Using Language Entertainment Activities to Enhance University Students’ English Vocabulary at Albaha University

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have considered the use of entertainment activities in teaching foreign languages. The significance of the present study emerges from handling the use of educational entertainment activities as a strategy to improve Saudi university students’ vocabulary learning. The current study aims to explore the use of entertainment activities in enhancing the students’ vocabulary at Albaha University. A pretest and posttest are administered to a sample of 20 junior students, enrolled in English courses in the College of Science and Arts in Almandaq, as the study participants. A quasi-experimental approach, that involves the study of the experimental group (n=10) and control groups (n=10), applies in the current study. The study uses SPSS to analyze the data. The findings of the study reveal that the use of entertainment activities has a statistically significant impact on improving the students’ vocabulary. Also, they show that entertainment activities in the educational process help to motivate the learner to interact with the educational material and with other learners in the learning situations. Accordingly, it is recommended that increasing the extent of using entertainment activities helps in enhancing the junior students’ vocabulary learning as an effective teaching strategy. In terms of the study findings, It is concluded that the application of the entertainment activities enables teachers and learners to pinpoint such activities in building university students’ vocabulary and other language skills.

Key words: Entertainments, Activities, Educational Games, Strategy, Vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in language learning. The language ability of learners will be improved through vocabulary improvement (Linse, 2006). In the past, the educational entertainment media was designed to teach students through entertainment. Most often, it contains content intended to teach the students with incidental entertainment value. It is implemented in various academic institutions, such as junior schools, colleges, and other higher institutions in various countries to disseminate information in classrooms and/or via television, radio, and other media to influence audience opinions and behaviors. The use of activities, such as entertainment and educational games for effective teaching, is one of the most important strategies that take into consideration the behaviors of the learners. Through these teaching activities, the students get a positive role that characterized them to become active and effective in the classroom (Prensky, 2005). Studies such as those of Al-Ahmadi (2010) and Al-Shehri (2009) have indicated that entertainment and educational games can increase the motivation of the learner. This ensures that the interaction of the teaching tools, which is presented in a fun and entertaining way, helps in achieving the desired goals (Habgod & Ainsworth, 2011). Recently studies such as that of (Liu & Chu, 2010) indicated that the learner’s use of different senses is the key to learning and development. Consequently, games are no longer just a way of entertaining students, when they want to spend their free time and are no longer a means of achieving physical growth, but became a vital tool the students use to achieve their mental growth (Habgod & Ainsworth, ibid). Most scholars and psychologists agreed that games are considered an effective tool for stimulating and developing thinking and learning.

Most of the Saudi junior students, who enrolled in linguistics courses at Albaha University, have poor English vocabulary. They find it difficult to express themselves in the English language because they lack the required vocabulary to use. The English instructors observed only three students out of fifteen in the class were able to express themselves in the English language. This indicates that students joined the college with weak English performance due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge. This situation makes the researcher think deeply to find solutions to such problems. Thus, the researcher thinks that the problem may be caused by using traditional methods in teaching English. The current research problem raises from the significant weakness in students’ language performance because they lack the vocabulary required due to traditional ways of teaching. This study, based...
on its findings, has proposed some solutions by approving the use of entertainment activities, including educational games, to improve junior students’ vocabulary and English performance as an ultimate aim. This strategy can enable teachers to enhance the students’ English vocabulary and motivate students to get involved in the language-learning environment. The weakness of students’ performance and the lack of research studies that investigate the impact of using entertainment activities to enhance the students’ vocabulary are the main reasons that have led to the research study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many educational and psychological studies confirm that entertainment is a vital educational component in education because it is a functional entrance to the world of learning and an effective educational medium for the formation of the personalities of beginners (Conati, 2002). This period involves the important capabilities and characteristics necessary to form the basic construction of the individual personality (Ginsburg, 2007).

Concept of Entertainment

The interest in merging education with entertainment, especially to make learning more enjoyable, has existed for hundreds of years with the Renaissance and Enlightenment Movements in which this combination presented to students. Richard’s Almanack demonstrated the early implementation of edutainment, with B. Franklin combining entertainment and educational content, such as puzzles and rules of conduct, into an instructional entity for colonists. Later development of the concept of edutainment has a relation to Walt Disney, with his first educational short film, ‘Tommy T.’ which was made in 1922 for the Deneer Dental Institute. In the 1970s, various groups in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Latin America have used edutainment in major universities, such as the John Hopkins Center for Communication Programs and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Modern forms of educational entertainment activities which contain television productions, film, games, museum exhibits, and computer software that uses entertainment to attract and maintain an audience, appeared.

Application of Educational Entertainment

1. Audio and video: These are used to teach topics like building vocabulary, listening, and oral activities. Much of what educational entertainment activities can offer through audio and video especially, is accessible over the internet via YouTube.
2. Film and television: Motion pictures with educational content appeared as early as 1943, then educational entertainment shifted towards the television. TV programs contained three main categories: those with primarily educational intentions, those with a high degree of both education and entertainment, and those purely for entertainment which shows incidentally or occasionally educational value. The third season of the television show MTV Shuga was analyzed by scholars and then published in 2017 in terms of its impact related to its aim at teaching African youths. Recently, Walt Disney believed in education through entertainment using television and film. He is known as the master of communications who brought entertainment activities into education in distinctive ways. He achieved an educational characteristic in his work through a picture series of live animals. (Paraskeva et al. 2010).
3. Educational games: They fulfill several educational purposes. Some games may be designed with education in mind, while others may have secondary educational value. All types of games, including board, card, and video games, apply in an educational environment. Educational games are designed to teach students certain subjects to expand concepts, reinforce development, understand a historical event or culture, or assist them in learning a skill as they play. Many recent research articles postulated that education and gaming can provide academic benefits Paraskeva (ibid). Besides, Van Eck (2006) argued that games consider as effective learning tools. Also, Kim (2008) supports the use of entertainment games with meta-cognitive strategies to enhance students’ cognitive performance.
4. Toys: They are perhaps the earliest entertainment activities that also have educational benefits. They can teach children literacy, numerical, conceptual, or motor skills. Many toys are simply colorful, such as picture books, which can help children in improving their skills and benefits. Toys can often employ in the context of role-play and puzzles to partially experience personalities or situations to simulate video games.

The Cognitive Theory of Piaget

Piaget devoted many years of his life studying children in depth. He began as a biologist and studied the adaptation of living organisms. His studies on biological adaptation had motivated him to focus on human adaptation with the surrounding environment. Adaptation is considered a basic function of humans, as they always try to match their abilities with environmental requirements (Piaget, 1957). He became more interested in the development of thinking abilities, and his theory focuses on the primitive nature of knowledge and its development. He had rated learners playing according to age, growth, and mental abilities to four stages (Wadsworth, 2004). He suggested that children pass through four different stages of mental development, as follows:

1. Functional playing: it is a kind of play that is played by the child in the sensorimotor stage. It occurs in response to muscular activities, the need for movement, activity, and the surrounding environment. The child grabs the object for the pleasure he finds, and this gives him the feeling that he is controlling and subjecting the object to his powers (Bates, 2014).
2. Symbolic playing: it is the second stage of development of playing that appears in the drama of the child. The symbolic games appear clearly at the beginning of the second year. Piaget considers them to be indicators that
intelligence evolves from the sensorimotor stage to the ability to convert direct sensory data through direct reality (Bates, 2014).

3. Game with rules: it is the third stage in children’s play, starting from seven or eight years old which is the beginning of logical thinking in children, where the child at this age can play games with rules and limits, and learn to control his behaviors and actions within certain limits. This is considered a basic form of play that tend to accompany us in adult life (Lillard et al., 2013).

4. Constructive playing: this type of playing is characterized by the child’s growing ability to deal with problems. At this stage, the child is capable of achieving the goals of the game he had set for himself. He is also capable of achieving the goals of the game that has been set by other players. Skill development is one of the constructive playing characteristics, and skill is a prerequisite for creativity and innovation development. The child expresses his activity through these creations, which recognizes himself as a creative individual through them (Alcock, 2016).

Piaget has developed several stages of cognitive development (Bjorklund, 2017); these are:
1. Sensorimotor stage: this period extends from birth until the end of the second year.
2. Pre-operation stage: it extends from the end of the second year to the seventh year.
3. Concrete operational stage: extend from the seventh year to the end of 12th year.
4. Formal operational stage: extend from the 12th up to the 15th year.

Concepts of Educational Entertainment

The educational entertainment activities refer to a wide variety of definitions that dealt with the concept of educational games. Entertainment activities and educational games can offer a distinctive structure to support traditional teaching methods and enhance the learning process, innovate thinking, and provide variety in teaching and learning strategies. It also makes the learning process more pleasant to learners and supports students with a base for their creative thinking. Language entertainment activities motivate the learners; creative behavior and different thought (Fuszard, 2001)

Importance of the Entertainment Activities

Entertainment activities are one of the most important methods that provide students with opportunities to be active during the educational process. They have several characteristics including:

1. Playing is an activity that has no obligation and it is non-binding to the participants and could be under the guidance and supervision of an adult as in the popular public games.
2. Fun and pleasure are key parts and goals that players achieve through playing and often end up with learning.
3. Through playing, we can exploit both the mental and motor energy of the player at the same time
4. Playing is linked to the child’s internal motives, as it requires speed, agility, attention, and open-mindedness (Kim et al., 2017).
5. Playing is a key prerequisite for the child’s growth, to meet his evolving needs, and to teach him to think (Kim et al., 2017).

Objectives of Entertainment

1. Entertainment is a learning strategy in which the child recognizes the tools used in terms of weight, size, color, and shape. The child also recognizes the rules and systems of the game and can identify some facts, characteristics, and attributes of the things and people who have to do with that game.
2. Developing the cognitive aspects: that is the game contributes to the development of the cognitive aspect of the individual through its rules and regulation. The child who plays the game should use his ability to analyze, install, and become innovative through those rules to play successfully (Kim et al., ibid).
3. Development of social aspects: playing with others, where many games require cooperation with members of the group and the games, allow the child to communicate with others so that the educational games develop the skill of teamwork and the skill of communication with others. Furthermore, educational games develop the emotional side and keep the child away from extreme emotions, such as acceptance of failure or loss of the game, lack of emotion, and quarrel.
4. Development of creative thinking: this may be in terms of working on finding new games. It is the development of new methods of dealing with tools that affect the thinking of the individual or in the new uses of valuable subjects. All these could be new creative thoughts.
5. The educational games give absolute freedom to the individual to choose the game that suits his abilities and level a natural and realistic way.

Previous Studies

Many studies have explored the impact of educational entertainment activities on teaching the English language. For example, the effects of applying entertainment activities studied by Retta and Gerald (2016), in which students used video lessons. The findings showed that the participants outperformed their counterparts in the traditional classrooms. They, also, revealed the actual time in class to prompt more interaction and thought in the class to be more enjoyable.

Lynch R. and Joyce, A. (2016) conducted a study on the integration of entertainment activities into education. The subsequent results exemplified the potential for edutainment to promote critical thinking, increased engagement, and growth mindsets.

Cox C. et al. (2017) conducted a study in which a mini-series that combined educational and entertaining elements developed and presented to participants; it was effective in increasing the confidence of the participants and was an honorable mention for the innovation.
Amal et al. (2015) investigated the use of games with disabled students. The findings explored that the system had a positive impact in terms of scores, coordination, communication, and memorization skills; after replaying, higher scores were often achieved as well.

Another study conducted by Sripramong (2004) examined the effectiveness of using educational games in the teaching of English vocabulary and its impact on keeping and memorization among students. Vocabulary task administered to 40 students in the fifth grade. The findings of the study showed that the students' attitudes toward the learning of English language vocabulary increased positively by using entertainment activities.

A study performed by Roslina et al. (2011) investigated the students' perceptions of using educational games to learn Introductory programming in a Malaysian setting. This research studied undergraduate students' perceptions towards using educational games as their learning medium using five constructs: motivation, attitudes, cognitive development, interface, and expectation with 24 items. The findings showed that most students had motivated positive attitudes and were more encouraged to learn Programming using games compared to traditional methods.

Al-Askriy (2007) performed a quasi-experimental study to find out the impact of using educational games on the achievement of fifth-grade students in the English language. The study population contained fifth-grade female students in the primary cultural school. The researcher had selected the school deliberately. The sample included 64 randomly selected students in the fifth grade. It contained the control and experimental groups. Each group included 32 students after the equivalence between the two groups. The researcher used a performance test which is a multiple-choice test consisting of 20 items. After performing the experiment and applying the test on the control and the experimental groups, the result showed the superiority of the experimental group over the control group in achievement in English language. The study concluded that there is a high possibility of using educational games in teaching the English language for the primary stage and its effectiveness in improving the students' achievements in the English language.

In his study, Al-Shehrri (2009) investigates the impact of using communicative educational games in teaching English vocabulary for primary school students in the Saudi context. 18 fourth-grade students enrolled in his study. The control group received instructions using only flashcards with pictures, while the experimental group received the instruction by the same method besides the use of the communicative educational games. The data collected through pre-test, post-test, classroom observations, and a questionnaire for the experimental group students. The findings of the study revealed a significant difference and remarkable improvement in the experimental group as compared to the control group. The study had proved that using communicative educational games increase the enthusiasm and motivation of students toward learning and their opportunities to speak better.

A study directed by Al-Ahmadi (2010) aimed to identify the impact of using educational games on the achievement of sixth-grade students in learning the English alphabets and vocabulary. The study sample was composed of sixth-grade students in one of the randomly selected primary schools in Jedda city. The researcher used a quasi-experimental approach, designed the educational lessons for this study, prepared a program for the educational games, and a performance test which were applied to both groups. The study findings revealed a significant improvement among the experimental group members compared to the control group, which revealed that educational games positively affect students’ ability to learn English language and vocabulary. The study recommended that there is a need to use English language teachers for educational games in the educational process, as well as the need to provide the taught curriculums with models of educational games.

Amonrat, (2010) had conducted a study that aimed to investigate the impact of teaching English through educational games for sixth-grade students. The study sample consisted of 30 students who were selected for the experimental group. The study was carried out during the first semester of the year of 2009. The research instruments consisted of a performance test and a questionnaire. Fourteen lessons in six different topics had prepared and nine types of games used. The findings of the study showed that the students’ performance improved in acquiring the vocabulary of the lessons, and their ability to practice the language had significantly increased. This created positive attitudes for them towards learning English through the use of educational games. It concluded that the use of educational games in teaching the English language is a useful method for beginners and young people in the primary stage.

Summary

Previous studies have found that the use of entertainment activities as a learning strategy can improve student’s learning of various learning fields such as cognitive skills. Most of the previous studies mentioned above revealed that the use of entertainment through educational games positively affected students’ ability to learn the English language and vocabulary. The findings of this study are in line with the previous studies, like those of William et al. (2006), Al-Askriy (2007), Al-Shehrri (2009), Al-Ahmadi (2010), Amonrat (2010), and Amal D. et al. (2015). The current study findings showed a significant improvement in the experimental group when entertainment strategies were implemented. However, it differs from those studies because it focused on university junior students’ vocabulary, while most of the previous studies focused on schoolboys and children learning.

METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

The aims of this study are to:

1. develop Saudi students’ vocabulary through language entertaining activities.
2. identify the relationship between the use of entertainment activities and developing students’ vocabulary in the Saudi context.
Research Question
The main questions of the study are:
1. Does the use of entertainment activities help in improving university students’ vocabulary in the Saudi context?
2. Do entertainment activities motivate the students to learn English vocabulary effectively?

Research Hypotheses
The researcher assumes that
1. The use of entertainment activities does not help in improving students’ vocabulary in the Saudi context.
2. Entertainment activities do not motivate the students to learn English vocabulary effectively.

Research Population
The population of this study includes Saudi junior students who enrolled in the English language program in the College of Science and Arts in Almandaq, at Albaha University. A quasi-experimental approach involving the study of experimental and control groups is applied in the current study. A sample of 20 junior students participated and they were divided into an experimental group (n=10) and a control group (n=10).

Data Analysis
Independent samples t-test was used to identify the differences between the control and the experimental groups in the pre- and post-achievement tests. Paired samples t-test were applied to identify the differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pretest and posttest scores. Means and standard deviation were calculated to investigate the impact of using entertainment on improving the English language vocabulary among the junior students.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Study Sample Distribution
Before treatment, the participants were distributed into two groups: control (n=10), and experimental (n=10).

Research Tools
An achievement test was designed for the current study aimed to investigate and measure the impact of using entertainment activities on improving the English language vocabulary of junior students in the third module selected for the study for the second semester (/2018).

Validity and Reliability
The test had sent in an initial form to the assistant professors of applied linguistics at Albaha University to get their views regarding the clarity of the items and their relevance to students and content. Their appropriate views and suggestions were considered before finalizing the test. To calculate the reliability coefficient of the achievement test, the researcher used the test-retest reliability method by applying the test on a sample of 10 students in the same college and the same level and adopted the scores of the pilot study sample. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate the reliability coefficient. It was 0.80 and this confirms that the test of achievement has a high degree of reliability.

The results which are shown in table 2 above indicated that all reliability and validity coefficients for the sampled individuals on each test theme for the overall test are greater than (50%), some of them are nearest to one. This shows the high validity and reliability of the responses, so, the study test is valid and reliable, and it will give accurate and acceptable statistical analysis.

Results of the Pre- and Posttests
Before the treatment, a pretest (PET test) was administered to the study participants to guarantee their homogeneity and determine their ability and knowledge. The test, which consisted of three questions and was separated into different parts, ran to both groups.

Table 3 above shows that the mean score of the control group in the pretest is (22.73), while it is (26.20) for the experimental group in pretest, which has no statistical indication. Also, it reveals that the mean score of the control group in the post test is (23.00), whereas, for the experimental group it is (39.64), which indicates statistical significance that the mean value change after the treatment. These findings mean that there is an improvement in the experimental group vocabulary after using the entertainment activities. This means that this strategy is useful.

The following figure (1) illustrates the comparison of the mean values of both groups on pretest and post-test for the students’ test.
English vocabulary effectively. Also, the results answer the main question of the study that the use of entertainment activities, in teaching junior students at Al Bahah university, helps in improving the students’ English vocabulary in the Saudi context.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of the current study revealed that using entertainment activities had a statistically significant impact on improving English language vocabulary for the experimental group due to the significant statistical differences between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for the control group which was (23.22) and the experimental groups was (39.64). This explored a positive impact of entertainment activities on motivating Saudi university students to improve the students vocabulary. The study findings also revealed that there were significant statistical differences between the mean scores of the post-test for the control and the experimental groups. This approved the relationship between the use of entertainment activities and developing students’ vocabulary in the Saudi context. Besides, the result showed that there was a positive impact of using entertainment activities and educational games for the improvement of English language vocabulary for junior students. The findings, further, showed significant statistical differences at the significant level ($\alpha < 0.05$) between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for the control and the experimental groups, which indicates that there was a positive impact for using entertainment activities to improve the English language vocabulary for the experimental group students for junior students.

These results, besides, lead to theoretical and practical implications. Although it is difficult to pinpoint accurately the benefits of using entertainment activities to English language learning, it is possible to assume that using entertainment activities has opened up new avenues for enhancing the students English vocabulary at Al Bahah University and other Saudi universities. This lead to direct learning of the English language through the involvement in the entertainment activities and educational games. Furthermore, The use of these activities is more stimulating and motivating than the traditional learning. Also, there are some educational implications concerning the use of games in vocabulary learning.
teaching and learning. It is advisable that teachers, with the arenes of the importance of games in developing students’ needs and abilities, should help them to choose the suitable strategy for teaching English vocabulary. In terms of practical implications, the traditional approach does not help the students to improve their English vocabulary due to passive participation and boring method. Accordingly, English language instructors should apply different teaching approaches which will make the process of learning student-centred, cooperative and collaborative learning, and would enhance the students’ vocabulary, and motivate students to participate in English classes. Such approaches and entertainment activities might help the students to practice English, which in turn will eventually help in enhancing their vocabulary. It gives immediate feedback and various kind of reinforcement.

CONCLUSION

The current study was one of the fewest studies that consider the use of entertainment activities in the field of teaching foreign languages. This study aimed to explore the use of entertainment activities in enhancing English vocabulary for junior students, who enrolled in linguistics courses, in the College of Science and Arts, in Almandqaq, at Al-Baha University. The main questions of the study were that ‘Do entertainment activities help in improving university students’ vocabulary in the Saudi context? and if the use of entertainment activities motivate the learners to improve their vocabulary.’ A quasi-experimental approach, that involves the study of the experimental group (n=10) and control groups (n=10), was applied in the current study. Basing on the study findings, the study had approved the use of entertainment activities that enable teachers to improve the junior students’ English vocabulary in the College of Science and Arts at Al-Baha University as well as enhancing learning English as an ultimate goal. The findings of the study revealed that the use of entertainment activities had a statistically significant impact, in posttest for the experimental group at level (0.05), on improving the students’ vocabulary. Also, they showed that the use of entertainment activities in teaching foreign languages motivated the learners to interact with the English language material and with other learners in the learning situations. These indicated that the use of entertainment strategies had some benefits in improving students’ vocabulary at Al-Baha University and other Saudi universities. Also, these findings will enrich knowledge in enhancing Saudi students’ vocabulary learning regarding the use of entertainment activities for learning, particularly in the Saudi context. These results agree with the previous studies in that the use of entertainment through educational games can positively motivate students to learn English language vocabulary effectively.

In terms of the study findings, the researcher recommended the use of entertainment activities as an effective teaching tool in teaching English language curricula for junior students and other educational stages. Discussion and workshops for English language staff will run regarding the designation of some entertainment activities through guidance for instructors containing those strategies and their educational objectives. Also, language instructors should activate the English clubs to entertain university students. Teachers and learners should utilize a variety of strategies for teaching vocabulary. Topics related to educational entertainment will be applied as a teaching strategy in the content of the English language courses besides the suggested models for accompanying the lessons. Finally, Research efforts will take place to discover the best strategy for vocabulary learning (Gu, P. (1994). Further, studies will run to investigate the impact of entertaining students on enhancing other selected language skills and similar studies regarding the use of entertainment activities by studying a different sample of learners such as those having learning difficulties or learners with special needs.

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Author Queries???

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