Enrichment of English Vocabulary through Digital Games: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at how well digital games helped undergraduate students at the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, Telangana State, India, expand their English vocabulary. Most students indeed own cellphones, laptops, and desktop computers due to the growth of technology and their lower cost. It is common knowledge that most students use their smartphones to play games, which are important for developing their personalities. The researcher promoted the use of digital games in language classes to increase vocabulary and make learning engaging, enjoyable, simple, and efficient. The objective of the study was to determine whether English vocabulary can be taught to undergraduate students in an engaging and effective manner by using digital games to expand students' everyday English vocabulary. The results of this study demonstrated that employing digital games in ESL classes to teach basic English vocabulary is efficient, engaging, and advantageous.

Keywords: Digital Games, Puzzles, English Vocabulary, Urdu Medium, Communication

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of age, almost every student enjoys solving puzzles and playing games. Playing is a crucial aspect of kids' life from an early age and has a significant impact on how they develop as people as a whole. Kids begin to play while they are young, but as they mature and get older, their games take on other forms. When children reach the ages of 6 to 12, their play begins to change into games, which are distinct from play in that they are more structured and planned and typically have a range of rules and particular objectives. Students practically feel obligated to cooperate and speak with one another while playing games to keep the game going. The informal environment of the games and the requirement for communication during them encourage the students to converse, which boosts their ability to speak English fluently. The curriculum designed for our undergraduate students places a strong emphasis on the need to gain language proficiency, particularly in communicative English. Because culture has a big impact on how well a language is learned, language teachers should foster a favourable learning atmosphere and work to pique pupils' interests in both the English language and their own culture. As they help satisfy the requirements of the syllabus that language learning should be enjoyable and memorable for the students, digital games and puzzles assist in achieving all the stated objectives and goals. It's not unique to use digital games and puzzles to keep kids' attention and encourage active learning in the classroom. Throughout the past few years, various methods to efficiently learn and teach language skills have been tested. It is true that games and riddles can make learning a language enjoyable, fascinating, and successful. In order to make learning fun for pupils, educational institutions have been adopting digital tools to teach language during the past few years. Digital games and puzzles often encourage students to participate in language learning, despite the time commitment. English has become an official language in numerous nations in recent years. It might be challenging for those whose mother languages are different to become fluent in English. Students of all ages can learn/teach vocabulary through the use of digital games and puzzles to increase their English proficiency. Digital games inspire students to become more involved and communicate with their peers, making language classes more dynamic, engaging, and effective. The challenges are reduced and the classroom is made more engaging by using digital games and puzzles to teach students to acquire vocabulary. Games encourage language use among pupils as opposed to simply teaching them the proper grammatical structures. Digital puzzles and games also foster spontaneity and inventiveness in the use of language in meaningful contexts. They also encourage pupils to participate with a sense of competition and to be proficient in understanding and speaking English. Games that are well-designed provide learners with a break from ongoing theoretical learning and are therefore highly recommended. Students learn vocabulary in the classroom with the aid of games and puzzles, which have been proven to offer relaxation and fun learning, helping pupils

retain words more readily. They also involve students in friendly rivalry, which boosts motivation and provides the language classroom with context from the outside world.

The teacher encouraged students to use digital games and puzzles in the language classroom while working on vocabulary exercises, such as Roll the Ball, Word Search Puzzle Game, Bridge Constructor, Jigsaw Puzzles, Word Connection, The Witness, Candy Crush Saga, Tetris 99, Art of Balance, Fruit Cube Blast, etc. Online dictionaries and chat rooms are two other examples of digital tools. The goal should be to encourage as many students to learn as much English vocabulary as they can while also making the process enjoyable, not to see which student can solve the puzzles the quickest or best when left on their own. Students always learn more swiftly and more quickly in language classes when they are encouraged and given a welcoming environment. For courses to remain engaging, students to remain engaged, and for the sessions to be participatory, there should be a modest degree of diversity in every English class. Students paid attention to reading passages with the goal of understanding when a teacher incorporates both digital games and puzzles into the language lesson. This also encourages students to speak up and recall forgotten terms. It is admirable that digital games and puzzles are used to teach and acquire vocabulary. However, ideal games must be chosen following the requirements of the student's interests, educational background, and age groups to get the most out of digital games and puzzles. The total number of students, their level of skill, the cultural context, the time, the learning topic, and the classroom settings are all things to consider if a game is to be conducted. This will become a useful technique for both learning and memorising the English language when done in an orderly fashion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the past few years, there have been significant changes in the teaching process. Students used to be only passive listeners in class, but now they participate more actively (Steve Sugar.1998. p. 3). The need of maintaining distinctive teaching methods and approaches is stressed in the foreign language curriculum to pique the interest of the students. Instructors can maintain variety in the classroom in a variety of ways, such as by employing activities that encourage students to think creatively and by placing equal emphasis on both individual and group learning. Employing games as a teaching tool alongside other ways is one more specific way that educators may maintain variety in the classroom. The national curriculum states that games can be useful teaching tools and that activities that involve role-playing, mimicry, exaggerated expression, and problem-solving are particularly appropriate for all phases of language learning. According to Howard Gardner's (2006) theory, which is based on the idea that humans have eight different types of intelligence, a topic should be handled in six different ways to reach as many students as possible in the class. The "personal way" is one of the approaches, and the ultimate objective is to determine whether it is possible to approach a particular issue utilising, for instance, role plays and other interactive modalities. Also, because board games offer a great environment for student interaction, Armstrong (2000) suggests them as a teaching method that might be appropriate for students with interpersonal intelligence (Sigriour, 2010). The numerous reviews of literature serve as evidence that language games are very successful in teaching and learning English vocabulary. According to Nguyen's article, "Teaching and learning grammar through games in the tenth grade at Hung Vuong High School," games make teaching and learning grammar less challenging and more exciting. The results of this study demonstrate that teachers who stick to the conventional methods of teaching English through tasks found in textbooks and fail to create engaging games and activities make grammar lessons boring for the students and fail to meet the requirements of an efficient grammar class. When teaching English, both teachers and students must accept-language games. According to research on "The Usefulness of Games in Teaching Grammar in Turkey," Turkish EFL teachers believe that games are useful for enhancing students' English learning. The authors of this study indicate that both teachers and students are encouraged to use language games and activities that aid in learning English in the classroom and that they consider these to be effective aids in learning a language through the computation of the percentages for each item. They think that these exercises invigorate and enthuse the class and encourage participation in harder learning tasks. It is impossible to overlook how popular gaming has become in the modern world. The majority of linguistic skills are acquired by students through the use of technology and first-hand exposure to it.

METHODOLOGY

To increase English vocabulary among MANUU undergraduate students, the researcher used video games and puzzles. This study employed a purposive sampling strategy. The experiment group for the study consists of 45 B.A. third-semester students whose mother tongue and preferred medium of teaching are Urdu. Digital games and riddles were employed as research tools. The teacher initially went over with the students the value and use of online games and puzzles in enhancing English vocabulary. Students are given an information schedule to fill out with information about their gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, other languages spoken, and medium of instruction, among other things.

Research Question
Is it useful to improve English vocabulary by using digital games and puzzles?

Objectives
1. To determine whether using video games and puzzles to teach vocabulary in English is effective.
2. To determine whether or not learning English vocabulary through digital games and puzzles is enjoyable and simple.

Hypotheses
Digital Games and Puzzles are effective at teaching English vocabulary and making learning fun.

Questionnaire
The students were given a questionnaire to complete that contained ten questions on their interests in games and puzzles as well as their thoughts on teaching and learning English vocabulary through them. They had to respond by checking the boxes next to the "Yes" or "No" answers on the survey.

Procedure
Questionnaires were created after the puzzles and games on the computer were carefully chosen. The study was conducted among B.A. third-semester students whose mother tongue and primary language of teaching is Urdu. After receiving detailed instructions, the students were instructed to complete a selection of online games and puzzles. They were given an information schedule to complete with their personal information, then a questionnaire with 10 items that they had to respond to by checking "Yes" or "No." There was no time limit for completing the questionnaire and performing the games or puzzles.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:
After the students completed the questionnaires, their responses were examined. Each questionnaire underwent an individual analysis. The students admitted that they enjoy working together to solve puzzles and play video games.
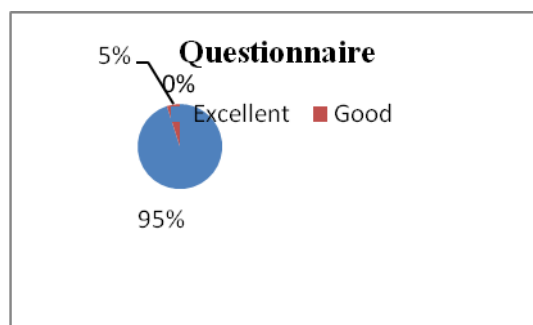

Figure 1:Questionnaire

The findings indicate that students enjoyed learning English vocabulary using digital games and puzzles. The majority of them expressed interest in the concept of learning English vocabulary through video games and puzzles. To make learning entertaining and easy, they added, games and puzzles should be utilized to expand English vocabulary. They claimed that learning new words in English is simpler and keeps the brain busy. Also, it is simpler to comprehend and apply the words' definitions to phrases. They have shown enthusiasm for learning new terms and for solving digital games. All of the students firmly agreed that this was a successful and practical technique that ought to be employed to increase English vocabulary. It would liven up the atmosphere and provide a respite from their regular, serious theoretical routine.

FINDINGS
The study discovered that games and puzzles are effective ways to teach English vocabulary after conducting an assessment and evaluating the data. According to the data gathered, students like to play video games and solve puzzles. They also said that learning through video games and puzzles is always simple and enjoyable. They stimulate creative thinking and keep the mind engaged. It facilitates the retention of words and their meanings and facilitates the use of those words in sentences. The use of such a method brings out the potential in the students, promotes their interaction, and enhances their speech-communication abilities. It is one of the best ways to increase their self-assurance and give them a sense of class participation. The students learned new terms through the games and puzzles are given, demonstrating that the strategy makes learning simple and enjoyable. After the classroom evaluation was over, the students yearned for more games and riddles to solve.

This demonstrates their active participation in the game; as a result, using this strategy in a language class can produce excellent outcomes in terms of both academic performance and the development of numerous abilities. There are further reasons why this study is significant. It can be used pedagogically by English teachers, students, and textbook authors. The findings will aid teachers in their understanding of how to employ various digital games and puzzles and how to apply this strategy to boost students' vocabulary. This study may also refute some teachers' claims that using new tactics is ineffective. Teachers can employ digital games to provide meaningful contexts for the language. Students benefit more from digital language games and puzzles than from traditional teaching strategies. As seen during data collecting, the use of language games in class encourages healthy rivalry among the students. Inviting them to take part in the games, can also lessen shyness among the students.

CONCLUSION

Students' interest in language learning is piqued by digital games and riddles. They assist the teacher in developing settings that make the language usable and meaningful. Digital games and puzzles that students would concentrate on for a longer period are one way to teach vocabulary. Nonetheless, it is important to proceed with caution while choosing games because not all terms can be taught through word games and puzzles. Also, attention should be taken to choosing terms that express important ideas, are highly useful, are pertinent to the majority of the material being learnt, and have significance in the lives of the students. Limiting the number of words that students are required to learn can also help them understand word meanings at a deeper level, which is crucial for the expansion of their vocabulary. Exact learner needs are also met through the usage of digital games. This suggests that traditional methods for teaching vocabulary to intermediate and advanced students could be given less importance. But one area that is frequently overlooked in the teaching of vocabulary is the use of digital games and puzzles. Books have concentrated on ways to classify, practise, and convey new vocabulary in ways that are both understandable and memorable to students over the previous few years. Withholding vocabulary is one of the most challenging parts of learning English, especially in an ESL setting. The success of English language learners depends heavily on learning new terms.

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