

Game-Based Learning Platform and Its Effects on Vocabulary Mastery in Online ESL Classroom

Tanxia Claire R. Tobias

University of the Cordilleras, Philippines

Abstract

In today's technologically-overrun world, English content is obtainable to whoever with access to a smartphone, tablet or computer. Online ESL has expanded the ways in which teachers can foster fun and interactive way of learning in a global classroom. Game-based learning is found to be essential for educators to assist students in achieving mastery of English language through strengthened memory retention. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of game-based learning platform to increase vocabulary mastery. In addition, this intends to design games in a particular course (Zero/Beginner level) to shape better student interaction and vocabulary mastery using game-based learning methodology. Based on teacher's role to determine the effectiveness of methodology through careful assessment, effective feedback, and thorough knowledge on student's manner of learning. An online quantitative questionnaire was distributed to 100 office-based teachers at 51Talk Philippines, they were asked to respond to the material. To validate the results from the questionnaire, a focus group interview was conducted among 10 potential respondents. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that game-based learning was relevant teaching tool for current generation of learners to retain unfamiliar vocabulary. Accordingly, findings of the study proved that use of games in class was very effective; students were more engaged, motivated and they learned more vocabulary. Overall, using games during Online ESL teaching was successful in improving students' vocabulary mastery. Implications of the study suggested that Online educators should explore the possibilities of game-based methodology in unlocking student's potential towards student's preparation to face and win the world with excellent communicative skills.

Keywords: ESL; Beginner Level; Game-Based Learning; Online Classroom;

1. Introduction

Game-based learning has risen in popularity recently, but there is still some debate about how effective it is as a learning tool. This study aims to explore this area and demonstrate the effectiveness of game-based methodology and the opportunities it provides for language learning and motivation in order to prepare students for the future.

In the 21st century, game-based learning is found to be essential for educators to assist students in achieving mastery of English language through strengthened memory retention.

Getting the critical part of teaching language, the study focuses on teaching vocabulary through games.

Game-based learning- offers ample opportunity to practice and master skills by having students repeat a level, or levels and encourages students to persist and persevere through challenging problems which, in turn, creates a sense of accomplishment and builds confidence. (Cuizon,2020) When games are used to teach a concept and improve the learning outcome, the method is known as Game-Based Learning (GBL). Teachers and students collaborate in order to add depth and perspective to the experience of playing the game. In order to be proficient in English, learners need to learn vocabulary through repetition. It is said that repetition through games makes learning fun (Bakhsh, 2016).

As learning vocabulary is very important to boost critical- and creative-thinking skills, therefore it is crucial for learners to find effective ways to learn vocabulary. One of the ways in learning vocabulary is through games. Games can be defined as “an organized activity that usually has a particular task or objective, a set of rules, competition between players and communication between players by spoken or written language” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1995).

Games can meet the needs of the learners by making the lessons amusing and attracting the interests of the learners (Bakhsh, 2016). For instance, amusement to the classrooms assists long-lasting teaching and learning process in an easy and comfortable way. On the other hand, it facilitates the achievement of learners concerning the pre-test and post-test conducted (Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018). Learners show improved performance after the interventions due to their engagement in the games (Poondej & Lerdpornkulrat, 2016). Consequently, lesson learnt in a fun environment enhances retention of the course.

Studying the previous researches on Game-Based Learning Platform (Fithriani 2019, Mohd Iskandar Idris, Nur Ehsan Mohd Said and Kim Hua Tan, 2020; studies put emphasis on grammar mastery only. The importance of using game-based methodology in teaching vocabulary has been detected in The Chinese mime game in Teaching Vocabulary on (EFL classroom Andi Patimah Ramarh Apdy,2019) but is only confined on mime game. Research on game-based for ESL Online Teaching specifically to Zero and Beginner level students’ needs to be explored more for excellence and innovation in teaching.

Every now and then, we come across an absolute beginner (Zero Level) and Beginner Level, someone who has had so little exposure to English, they can’t even handle the most basic greetings, verbs or vocabulary. Accordingly, the study focus is on this need in the field.

The current study was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of using game-based in vocabulary mastery to online ESL teachers- Home-Based and investigate the challenges in game-based methodology that yields to quality education in Online ESL classroom. The researcher conducted quantitative surveys and interviews to gain insights on the effectiveness of game-based methodology in vocabulary mastery. The current study was limited to the ability and opinions of the participants, 100 Online ESL Teachers- Home-based in Manila. The ring-fence of the research focuses on zero level learners and Beginner level students for there is the need to explore more on effective ways for excellence and innovation in teaching English and vocabulary mastery.

2. Methodology

This study sought to explore the effectiveness of game-based learning platform on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL Classroom. Based on teacher’s role to determine the effectiveness of methodology through careful assessment, effective feedback, and thorough knowledge on student’s manner of learning. The researcher used quantitative approach to conduct this study. To test the validity of the questionnaire, it was subjected to a reliability test. For this the Cronbach’s alpha was utilized. As Warner (2013) indicated, “Cronbach’s alpha has become the most popular form of reliability assessment for multiple-item scales” (p. 931). Content validity was also done through a focus group interviews among 10 potential respondents. The researcher was careful to document the results and report all findings associated with the research questions. The survey consisted of two parts: Part 1 consisted of 18 questions with a 4-point Likert scale response and Part 2 is an essay question. The aim is to conduct an online survey with 100 Online ESL Teachers -Home Based from February 10-13, 2021 during their free time. Participants were given 10 minutes to fill the survey anonymously and 100 teachers responded and has led to 100% response rate. Before analysis, the data set was checked for consistency. The data was then analyzed using statistical software SPSS and to measure the level of effectiveness, weighted mean was synthesized. Limitations and indications for future research were also discussed.

3. Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings on the effectiveness of Game-based learning platform on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL classroom. An online quantitative questionnaire was tried out to 10 Home-based Online ESL teachers. After the questionnaire was tried out the formula of Cronbach’s alpha was applied to find reliability index of the result, and the result was 0.88. In order to explore the effectiveness of game-based learning in vocabulary mastery, an online quantitative survey was distributed to 95 Home-Based Online ESL Teachers. The 4-point Likert scale was used to rate the effectiveness of games. Data from semi-structured interviews were also presented to support the data. The findings of the current study confirmed that game-based learning is very effective on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL classroom. The data contributes a clearer understanding of effectiveness of Game-Based learning on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL classroom indicated in four specific areas.

Summary of Key Findings

STATISTICAL LIMIT	DESCRIPTION
3.25 – 4.00	Very Effective
2.50 – 3.24	Effective
1.75 – 2.49	Moderately Effective
1.00 – 1.74	Not Effective

Table 1

ITEMS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
A. Motivation		
1. Game-based learning creates vocabulary mastery fun and interesting to beginners.	3.47	Very Effective
2. Game-based learning yields good class interaction while leaning more words.	3.52	Very Effective
3. Beginners are more participative in learning new words through games.	3.49	Very Effective
4. Students are more enthusiastic in vocabulary mastery through game-based learning.	3.46	Very Effective
5. Games sparks interest in learning new words for Beginner students.	3.46	Very Effective
Area Mean	3.48	Very Effective

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean scores ranged from 3.47 to 3.52 showed motivation is very effective in game-based learning for vocabulary mastery. This finding is consistent with Pham Vu Phi Ho et.al (2019) study that games are motivating and exciting experiences for students to develop speaking skills in a fun and comfortable way. For instance, amusement to the classrooms assists long-lasting teaching and learning process in an easy and comfortable way. Students were able to learn more new words and they could apply those words in a relaxed and comfortable environment. Along similar lines, the findings of Lia's (2015) supports implementation of games in the speaking classroom enabled the students to became more confident in speaking skills and they become more active in the learning processes.

Table 2

ITEMS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
B. Word Presentation		
1. Word recognition for students becomes easier through game-based methodology.	3.43	Very Effective
2. Game-based learning provides exercises towards vocabulary mastery.	3.47	Very Effective
3. Games are effective in drilling new words for vocabulary retention.	3.54	Very Effective
4. Games are effectively used in presenting new words to beginners.	3.46	Very Effective
Area Mean	3.48	Very Effective

In addition, Table 2 revealed that word presentation is very effective in game-based learning for vocabulary mastery with the mean scores ranged from 3.43 to 3.54. This finding correspond to Yahoui (2012) study that using language games in vocabulary teaching was effective to improve vocabulary knowledge. Students obtained positive attitudes in the ways that games could help vocabulary acquisition and proficiency.

Table 3

ITEMS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
C. Production		
1. Game-based learning help Beginners to memorize words easily.	3.37	Very Effective
2. Students spell out new words correctly through Game-based learning.	3.17	Effective
3. Beginners practice new words learned for vocabulary retention through games.	3.40	Very Effective
4. Beginners are able to use words in sentences through game-based learning.	3.24	Effective
Area Mean	3.29	Very Effective

As presented in Table 3 the mean scores ranged from 3.17 to 3.40 displays that production is very effective in game-based learning for vocabulary mastery. The finding is consistent with (Bakhsh, 2016) study that games can meet the needs of the learners by making the lessons amusing and attracting the interests of the learners. They speak out the words, correctly and incorrectly but at least, they have chances to think about what they learn during games. On the other hand, it facilitates the achievement of learners concerning the pre-test and post-test conducted in the previous study (Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018).

Table 4

ITEMS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
D. Application		
1. Game-based learning for vocabulary mastery is effective in student's decision-making.	3.19	Effective
2. Game-based learning encourages students to solve unexpected problems.	3.25	Very Effective
3. The objectives of the course is achieved through game-based learning.	3.27	Very Effective
4. Game-based learning assist vocabulary assessment.	3.35	Very Effective
5. Review of new words learned through games is easier for beginners.	3.40	Very Effective
Area Mean	3.29	Very Effective

As seen in Table 4, the mean scores ranged from 3.19 to 3.40 indicates that application is very effective in game-based learning for vocabulary mastery. The results support the findings of Putri (2013) and Damayanti (2014), research on mastery of vocabulary indicated that puzzle technique is significant in students' achievement. They speak out the words, correctly and incorrectly but at least, they have chances to think about what they learn during games. Learners show improved performance after the interventions due to their engagement in the games (Poondej & Lerdpornkulrat, 2016).

Admittedly the area of motivation, word presentation, production and application shows that game-based learning is very effective on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL classroom. Besides, based on interviews lesson learnt in a fun environment enhances retention of the course. Game-based learning offered ample opportunity for practice and skill mastery through repetition, it encourages students to persist and persevere through challenging problems which, in turn, creates a sense of accomplishment and builds confidence.

The teachers' challenges on using Game-based learning on vocabulary mastery in Online ESL Classroom.

The teachers' challenges on using Game-based methodology were grouped as follows: Some Zero/ Beginner Level students have a hard time understanding, following instructions and navigating the tool. Students may also be confused with the mechanics of the games. Furthermore, some teachers have challenges in getting students' attention and interest; resulting to low student participation in class. Lastly, teachers have insufficient time after doing the vocabulary drills for practice with students. Some students might not have enough time to repeat and practice resulting to students making wrong guesses.

4. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the effectiveness of Game-Based learning on vocabulary mastery in ESL Online Classroom. Based on a quantitative analysis of game-based learning to vocabulary mastery, it can be concluded that game-based learning is very effective. The results indicate that learners were more motivated, engaged, and that they learned and retained more words though game-based learning. Accordingly, findings of the study proved that game-based learning puts forward ample possibilities for students to practice and apply new words in daily and practical conversation, students were encouraged to persist and solve challenging problems. Overall, using games during Online ESL teaching developed sense of accomplishment, builds student's confidence, and was successful in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Based on challenges encountered in instruction giving and navigating tools in game based learning, it is recommended that simple and clear instructions must be developed for easy understanding of mechanics. In terms to getting student interest and attention, varied games must be prepared that would match students interest and capabilities, together with creative, colorful and kid friendly materials. It is also suggested that teachers plan their games to ensure that time of teaching should be well-managed. Equally important, implications of the

study suggested that Online educators should explore the possibilities of game-based methodology in unlocking student's potential towards student's preparation to face and win the world with excellent communicative skills. As the teaching topic of this research was vocabulary, further research can be conducted by selecting other teaching topics, such as grammar, in order to determine any similarities and differences of the results of using the games approach in Online ESL classroom.

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