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THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES ON YOUNG LEARNERS' VOCABULARY RETENTION: A CLASSROOM-BASED STUDY

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Abstract: *Vocabulary is important in learning English because students need words to communicate. During my teaching practice, I noticed that many students forgot new vocabulary quickly and were not confident using English in class.This study explored simple ways to improve students' vocabulary skills through games, pictures, songs, and pair work activities. The findings showed that students became more active, interested, and confident during lessons. The study suggests that interactive activities help students learn and remember vocabulary more effectively.*

Keywords: *vocabulary learning, English lessons, young learners, classroom activities*

INTERAKTIV FAOLIYATLARNING YOSH O‘RGANUVCHILARNING SO‘Z BOYLIGINI ESLAB QOLISHIGA TA’SIRI: SINFGA ASOSLANGAN TADQIQOT

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Annotatsiya: *So‘z boyligi ingliz tilini o‘rganishda muhim ahamiyatga ega, chunki o‘quvchilar muloqot qilish uchun so‘zlarga ehtiyoj sezadilar. Pedagogik amaliyot davomida ko‘plab o‘quvchilar yangi so‘zlarni tez unutishi va ingliz tilidan foydalanishda ishonchsizlik bildirishi kuzatildi.*

Ushbu tadqiqot o‘yinlar, rasmlar, qo‘shiqlar va juftlikda ishlash faoliyatlari orqali o‘quvchilarning so‘z boyligini rivojlantirishning oddiy usullarini o‘rgandi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, o‘quvchilar dars davomida yanada faol, qiziqqan va ishonchli bo‘lib qoldilar. Tadqiqot interaktiv faoliyatlar o‘quvchilarga so‘zlarni samaraliroq o‘rganish va eslab qolishga yordam berishini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: *so‘z boyligini o‘rganish, ingliz tili darslari, yosh o‘rganuvchilar, sinf faoliyatlari.*

ВЛИЯНИЕ ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫХ ЗАДАНИЙ НА ЗАПОМИНАНИЕ СЛОВАРНОГО ЗАПАСА МЛАДШИМИ УЧАЩИМИСЯ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ НА ОСНОВЕ КЛАССНОЙ ПРАКТИКИ

ДАВЛАТОВА ЗИЛОЛА ТУРСУНПОЛОТ КИЗИ
СТУДЕНТКА НАМАНГАНСКОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО ИНСТИТУТА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ
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Аннотация: *Словарный запас играет важную роль в изучении английского языка, поскольку учащимся необходимы слова для общения. Во время педагогической практики было замечено, что многие ученики быстро забывали новую лексику и неуверенно использовали английский язык на уроках.*

Данное исследование изучало простые способы улучшения словарного запаса учащихся с помощью игр, картинок, песен и парных заданий. Результаты показали, что учащиеся стали более активными, заинтересованными и уверенными во время занятий. Исследование показывает, что интерактивные задания помогают учащимся более эффективно изучать и запоминать лексику.

Ключевые слова: *изучение словарного запаса, уроки английского языка, младшие учащиеся, классные задания.*

Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the most important parts of learning a foreign language. Without vocabulary, students cannot understand texts, express ideas, or communicate with others successfully. For young learners especially, learning new words is the foundation for developing speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills.

During my teaching practice, I observed that many students had difficulty remembering vocabulary taught in previous lessons. Some students could recognize words in exercises but could not use them while speaking. Others became passive during vocabulary tasks because they felt the activities were boring or difficult. I also noticed that students learned words more successfully when lessons included games, pictures, or movement activities.

These observations encouraged me to investigate the problem more carefully. The aim of this study was to explore practical ways to improve students' vocabulary skills during English lessons and to understand which classroom activities helped students learn words more effectively.

The research was guided by the following questions:

- Why do students struggle to remember and use English vocabulary?
- Which classroom activities help students learn vocabulary more effectively?
- How do students feel about vocabulary learning during English lessons?

Literature Review

Many researchers explain that vocabulary learning becomes more successful when students actively use words instead of simply memorizing lists. Harmer (2007) states that students learn vocabulary better when teachers create meaningful and

communicative classroom activities rather than focusing only on repetition. According to Thornbury (2002), repetition is important in vocabulary learning, but students also need opportunities to meet words in different contexts. When learners hear, read, speak, and use words repeatedly, they remember them more easily.Nation (2001) emphasizes that visual support such as pictures, flashcards, and real objects can help learners understand and remember vocabulary more effectively. Young learners especially benefit from visual materials because they connect words with images and experiences. In addition, Cameron (2001) explains that games and physical activities motivate children and make language learning more enjoyable. Songs, movement, and interactive tasks help students stay active and focused during lessons. These ideas influenced the strategies used in this action research study.

Methodology

This study followed an action research approach. Action research helps teachers identify classroom problems, apply solutions, and reflect on improvements. It is useful because it focuses on real classroom experiences and practical teaching methods.

Participants and Context

The research was conducted during my teaching practice with primary school students. The class included learners with different English levels. Most students understood simple vocabulary but often forgot words after lessons or hesitated to use them in activities.

Data Collection Methods

Several methods were used to collect information during the study:

- Classroom observations – I observed how students reacted during vocabulary activities and noted which tasks increased participation.
- Reflective notes – After lessons, I wrote short reflections about successful activities and classroom difficulties.

- Teacher discussions – I spoke with other teachers about common vocabulary learning problems among young learners.
- Student feedback questions – Students answered short questions about vocabulary lessons, games, pictures, and speaking activities.

Some of the questions included:

- Do you enjoy learning new English words?
- Which activities help you remember vocabulary better?
- Do games make vocabulary lessons easier?
- Do pictures help you understand words?
- Are you confident when using new vocabulary?

Findings

After analyzing classroom observations and student feedback, several important problems became clear. Many students forgot vocabulary because they only repeated words once or twice during lessons. Some students were able to understand vocabulary during activities but could not remember the same words in the next lesson.

Another problem was that traditional vocabulary exercises sometimes made students lose interest. Writing words repeatedly or only translating vocabulary from English into Uzbek did not keep students motivated for long periods.

Students reacted much more positively when lessons included interactive activities. During games and pair work exercises, students became more active and used vocabulary more naturally. Pictures and flashcards also helped weaker learners understand meanings more quickly.

Feedback from teachers showed that vocabulary retention is a common challenge in many English classrooms, especially among younger learners who need movement and variety during lessons.

Action Research

After identifying the main problems, I introduced several small classroom strategies over four weeks to improve students' vocabulary learning.

1. Using Vocabulary Games

I began using simple vocabulary games during lessons. Activities such as matching games, memory games, and “Find the Picture” encouraged students to practice words in an enjoyable way.

One activity students especially enjoyed was a ball game. Students threw a soft ball to each other and said one English word before passing it. This activity increased participation because students felt relaxed and excited.

2. Using Pictures and Flashcards

I used colorful flashcards and pictures to introduce new vocabulary. Students found it easier to remember words when they could connect them with visual images. Even shy students became more willing to answer questions when pictures were used.

3. Songs and Movement Activities

I also included simple English songs connected to lesson topics. During lessons about body parts, students sang songs while pointing to different body parts. These movement activities helped students remember vocabulary more naturally.

4. Pair and Group Work

Students practiced vocabulary in pairs and small groups instead of always answering individually. This reduced anxiety and gave students more opportunities to repeat and use words during communication.

5. Positive Feedback

Instead of focusing immediately on mistakes, I encouraged students whenever they attempted to use new vocabulary. This helped create a more supportive classroom atmosphere and increased students’ confidence.

Results

At the beginning of the study, only a small number of students actively used English vocabulary during lessons. Many students stayed silent or quickly forgot words after activities.

However, after introducing games, visual materials, songs, and pair work activities, noticeable improvements appeared in the classroom. Students became more enthusiastic during vocabulary lessons and participated more actively in speaking tasks.

Many students remembered vocabulary more successfully when words were connected to games or pictures. Pair activities also encouraged weaker students to practice vocabulary without fear of making mistakes.

One of the most positive changes was students' attitude toward vocabulary learning. Lessons became more energetic and enjoyable, and students seemed more willing to speak English during classroom activities. Although some students still needed support with pronunciation and sentence formation, overall participation improved significantly compared to the beginning of the research.

Discussion

The results of this action research study align closely with findings reported in the existing literature on vocabulary learning and second language acquisition. This section interprets the key findings in relation to established theoretical perspectives and discusses their practical implications for classroom teaching.

Interactive Activities and Vocabulary Retention

The most consistent finding of this study was that students retained vocabulary more effectively when learning was embedded in games, songs, and movement activities. This supports the communicative approach advocated by Harmer (2007), who argued that meaningful classroom activities produce better vocabulary outcomes than mechanical repetition. In this study, students who participated in ball-throwing games and matching activities demonstrated noticeably higher engagement compared to lessons that relied on translation and written exercises.

This finding also reflects what Thornbury (2002) described as "multiple encounters" with vocabulary. When students heard, repeated, saw, and physically interacted with new words during a single lesson, they appeared more likely to recall those words in subsequent lessons. The variety of activity types ensured that students met the same vocabulary in different contexts, which is considered a critical condition for long-term retention.

Visual Support and Learner Accessibility

The use of flashcards and pictures produced particularly noticeable results among weaker learners. Students who hesitated to participate during oral activities became more willing to engage when visual prompts were provided. This is consistent with Nation's (2001) emphasis on visual support as a vocabulary learning tool, especially for younger learners who rely on connecting words to concrete images and real-world experiences.

Interestingly, pictures also appeared to reduce anxiety among shy students. This suggests that visual materials serve not only a cognitive function in supporting word-meaning connections, but also an affective function in lowering the emotional barriers to participation. This dimension of vocabulary instruction has received relatively little attention in the literature and represents a potentially valuable area for further investigation.

Collaborative Learning and Reduced Anxiety

Pair and group work activities had a significant positive effect on students' willingness to use vocabulary in spoken communication. When students practiced in small groups rather than responding individually in front of the whole class, participation rates increased noticeably. This finding supports Cameron's (2001) argument that collaborative and interactive tasks reduce anxiety and increase language production in young learners.

The reduction in anxiety associated with pair work is particularly significant in contexts where students are accustomed to teacher-fronted instruction. In the present study, many students had initially been reluctant to speak English for fear of making mistakes. Moving to pair-based practice appeared to shift this dynamic, allowing students to experiment with language in a lower-stakes environment.

Role of Positive Feedback

The deliberate use of positive feedback throughout the study contributed to a more supportive classroom atmosphere. Students who were encouraged when attempting to use new vocabulary – regardless of accuracy – appeared more willing to take communicative risks in subsequent lessons. While this study did not measure affective variables formally, classroom observations and student feedback consistently pointed to improved confidence as a key outcome of the intervention.

This finding resonates with broader research on motivation in language learning, which suggests that a supportive affective environment is a necessary condition for effective vocabulary development (Harmer, 2007). Teachers who focus exclusively on error correction may inadvertently suppress the very attempts at language use that vocabulary learning requires.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

While the findings of this study are encouraging, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted over a relatively short period of four weeks with a single class. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions about the long-term retention of vocabulary or the transferability of findings to other teaching contexts. Longitudinal studies involving larger and more diverse student populations would be needed to validate these findings more robustly.

Second, the data collection relied primarily on classroom observation and informal student feedback rather than standardised vocabulary tests. Future studies

could incorporate pre- and post-tests to measure vocabulary gains more precisely and to compare the relative effectiveness of individual activity types.

Third, the overlap between the Findings, Action Research, and Results sections in the original structure of this paper reflects a limitation common to practitioner-based action research: the boundaries between data collection, intervention, and analysis can be difficult to separate clearly in a single-classroom study. Future iterations of this research could benefit from a clearer methodological separation of these phases.

Conclusion

This action research study showed that improving students' vocabulary skills requires more than memorizing word lists. Young learners remember vocabulary more effectively when lessons are interactive, visual, and enjoyable.

Games, songs, movement activities, pictures, and pair work helped students become more confident and motivated during English lessons. Positive classroom support also played an important role in encouraging students to use new vocabulary without fear of making mistakes.

Overall, this experience demonstrated that even small changes in teaching methods can make vocabulary lessons more effective and enjoyable for students. In the future, teachers should continue exploring creative classroom activities that help learners practice and remember vocabulary in meaningful ways.

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