THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GAMES IN ENHANCING VOCABULARY FOR STUDENTS AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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Article info	Abstract:
	In recent years, teaching English has become a compulsory subject at schools, colleges, and universities. That is the reason why teaching and learning English effectively play a crucial role in the development of educational system. However, students seem to be weak in communicative skills due to they are lack of English vocabulary knowledge. The aim of this paper is to seek out the evidence to prove that teaching games are very helpful in the language classroom because this method helps to improve and increase students' vocabularies. The results show that language games not only enhanced students' lexical knowledge but also made the lesson more enjoyable, students became motivated in learning English and had plenty of interactions with teachers and classmates. The study suggests that before employing games in the language classroom, teachers should choose appropriate materials, levels, contexts, topics, time allowance for games.

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TRIỂN KHAI CÁC TRÒ CHƠI NHẰM NÂNG CAO VỐN TỪ VỰNG CHO SINH VIÊN TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CÔNG LẬP

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Thông tin bài viết	Tóm tắt
	Trong những năm gần đây, dạy tiếng Anh đã trở thành môn học bắt buộc tại các trường phổ thông, cao đẳng và đại học. Đó là lý do tại sao dạy và học tiếng Anh hiệu quả đóng vai trò quan trọng trong sự phát triển của hệ thống giáo dục. Tuy nhiên, học sinh còn yếu về kỹ năng giao tiếp do thiếu kiến thức từ vựng tiếng Anh. Mục đích của bài báo này là tìm kiếm bằng chứng để chứng minh rằng việc dạy trò chơi rất hữu ích trong lớp học ngôn ngữ vì phương pháp này giúp cải thiện và tăng vốn từ vựng của học sinh. Kết quả cho thấy các trò chơi ngôn ngữ không chỉ nâng cao kiến thức từ vựng cho học sinh mà còn khiến bài học trở nên thú vị hơn, học sinh có động lực học tiếng Anh và có nhiều tương tác với giáo viên và bạn học. Nghiên cứu gợi ý rằng trước khi sử dụng trò chơi trong lớp học ngôn ngữ, giáo viên nên chọn tài liệu, cấp độ, bối cảnh, chủ đề, thời gian dành cho trò chơi phù hợp**.**

1. Introduction

In Vietnam English has become more and more popular in which the number of people who are studying English has increased dramatically and obviously English language teaching is considered as an essential part of educational systems in the nationwide. More specifically, English is regarded as a compulsory subject that students have to learn this language during their academic course. The majority of students are excited and totally keen on learning English due to its importance and necessity for the future progression, communication and collaboration.

On the contrary, some of the students who have learnt English for more than five years have difficulties in mastering this international language and cannot speak English fluently when communicating with foreigners. The main reason is limited vocabulary among these students, this leads to the fact that they feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of the crowds. Furthermore, students tend to pay more attention the teacher's vocabulary explanations rather than their self-discovery its meaning and putting these vocabulary words in sentences.

Another reason could be explained that the status of teaching English at universities is a big challenge not only for language teachers but also for educators due to the influences such as teaching and learning methods, students' laziness, using mother tongue inside the language classroom, intercross cultural orientation, grammar-based and so on. As a result, students' vocabulary becomes poorer and cannot integrate four English skill effectively.

According to Nation (2001), vocabulary is the focus of language with its sound and meaning which interlocks to allow us to communicate with other people. These researchers also highlighted that when teaching a language, teachers should teach words first. It is the word that helps students make sentences, conversations and discourse of all kinds. Without know words, students cannot express their ideas as well as understand each other. Moreover, vocabulary is a crucial element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading all together.

In the light of the mentioned problem, there is a need in innovating teaching and learning methods in order to improve students' knowledge of vocabulary. However, a big question of how to help students learn English well and enrich vocabulary to speak as native speakers is risen among language teachers. Therefore, it is suggested that using communicative games in the language classroom to make the lesson more enjoyable and more importantly upgrade students' vocabulary. For the reasons above, this study is going to examine the use of communicative games to enhance vocabulary at universities and probably suggest a further implication so that both teachers and students can be beneficial from communicative games.

2. Literature review

In the review of literature, the study presents the importance of the teaching vocabulary in the language classroom, benefits of using games in teaching vocabulary in the language classroom and different types of games.

2.1. Importance of the teaching vocabulary in the language classroom

In language teaching, like grammar and phonology, vocabulary plays a very crucial role in

which carries power of meaning and is the representative of a language which consists of single items, different phrases conveying special meanings (Gu, 2003; Nation & Hirsh, 1992; Nation, 1994). Bakhsh (2017) defines that "if language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh" (p.123). Therefore, without lexical knowledge students would not be able to use the grammar to generate sentences with meaning.

Similarly, Schmitt and Jiang (2011) state that "without grammar, very little can be convey, however without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.58). In other words, when students have abilities in manipulating grammatical structures, it does not mean that they have capacities in expressing the meaning of the words that they have used. In order to express the concepts or meaning, students need to have plentiful of words which help them convey ideas easily (Hedge & Ferris, 2009).

According to Schmitt (2002) and Maria (2017), teaching lexical knowledge is the quickest way to improve communicative competence thus it suggests that when travelling abroad for academic purposes, teachers should not pay more attention on grammar, it is better for equip them more and more frequently used words related to the real life situations. It can be said that language learning and teaching should rely heavily on knowledge of vocabulary in which the limited vocabulary will impede a successful communication, or an obstacle for listeners and readers.

Several other studies have revealed that language learners heavily rely on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle to overcome (Ernawati, 2009; Huckin,1995). In production, when we have a meaning or concept that we wish to express, we need to have a store of words from which we can select to express this meaning or concept. ''When students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries'' (Lewis, 1993, p.25). That means that the important of lexis is demonstrated both inside and outside the classroom because once they know the language well, they will master their communication skills,

avoid the isolation with the community that they are involving in.

In a nutshell, it can be interestingly drawn the conclusion that vocabulary is the decisive tool in communication, therefore improving vocabulary is a must for language learning in which this helps learners have ability to express and convey the meaning of the words that they used. More importantly, learning vocabulary is the best way to develop other skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing because lexis is the great way to connect these skills. The wider range of vocabulary the learner achieve, the better communication with other people they have.

2.2. Benefits of games in the language teaching classroom.

Games are one of the most important components in EFL classrooms. They include activities which have goals and rules at the same time fun (Hadfield ,1990 cited in Deesri, 2002, p.1) describes games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. Games are considered as one of the most significant components in English language classrooms because it is due to the fact that games consist of different activities which have pedagogical goals of teaching and learning. According to several researchers, there are many ways to increase learners' vocabulary, and using games is one of the most effective way to widen their lexis (Bakhsh, 2017; Chancons, 2010; Earnawati, 2009; Guo, 2008; Huyen & Nga, 2003, Maria , 2017).

With the use of language games, the teachers can create various contexts in which learners are able to use the language to communicate, exchange information and express their own opinions (Huyen & Nga, 2003; Nation, 2001). Furthermore, Bakhsh (2017) holds the view that teaching and learning through different language games could encourage the process of psychological and knowledgeable influences that help to improve communication to promote learners' self-confidence and motivation, strengthen learner's learning, and build their self-reliance. Similarly, other researchers also indicate the benefits of using games in teaching the second language.

The first advantages of using games is highlighted that during the language classroom, games will be regarding as a language practice of various skills and a kind of amusement which boost up learning motivation (Bakhsh, 2017; Huyen & Nga, 2003) . Therefore, it is suggested that games are utilized at all stages of the lessons to develop more skills of communication in stead of considering them as filling activities in unusual moments when teachers seem to finish the lesson earlier than expected or have nothing better to do (Ernawati, 2009; Schmitt & Jiang, 2011).

Another benefits of using games should be focused that several games are the best method to lend themselves to revise exercises in order to help learners recall the lesson in an entertaining, relaxing and pleasant way (Bakhsh, 2017). Additionally, although games remain the noise among learners, they are still worth paying much attention to and applying in the language classroom due to the fact that they create motivation, promote communication competence, language English proficiency, generate speaking fluency and especially boost up interactions between learners in the classroom (Ernawati, 2009; Maria, 2017).

In short, games are very helpful because they are able to lower learners' anxiety, encourage and increase cooperations by giving more opportunities for shy learners to express their ideas, opinions and feelings. Furthermore, well-choose and well-prepared games are truly valuable because these games force learners to practise language skills as well as give them a break during the lesson. For these reasons it suggests that games are considered as supplement materials for lesson plans in the teaching language classroom.

2.3. Types of games

According to several researchers, there are some dominant games that could employ to help to improve students' vocabulary knowledge effectively in this study. Therefore in this study, some types of language games are going to use as supplement material during the teaching procedure in order to increase the knowledge of vocabulary for students (Bakhsh, 2017; Ernawati, 2009 ; Huyen & Nga, 2003; Maria, 2017; Nation, 2001)

Picture comparing

More specifically, picture games are the ones in which the usage of photographs plays the most important part. There are various types of games in picture section. They involve comparing and contrasting pictures, considering differences or similarities, and considering possible relationship between pictures, such as describing key features, so that someone else may identify them or represent them in a similar way.

Memory challenge

This is another interesting game that is able to use to teach vocabularies in the classroom to learners. In this game, Students are required to sit around in pairs or in a small groups of five students. Then five minutes will be given to each group which is asked to note down as many words as they could remember from the previous lessons. Winner groups are the ones who can recall most word in the given time.

Ring the golden bell

Another exciting game can be applied in the classroom which is "Ring the golden bell". In this game, students will be asked many questions related to familiar topic such as study, family, hobby, leisure time, sport and so on. The last student who can answer all the questions will be declared as the winner.

Unscramble word

This game is one of the most effective way in improve students' vocabulary knowledge because in this game students are required to rearrange the unscramble words into new meaning words. The student who can find most new words will be the winner.

Last standing student

This is also an effective game in enhancing students' vocabularies. The rule of this game is that the teacher will give to the student a topic, such as animal, flower, fruit or food. Students are required to stand in the circle and give a word related to the topic. Those students who cannot generate a new words or repeat the previous words will be out of the circle and the student who can stand at the last minute with more new words will be considered as the winner.

Board race

It is a greatly fun and teamwork game that is used for revising vocabulary. The board is separated into 2 part by a straight line. Then students are divided into 2 teams and each team will get some coloured chalk. Each student takes turn to write down the words that they have learnt in the previous lesson on the board. One point will be scored for one correct word. The team who can write most words will be declared as the winner.

It is interestingly concluded that vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in language learning because a wide range of vocabulary will help students master other language skills. More importantly, having much lexis knowledge will help students understand what other people are saying and easily express their opinions and ideas. As mentioned earlier, games are totally interesting method to teach vocabulary. Furthermore, games helps students escape from the boredom of the lesson in which teachers only focus on using traditional teaching method and also help them enrich their lexical knowledge effectively. For these reasons, the study of using games to enhance students' vocabulary merge as absolutely appropriate research in the field of teaching second language.

2.4. Previous studies

As far as mentioned earlier, there have been several researchers investigating the effectiveness of games in teaching the second language at institutional levels. Starting with the first author, Bakhsh (2017) emphasised the importance of language games, his book indicated a plenty of oral communication activities through games. He shared the view that games provide not only a welcome break in the lesson routine, but also a form of integral part at both the practice and production stages of learning. Moreover, games are effective tools when devising to give more clear explanations and relevant instructions on vocabulary meanings and make them easier to remember, play and practise these words. For these reasons, the researchers used some examples of games in improving students' vocabulary such as Hot potatoes, Memory challenges, Dictation and Bingo. The results showed that students totally enjoyed the lesson through games and games helped them learn vocabulary effectively. The researcher also

suggested a communicative atmosphere during the game lesson where learners are able to express their opinions and views. More specifically, the teachers should have been well-chosen an appropriate games and then explain the game instructions and the rules by giving clear and short vocabulary in order to help learners easily understand, totally involve in the game, avoid the wastage of class time and students' demotivation.

In the same vein, Huyen & Nga (2003) examined the communicative games to improve students' vocabulary learning. These authors highlighted that language games should provide some light hearted fun entertainments in order to raise up students' lesson motivation and encourage them to develop their language communicative skills. In the first two weeks, the two researchers employed different kinds of games in order to observe whether students liked learning with games or not. Then they interviewed students to obtain information about their desires and expectation when learning English.. Furthermore, they also conducted a post class questionnaire to elicit students' feeling and experiences about learning vocabulary. The results showed that games extremely contributed to vocabulary learning because they gave students a chance to practise speaking, sharing ideas, improving interactions with teachers and friends. The two researchers suggested a training course for teachers in understanding the importance of games in English language teaching and employing different teaching methods such as role-play games to improve dialogue and interview interactions as art of teaching oral English.

Earnawati (2009) did the master research on using game to improve the knowledge of vocabulary among elementary schools and senior high schools in Indonesia. The author used different kinds of communicative games such as picture or text matching, Bingo words, true or false and memory games. The data was collected through observation in the classroom while games were being carried out. The results showed that the majority of the students become more and more active during the lesson, the students' academic achievements were improved with 70% of the students could improve their vocabulary and English communicative skills. The researchers gave the conclusion that the quality of teaching method and learning process was improved effectively and the uses of communicative games in teaching English and developing vocabulary were mastery. The researchers also suggested for further study in order to achieve successful lesson teachers should pay more attention on students' characteristics to choose a suitable game or technique in teaching English.

Maria (2017) investigated the use of games to improve 11th grade students vocabulary at the senior secondary school in Indonesia. The author indicated that the limited vocabulary made students feel more less confident in speaking English. Furthermore, students easily felt bored when learning English because teachers used monotonous such as textbooks, hand outs to teach. For this reason, games were used by researcher to improve students' motivation and increase the communicative interaction with teachers and classmates. The researcher conducted data such as games books, journals from the library database. Two games: Doctor –doctor and Kim's game were used in teaching students and then analysed qualitatively through observations about the influences of games. The results showed that games were totally helpful in enriching students' vocabulary and increasing students' motivation. Through different games, students seemed to be more active and interactive in responding teachers' questions and making more conversations with classmates. The researchers also suggested that teachers should be well-prepared suitable games to teach vocabulary and then have a clear instruction before starting games in the class in order to help students better understand what they have to do during the games.

In brief, using games in the language classroom is an incredibly good choice because this method importantly helps to increase and broaden vocabulary knowledge and brings teachers and students closers. Students have more opportunities to practise speaking in the target language. Based on games, teacher can create a context in which teaching language becomes more useful and meaningful as well as improve the quality of education.

2.5. Research questions

Based on the problem mentioned above, the study aims to answer the research questions:

1. Does using games in the language classroom improve the vocabulary knowledge?

2. What are the differences between a vocabulary game-based learning class and a normal vocabulary teaching class?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Seventy students who have been studying English in two different classes: Class A and Class B participated in the study. Each class consists of 35 students. The participants of the study were all freshman students and of the English elementary level. More specifically, 65.7% (46) of students were females and 34.3% (24) of them were male students. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the participants

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the participants

Participants	Academic year	Gender			
		Female	%	Male	%
70	2019-2020	46	65.3%	24	34.3%

3.2. Instrument and data collection

The data was conducted through three stages. In the first stage, a vocabulary-based pre-test which consisted of 20 items was developed by the researcher. This pre-test was given to 70 students in two classes (Class A and Class B) before games were employed in these classes.

In the second stage, during the first week, students in Class A were taught different kinds of vocabulary-based games. In contrast, students in Class B were undergone the normal vocabulary teaching lessons. In other words, the two classes were taught with the same amount of vocabulary items at the same period of time, but two different methods of teaching English language. Then students' reactions and perspectives of whether they liked the lesson or not, attitudes, feelings and expectations were noted down. The observations were conducted within three periods of vocabulary-based teaching and learning in each class.

In the last stage, a vocabulary based post-test which was designed by the researcher was employed to two classes in order to get the results of vocabulary teaching and make a comparison of students' lexical achievements.

3.3. Data analysis

Students' pre-test and post-test scores were keyed in SPSS and descriptive statistics were computed in order to see how students in two classes performed on the pre-test and Paired sample T-test was used to determine the differences between two classes.

3.4. Results

3.4.1. Pre-test results

In order to examine how students in Class A and Class B performed the vocabulary- bases pre-test before using game-based teaching in the classroom, the min, max, mean and standard deviation were calculated through SPSS. Table 2 show the statistics scores of pre-test in two classes.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of vocabulary-based pre-test.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. deviation
Class A	35	2.00	6.00	4.2571	1.17180
Class B	35	2.00	6.00	4.2286	1.26225

As can be seen from Table 2, it can be observed that in both Class A and Class B the minimum of the pre-test in both classes is 2.0 and the maximum is 6.0. Similarly, the mean scores of the pre-test in both classes are the same with 4.2. It can be said that the results obtained from the pre-test at the beginning of the study exhibited no statistically significant difference between Class A and Class B

indicating the fact that students in Class A and Class B were in a similar status.

3.4.2. Class observation results

As for observation in the two classes, the researchers noticed some change in students' behaviour during the three periods of classroom teaching and learning. In Class A where students were taught different kinds of games such as **The last standing student, Ring the golden bell and Unscramble word** were fully energetic from the beginning of the first until the last period. More specifically, during games activates students in Class A totally teamed up actively with their classmates. All of them could understand the teachers' explanations and instructions of the games rules. Even quite students who were often reserved in other lessons also excitingly join the games. Through their excited faces, it can be interestingly noted that these students seemed to get motivated and satisfaction during and after the games. The majority of them expected to play more as they found games incredibly helpful for their practising speaking, listening and improving their new words. Overall, students in Class A showed their pleasant feelings and positive attitudes towards the implementation of vocabulary-based games in the language classrooms.

On the contrary, in class B the number of students who were gone through three normal vocabulary-based lessons were somehow confused and refused to take part in the lesson from the beginning to the end. These students claimed that during the lesson they just wrote down new words provided by teachers and then looked up words in the dictionary. They even did not have time to practising speaking and make up new sentences with these new words. This may lead the fact that they might have forgotten these vocabulary knowledge soon. More interestingly, some students also put their hands up and asked the teacher of how they could remember all new words and their meanings in a short period of time?. In general, students in Class B seemed to be demotivated during the normal vocabulary teaching lessons and they also expected to try in different ways of learning lexis effectively rather than traditional ways as usual

From the observation results, it would come up with the conclusion that using games in the language classroom is an incredibly good choice because this method importantly helps to increase and broaden vocabulary knowledge and brings teachers and students closer. Students have more opportunities to practise speaking in the target language, therefore they express their wishes to learn and improve vocabulary effectively in more attention-grabbing methods than the traditional ones that they have been taught in the class.

3.4.3. Post-test results

As mentioned earlier, a vocabulary-based post-test designed by the researcher was administered to both groups after class observation. Students' post-test scores in both classes were analysed through Paired sample T-test to compare the results of before and after teaching vocabulary -based lessons in the class. The results of the post-test in Class A are indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of vocabulary-based pre-test and post-test

	t	df	p	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pretest ClassA	21.493	34	.000	4.25714	3.8546	4.6597
Posttest ClassA	36.190	34	.000	6.14286	5.7979	6.4878
Pretest ClassB	19.819	34	.000	4.22857	3.7950	4.6622
Posttest ClassB	24.222	34	.000	4.94286	4.5899	5.2958

The results in Table 3 show that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in two classes at p value of .000. In Class A, students' post-test mean score were 4.2 while their post-test mean score increased up to 6.1 after games were used in the class. This means that the mean scores between two tests are different. Students tend to gain better marks after joining the games. This is the evidence that games had most influences in the results of post-test. In other words, the

implementation of games is obviously helpful in improving students' vocabulary knowledge effectively. In contrast, students in Class B seem to get a little good marks when attending normal teaching vocabulary lessons due to the slightly increase of mean difference between the pre-test (M=4.2, t(19.819); df=34) and the post-test (M=4.9, t(24.222), df=34).

Based on the results of the statistical operations, the study would come up with the conclusion that both pre-test and post-test in both classes are significantly different. Class A where students were taught fun language games seemed better marks than those who received normal teaching vocabulary in the traditional ways in class B. This also demonstrates the fact that learning vocabulary can be upgraded significantly through using language games in the classroom.

4. Discussion and conclusion

As all these references indicated above, it can be safely concluded that there are some existing significant differences between scores of pre-test and post-test in both classes. Students in Class A where fun language games were applied to improve vocabularies achieved better marks than those who received normal teaching vocabulary in the traditional ways in class B. This also demonstrates the fact that learning vocabulary can be upgraded significantly through using language games in the classroom. In other words, improving students' vocabulary knowledge through games is one of the most effective method that is able to frequently use in the classroom. This is in line with the conclusions drawn from similar previous studies conducted on the effectiveness of using games in teaching and improving students' vocabulary (Bakhsh, 2017; Chancons, 2010; Ernawati, 2009; Guo, 2008; Huyen & Nga, 2003; James, 2012; Maria, 2017; Nation & Waring, 1997; Schmitt & Jiang ,2011). Though these studies varied in the sample sizes, most of the researchers concluded that there has been a significant role of using games on learning vocabulary in improving students' vocabulary attainment.

More interestingly, to investigate the effectiveness of using games in developing students' vocabularies, an observation in Class where fun language games were applied was conducted in order to get feedback about the satisfaction of the language games, and whether the games were helpful in learning and enrich vocabulary or not. At the same time, another observation in Class B where students received normal teaching vocabulary in the traditional ways was obtained to get reactions about the satisfaction of the vocabulary lesson. The findings from studies have indicated that students in Class B were somehow confused and rejected to participate in the lesson from the beginning to the end. These students showed that during the lesson they just wrote down new words properly that were provided by teachers and then looked up words in the dictionary. They even did not have time to practising speaking and making up new sentences with these new words. This made them might have forgotten or ignored these vocabulary knowledge rapidly. In contrast, students in Class A claimed that games were a mean of entertainment which helped them escape from the boredom of the lesson and more importantly helped them have more opportunities to practise speaking, enrich their lexical sources and strengthen relationship and interaction with teachers and classmates.

In the lights of discoveries from the study, it is suggested that learning vocabulary through games needs to gain a plenty of attention from both teachers and students because each language game has educational value in which it can be relaxing and create educative environment. Those students who have experienced with the effectiveness of using games in the classroom can enrich vocabularies and then use their language communicatively, get motivated and achieve positive aptitudes toward their learning process. Therefore, before employing games in the language classroom, teachers should choose appropriate materials, levels, contexts, topics, time allowance for games. Other future research can take these into considerations when investigating the effectiveness of game in the language classroom.

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