Boosting ESL Vocabulary: The Role of Interactive Method in Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of interactive methods in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Focusing on innovative teaching strategies, the research examined how interactive activities such as games, role-playing, and technology-assisted learning affect vocabulary retention and use. The research question is "What is the impact of the interactive method on the students' vocabulary enhancement?" There were 100 students of Marine Cruise Yogyakarta, Sukoharjo Branch, who were selected for this research. The data collection method was mixed method through open-ended questionnaire, observation, and interview. Descriptive narrative research design was used to analyze the data through triangulation. The result showed that interactive method significantly contribute to vocabulary enhancement in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) especialy in; 1) student engagement, 2) integration of technology, 3) collaborative learning. This research provides valuable insights for educators seeking to implement effective strategies for teaching vocabulary in ESL classrooms.

1. Introduction

As the cornerstone of effective communication and comprehension, vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental component of learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Understanding the complex nature of vocabulary requires recognition that meaning does not always map one-to-one to form. It consists of formulaic sequencesin that content and function words behave very differentlyand words have semantic, syntagmatic, grammatical, and morphological relationships (Alharbi, 2019; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020; Amelia J et al., 2024; Rahman, 2018). Several researchers have shown that computerization, both games and social media, can enhance vocabulary knowledge (Alharthi et. al., 2020; Hashemi, 2021; Peterson, 2011). Vocabulary knowledge is a key factor in achieving proficiency (Schmitt, 2000; Yaumi et al., 2024). It is a strong indicator of reading proficiency. This means that there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables of reading comprehension. Through the improvement of vocabulary knowledge, students significantly improve their language proficiency and have a good understanding of socio-cultural adaptation (Sari et al., 2020). In learning vocabulary, teachers should provide English language learners with the necessary vocabulary and discourse structures needed to further their learning in the specific domain (Pustika, 2019; Rahman et al., 2019). Effective and easy-to-understand instruction is needed by students (Masita, 2020; McQuillan, 2019; Wright & Cervetti, 2017).

There are two vocabulary learning techniques namely the traditional method and the modern method, which we usually know as the interactive method. Traditional methods of teaching vocabulary have long been the standard in ESL classrooms, such as rote memorization and passive repetition. One of the difficulties in vocabulary instruction is the implementation of instructional technology (Suardi & Sakti, 2019; Yaumi et al., 2023). There is a growing interest in exploring more dynamic and interactive approaches to vocabulary instruction (Park et al., 2022) as educational technology and pedagogical strategies evolve. The traditional method is often teacher-centred and has an emphasis on the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student (Bo et al., 2022). It has had academic success in teaching English. However, this does not mean that the traditional method is more successful than the modern approach (San et al., 2020). The modern approach, which refers to interactive methods that include digital games, collaborative tasks, and immersive technologies, represents a shift toward more engaging and participatory learning environments (Dalimunthe & Haryadi, 2022; Hasnia et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, classroom discourse exhibited several key features based on

interaction characteristics that indicated a flexible and supportive approach to classroom interaction to foster students' engagement and understanding in the learning process (Rido & Sari, 2018).

As teachers seek to create learning environments that promote quality learning outcomes, understanding students' learning strategies is important. The role of interactive methods in the acquisition of vocabulary is a burgeoning area of study as teachers seek innovative strategies to improve the outcomes of language learning. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of interactive methods in the promotion of ESL vocabulary acquisition. Through an examination of various interactive techniques and their impact on students' vocabulary skills. By reviewing current research and practical case studies, this research seeks to shed light on the effectiveness of interactive methods in fostering a more engaging and effective vocabulary learning experience.In brief, based on the above background and literature, the research objective is encapsulated in the research question "What is the impact of the interactive method on the student's vocabulary enhancement?".

2. Methodology

This study used open-ended questionnaires, class observations, and in depth-interviews as a mixed method research. It aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the interactive method in improving the vocabulary acquisition of the EFL students at the Marine Cruise Yogyakarta, Sukoharjo Branch. A total of 100 students were selected, 3 of them were female students and 97 of them are male students. Their ages ranged from 19 to 33 years old. They had been learning vocabulary for three months to 1 year.

Systematic observation of students' behavior and interactions during vocabulary lessons was the focus of the research design. The observational approach allowed for the collection of qualitative data unobtrusively without being directly involved in the teaching process, given the naturalistic setting of a classroom. The researchers applied tiangulation data analysis and presentation as descriptive narratives to report the data (Creswell, 2013; Flanagan 1954; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sugiyono, 2017). Data were collected in June 2024.

3. Result and Discussions

The results from demographic information (open-ended questionnaires), classroom observations, and in depth-interviews are reported. The percentages and frequencies of the number of students, the gender, the age, and the preferred teaching method are presented. Data showed that 97 of the respondents were male (97%) and 3 respondents were female (3%). Data showed that most of the students preferred the interactive teaching method (63%) for vocabulary learning more than the traditional method (7%) and mixed method (30%). Table 1 shows the results of the participants' demographic data.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Result

Number of Students	100 Students	
Gender	97 Male (97%), 3 Female (3%)	
Age	19 and 33 years	
Interactive Method	63	63 %
Traditional Method	7	7 %
Mixed Method	30	30 %

Interactive education methods refer to pedagogical approaches that actively engage learners in learning through participation, collaboration, and hands-on activities (Munna & Kalam, 2021).These methods are designed to encourage learners to interact with the subject matter rather than passively receive information, thereby fostering deeper understanding, critical thinking, and knowledge retention. Students are actively involved in learning rather than passively receiving information (Moreno & Mayer, 2007; Samaddar & Sikdar, 2023: Yu et al., 2022).

The next finding is the inclusion of selected observations in a researcher's report provides a more complete description of phenomena than would be possible through reference to interview statements or documents alone (Gay & Mills, 2012; Sugiyono, 2017). Table 2 shows the result of the class observation according to the structured checklist. Almost all of the students (100%) paid attention in class and were active in speaking. 33% of students were active in asking questions, 51% can memorise new vocabulary directly, and 98% of the students used vocabulary mobile applications.

Table 2. Participants' Observation Result

Indicator	Number of Student	Total of Student	Percentage
Pay attention	100	100	100%
Active in speaking	100	100	100%
Asking question	33	100	33%
Memorizing new vocabularies directly	51	100	51%
Using vocabulary mobile application	98	100	98%

To supplement the data collected, this study also used survey interviews. Gay & Mills (2012) stated that this format relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in natural interaction, which typically occurs as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork. Because the conversation appears natural (Creswell, 2013; Flanagan 1954; Gay & Mills, 2012: Miles & Huberman, 1994), research participants may not even be aware that they are being interviewed.

Table 3. Participants' Interview Result

Indicator	Number of Students	Total of Student	Percentage
Using English mobile application to learn vocabulary	98	100	98%
Repeat the material at home	27	100	27%
Enjoy interactive activities	100	100	100%
Enjoy the discussion activities	69	100	69%
Enjoy teacher-center activities	37	100	37%

The interview result implicated that 98% of the students used English mobile applications to increase their vocabulary mastery. Only 27% of the students repeat the material at home. It also extracted that interactive methods significantly contribute to vocabulary enhancement in learning English as a second language (ESL) especially in; 1) student engagement, 2) integration of technology, and 3) collaborative learning.

3.1 Student Engagement

Getting students involved is critical to effective vocabulary building. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they are more likely to have a positive impact on the retention and use of new vocabulary. Engaged students are more likely to participate in discussions, role-plays, and activities that require them to use new words. This active use helps solidify their understanding and retention. This is also very relevant when students can relate vocabulary to their personal interests or experiences, they are more motivated to learn and remember the words.

Nico shared:

"Working together, sharing knowledge, and supporting each other is amazing for me. It makes learning more engaging and less isolating. It increases my motivation and enthusiasm".

Engagement often involves linking new vocabulary to topics that resonate with students. In this case of active learning, teachers promote active learning by requiring students to take an active role in the learning process (Gumartifa et al., 2023). This method is in line with cognitive theories of learning, which emphasize that active engagement and contextual learning facilitate the processing of information at a deeper level (Zhang & Li, 2020). The notion that motivation is a critical factor in language learning is supported by the increased learner engagement observed with interactive methods. Engaging and interactive activities cater to different learning styles and interests. This makes the learning experience more enjoyable and relevant. This increased motivation can lead to more frequent practice and a greater willingness to experiment with new vocabulary. This contributes to more robust language development.

3.2 Integration of Technology

The integration of games, technology, and collaborative projects makes vocabulary learning more dynamic and enjoyable. The positive impact of technology in interactive methods is a reflection of the growing importance of digital tools in modern education (Alakrash, 2020). Technology provides adaptive learning environments, personalized feedback, and individualized learner needs (Alfadil, 2020). Integrating digital tools not only makes learning more interactive but also allows for a range of activities that can be tailored to different skill levels.

Adi shared:

"Interactive activities in class have helped me master vocabulary better, especially using my favorite games and applications. I feel like I'm learning and playing. It's a lot of fun".

3.3 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an approach to education in which students work together in groups to achieve a common set of learning goals. It leverages students' collective efforts to increase understanding of material, build interpersonal skills, and foster deeper engagement with content. Interactive methods have proven to be effective. However, traditional approaches should not be abandoned altogether. While they may vary across cultures and educational systems, traditional methods typically emphasize structured instruction, textbooks, lectures, and assessments (Huang et al., 2021) but these are still necessary in learning The most comprehensive benefits can be achieved through a balanced approach that combines interactive techniques with elements of traditional instruction.

Rizal concluded:

"The class activities always make me excited to come to class and learn with my friends. It's really nice to be in this very active learning environment".

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of interactive methods in promoting ESL vocabulary acquisition. Digital games, collaborative learning, and immersive technologies offer significant advantages over traditional instructional methods by enhancing retention, practical application, and learner engagement (Chen et al., 20-22; Jeyaraj, 2019; Vigotsky, 2011). The integration of these interactive techniques can lead to more dynamic and effective vocabulary instruction, which ultimately supports better language learning outcomes (Limeranto& Bram, 2022; Ghalebi et al., 2020). However, the combination of the two teaching modes and mutual learning can make teaching more efficient, thereby stimulating students' creative thinking or collaborative learning (Munna & Kalam, 2021).

A key finding indicated that interactive activities are a significant contributor to vocabulary development among ESL Students at Marine Cruise Yogyakarta, Sukoharjo Branch. Participants consistently demonstrate improved retention of new words, improved comprehension of word usage, and increased confidence in the use of vocabulary in both spoken and written contexts. In addition, the interactive nature of these activities promotes a positive learning environment that encourages collaboration, creativity, and active engagement with language learning materials (Al-Mubireek, 2021; Astriningsih& Mbato, 2019; Malikovna et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2023). To realize the full potential of interactive methods in supporting diverse learners in a non-formal education (NFE) context, future research should continue to explore innovative approaches and best practices.

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