IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY THROUGH GAME-BASED LEARNING: IMPLICATION FOR CREATIVITY

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Abstract
This study sought to find out the extent to which game-based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary and the extent to which teachers utilize the approach in teaching of English vocabulary. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 120 which comprised all the English language teachers in Nsukka Local Government. There was no sampling due to the controllable size of the population. A 20 item questionnaire was designed by the researchers and administered to 120 English language teachers in public schools in Nsukka Local Government. The instrument was validated by two experts in Language Education (English) and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80 using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. Findings revealed that the teachers agree that game-based learning can be used to improve quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary. It also revealed low extent of teachers' use of game-based learning in teaching English vocabulary. The researchers therefore recommended that teachers should teach English vocabulary using varying game-based learning and equally be trained on the use of the approach in teaching English vocabulary.

Keywords: English Language, English Vocabulary, Game-Based Learning, creativity.

Introduction

The English language is officially recognized as the medium of instruction in Nigeria from upper basic to the university level. All subjects apart from Nigerian and Foreign languages are taught and examined in the English language. Despite the important function the English language plays in Nigeria's educational system, students' performance is still not encouraging. One wonders whether the problem is traceable to the approaches teachers employ in teaching the subject. Vocabulary is an aspect of the English language which is not clearly defined on the school timetable. In the traditional teaching method, vocabulary is only remembered in reading comprehension class where some words are picked from the comprehension passage and students are asked to search for their meanings in the dictionary in the class or at home as an assignment. As crucial as vocabulary is, it is not given due attention. This

is in line with the view of Schmitt (2000) who notes that most teachers in schools and colleges still retain the conventional method such as rote memorization, explaining the meaning of vocabulary in native language, and giving students' lots of vocabulary exercises to do. Decarrico (2001) states that memorization without comprehension is not a better way to learn words. The researcher also notes that the traditional ways used for teaching vocabulary is teacher centered and students are not fully involved in the process of learning. In this method teachers are the main source of vocabulary information in addition to dictionary.

Vocabulary according to Neuman and Dwyer, (2009) are words that must be understood and used for effective communication. Vocabulary is a set of familiar words within a person's language. It is a fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge. Vocabulary is the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speaker's meaning (Mofareh, 2015).It is the stock of words used in a particular field. Vocabulary is basically grouped under two types namely: active and passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary are words that learners understand and use in speaking while passive vocabulary on the other hand are the words that learners understand and yet unable to use(Hatch&Brown,1995).

Students need vocabulary knowledge to understand the meaning of important words in a text. Limited vocabulary knowledge limits students' capacity and success in their different subject areas. Ferreira (2007) recommends that learners need to know 97% of vocabulary in a text in order for them to acquire an acceptable interpretation of the words used in the text. This means that students need to gain more than 85% of English vocabulary for them to be able to communicate effectively in the language. This study seeks to find out how game based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary. Game-based learning is one of the creative ways of teaching English vocabulary.

Creativity is a talent needed to create ideas that are both unique and beneficial. It is the ability one has in realizing the skill he or she has by picturing new strategy that would likely produce the best result. Sternberg (2003) sees creativity as the ability needed to produce ideas that are original. It therefore, means that teaching creatively depends on teachers using their creative ability to initiate approaches or methods that will create effective learning. One way teachers can be creative in the classroom is to explore ways of introducing games in their teaching.

Introducing game-based learning approach may motivate students to learn English vocabulary without encountering any difficulty. Marzano (2009) observes that when students are introduced to games that expose the meaning of words in a natural and interesting manner, it produces positive result. Game-based learning is the use of certain gaming principles and applying them to real life settings to engage users (Trybus, 2015). According to Derakhsham and Khatir (2015) games create an interesting and exciting teaching and learning activities. Games draw students' attention and develop their critical thinking. Through game-based learning,

participants learn actively and with interest. Game-based learning is a teaching approach that is interactive and interesting; learners are motivated and actively involved in the exercise (Donmus, 2010). Games are motivating and effective in learning because they involve competition and cooperative learning. (Sorayaie Azar, 2012). Games also enhance students' speaking skills. They attract the attention of the learners' thus improving learners' involvement in the lesson. The following games can be used in teaching English vocabulary: Scrabble, Crossword, Newspaper Search, Word Swipe, Word cookies, Charades, Pictionary.

Scrabble is a fun game for learning vocabulary. Scrabble is a word game in which two or four players score points by placing tiles bearing a single letter onto a board divided into 15x15 grid of squares. The tiles must form words that are in crossword fashion, read left to right in rows or downward in columns, and must be found in a standard dictionary. Words are formed with the tiles and highest scorer wins. The game is challenging and learners have to think critically to form meaningful words before they can score. Word cookies is another interesting game used to find hidden words that can be formed with the given letters in the game. You can discover hidden words by swiping your fingers over the given letters. In this game, words can be diagonal, vertical, horizontal and backwards. The found words will be highlighted on the word list.

In Pictionary, the teacher splits the class into two teams. One student from each team comes to the board, and is assigned one vocabulary word to draw. The students' team try to guess what vocabulary word is being drawn. In charades, instead of drawing, the students act out the vocabulary word. Newspaper search is another type of game that can be used to improve students' vocabulary. Here, students look for pictures or articles that relate to each vocabulary word. The students should be given time to complete the assignment. The students present their findings afterwards. Scarfo and Littleford (2008) assert that by setting up a play and fun environment, students are given the opportunity to manipulate, explore and experience with varieties of new materials which enhance learning. The advantages of learning vocabulary through different games motivated the researchers to find out how game-based learning can improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

Vocabulary is a key component in language   learning. Language teaching is focused on the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to enable the learners acquire an effective interaction in the target language. For students to communicate effectively in any language, they must possess substantial stock of words in that language. The way and manner new words are taught to learners matters a lot in English language.

However, the effective use of vocabulary skills in English language is affected by the approaches teachers adopt in the teaching of English vocabulary. Students seem to hardly understand the message of what they read in a text. Many of them barely construct good messages through spoken and written words, or sentences. Many students cannot find good synonyms for other words. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiners' reports over the years have pointed to the fact that students' essays are usually marred by poor vocabulary. These problems therefore, inspired the researchers to find out how game-based learning can improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary in public secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the extent   game-based learning can be beneficial to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary and the extent teachers utilize game-based learning in the teaching and learning of English vocabulary.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study
1. To what extent can game-based learning be beneficial to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary?
2. To what extent do teachers utilize game-based learning in the teaching of English vocabulary?

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2015), aims at studying a group of people or items by collecting data from a sample of the same group or item considered appropriate to be a representative of the entire population. This design was appropriate for the study because it sought information from respondents on the extent game-based learning can improve the quality of teaching and learning English vocabulary in public Secondary Schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. The population of the study was all 120 English teachers in Nsukka local Government Area of Enugu State. All the teachers were used and as such no sampling technique was adopted. The researchers developed a questionnaire "titled" Questionnaire on teachers' use of game-based learning to improve the teaching and learning of English vocabulary (QTUgblltLEV) which contains 20 item statements. The responses of the teachers were used to answer the research question.

The instrument was structured on 4-point scale Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, Very Low Extent. The research instrument was validated by two experts in Language Education and one from Measurement and Education. All from the

University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A reliability co-efficient value of 0.80 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. The researchers visited the schools and administered the instrument personally to the teachers. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Item statement with mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted to stand for Agree while any item with a mean rating less than 2.50 was rejected.

Results

Research Question One: How can game-based learning be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary?

Table 1: Mean analysis of Extent to which game-based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary

n = 120

Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. Using game-based learning to enhance quick understanding of English vocabulary	3.50	.60	Very High Extent
2. Using game-based learning to prevent students from being bored when English vocabulary classes	3.51	.50	Very High Extent
3. Using game-based learning to attract students' attention in order to involve them actively in English vocabulary class participation	3.47	.50	High Extent
4. Using game-based learning to activate the interest of the students during vocabulary classes	3.41	.49	High Extent
5. Using game-based learning to cater for individual differences among the students	3.32	.47	High Extent
6. Using game-based learning to improve students' spoken and written words in English language	3.40	.57	High Extent
7. Using game-based learning to motivate students to learn English vocabulary	3.53	.50	Very High Extent
8. Using game-based learning to reduce tension in students during English vocabulary classes	3.51	.50	Very High Extent
9. Using game-based learning to create spirit of team work and cooperation among students	3.14	.68	High Extent
10. Using game-based learning to improve interface between the students and the dictionary	3.19	.70	High Extent
Cluster Mean	**3.40**	**.44**	**High Extent**

n=120   3.50-4.00 Very High Extent, 2.50-3.49 High Extent, 1.50-2.49Low Extent, 0.05-1.49 Very Low Extent.

Table 1 shows the extent game-based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary. It shows that the mean ratings of the teachers on items 1 and 2 are 3.50 and 3.51 criterion mean. This means that the teachers to a Very High Extent agree to the statements of the items. Items 3-10

show High Extent. These indicate that game-based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary by; using it to enhance quick understanding of English vocabulary, using it to prevent students from being bored when English vocabulary classes, using to attract students' attention in order to involve them actively in English vocabulary class participation, using to activate the interest of the students during vocabulary classes, using to cater for individual differences among the students, using it to improve students' spoken and written words in English language

Research Question Two: To what extent do teachers utilize game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary?

Table 2: Mean analysis of the ratings to which teachers utilize game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary

		n = 120	
Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
11. Scrabble games	2.11	.67	Low Extent
12. Newspaper search	2.06	.73	Low Extent
13. Word cookies	1.05	.80	Very Low Extent
14. Charades	1.96	.74	Low Extent
15. Pictionary	1.20	.69	Very Low Extent
16. Chalk board acronym	3.21	.61	High Extent
17. Crossword	2.15	.46	Low Extent
18. Hangman	1.85	.49	Low Extent
19. Word Bingo	1.90	.44	Very Low Extent
20. Synonym Bingo	1.00	.44	Very Low Extent
Cluster Mean	**1.85**	**.37**	Low Extent

Table 2 shows that the mean ratings of teachers on items 11, 12, 14, 17 and 18 are within the mean range of 1.50 to 2.49, while their mean ratings to items 13, 15, 19 and 20 are within the mean range of 0.05 to 1.49. The overall mean rating of 1.85 with a standard deviation of 0.37 indicate that teachers to a low extent utilize game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary

Discussion

From the result of this study, the respondents agreed to a high extent that game-based learning can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English vocabulary. This is in line with Scarfo and Littleford (2008) who noted that by

setting up a play and fun environment, students are given the opportunity to manipulate, explore and experience with varieties of new material which improves learning. Donmus (2010) also affirmed that game-based learning is a teaching approach that is interactive and interesting, learners are motivated and actively involved in the lesson thus improves teaching and learning of English vocabulary. This study has shown that game-based learning has the potential of arousing students' interest and preventing boredom in the classroom. It also improves students' participation and motivation in the classroom. Above all, it eases the tension of students and promotes the spirit of teamwork in the classroom. This is in line with Marzano(2009)that when students are introduced to games that expose the meaning of words in a natural and interesting manner, it produces positive result.

Results in Table 2 show that the extent to which the English language teachers utilize game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary is to a low extent. Despite all the benefits of game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary, teachers do not make effective use of games as they teach English vocabulary. Despite all the benefits of game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary, as observed by Donmus(2010) and Derakhasham and Khatir(2015),teachers do not make effective use of games as they teach English vocabulary. This could be attributed to lack of exposure of teachers to game-based activities, lack of training on how to use them, lack of funds to purchase some game materials, such as scrabbles. The use of game-based learning also requires of teachers to be creative, innovative and committed. Game activities require more effort on the part of the teacher to set up and facilitate the activities. Many teachers may not be committed enough to go extra mile in the teaching of vocabulary and thus may be more comfortable in using the conventional method rather than game-based learning.

Conclusion

Utilization of game-based learning in teaching and learning of English vocabulary is dependable as it provides an interesting and exciting teaching and learning activities. Regrettably, teachers do not make good use of the approach. Teachers depend on the traditional method of teaching, which is mainly teacher centered. With this method, students are not motivated and this inhibits students' performance in English language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers should teach English vocabulary using varying innovative oriented activities.

- The school authority should provide enough funds to purchase game materials like Scrabbles, Newspapers, Word cookies etc.
- Teachers should be well trained on the use of game-based learning in teaching English vocabulary

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