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„EFFECTIVENESS OF USING GAMES IN LEARNING VOCABULARY"

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ABSTRACT: *Vocabulary is essential for mastering any language, yet traditional methods such as rote memorization often fail to engage learners effectively. This article explores the integration of educational games into English vocabulary teaching, highlighting their advantages over conventional approaches. Games provide meaningful contexts, enhance student engagement, and align with the preferences of digital-native learners. The literature review emphasizes the significance of vocabulary in language proficiency and discusses the benefits of contextual learning. Various types of games, from Bingo to Scrabble, are analyzed for their ability to reinforce vocabulary through practical application, teamwork, and fun. Despite some limitations, such as time constraints and classroom management challenges, the use of games demonstrates significant potential in promoting vocabulary retention and practical usage.*

Key words: *Vocabulary learning, English as a foreign language, educational games, communicative language teaching (CLT), language retention, digital games, vocabulary teaching methods, student motivation, language skills development*

The importance of effective vocabulary teaching in language education cannot be overstated, particulary in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Vocabulary is a fundamental building block for acquiring language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Without a sufficient vocabulary base, learners struggle to understand others or express their own ideas. However, traditional methods of teching vocabulary suck as rote memorization or teaching words in isolation, have been widely criticized for their inefficiency. As a result, educators have been searching for innovation approaches that can engagl learners more effectively, making the learning process both enjoyable and productive.One such method that has gained inoreasing attention in resentyears is the intergration of educational games into language learning. the value of games in education, portuculary fot teaching vocabulary, has been highlghted by varions researchers.Donmus suggested, games not only make language education more entertaining but also create meaningful contexs in which learners can use target vocabulary in a practical and engaging way. When education is combined with games, learning environments become both educative and enjoyable,which enhances student motivation and engagement. This combination of learning and fun is especially important in language education, where the ability to use new vocabulary in context is crucial for retention and practical

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application.One ofthe main challenges in teaching vocabulary is the tendency to present words out of context, treating them as isolated units of knowledge. This approach can lead to frustration among learners, who may struggle to understand how these words fit into real-world communication. Educational games offer a solution to this problem by providing contexts that make vocabulary both useful and meaningful. For intance, games can simulate real-life scenarious where learners need to use new words in dialogue or description, reinforcing their understanding of how the vocabulary functions in practice. As Sorayaie-Azar points out, games are advantageous for learning vocabulary because they create a cooperative learning environment while motivating students through friendly competition. Moreover, Plenski said that educational games are particularly will-suited for today'slearners, who are often described as "Digital Natives" and "Digital immigrants" due to their familiarity with technology. These learners have grown up using digital tools such as computer, video games, smartphones, making the use of digital games in the classroom a natural extension of their everyday experiences. Online educational games in particular offer a unique opportunity to teach vocabulary in a way that resonates with this tech-savvy generation. Additionally Septian argued that many online games are designed with English-speaking contexts in mind, providing learners with outhentic language input that they can apply in real-world communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern ages vocabulary was often overlooked in language teaching. Carter suggested that its neglect was partly due toa focus in linguistic research on syntax and phonology, which may have fostered a perception that vocabulary was less important in secind language. However, more recent studies hve highlighted its significance. David and Squire emphasized that without grammar, little meaning could be conveyed, but without vocabulary, communication is impossible. Harmer described the role of vocabulary by comparing language structures to the skeleton and vocabulary to the vital organs and flesh suggesting that vocabulary is essential for language expression. It has become clear that without sufficient vocabulary one cannot effectively express ideasor communicate meaning.

According to Rogers, Phillips and Walters vocabularyis more crucial for students than grammar, especially in the earle stages of languge learning. At this point students are motivated to learn basic words that enable them to get by in the language. Cosequently it is vital to develop effective methods for teaching and learning vocabulary. DeCarrico noted that vocabulary should not be learned in isolation or by rote memorization without a contextual understanding. Similarly, Nation argued that vocabulary learning is cumulated, with words becoming more familiar as they are encountered in different contexts. This suggested that the „look and remember" approach is insufficient for English language learnenrs. Some students may also rely on their teachers to explain the meaning and grammatical functions of unfamiliar words, often waiting passively for instruction. They maywrite down these words and use them in exactly the same forms they were taught which helps to someextent by providing a correct understanding of wor usage. However, as DeCarrico pointed out, this focuson grammar and phonology often leaves the lexical aspect

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of language neglected. As a result, students may only learn to use words in specific context without understanding their broader meanings or applications in real-life communication.

In contrast to traditional vocabulary learning methods the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach encourages students to engage in social interaction through active help learners develop all aspects of language, including vocabulary,through active use and practice CLT emphasizes the importance of context in learning new vocabulary, as students are more likely to remember words when they are learned in meaningful contexts rather than in isolation.

Numerous methods for leaching vocabulary have been suggested in educational literature. These include using visuals, meme, realia, explanations, examples, synonyms, antonyms, and translations. Many linguists agree that teaching vocabulary in context is one of the most effective ways for learners to retain new words long-term. As Elley and Mangubhai and Krashen noted, reading provides contextual clues for understanding new vocabulary, and learners must recognize the relationship between unknown words and thur surrounding text. Jacobs emphasized that explaining new words clearly is crucial for vocabulary acquisition. bames have been proven to be a highly effective tools in both teaching and learning foreign languages. Hadfield argued that games are most useful in the later stages of a lesson when students can apply the language they have learned in a freer contest. Games are not only fun but also provide motivation, allowing shy students to participate more actively. Zdybiewska supported this, noting that games offer learners a model of how they can use the language in real life. Khuat and Nguyen also advocated for games in vocabulary learning, stating that they bring fun and relaxation to the learning proces, which helps students retain new words more easily. Furthermore, games often involve competition, which keeps learners engaged and attentive. Vocabulary games can introduce real-vorld context in to the classroom, encouraging students to use English flexibly and communicatively.

Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby emphasized that games help learners maintain their effort and interest over long period of time. Well-chosen games allow students to practice language skills in a fun and meaningful way. Games are also motivating becaure they present a challenge while encouraging cooperation in the classroom. In this sense, games promote the use of useful and relevant language in real-life contexts.

According to Çetin, in recent years digital games have also become a populat tool for teaching vocabulary. Digital games are designed using various technologies that immerse users in a visual environment. These games can be categorized into different types, such as drill and practice games, single combat games, and contextual games. Wood argued that digital games capture learners' attention more effectively than traditional learning tools like textbooks.

MAIN BODY
Definition of Vocabulary
Richard argues that vocabulary is the a key component of language proficiency and plays a major role in determining how well students can speak, listen, read and write. Therefore, it

is the primary aspect of language that must be learned before other language skills can be fully developed Various experts have offered definitions of what vocabulary red entails. Nunan describes vocabulary as a group of words from the target language. Smilarly, Jackson and Amvela state that the terms vocabulary, lexis and lexicon can be used interchangeably. Richards and Schmidt further explain that vocabulary consists of lexemes, which include individual words, compound words, and idiomatic phrases.

Definition of Games

Numerous scholars have defined the concept of a game in various ways Generally, a game is described as an activity or sport that involves skill knowledge, or chance, where participants aim to overcome an opponent or solve a challenge while following a set of rules. Researchers such as Celse-Murcia and Mclntosh, Hadfield, Khan, and Wright have provided different interpretations of the term game. For instance, Hadfield describes a game as „an activity governed by rules, with a defined objectives, and an element of enjoyment". She argues that games should be an essential part of the language curriculum.

Advantages of using games

Kim pointed out that using games is an effective method for leaching English. He highlighted several benefits associated with incorporating games is language learning:

+ Games are both motivating and challenging

+ They encourage interaction and communication among students, fostering a meaningful context for language use

+ They con facilitate easier learning and retention of new vocabulary

+ Language learning requires significant effort, and games help students maintain this effort over time

+ Vocabulary games introduce real-world scenarios into the classroom, enhacing student's use of English in a practical, flexible, and communicative way

+ Games provide opportunities for practicing various language skills, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

+ Cames often involve friendly competition, which keeps students engaged and interested in learning

Disadvantages of using games

+ They can consume a significant portion of lesson lime

+ Games are frequently used orly as brief warm-up activities or when extra time is available at the end of a lesson.

+ The range of available games may be limited

+ Managing classroom behavior during gami-based activities can sometimes be challenging

Types of games that promote cocabulary development

Game 1: Bingo

Skills Reinforced: to get students to

practice listening to new words and to match sounds with spelling

Procedure: First, teacher gets the class to brainstorm a listen of 10 or 15 new words and

put them on the board. Then, student should choose any five and copy them into their notebooks and teacher reads out the words in any order. Each time the student has one of the words teacher reads, he or she puts a tick next to that word. The first student who ticks all five words shout „Bingo".

Game 2: Matching game

Skills Reinforced: to describe or defining words. Vocabulary development

Procedure: Prepare a set of flashcards for each target vocabulary a large piece of paper on the wall for each group to tick their work later. Ask the groups to match the flashbards. Give the key to each group so they can peer-check the other group's work.

Game 3: Top trumps

Skills Reinforced: to win information cards by asking questions related to a specific theme, helping students learn and reinforce vocabulary in an engaging way.

Procedure: Purchase the cards in themed sets that cover nearly every topic from cars and superheroes to plants and television shows. This is a great way to get students to learn vocabulary words related to a particular topic or to a capture their attention with a set of cards related to their interests.

Game 4: Noughts and Crosses.

Skills Reinforced: to get students to put the new vocabulary into a sentence

Procedure: the teacher puts a grid on the board with a new words in it. Students work in pairs, with one of the students copying the grid into their notebook. One student is assigned „Noughts"(„0") and the others „Crosses" („X"). The game begins with one student choosing a word and making a sentence with it. If the sentence is correct, the student places their mark (O or X) in the corresponding square. The first student to get three marks in a row-across, down or diagonally wins the game

Game 5: Guess game

Skills Reinforced: to finding new vocabulary within quick thinking, remembering new vocabulary

Procedure: Ask students to write a newly learnt word in the middle of the board. Think of a word, which shares a letter with the word on board, and give student a clue to your word. If somebody guesses the word she or he writes the word so it crosses the word and shares a letter

Game 6: Charades

Skills Reinforced: to act out vocabulary words without speaking while their team guesses the word within a time limit, promoting active vocabulary recall and teamwork

Procedure: Divide class into two teams. Individuals will take turns acting out one of the words from the cards

Game 7: Pyramid game.

Skills Reinforced: describing or defining words, vocabulary development or recall

Procedure: the class divides into pairs, facing each other. One student gives the prompts and describes them to his partner. For each correct answer, the team gives one point. It the native language or the name of the item uses to describe it, no points are awarded. Time

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should monitor.

Suggestion: Two vords per thirty seconds.

Game 5: Pelmanism.

Shills Reinforced: to recognore the words and its meaning

Procedure: the teacher preppres 6 to 8 cards and writes numbers from 1 to 8 on one side of each card, with the meaning of the words written on the other side. The teacher then ticks the cards on the board so that students can see the side with the numbers. Students are divided onto 2 groups, and each group chooses 2 numbers from the cards. The teacher shows the two cards that the students have chosen. If the cards match, the group wins one point. If the cards do not match, the teacher places them back down, and the game continues until all the cards match.

Game 9: Scrabble

Skills Reinforced: to encourage sludents vocabulary and enhances their problem-solving abilities as they find ways to use their leller tiles effectively.

Procedure: Divide the class into groups of four and provide each group with a scrabble game and a set of letter tiles. Students take turns drawing tiles and creating words on the board. Each word must connect with exicting words on the board and follow standard Scrabble rules. Players score points based on the value of the letters and any spesial squares on the board. The game continues until one student uses all theie tiles or no more moves are possible. The student who uses all their tiles first or scores the highest points wins the game

Game 10: Parrot game.

Skills Reinforced: listening, memory, pattern development and quick thinking

Procedure: A student begins by saying a sentence. The other students repeat the sentence and then add a new word. If a student forgets what previously said or cannot add a new word, they are eliminated from the game.

Game 11: Crossword puzzle

Skills Reinforced: to finding new vocabulary with remembering

Procedure: The game consists of a series of arranged squares. The objectives is to fill the white squares with letters to form words that answer a set of given clues. This activity can be useful for practicing vocabulary, aligning with the students' level and course objectives, and ever expanding their vocabulary.

Below is an example of a crossword puzzle:

 [PICTURE]

Game 12: Memory game.

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary identification and memory recall

Procedure: Ask the students to create matching pairs. A typical setup would be placing a word on one card and its matching picture on another. Lay the cards face dorn and shuffle them to ensure that no matching pairs are close to each other. Each student takes turns trying to find a matching pair. If a match is found, the student takes abother turn. The student with the most matched pairs at the end wins

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Game 13: Jumbled words

Skills Reinforced: to get students to practice spelling new words.

Procedure: the teacher writes 5 or 6 scrambled words on the board and announces the topic. Students work in pairs to rearrange the letters and form the correct words. Once they have solved the words, students come to the board to write down their answers.

Game 14: Ball Toss game

Skills Reinforced: listening, memory, pattern development and community development.

Procedure: Ask all the students to stand in a circle. The first student holding the ball should say their name and then throw the ball to another student in the circle. Continue this process until everyone has had a turn or until it becomes challenging to remember all the names. Next, the student with the ball should throw it back to the person who passed it to them. Saying that person's name instead of their own. If the ball is dropped or the name is incorrect, go back to the last student who caught the ball or get assistance from others in the circle.

Game 15: Piramide de Palabras (Word Pyramid) game

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary development.

Procedure: The teacher should use the triangle template and write synonyms in different spols on it. Make as many copies as needed and cut the template into separate triangle pieces. Divide the class into groups and provide each group with a set of triangles. Students need to match the synonyms to assemble the pyramid

Variations: Make it a competitive game by turning the pieces face down. Each student should select five triangles and choose one as the starting center price. On their turn students try to match one of their words to a synonym on the existing pieces. At the beginning of cach turn they should draw another triangle to maintain five pieces in their hand. You can also use of types of word pairs, such as antonyms, rhyming words, cities and countries, or occupations and shur related tasks.

CONCLUSION

The use of games in teaching English vocabulary revolutionizes traditional language education by transforming a potentially monotonous process into an exciting, interactive, and highly effective learning journey. Educational games bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering students an engaging platform to not only acquire but also apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. By encouraging collaboration, fostering friendly competition, and utilizing real-world scenarios, games help learners move beyond rote memorization to achieve genuine language proficiency. Moreover, in a world dominated by technology, integrating digital games into the curriculum resonates with today's "digital natives," making learning feel natural and relevant. Games such as Bingo, Scrabble, and Charades allow students to practice language skills in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere, promoting long-term retention through active participation. They also address diverse learning styles, ensuring inclusivity and making language acquisition accessible to all students.

Despite challenges such as time constraints and the need for careful classroom

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management, the rewards of incorporating games in teaching are profound. They energize classrooms, enhance motivation, and create a sense of accomplishment among learners. More importantly, they instill confidence in students by equipping them with vocabulary that they can use confidently and flexibly in real-world situations. The integration of games in vocabulary teaching represents a paradigm shift towards a learner-centered approach that prioritizes engagement, enjoyment, and effectiveness. By embracing this strategy, educators can cultivate not only language skills but also a lifelong enthusiasm for learning, empowering students to thrive in a globalized, multilingual world.

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