



The problems that face Sudanese basic school students in learning English vocabulary

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the problems and difficulties that encounter Sudanese basic school students when they learn English vocabulary, also the study aims at identifying and predicting modern methods to help teachers in the process of teaching and reading vocabulary. The analytical descriptive method was conducted to analyze the collected data through a test for a group of both male and female Sudanese basic school students to check their ability of using English vocabulary correctly. The test was analyzed through statistical package of social sciences (SPSS). The statistical results revealed that Sudanese basic school students encounter difficulties when they learn vocabulary. Some teachers do not use appropriate approaches of teaching vocabulary. The researchers recommended that: Teachers should encourage students to make English societies to improve English vocabulary, curriculum designers should decrease the curricula concerns basic school level to give much time to students to focus on vocabulary, listening audio sections should be provided at basic school level.

Keywords: Word; Verb; Vocabulary Building; Accurate Writing and Fluent Speaking

1. Introduction

Language is a system of communication and interaction that consists of sounds and written symbols, which are used by people of a particular countries or regions using different languages. In addition, as Finnegan R. (1989:1) defined it, they explained "Language is a finite system of elements and principles that make it possible for the speaker to construct sciences to do particular communicative jobs". English language is one of the most important languages all over the world; it was created in a very long period ago. Today English language is the language of technology, international conferences, diplomacy, and more than that.

1.1. Statement of the problem

On the basis of an experience of more than twenty-five years in teaching English language, the researchers observed that basic school students face real problems when they write or speak English. It was an unpleasant surprise when teachers ask a basic school student to speak for just five minutes or to write one and only one paragraph, he or she couldn't speak fluently or write accurately. The main reason behind this is that students were poor in vocabulary. The idea of participating in solving such problems through this research raised from these observations. The researchers observed that students at basic school level commit uncounted problems in reading passages, because they are unable to pronounce words correctly when they learn English vocabulary at basic school levels, simply because the process of writing words is one thing but the process of reading and saying them is quite another thing. Wallace J.M. (2004: 9) pointed out "reading play a key role in almost every course of study. Yet many students do their reading in an unfocused way. This can often lead to poor result". Wallace J.M. (2004: 10) went on "Efficient readers do not always read every word. To save time they use techniques like skimming, scanning and searching". To be more precise which is better for students at basic school: to scan the text or to intensify it? For vocabulary building, reading intensively is one of the best

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ways to come across new words to study and to be added to your vocabulary record. It is clear that Wallace in the lines above threw the light on the importance of reading process as one of many ways to build up our vocabulary records.

1.2. Questions of the Study

- What are the modern methods of learning vocabulary at basic school levels?
- To what extent do the traditional methods of teaching vocabulary are useful.?
- How to motivate students in learning English vocabulary?
- To what extent does the surrounding environment affect learning English vocabulary?

1.3. Objectives of the study

The study demonstrates the following objectives:

- To identify and predict modern methods to help teachers in teaching vocabulary.
- To evaluate the traditional methods which are used in teaching vocabulary at basic school levels.
- To find out some modern suggestions to motivate students at basic school levels to learn English vocabulary.
- To find out an effective environment for basic school students in learning English vocabulary.

1.4. Hypotheses of the study

This study tries to test the following hypotheses

- There are many modern methods of learning vocabulary at basic school levels.
- By making tests a teacher can evaluate the traditional methods of learning vocabulary.
- There are scientific ways of teaching and motivating students of basic school level to learn English vocabulary.
- School environment plays significant role in learning English vocabulary.

1.5. Significance of the study

The researchers observed that there are many factors that create problems facing basic school students in learning English vocabulary such as surrounding environment, different approaches, teachers' training and experience, so the researchers believe that strong vocabulary helps learners to precise themselves clearly and accurately, as well as, transform their thoughts, ideas, and opinions effectively. In brief, vocabulary is necessary for operational communication, critical thinking, and academic and proficient success. Also, it enriches our cultural understanding, enhances confidence and supports brain development and lifelong learning to look for suitable solutions and findings to solve these problems.

2. Methodology

The researchers used the descriptive analytical method and a test was designed for governmental basic school students. (SPSS) statistical package of social science was used to analyze the collected data.

2.1. Limits of the study

This study is limited to Sudanese students at basic school level, White Nile State, Kosti Locality, who have been studying English language.

2.2. Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.2.1. The concepts of vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined by different grammarians as the basic form to build any language, according to Hudson R. (2007: 4) "vocabulary is one of the most obvious components of language and one of the first things applied linguistics turned their attention" Also he said that vocabulary is commonly defined as "all words known and used by a particular person ". Vocabulary is one of the basic components of any language that when people use to create any language they are starting with sounds, as babies, and put these sounds into symbols and then join these symbols to make up vocabulary in order to become a particular word to speak with.

2.3. Types of vocabulary

There are numerous types of vocabulary, which can be classified based on their characteristic's usage and contents. The first one is dynamic vocabulary which means words and phrases that are habitually used in every day conversation and writing. The second one is passive vocabulary which means words and phrases that are recognized and understood, but not necessarily used in everyday conversation or writing. The third one is technical vocabulary which are specialized words and phrases used in specific fields such as medicine, law or engineering. The fourth one is formal vocabulary which are words and phrases used in formal situations, such as business, academic or professional settings. The fifth one is informal vocabulary which are words and phrases used in casual conversation such as slangs, popular expression or regional dialects. These are not reciprocally exclusive, and many words can belong to multiple categories. Understanding the different types of vocabulary can help language learners, writers and communicators to use language more effectively and accurately.

2.4. Learning and word meaning

Understanding word meaning is important for effective communication. Also, it helps to avoid misunderstandings, convey anticipated messages, interpret language correctly and develop vocabulary and language skills. Children start gradually to increase their vocabulary; they learn the meaning of words from their close relatives like parents. Learning word meaning stated by

2.5. The role of vocabulary in communication

Vocabulary plays an important role in communication and its importance cannot be overstated. Vocabulary helps to convey meaning and express thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Strong vocabulary enables precise expressions, reducing uncertainty and ease understanding and exchange of information. The role of vocabulary in communication based on very important aspects. Students are unable to read passages if they have not enough vocabulary because reading and speaking should be a practical process of the four skills that needs a number of vocabularies for a successful communication.

2.6. Problems of vocabulary building

By the term vocabulary building the researchers draw learners' attention towards not only keeping a vocabulary record that full of thousands of words, but in fact towards the way to practice such vocabulary in order to fix them in mind. Grammarians agree that there are many challenges may encounter problems while studying vocabulary. The most of such problems is the lack of motivation, limited exposure to new vocabulary, difficulty in pronunciation. Nuttall C. (1996: 62) pointed out "Students probably consider not having a big enough vocabulary in their main problem in reading. It has been suggested that moderate L1 reader can recognize about fifty thousand words, yet foreign language syllabuses present only a few hundred words a year. To support this idea, the researchers observed that students do not concentrate on syllabuses that written on foreign language, these syllabuses are affected by the first language or mother tongue because students concentrate on the first language more than the second language.

2.7. Listening as a tool of vocabulary building

Listening is regarded as one of the best ways to get and build vocabulary. Valenzuela J. (2017: 79) Pointed out "listening and vocabulary are definitely related, if you know the meaning of all the words a speaker uses; you are likely to have a better retain more. However, if you do not know the meaning of words used in the lecture or if you are not familiar with the specialized vocabulary of a particular study, you may not understand and your listening may well be affected.

2.8. Vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition refers to the process of learning and acquiring new words, phrases and expressions in a language. There are main effective methods for acquiring language the most outstanding one is exposure to new vocabulary through the four skills in English language. According to Nagy W. and Herman P. (1985: 85) proposed that "the vast majority of vocabulary are learned gradually through repeated exposure in various discourse contexts proponents of this view claim that learners typically need about ten to twelve exposures to a word over a time in order to learn it well. It is argued that second language (L2) learners who achieve advanced reading proficiency in a language will acquire most of their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading rather than from instruction.

2.9. Word formation process

Yule G. (2017: 55) explained that the creation of new words in a language never stops and English is one language that is particularly fond of adding to its large vocabulary.

2.10. Borrowings

McCarthy M. (2002: 28) explained "when one language takes words from another new items are called loan words or borrowing – though neither term is really appropriate as the receiving language does not give them back. Whereas the speaker of some languages takes pains to exclude foreign words from their lexicons (vocabulary), English seems always to have welcomed them. Over 120 languages are on record as sources (where something comes from) of it is present day vocabulary". The words that are taken from other languages to add in English language to become natural words is called borrowing which explain the process of borrowing words from another language to enrich your English vocabulary.

2.11. Blends

McCarthy M. (2002: 6) went on "An interesting if matchless common way of forming words is by combining two well-established words, e.g. the word (brunch) means a meal that is combination of breakfast and lunch. (heliport) means places where helicopters can land take off (helicopter + airport) understanding the blends help us to find the meaning of compound words this also, help as to increase the English vocabulary for our students. Also, the word blend is a type of word formation process where two words are combined to create a new word such as smog which comes from smoke + fog.

2.12. Acronyms and abbreviations

In Cambridge Advanced Learning Dictionary, the term acronym is defined as "an abbreviation consisting of the first letters of each word in the name of something, pronounced as a word". E.g. AIDS is an acronym of acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Whereas Richards J.C. and Schmidt R. (2002: 8) pointed out that "acronym is a word made from the initials of the phrase it stands for, for example, IPA for international phonetic Alphabet." Abbreviations is a short form of a word or phrase for example ITV stands for independent television. other examples of acronyms are: NASA which stands for: National Aeronautics' and Space Administration. RADAR stands for: Radio Detection and Ranging. GPS stands for Global Positioning System. APA stands for American Psychological Association.

Clipping: it is a common process in language evolution and it helps to create, more convenient words also it means shortening a word to form a new word such as telephone – phone.

2.13. Spoken and written words formation

Milton J. and Fitzpatrick T. (2014: 2) explained, "While teaching of modern language routinely distinguishes between the skills of reading and writing and those of listening and speaking in the study of vocabulary knowledge, this distinction is often over looked". Studies presume that if learners know the one form of a word, they will also, know the other form. However, even in modern and more literate times than those of ancient Greece it can be hard to know both word forms equally. When a foreign language involves a different orthography, it can be very hard to learn to recognize words in writing.

2.14. Effective techniques of teaching vocabulary

There are various techniques for teaching vocabulary, some of them are: Direct instruction techniques which handles definitions and explanation of new words. In addition, it focusses on words association such as synonyms and antonyms. Besides authentic materials that expose to students such as videos, broadcasting, news and articles. These techniques and others can be used alone or in combination to create a comprehensive vocabulary.

2.15. Previous studies

The first study entitled "The problems of English vocabulary at secondary school, Elduiem locality" June (2012) conducted by Abdallah Hassan Ibrahim: El-Imam El-Mahdi University, Faculty of Arts English Language Department and it has come to the following findings: Teachers should use audio visual in teaching vocabulary. Teachers should use a good way in explaining the meaning of new words. Ibrahim recommended that: Teachers must teach vocabulary through context. Teachers should try to make their students keeping the meaning of the new words.

The second study entitled "The problem of learning English language vocabulary at secondary school" (2018) is conducted by Afrah Edress Mohammedain Suleiman, White Nile University faculty of Arts, English language department. Comes to the following recommendations: Ministry of education should train and qualify teachers. School administration should find solution to the problem of English vocabulary. Teacher's vocabulary difficulties should by intensifying vocabulary lessons. The students should focus on vocabulary rules.

The third study entitled "Investigating of ESP vocabulary difficulties Encountered EFL learners" conducted by Mahdi Hamad Elballa Hamad, Sudan University of Sciences and Technology, College of Graduate Studies, (in May 2014). The Following recommendations for improving and enhancing the ESP specialized English vocabulary: ESP teachers should teach the ESP vocabulary in context rather than teaching it in separate lists. ESP teachers should compare with subject teachers in designing courses and selecting materials. ESP courses should concentrate on ESP vocabulary in order to enhance the subject. It would be better to increase the teaching hours of ESP courses. The objectives of ESP courses should be cave for both students and teachers.

The fourth study entitled "Effective techniques for teaching vocabulary at basic level schools" is conducted by Manahill Alnour Mohammed Alnour University of El-Imam El-Mahadi, (2013). The Recommendations are: School teachers should be aware of giving a lot of vocabulary to their students so, as to help them communicate influence. Teachers should use visual aids to enable students to understand easier and know a lot of vocabulary. Teachers should prepare good presentation in such a manner that it concentrates on conveying one point. Teachers should motivate the learners to read more so, as to grapes large amount of vocabulary.

2.16. Methodology

The total population of this study is Sudanese basic school students in White Nile State, twenty male and twenty female students have been selected randomly to present the sample of population of this study. The researchers used the descriptive analytical method and a test was distributed among basic school students. (SPSS) statistical package of social science was used to analyze the collected data.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 Male students' achievement and difficulty factor

Question	Total marks	Obtained marks	percentage
Question one (Comprehension)	200	169	84%
Question two (read and find)	200	147	73%
Question three (underline)	200	155	77%
Question four (read and find)	200	188	94%
sum of test marks	800	659	
Achievement in the test	82%		

The researchers note from the table above that the fourth question was the highest marks obtained, at a rate of (94%), while the first question was (84%) the second question was (73%) the third question was (77%).The overall collected exam coefficient for male students in the exam (82%).The difficulty factor in the first question was (16%), while the difficulty factor in the second question was (27%), the third question was (23%), and the fourth question was (6%). The overall difficulty coefficient for females in the exam was (18%).

Table 2 Female students' achievement and difficulty factor

Question	Total marks	Obtained marks	percentage
Question one (Comprehension)	200	150	75%
Question two (read and find)	200	126	63%
Question three (underline)	200	144	72%
Question four (read and find)	200	175	87%
sum of examination's Scores	800	589	
Achievement in the test	73%		

The table above has shown that question four was the highest marks obtained in the exam, at a rate of (87%), while the first question was (75%) the second question was (63%) the third question was (72%). There female students achievement percentage overall the exam was (73%). The difficulty factor in the first question was (13%), in the second question was (25%), in the third question was (37%), the fourth question was (13%). The overall difficulty coefficient for female students in the exam was (27%).

3.1. Students' performance analysis

Table 3 Both male and female students' achievement and difficulty factor

Question	Total marks	Obtained marks	percentage
Question one (Comprehension)	400	319	78%
Question two (read and find)	400	273	68%
Question three (underline)	400	299	77%
Question four (read and find)	400	363	91%
sum of test marks	1600	1254	
Achievement in the test	78%		

The table above has shown that the most area of difficulties that face students of both gender is proved by the second question which indicated that 32 % of the students are unable to practice vocabulary through reading. The second more area of difficulties is the third question which showed that 23% of the students face a challenge to use vocabulary perfectly. Then the first question (22%). The least percentage of students is question 4 with only (9%) of the subjective students faced problems.

4. Conclusion

The study has come to the following findings to help students at basic schools in learning English vocabulary: Some teachers don't use modern methods of teaching English vocabulary, curriculum designers do not give learning English vocabulary process the care it worth, students at basic school level are not able to master reading skill, that is why they are poor in vocabulary building. Accordingly, the researchers recommended that: Teachers should encourage students to make English societies to improve English vocabulary, educational and administrative authorities should train teachers perfectly, curricula designers should decrease the curricula concerns basic school level to give much time to students to focus on vocabulary, listening devices should be provided at basic school level.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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