

Language Games – A Better Method of Learning Vocabulary

Pabbuleti Prasad

Ph.D. Research Scholar , Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University, AP, India.

pabbuletiprasad05@gmail.com

Abstract - One of the main goals of second language learners is to know, use and expand their vocabulary knowledge. In order to make the students learn vocabulary interestingly, language teachers employ different methods in the classroom; one such innovative method is using language games. The aim of the research paper was to investigate whether language games could improve the knowledge of vocabulary compare with traditional method. 200 students were selected for the present study. The sample of the study was taken from an engineering college who are pursuing first year engineering course. They were split into two equal groups: experimental and control. The experimental group was treated with language games; meanwhile, the control one received traditional practice. Both groups took a pre-test and post- test, and then the means of the two groups were compared through a t-test. The action of the study took three weeks, one session in a day to each group. The results showed that the students of experimental group had produced better results in post test than that of control group.

Keywords: *vocabulary, language games, experimental group, control group*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays an important role in our communication. We cannot improve our English without mastering vocabulary. The importance of the methods of vocabulary acquisition is increasing day by day as vocabulary learning is often considered a laborious and monotonous process. The role of language games in teaching vocabulary cannot be denied; they bring real world context into their classrooms. Wright, Betteridge and Buck (as cited in Rohani & Pourgharib, 2013, p. 3541) believe that "With the use of games, the teacher can create various contexts in which students have to use the language to communicate, exchange information and express their own opinions". They also help teachers to create a good atmosphere for optimal teaching learning process.

Learning is remembering. According to Scrivener (1994: 241), the things involved in remembering an item from meeting it to using it are: putting into storage, keeping into storage and retrieving. Language games then make the learner experience what he is learning and what leads him to keep the item in his mind. It facilitates for him recalling the word through a specific action done when meeting the word in its real situation and using it correctly.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether language games could improve the knowledge of vocabulary compare with traditional method and also tries to find out the dissimilarity between male and female in their receiving ability of vocabulary.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The review of related research plays a vital role in the process of research. The researcher has reviewed a few research studies done in the same area and provided them in the following.

Tri Ramadhaniarti (2016) stated that students were with positive attitude towards games and activities that might show that they really enjoy the activity with the game. Marzieh Taheri (2014) findings revealed that the effect of the game like activities was more significant in the delayed time than the immediate one. Evelyn Shaw (2009) used a triangular approach to collect data and stated that games might have been a factor in successful student acquisition and retention of vocabulary. Nadia Yahoui (2012) results showed that it is effective to use language games in teaching vocabulary and integrating them in the lesson which can help pupils to improve their lexical knowledge. Beyza Silsüpür (2010) used "Bingo" game and the findings of the questionnaire indicated that the participants preferred learning vocabulary through games rather than traditional way and also revealed that games reduce negative feelings during the learning process. Anastasiya Yudinseva (2015)'s synthesis of research identified that generally game-enhanced practices are helpful for second language vocabulary enhancement.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU-K) introduced English as one of the subjects in first year

Engineering Graduation in the first two semesters. The researcher found that the prescribed text book of English is with a lot of academic vocabulary which is another major hindrance to the students to learn English Language. As a teacher of English, the researcher realised the need for enhancing academic vocabulary to make the students better at their learning English Language as well as to get good score in English subject in the end semester examinations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine whether language games can improve motivation to learn and foster a deeper processing of vocabulary for engineering graduates.

Research Questions

This research aims to look for answers to the following questions:

1. Is the method of using language games more effective than the conventional method in learning vocabulary?
2. Does the receiving ability of the female students of experimental group better than the male students of same group?
3. Does the receiving ability of the students of ECE 1 better than the students of CIVIL 1 in learning vocabulary?

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the present study are:

- i). Using language games is better than the conventional method to enhance vocabulary.
- ii). There is a significant difference between male and female students in their receiving ability of vocabulary.
- iii). There is a significant difference between the students of ECE1 and CIVIL1 in their receiving ability of vocabulary.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study followed a quasi- experimental design in terms of using one experimental group and one control group. The branches, ECE 1 and CIVIL 1 are treated as experimental

group and the branches, ECE 2 and CIVIL 2 are treated as control group. Experimental group consists of hundred members (100) and control group also consists of hundred members (100).

On the first day of the study, a pre test was administered to both experimental and control groups to know the basic level of the students' knowledge of vocabulary. After the pre test, the researcher conducted intensified sessions for three weeks, one hour per day to each batch, to teach vocabulary using different language games to experiment group students. For this action research, "plan, act, observe and reflect" procedure was used by the researcher. To measure the effectiveness of learning vocabulary through language games, a game design was developed to investigate whether and how games could help students in learning vocabulary better than conventional method.

On the other hand, the researcher took the sessions in the same tenure for three weeks, one hour per day to each batch to the control group students to teach vocabulary in a conventional method like text, lists, worksheets, dictionaries, drill, and writing activities. After having teaching sessions to both the experimental group and control group, a post test was administered with the same questionnaire of pre test to both the groups. Marks are awarded to both the groups for pre test and post test. The mean values of both test scores are analysed with a statistical tool, Student t-test.

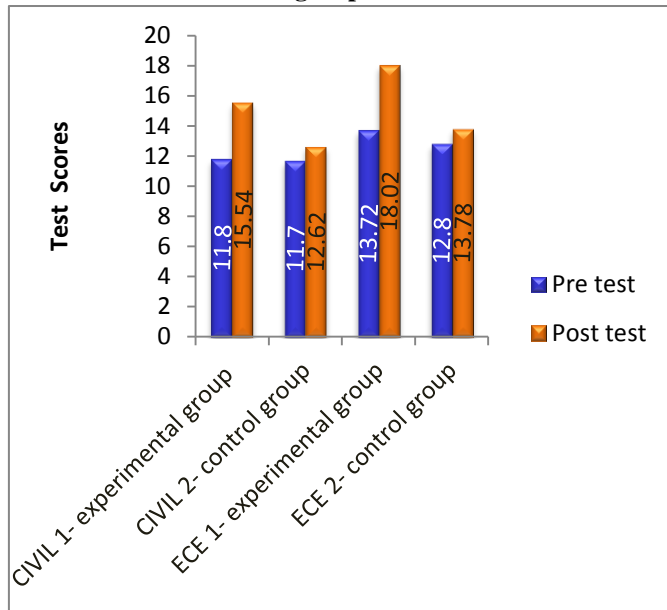
V. ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The researcher employed Student t test to test the objectives of the present study. Results on continuous measurements were presented on Mean \pm SD (Min-Max) and results on categorical measurements were presented in Number (%). Significance is assessed at 5% level of significance.

Tab.1 A comparison between Pre Test and Post Test scores of the students of experimental group and control group

Branch	Pre test	Post test	Difference	P- value
	Mean Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Deviation	
CIVIL 1- experimental group	11.80 \pm 4.45	15.54 \pm .13	3.74 \pm 3.80	<0.01*
ECE 1- experimental group	13.72 \pm 2.98	18.02 \pm .95	4.30 \pm 2.96	<0.01*
Average values of two branches	12.76 \pm 3.89	16.78 \pm 4.21	4.02 \pm 3.40	<0.01*
CIVIL 2- control group	11.70 \pm 3.60	12.62 \pm 3.28	0.92 \pm 2.62	<0.01*
ECE 2- control group	12.80 \pm 4.07	13.78 \pm .63	0.98 \pm 1.72	<0.01*
Average values of two branches	12.25 \pm 3.86	13.2 \pm 3.49	0.95 \pm 2.20	<0.01*

Fig.1 A comparison of pre test & post test scores of two groups

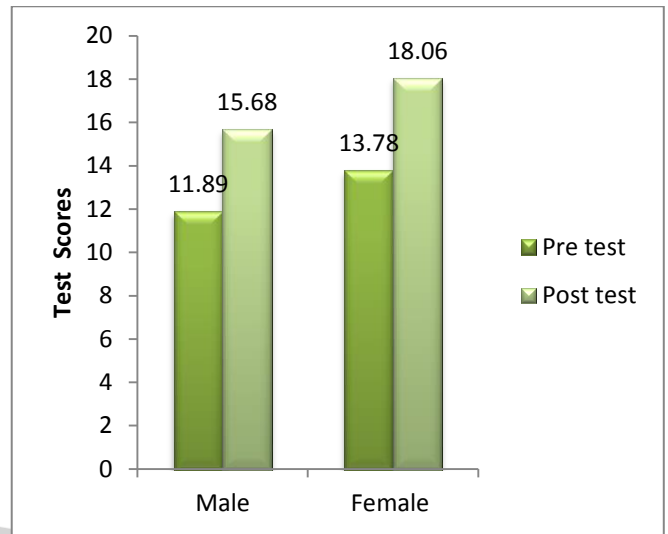


The table 1 and its relevant bar graph indicate a comparison between experimental group and control group in pre test and post test scores. The mean values of experimental groups in pre and post test for CIVIL1 are 11.80 ± 4.45 and 15.54 ± 4.13 ; and for ECE1, they are 13.72 ± 2.98 and 18.02 ± 3.95 . The mean values of two branches average in pre test are 12.76 ± 3.89 and in post test, it is 16.78 ± 4.21 . The difference of mean values of two branches average between pre test and post test is 4.02 ± 3.40 . The mean values of control groups in pre and post test for CIVIL2 are 11.70 ± 3.60 and 12.62 ± 3.28 and for ECE 2, they are 12.80 ± 4.07 and 13.78 ± 3.63 . The mean values of two branches average in pre test is 12.25 ± 3.86 and in post test, it is 13.2 ± 3.49 . The difference of mean values of two branches average between pre test and post test is 0.95 ± 2.2 . The mean values of two branches of experimental group average in post test 16.78 ± 4.21 is higher than the mean values of two branches of control group average in post test 13.2 ± 3.49 . The difference of mean values of experimental group branches average between pre test and post test 4.02 ± 3.40 is also better than the difference of mean values of control group branches average between pre test and post test, 0.95 ± 2.20 . The significant probability value is <0.01 *.

Tab. 2 Comparison of Male & Female students of CIVIL1& ECE1 branches, experimental group

Gender	Pre test		Post test		Difference	P Value
	No	Mean Standard Deviation	No	Mean Standard Deviation		
Male	54	11.89 ± 4.13	54	15.68 ± 4.26	3.8 ± 3.21	<0.001 *
Female	46	13.78 ± 3.35	46	18.06 ± 3.80	4.28 ± 3.62	<0.001 *
Total	100		100			

Fig.2 Comparison of Male & Female students of CIVIL1& ECE1 branches



The table 2 and its relevant bar graph indicate a comparison between male and female students of experimental groups, CIVIL1 and ECE1, considering the participants together of both the branches of experimental groups, in pre test and post test scores. Student t - test has been used to find the significance of the study parameters on a continuous scale between the same experimental groups in both the tests. The mean value of male is 11.89 ± 4.13 and 15.68 ± 4.26 in pre test and post test respectively and the number of male participants is 54. The mean difference between pre test and post test is 3.8 ± 3.21 . On the other hand, the mean value of female is 13.78 ± 3.35 in pre test and 18.06 ± 3.80 in post test and the number of female participants is 46. The statistical analysis shows that the pre test mean value of female, 13.78 ± 3.35 is better than that of male, 11.89 ± 4.13 . The mean difference of female between pre test and post test 4.28 ± 3.62 which is higher than the mean difference of male participants 3.8 ± 3.21 .

Tab.3 Comparison between pre test and post test scores of the students of experimental group of CIVIL 1and ECE 1

Branch	Pre test	Post test	Difference	P-value
	Mean Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Deviation		
CIVIL 1- experimental group	11.80 ± 4.45	15.54 ± 4.13	3.74 ± 3.80	<0.01 *
ECE 1- experimental group	13.72 ± 2.98	18.02 ± 3.95	4.30 ± 2.96	<0.01 *

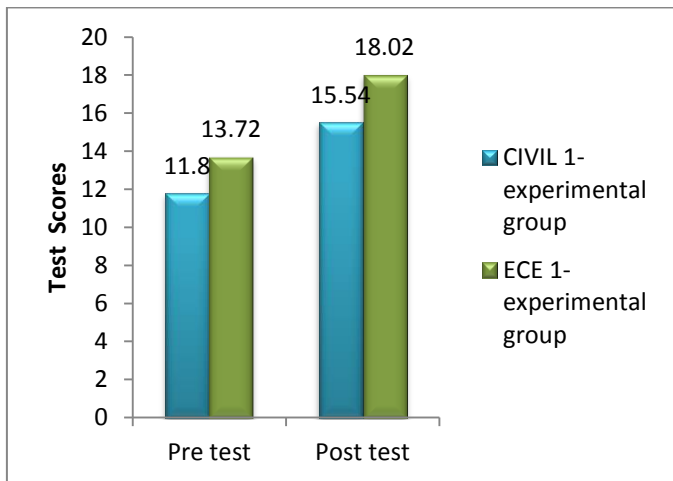


Fig.3 Comparison of pre test and post test scores of CIVIL 1 and ECE 1 branches

The table 3 and its relevant bar graph indicate a comparison between experimental group and control group in pre test and post test scores. Student t - test has been used to find the significance of the study parameters on a continuous scale between the same experimental group, CIVIL1 and ECE1 in both the tests. The mean value of experimental group, CIVIL 1 is 11.80 ± 4.45 and 15.54 ± 4.13 in pre test and post test respectively. The mean difference between pre test and post test is 3.74 ± 3.80 . On the other hand, the mean value of experimental group, ECE 1 is 13.72 ± 2.98 in pre test and 18.02 ± 3.95 in post test. The mean difference between pre test and post test of ECE1, 4.30 ± 2.96 which is higher than the mean difference value of CIVIL1, 3.74 ± 3.80 .

VI. DISCUSSION

Perego and Boyle (1993) commented that introducing vocabulary through games created opportunities for interaction in developing and retaining vocabulary. The analytical data of the present study indicate that the first year engineering students enhanced the knowledge of vocabulary through the innovative method of using language games in learning vocabulary. This method further created a lot of interest and curiosity to learn vocabulary. The findings from the table 1 shows that the experimental group students scored higher than the control group students in post test. Hence, it is evident that using language games in teaching vocabulary is better than the conventional method of teaching. The analysis of the table 2 indicates that the receiving ability of female students is better than the male students. The data of the table 3 shows that there is dissimilarity between the students of ECE1 and CIVIL1 in receiving vocabulary though both branches were taught vocabulary through language games. In the three cases, the Null hypothesis is rejected (H_0) and Alternative hypothesis is accepted (H_1) as the significant value is $< 0.001^*$.

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study have raised a few pedagogical implications in teaching vocabulary. Some implications for

the students and the teachers to use educational games in order to improve language learning. It is suggested that teachers should seek for different methods that engage their students in a creative language use. By using vocabulary games, students can use the language more communicatively.

The present study was limited to only one Engineering college, located in a rural place in Andhra Pradesh. The study was also limited to the first year engineering students as they had a prescribed English text book. Further, the study was confined only to two branches of Engineering i.e ECE and CIVIL. The study was also limited to teach only fifty academic words that are part of the English syllabus of first year engineering graduation.

The outcomes of this study led to several recommendations for future research. In the light of the study's results, it is recommended that the syllabus designers need to introduce language games in the textbooks for ESL learners. For future studies, more instruments of testing can be considered since for this research a pre test and a post test were considered which included just six sections, based on the characteristics of the sample of study. This study can be carried out with degree pursuing students in order to create a lot of interest towards learning English language in particular vocabulary, since the present study was done with technical students.

VIII. CONCLUSION

To effectively promote learning, language games must include ways for students to reflect on and explain what is happening. In fact, learning may not occur without time for reflection. Teachers should encourage students to take advantage of language games in their learning process. They also need to monitor their students' use of these language games to make sure that the structure and rules of the game do not take higher rank over learning. Learning vocabulary through language games is one of the effective and interesting ways that can be applied in classrooms.

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