



**The Effectiveness of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Using
Frayer's Model to Enhance EFL Students' Vocabulary
Knowledge**

by

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KEBERKESANAN STRATEGI PEMBELAJARAN KOSA KATA MENGUNAKAN MODEL FRAYER DALAM MENINGKATKAN PENGETAHUAN KOSA KATA PELAJAR.

ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggeris adalah bahasa yang paling meluas penggunaannya di dunia. Ia juga telah menjadi bahasa rasmi pelbagai negara, walaupun ia bukan bahasa ibunda negara-negara tersebut. Di Jordan, bahasa Inggeris diajar sebagai bahasa asing dan diberikan penekanan mendalam kerana mempunyai fungsi ketara dalam aspek pembangunan negara. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat ramai tenaga pengajar Bahasa Inggeris yang kurang berkelayakan dan tidak terlatih dengan teknik pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang betul. Mereka juga tidak memahami gaya pembelajaran pelajar dan ini menyukarkan pelajar untuk mempelajari bahasa Inggeris. Dalam pemahaman, pengetahuan kosa kata membantu dalam menghasilkan gambaran minda bagi sesebuah teks selain daripada membolehkan pelajar memahami maksud teks dan mengenalpasti perkataan secara berkesan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menilai keberkesanan strategi pembelajaran kosa kata berdasarkan Model *Fruyer* dalam membantu pelajar membina pengetahuan kosa kata. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi pelajar terhadap Model *Fruyer* dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan kosa kata mereka. Teknik persampelan tidak rawak mudah dan rekabentuk kajian kaedah-campuran yang menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif bagi pengumpulan data dan analisis juga digunakan bagi kajian ini. Data kajian ini dikumpul melalui pelaksanaan pra-ujian dan pasca-ujian serta melalui satu siri temu bual separa berstruktur bagi memahami penguasaan kosa kata pelajar. Dapatan kajian yang diperolehi melalui analisis statistik Ujian-T menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan ketara dalam pencapaian akademik para pelajar sewaktu pasca-ujian. Hal ini menunjukkan terdapat peningkatan penguasaan kosa kata yang telah dipelajari selepas penggunaan intervensi tersebut. Dapatan kualitatif menunjukkan pelajar telah mendapat kesan positif melalui penggunaan Model *Fruyer*. Dapatan kajian ini digunakan untuk membangunkan rangka kerja pembelajaran untuk pembelajaran kosa kata yang efektif.

Kata kunci: strategi pembelajaran kosa kata, Model *Fruyer*, pengurus grafik, pengetahuan kosa kata, pemahaman

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES USING FRAYER'S MODEL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

ABSTRACT

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world and it is the official language of many countries where it is not the native language. In Jordan, English is taught as a foreign language, and is given a lot of importance as it plays a significant role in various aspects of the overall development of the country. However, many EFL teachers are not well-qualified or trained to teach English using proper strategies and they do not understand the learning styles of the students which causes some difficult for the students to learn English. In reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge aids in making a mental representation of the text apart from understanding the meaning of the text for these learners to be able to recognize words efficiently. The objective of the study investigates the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies based on Frayer's model to help students develop their vocabulary knowledge necessary for effective reading comprehension. It also investigates students' perceptions using Frayer's model to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. The researcher adopted a mixed-method design, blending quantitative and qualitative approaches, for data collection and analysis. The data for this research was gathered by conducting pre-test and post-test and a series of semi-structured interviews in order to identify the vocabulary uptake of the participants. Findings from the the statistical analysis using the T-test show that there is a significance difference in students' academic achievements during the post-test. This indicates that there is an improvement in the vocabulary learnt after the use of the intervention. According to the qualitative findings, the students seem to have positively benefitted from the use of the Frayer's model. The findings from the study are used to develop a teaching framework for effective vocabulary learning.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategies, Frayer's model, graphic organizer, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) based on Frayer's Model to help students develop their vocabulary knowledge. It also examines to investigate students' perceptions of using Frayer's Model to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. Before proceeding further, this chapter gives background information on the role of English language in Jordan, the teaching of English in Jordan, elaboration on the vocabulary knowledge and the importance of VLS. The chapter also sheds light on the issues related to the status of English and how English is taught in Jordan. The statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, the conceptual framework, and the definition of related terms are also presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the five chapters that comprise this thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 The Role of English in Jordan

English is a prestigious language globally and it is considered as a language that can influence an individual's life if one can communicate well in it. The mother tongue of most of the Jordanian students is Arabic language and they learn English in an environment where opportunities to interact with native speakers are limited to speaking to some tourists who visit Jordan (Rabab'ah, 2003). Research scholars (Zughoul, 2003)

argue that high language proficiency in English is not attainable for EFL students in Jordan. Abu Ghazaleh and Hijazi (2011) claim that Jordanian students' English language proficiency is very low.

English is given a lot of importance in Jordan and it plays a significant role in various aspects of the overall development of the country (Drbseh, 2013). In Jordan, English is considered as the lingua franca (Bani-Khaled, 2012) and it is taught in both public and private schools from Grade One to Grade Twelve (Hamdan, 2010). English is the medium of instruction in many universities (Bani-Khaled, 2012) and Jordanians consider knowing English as a sign of prestigious status. For Jordanians, English is the 'Language of future' (Al-Abed Al-Haq and Al-Masaeid, 2009) and the significance of English is apparent in the job advertisements placed in the local newspapers as knowledge of English is a major factor for employability (Hamdan and Abu-Hatab, 2009). Most workers consider high proficiency in English as a better approach for gaining better positions in their professions. Many Jordanians are aware that English will help them in their personal growth, for expanding business at the international level and, in general, for the country's overall development (Drbseh, 2013). Learning English in Jordan is mandatory in the general education system and at the age of six a Jordanian begins to learn English as part of the curriculum (Drbseh, 2013). In their study, Pinon and Haydon (2010) have stated that some of the industries like tourism industry, service industry, IT, maritime and freight, pharmaceutical industry, some government offices, and industries that deal with energy and oil, insist on employing people who can speak English fluently so that trade and business will be successful which will benefit Jordan economically. The role of English is very important and critical for Jordan to develop in all fields.

1.2.2 Teaching English in Jordan

English was the first foreign language to be taught in Jordan due to the influence of the British who ruled Jordan from 1916 to 1946 (Drbseh, 2013). It is taught from the first grade as a foreign language in both public and private schools up to the university level. Many English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers are not well qualified or trained to teach English using proper strategies and they are not fully aware of the learning styles of the students which cause some difficulty in learning English (Abdo and Breen, 2010). Teachers in Jordan often use the native language to explain an English word and this hampers the English language acquisition in students (Nero, 2005). Due to the large number of students from diverse background in the classroom, there is variation in the linguistic competence of English among the students which makes it difficult for the teachers to give individual attention (Yawkey & Minaya-Rowe, 2006). Based on the findings from several related studies (Abdo and Breen, 2010; Drbseh, 2013), it can be concluded that teachers in Jordan struggle to find the suitable teaching methods to be used with their students in classes.

In Jordan, there seems to be a lack of English language teaching methods that can be useful and effective to teach various elements of the language, such as the teaching of reading, vocabulary, writing and listening. Hence, the present study aims to propose an alternative vocabulary teaching method that is developed according to Frayer's Model. The method is proposed to assist vocabulary teaching and enhance reading and understanding of new English words.

1.2.3 Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge

Teaching English language involves teaching four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading is an important skill as it helps in improving students'

language proficiency and understanding. Students of Jordan have very poor reading skills which need to be improved (Al Jamal et al., 2013). Reading comprehension is the result of the reader's interaction with the text (Davey and Miller, 1990; Pulido and Hambrick, 2008), and it helps in bettering the reading skills (Stoller et al., 2013). The reader retains the comprehended information in the mind, but studies show that Jordanian EFL students have difficulties in reading (Al-Qatawneh 2005; Al-Sobh, and Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2012). Elder and Paul (2004, p. 1) state that, "a typical college student is unable to deeply comprehend what he or she reads. Most students have few if any intellectual tools that would enable them to read deeply and then apply what they have read".

A number of studies show that the Jordanian students have to improve their reading skills because this will help them comprehend the text better. Al Jamal et al.'s (2013) study assessed the level of reading comprehension proficiency of EFL students who capacity to identify the main idea in a paragraph. This study also examined the comprehension instructions that the teachers gave the students. The study tested 649 participants who were 10th graders whose reading comprehension was tested and 15 teachers who participated were observed for the manner in which the instructions were delivered. The results showed that the students had moderate reading comprehension proficiency level and teachers assessed and evaluated the comprehension of the students. The researchers recommended a number of changes in the textbook structure and the study recommended the teachers to give instructions for comprehension strategies.

Al Odwan's (2012) study examined the effect of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) using cooperative learning method among the Secondary stage students at a number of public schools in Amman. The study consisted of 42 participants of which 22 were part of the experimental group and 20 comprised the control group. The strategy used on the experimental group in this study was direct reading thinking activity while

the control group was taught using a traditional strategy. The experimental group was better at comprehension when compared to the control group in a comprehension test conducted by the researcher. The present study is different from Al odwan's study as this study is conducted on university level students.

Research shows that reading comprehension can be considerably improved using the **Know, Want and Learn (KWL)** strategy (Hamdan, 2014). The study conducted by Hamdan (2014) involved 50 participants: 25 were from a public and the rest were from a private school in Amman – Jordan. The participants were tenth grade male students and they were divided into two groups; namely, control and experimental groups. Twenty five private school students were part of the control group and public school students represented the experimental group. Public school students were taught using the KWL-Plus strategy while the private school students were taught using the conventional methods. During the reading comprehension test conducted at the end of thirteen weeks training, the experimental group scored better than the control group proving that strategies effectively improve the reading comprehension. Once again, Hamdan's study is different from the present study in terms of the level of the students and also the duration of the intervention.

Research has shown the important role of lexis in foreign language learning or second language learning and many theoretical and empirical studies (Alderson, 2000; Joshi & Aaron, 2000; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Pressley, 2000; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008) have indicated the close link between vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Reading helps in vocabulary acquisition and knowledge that help in understanding the given text. Research shows that vocabulary difficulty influences the comprehension of a passage; actions taken to improve vocabulary knowledge establish the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Anderson & Freebody,

1981). Hancock (1998) states that “comprehension involves understanding the vocabulary, seeing relationships among words and concepts, organizing ideas, recognizing the author’s purpose, evaluating the context, and making judgments” (p. 69).

Among many factors that affect reading comprehension the most significant factor is the ability to understand the text. Words are the fundamental part of any language and for comprehending a passage vocabulary knowledge is essential. The misunderstanding of words given in the text hinders reading comprehension (Nation, 2001). Vocabulary knowledge aids in making a mental representation of the text apart from understanding the meaning of the text, and so learners must be able to recognize words efficiently (Alderson, 2000; Adams, 2004). Stahl (2003) affirms that text comprehension is influenced by word difficulty and the difficulty level is directly proportional to the amount of unknown vocabulary the reader encounters in a text.

Research proves the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension is very strong. Baker, Simmons, and Kame'enui (1988, para.1) state that "The relation between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge is strong and unequivocal. Although the causal direction of the relation is not understood clearly, there is evidence that the relationship is largely reciprocal."

By increasing vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension skills can be improved. Berg, Cressman and Pfanz’s (1988) used ‘improving Reading Comprehension through Vocabulary’ and emphasized the importance of vocabulary for successful reading comprehension. It has been justified that reading vocabulary positively correlate with reading comprehension more than with oral vocabulary (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992). Various aspects of vocabulary learning strategies are highlighted by researchers (Nation, 1990; Laufer, 2009). The vocabulary size of a learner correlates with reading comprehension (Gu, 1999).

With clear instructions, vocabulary development improves reading comprehension (Stahl, 1999). To teach learners reading vocabulary is a basic component of reading comprehension and so it is very important to give instructions that will help the learners understand the text better. Research literature on the relation between word knowledge and reading comprehension shows that students will not be able to comprehend the text they read if they do not improve their vocabulary knowledge in a systematic and steady manner (Chall & Jacobs, 2003)

Vocabulary instructions must consist of both direct and indirect methods of teaching as students cannot be taught all the vocabulary they need to learn. In direct instruction method specific words are taught and research has proved that in a year a student can be taught around 400 words (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002) and word analysis for root and affixes can be taught in this system. This suggests that students need more exposure to new words for which indirect method of teaching must be followed and students will be able to use the words learnt in this manner to use them in specific contexts (Baumann, Kame'enui & Ash, 2003). Large word knowledge will help students to comprehend words better based on the context.

1.2.4 Vocabulary Knowledge and Vocabulary Teaching in Jordan

Vocabulary knowledge is an important factor contributing to successful comprehension of reading. Vocabulary knowledge is best defined as the ability to apply the printed form of a word to its contextual meaning. According to Steven Stahl (2005), vocabulary knowledge refers to knowledge of a word that not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world. In Jordan, vocabulary teaching is still confined to the four walls of a language classroom. Teachers in the urban schools in Jordan follow the traditional teaching methods that are teacher-centric; students are seated

in rows which does not give the teacher the opportunity to move around and interact with the students (Hashisho, 2010). Zughoul (2003) has noted that Arab countries need English to communicate with the world, for education, technology and general development of them. With respect to Jordan, Zughoul (2003) suggests that old methods of teaching must be altered so that students will have self-confidence to learn the language.

In the public schools in Jordan, teaching activities in a classroom mainly consists of copying from the blackboard, listening to teachers and writing notes for all the subjects including English. Hashisho (2010) observed that in the primary classes from Grade 1 to Grade 3 teachers taught vocabulary by writing the words and their meanings on the board and students were required to copy them so that they could memorize them. In this study, it was observed that teachers did not repeatedly use the lexical items taught since recycling words would help strengthen the vocabulary knowledge of the students.

In spite of the various changes the government has brought about in teaching English as a foreign language, there are still many schools whose teaching methods have to change to meet the students' needs for knowledge. EFL teachers in Jordan use Arabic to teach the meanings of difficult words and vocabulary items are taught in isolation not within a context (Rababah, 2003). Students who graduate from public schools in Jordan have a modest set of vocabulary and it becomes difficult for them to comprehend the contents of the English literature curriculum (Manasrah & Al-Khawaldeh, 2014). So, the need to teach vocabulary and make students use them is very crucial from the primary level of education. Al Masri and Al Najjar (2014) argue that vocabulary development can be achieved through word games at the primary level and this leads to a significant increase in the vocabulary knowledge among the participants of the experimental group.

1.3 Jordan's Educational System

According to the World Data on Education (International Bureau of Education, 2010/11), "The educational system in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan is based on aspirations of freedom, justice, human and economic development to achieve a significant level of productivity and modernization". The country's vision is to provide all people with long term learning experiences that are relevant to their present and future needs so that the country's economic growth is at par with the rest of the world. The quality of a good educational system is reflected in the high ethical values maintained, promotion of excellence and focus on the needs of the learner. The education in Jordan helps in improving the country's wealth in a global knowledge economy by following high standards and being highly competitive (Robertson, 2005).

1.3.1 The History of English Language Teaching in Jordan

Jordan is a country in the Middle East and the other name for Jordan is 'The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan' which is an independent Arab Country. The country got its independence in 1946 from the British administration and it became a hereditary constitutional monarchy. The official religion of Jordan is Islam and the official language is Arabic.

English was introduced in Jordan in the 1920s but by mid 1920s Jordanians were introduced to the English language because of British colonization (Bader, 1995). In this country, English has a prominent position and it is a part of the curricula both at the school level as well as university level. The Ministry of Education has developed a curriculum framework from kindergarten to secondary school level which includes English; English is taught in Jordan from the first grade and continue till the 12th grade- 4hours a week, (The Ministry of Education, 2008). As cited in Al-Jarah et al. (2015), Ababneh (2007)

was the first and only researcher to evaluate Jordan Opportunities 1 and he has reasoned out that Jordan Opportunities was used to level the differences that occurred between using various publications used earlier for different classes. For example, Progress in English through Relevant Activities for Jordan (PETRA) was used to teach fifth through tenth grades, AMRA was used for eleventh and twelfth grades, and Action Pack was commonly used to teach first through ninth grades and the pedagogy in all these were having some differences. Currently, only ActionPack and Jordan Opportunities textbooks are in use throughout the basic and secondary stages in Jordanian public schools (Al-Jarah et al. (2015)). From 1972 there has been a conscious effort from the Ministry of Education to improve the English curriculum from primary to high school stage for students to be proficient in English (International Bureau of Education, 2010/11). Al-Kataybeh and Al-Shourafa (2011) have observed that many countries are looking into the global importance of English and there is a lot of research taking place in many countries including Jordan. In all these countries, the government recognizes the importance of teaching English and so from the primary level at school it is taught in all the stages as a compulsory subject.

According to Kachru (1992), English around the world can be divided into three types and this is represented in Kachru's model in the form of three circles. The inner circle is related to countries in which English is the mother tongue; the outer circle involves countries in which English is a second language; and the expanding circle includes countries in which English is a foreign language. According to this model, Jordan comes under the expanding circle. Most job opportunities in Jordan expect the employee to be proficient in English. In Jordan, English is given a lot of importance by the Ministry of Education both in case of teaching and the curriculum (Jafar, 2008). Among all the Arab countries, the best English departments can be found only in

Jordanians' universities (Hazaymeh, 2004). Therefore, a lot of prominence is given to teach English so as to give the students an opportunity to communicate well in formal and informal situations (Jafar, 2008).

Keeping in mind the professional needs, English is taught to all students for better communication in a language that is global in nature. English is also taught for academic reasons as professional courses like Engineering, medicine, law etc. are taught in English, so that there are equal opportunities for the students who pass out in the world arena. Thus, the main purpose for teaching English in Jordan is to empower the students both academically and professionally.

1.3.2 English in the Primary and Secondary Schools in Jordan

English is taught as a foreign language in Jordanian schools from Grade 1 to Grade 12. A student is taught English from the age of 6. The schools usually teach the students English as a subject where every week there are four sessions. Each session is of 45-minute duration in case of Grade 1 to Grade 3. For all other classes, English is taught for five sessions every week and each session is of 45-minute duration (Al-Omari, Smadi, & Bataineh, 2015). The MOE has made a number of changes in the syllabus in order to follow the global standards.

To teach the English language for both the Primary and the Secondary schools in the Jordanian governmental schools, the Ministry of Education has approved the ActionPack series 1 to 12. This series is well-designed with a lot of emphasis on grammar and oral fluency. The book also focuses on vocabulary though there should be more variety of materials for language development especially from Grades 8 to 12 (Noursi, 2005). The books follow a topic-based approach that helps in developing functional language and helps the students to use their multiple intelligences when they are working

on the activities given for each lesson in their textbooks (Al-Omari, Smadi, & Bataineh, 2015).

1.3.3 English in the Higher Education in Jordan

In the last few decades, the Ministry of Higher Education has made significant changes in the EFL teaching system in Jordanian universities (Alzboon, 2013) and a significant change is the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching also called as CLT (Assassfeh et al., 2012). In this approach, students are given an opportunity to reflect, practice and use approaches that are very effective for learning the language. Universities are given the liberty to use any textbook that follows this system and there are a few textbooks that offer comprehensive syllabus to help students develop their language especially grammar and pronunciation.

In some of the Jordanian universities, the instructors or teachers do not follow the CLT method of teaching as they have not been given sufficient training and the negative attitude of the teachers towards implementation of CLT is due to limited resources and time available for them to practice it (Assassfeh et al., 2012). Thus, the researcher feels it is necessary to highlight the fundamental importance of CLT approach in language teaching generally and, specifically, to enhance vocabulary learning among students in Jordanian universities in order to align the globally influenced advancement in language teaching and learning practices. The following section will discuss the fundamental background of English teaching practice in Al-Karak University College.

1.3.4 English in Al-Karak University College

History

In 1979, the Ministry of Education founded Al-Karak College as an Institute for Teachers. Once the trainees completed their course in teachers training, they were given a diploma from this college, which was a community college. In 1987, the government founded the Ministry of Higher Education and all community colleges were affiliated to the ministry, including Al-Karak College. The community colleges were set up to offer the students with majors in the Higher education and to help the community progress. Al-Balqa' Applied University (BAU) was established in 1997, as a university providing education in all levels of Bachelor and Associate degree in applied education. Al-Balqa' Applied University, which is a public university supervises all the community colleges, including Al-Karak College. There has been constant up gradation of staff and facilities so that the college can cater to the needs of the students and the community as well. At the undergraduate level, Bachelor of Arts (B.A), the college has increased the number of majors in the year 2006/2007. The main objective of Al-Karak College is to serve the Jordanian community through scientific approach (Al-Karak University College, 2015).

The English requirements at Al-Karak University College are English 099, English 101, and English 102 and all students must pass these courses. These courses are remedial courses aiming at assisting students to obtain the English fundamental skills that help to improve their proficiency and knowledge in the given field. In order to acquire these goals, the courses concentrate on improving the learner's grammar and vocabulary which can be invigorated through various connection skills. For instance, speaking and making conversations are connected to some social incidents related to their daily life.