet the skills that needed to be taught. Moreover, the teachers are recommended to be ready all the time to surprise the students with a new content of online tools if the teacher thinks that there is a need to change the dull atmosphere in the class. It is also recommended for the teachers to believe that using online tools can be a very fruitful way of teaching if they are carefully chosen to suit what is needed to be taught. Also the teacher should be sure about the appropriateness of any chosen tool.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the use of online tools has positive and significant effect on improving EFL students' vocabulary learning which resulted in improving the experimental groups vocabulary achievement in comparison with the improvement of the control group regardless of their gender. Based on the results it is recommended to use online tools in teaching

vocabulary and to conduct similar studies that investigate the effect of using integrating online tools on the language skills like (speaking, writing, reading and listening). Other aspects to be investigated are the students' and teachers' attitudes toward using integrating online tools.

About the author:

Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Baniabdelrahman is an associate professor of curriculum and instruction of the English language at the Curriculum and Instruction Department in the faculty of education/ Yarmouk University in Jordan. He has published more than twenty studies in teaching English as a foreign language and in the use of technology in teaching English

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