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Using Facebook Stories to Improve Vocabulary Learning among Year 4 Pupils in Rural School

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Abstract

Vocabulary is the fundamental aspect of learning a language. Language learners must acquire vast vocabulary knowledge to master the four basic skills of a language which are; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Nonetheless, lack of vocabulary repertoire is a prevalent issue among young learners in ESL Malaysian primary classrooms. This study aimed to improve the vocabulary learning among primary school pupils in a rural setting. This action research had been conducted on eight Year 4 pupils using Facebook Stories as the digital intervention in facilitating the pupils to learn about vocabulary. The data collection methods used by the researcher were pre and post-test, observations and semi-structured interview. Observation was carried out to analyse the pupils' behaviours in classroom. Field notes, interview transcript and pupils' pre- and post-test results were the primary sources to gain knowledge and insight on the effectiveness of using Facebook Stories. The findings of this study shown that pupils' vocabulary learning and the researcher's vocabulary teaching technique was improved with the help of Facebook Stories.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Learning, Facebook Stories, Year 4 Pupils, ESL

Introduction

Vocabulary is often referred to as the core foundation of a language. Without acquiring vocabulary, the mastery of other language skills is impossible. In Malaysia's education context, not all students were able to comprehend the meaning of new words and remember them, according to Ab Dollah and Shah's (2016) study. Although steps have been taken in the past year to address this issue, it still appears to be a barrier for students who learn English as a second language in their early years. It is imperative that both the teacher and the students are aware of how much vocabulary knowledge each student is acquiring. In another local research, the students were found to have few opportunities to learn English in a primary level setting (Razali et al., 2017), which limited their ability to learn vocabulary and caused them to rely more on translation. Additionally, students often memorise English words by heart without receiving any non-verbal cues, a method known as rote memorization. Due to this particular issue, the students were unable to build a vocabulary bank from which they could draw words to naively express this meaning or concept. Generally, the lack of opportunities to practise English and the use of rote memorisation techniques in vocabulary acquisition prevent students from learning the English language effectively. As a

consequence, they have trouble remembering and retrieving the words they have learned. Thus, it is important to establish the fundamental language skills in primary schools, such as vocabulary development as it will largely affect the other major language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

This action research was carried out based on the ground that the researcher had discovered a significant problem with ESL pupils' vocabulary knowledge. As for the researcher's teaching experience, the researcher discovered that pupils have very poor vocabulary acquisition as they have low interest in learning the language. Initial data collection such as behavioural observation checklist showed that the majority of the pupils were not motivated to learn about the language in the classroom. A vocabulary test was conducted as a diagnostic test to assess pupils' level of vocabulary knowledge in a particular topic and eight out of nine pupils showed below and average and weak proficiency level. Weak foundation in the language makes it very difficult to teach other language skills. Furthermore, the pupils in the rural area did not regard English as an important subject to learn as they are not fully exposed to the importance of learning English at a global level. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is the lack of vocabulary learning among the Year 4 pupils in a rural primary school. The researcher highlighted the lack of vocabulary repertoire that hinder English Language learning among Year 4 pupils to take place as the root problem. If this particular problem persists, the pupils will encounter more difficulties in mastering the English Language in higher levels of education due to their poor vocabulary. The researcher also discovered that the pupils in the rural area are not exposed to the advanced teaching tools that utilise technology as their urban peers. Thus, the significance of this study is to expose pupils in the rural area to utilise the use of digital intervention (Facebook Stories) to improve their vocabulary learning. This research benefits primary school children especially Year 4 pupils in learning new vocabularies in a fun and innovative approach.

The aim of this research is to improve the vocabulary learning among Year 4 pupils in a rural school using Facebook Stories as the intervention. In general, even though they are exposed to previously learned vocabularies, the majority of pupils still struggle to express themselves when speaking with others as they lack a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils frequently forget things, so it is difficult for them to master the English language. In light of this, the researcher believed that using fun, interactive teaching products with ICT integration will contribute to filling in the knowledge gap on primary school students' English vocabulary knowledge. It is essential for teachers to plan and create a powerful teaching tool that can maximise vocabulary knowledge gains while also motivating students to learn the second language. Therefore, this study explored the rate of vocabulary learning improvement among Year 4 pupils by utilising Facebook Stories and pupils' perceptions on using this digital intervention in learning new vocabularies.

Research Questions

This study is designed to examine the following research questions

1. How does Facebook Stories help Year 4 pupils to improve their vocabulary learning?
2. What are pupils' perceptions on learning vocabulary using Facebook Stories?

Literature Review

Vocabulary

Hornby (1995) provided a simple definition of vocabulary as a list that is often the one that comes with a textbook which is defined as a list of all the words that are used in a language.

The second explanation of vocabulary is provided by Hatch and Brown (1995), who asserted that it refers to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that speakers of that language may use. According to Brown (2001), lexical forms play a crucial part in contextualised, meaningful language, while vocabulary words are seen as a tedious list that students must define and memorise. Nation in Schmitt (2000) also classified the term vocabulary as a list of the various types of knowledge a person must have in order to understand a word, including the word's meaning, written form, spoken form, grammatical behaviour, collocations, register, association, and frequency. Generally, these authors define vocabulary as a list of words. From these claims, it can be deduced that vocabulary is a list of words as a fundamental component of language proficiency that has a form or expression and contains aspects, such as meaning, use of word, and form (pronunciation and spelling). Another expert defines vocabulary as a strong anchor that holds stories, ideas, and content together and facilitates children's comprehension (Rupley et al., 1998). Renandya and Richards (2002) claimed that vocabulary is an essential component of language proficiency and plays a significant role in how students speak, listen, read, and write. Without a large vocabulary and strategies for growing it, students frequently fall short of their potential and may give up trying to take advantage of the many opportunities that are available to them to learn a language, such as listening to the radio or a native speaker, using the language in various contexts in everyday situations.

Nation (2001) explained how students should learn a word by saying it is better to focus vocabulary learning on more specialised areas once students have mastered the 2000–3000 words in English that are generally useful. As a result, students must learn various vocabulary categories, teaching methods, and specific vocabulary-building techniques. The foundational knowledge of a language that determines a learner's level of speaking, listening, reading, and writing is their vocabulary. Students can easily understand the lesson that is being taught by the teacher by mastering vocabulary. According to Renandya and Richards (2002), student have no trouble understanding meaning and context if they are able to master the foundation of vocabulary. These definitions provided by the language experts demonstrate the importance of vocabulary in learning English.

Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning requires a process. The learner must be in the proper state of mastering vocabulary in order to make it an effective process. The situation ought to aid students in acquiring a sufficient number of vocabulary words for use in both language comprehension and language production (Thornbury, 2002). According to Brown and Payne in Hatch and Brown (1995), there are five steps that students must take in order to learn vocabulary. The five are: (1) having sources for learning new words, (2) gaining a clear mental image, (3) understanding the new words' meanings, (4) creating a solid memory association between the word's forms and meaning, and (5) using the words.

Additionally, some important guidelines are given to aid students acquire new vocabularies. First and foremost, the students' reading habits come first. More reading by students will definitely increase their vocabulary. The biggest factor in a student's vocabulary development is reading. Students' vocabulary will grow as a result of reading a variety of texts because they will encounter more new words. Second, students' propensity to look up words that they have never heard of before. The habit of being curious about new words must be formed in students. They will encounter new words they have never heard before as they read various texts. Then, they must consult a dictionary or consult with a teacher or a friend. Their

vocabulary development may benefit from this habit. These process constructed by the language experts stated the criteria that are crucial for efficient vocabulary learning process.

Facebook Stories as an Intervention in Education

Facebook is one of the most widely used media social tools today and is widely used across the globe. The world has come to accept digital learning, which has long since established itself as a source of knowledge. Due to their portability and accessibility to social media, smart phones are crucial to the success of online education.

On accounts of the unique features of modern smartphones, which have greatly boosted students' creativity and self-access learning, Malik and Asnur (2019) asserted that modern students are aware of the role smartphones play in their digital learning. In three areas—vocabulary, listening comprehension, and writing ability—students who used Facebook for learning outperformed those in the control group, according to research by (Mykytiuk et al., 2020). Due to their ability to increase vocabulary learning and foster an interest in learning a second language, social networking sites are extremely popular with ESL students (Abbas et al., 2019). The positive feedback from the research's teacher participants also led the researchers to conclude that these tools are effective at teaching vocabulary.

The variety of platforms offered by digital media for language learning allows for more spontaneous vocabulary memorization (Haryanto et al., 2019). Digital media's content is thus seen as endless and diverse. The use of Facebook as a digital learning tool has had a significant positive impact on users' language learning, vocabulary growth, and engagement in the education process (Alharthi et al., 2020). Researchers claimed that students' positive attitudes toward learning have been aided by Facebook's interactive features and content, which allow students to converse whenever they want and at their own pace.

Integration of ICT in Education

ICT is being used more and more successfully in instruction, learning, and assessment. ICT is thought to be a strong tool for transforming and reforming education. ICT can enhance educational quality and connect lessons to real-world situations when used properly, according to a number of earlier studies (Lowther et al., 2008; Weert and Tatnall, 2005). According to Brush et al (2008), ICT is used as a tool for students to find out about topics for learning, solve issues, and offer solutions to issues in the learning process. While involving students in ICT applications, ICT facilitates knowledge acquisition and aids in the comprehension of academic concepts.

According to Koc (2005), students can collaborate, share, and communicate using ICT anytime, anywhere. They might have the chance to develop concepts, explore ideas, and analyse issues by assessing ICT-based learning options further. Along with learning together, in order to express themselves and reflect on what they have learned, students also exchange a variety of learning experiences.

ICT offers additional creative answers to various learning-related questions. E-books, for instance, are frequently used during reading aloud exercises in reading classes. Students can easily access all different types of texts on iPads, laptops, PDAs, computers or all acceptable forms of electronic devices from basic to advanced levels. More specifically, these e-books might include reading software that includes a reading-aloud interface, activities for enhancing vocabulary, games for improving reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, and more. ICT therefore includes applications that have been specifically created

to offer creative solutions to a range of learning needs. These authors highlight the importance of ICT integration in education.

In conclusion, the integration of ICT in improving vocabulary learning especially in the rural area is not fully explored. Most of the literature review focuses on the use of ICT in urban areas that are equipped with complete facilities. Rural areas are generally known for having limited resources which inhibit the overall integration of ICT in education. Thus, the researcher would like to highlight the research gap found in the previously stated literature reviews which is the rural setting in integrating ICT in education.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher was employing action research as the research design. According to Fraenkel et al (2011), action research is carried out by one or more people or groups with the aim of resolving a problem or gathering data to guide local practice. Action researchers typically aim to address a current issue that they face on a daily basis. According to Kemmis (1994), as cited in Creswell (2008), action researchers are more interested in examining their own practises than other people's practises when they conduct a study. Action researchers, in this sense, engage in participatory or self-reflective research by focusing on their own educational practice, school, or a classroom. In this particular study, the researcher was using Facebook Stories as an intervention to improve vocabulary learning among Year 4 pupils.

Research Participants

As for the research participants, purposive sampling was used by the researcher as the focus was Year 4 pupils in the researcher's own school. The target population of this action research is the primary school pupils in a rural school in Sarawak. The researcher was focusing on pupils with low proficiency from Year 4 and eight research participants were chosen for this study.

Research Instrument

As for the data collection procedure, the researcher utilised three methods which are interview, observation and pre and post-test. Creswell (2012) identified a number of advantages of using observation as a method of data collection, including the capacity to record information in context, watch actual behaviours, and watch individuals who have difficulty expressing their thoughts. In order to document the pupils' behaviour and progress in vocabulary lessons, the researcher employed participant observation in behavioural observation checklists and observation field notes. Observation can track and record a pupil's progress in learning vocabulary.

Interviews are discussions in which the researcher and participants converse and the researcher asks the participants' questions. The researcher interviewed the participants using a semi-structured format. Before the interview starts, the researcher created a set of questions for a semi-structured interview. As for the pre and post-test, quantitative data are able to visually illustrate the rate of effectiveness of the intervention, Facebook Stories in improving the pupils' vocabulary learning.

Data Analysis Procedure

As for the pre and post-tests, the marks obtained by the eight participants were presented as quantitative information and displayed as charts. The qualitative data were presented by the

researcher in the form of interview transcripts and reflective journal entries. A thematic analysis was implemented by the researcher to analyse the data transcripts and journal entries. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are two types of theme analysis: top-down or theoretical, which is motivated by the specific research question(s) and/or the analyst's focus, and bottom-up or inductive, which is more motivated by the data itself. As the study was driven by research question, top-down or theoretical method was employed by the researcher.

Six stages provided by Braun & Clarke (2006), started with familiarising the data obtained where the researcher read the interview transcripts multiple times to detect any repeating phrases. Second stage was generating initial codes, as the participants verbally responded with phrases or words such as eager, excited, like it very much, motivated, love it, the code "positive responses" was formed. Next stage was searching for the suitable themes. The researcher constructed motivation in learning and preferred vocabulary learning strategy as the two main themes after collecting coded data and detecting similar phrases in the data. Fifth stage involved reviewing the theme obtained in order to make sure the themes were quite similar to the study's aim. Last stage was writing a report and analysed the data accordingly.

Findings and Discussion

To investigate the outcomes of using the intervention, Facebook Stories in improving Year 4 pupils' vocabulary learning, Pre and Post-tests were administered upon the research participants. Figure 1 below shows the comparison marks between the two tests.

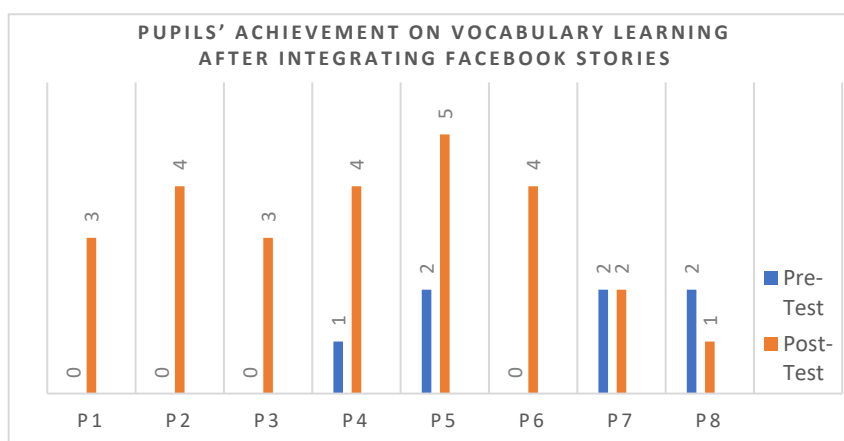


Figure 1: Comparison between Pre and Post-test results

As Figure 1 shows, Participant 1 and Participant 3 initially got zero (0) during the Pre-test and both successfully scored three (3) marks out of five (5) marks in the Post-test. On the other hand, Participant 2 and Participant 6 whom obtained the same score of zero (0) in the initial test drastically improved in the Post-test where both of them scored 4 (four) marks. Participant 4 also portrayed an increase in her performance from one (1) mark to four (4) marks in the Post-test after the intervention of Facebook Stories. The only participant that scored full marks of 5 in the Post-test was Participant 5 and she was the most successful learner among the research participants. The vocabulary learning achievement of one participant (Participant 7) did not significantly correlate with the use of Facebook Stories

where he managed to maintain his score of two (2) marks. He claimed that his final result was affected by anxiety that required him to complete the quiz in a short amount of time. One of the participants (Participant 8) 's score decreased by 1 mark. She was the least successful pupil among the eight participants.

Overall, with six participants portraying improvement in their Post-test results, it was statistically proven that the majority of them successfully gained more vocabulary knowledge after the intervention. Through the results shown in Figure 1, this had clearly established the fact that Facebook Stories usage in the classroom had improved Year 4 pupils' vocabulary learning. This outcome is consistent with findings from past researches by Brush et al (2008); Weert & Tatnall (2005) which integrated ICT as an alternative learning tool in the classroom.

Based on the observation field notes and interview transcripts, there are two main themes that emerged in the findings. In general, vocabulary learning achievement improved with Facebook Stories.

In the observation field notes done by the researcher, the students' willingness to learn was evident through the use of Facebook Stories to learn new vocabulary. They gave excellent answers to questions during the session and had no problems about bringing up any relevant topics. Throughout the whole lesson, the interactive activities kept the students engaged and interested. Given that the emphasis is more on teacher-centered learning in traditional vocabulary lessons, the students frequently appeared to be very bored. With students participating as much as possible in the teaching and learning process, Facebook Stories placed more of an emphasis on student-centered learning.

In the interview transcripts, the participants in general showed enthusiasm in using Facebook Stories in the classroom. Majority of them claimed that they learned new vocabularies better by using the intervention in English classes. Overall, from observation and interview, the pupils' perceptions on using Facebook Stories were all positive which also proven that the intervention is a success in improving vocabulary learning among Year 4 pupils. The two main themes which are; motivation in learning and preferred vocabulary learning strategy were selected due to recurring phrases or words in the transcripts and field notes.

Table 1

Themes derived from Interview Transcripts and Observation Field Notes

Theme	Excerpts from Interview Transcripts and Observation Field Notes
Motivation in learning	<p>“Facebook Stories is so colourful, I am very excited to play with it!” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“Can we use this again for our next class, Miss? I can’t wait!” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“I love the moving pictures, is that your voice in the audio Miss? (Participant 7)</p> <p>“I also have Facebook Miss, can we do this together in the class?” (Participant 3)</p> <p>...Participant 8 was quiet in the previous English classes, but after a few interventions with Facebook Stories, she seemed very eager to learn when it is used in the class.</p> <p>...Participant 5 is the most successful learner among the participants, he was independent learner before and always finish any work independently given by the teacher before his peers, but after using Facebook Stories, he is motivated to collaborate with the other participants and even helped the least successful one.</p> <p>Participant 1 showed full concentration in the classroom and followed every instructions closely.</p> <p>Participant 2 requested to play with Facebook Stories after the class even though it was the same topic over and over again.</p> <p>Participant 3 was so excited that he wanted to share the Facebook Stories online. (Observation field notes)</p>
Preferred vocabulary learning strategy	<p>“ I remember the words better with the pictures and sound, Miss” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“ I love using this to learn vocabulary, I love it so much!” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“ I can see the pictures moving, so I understand what are they doing” (Participant 6)</p> <p>...Participant 5 was able to answer most of the questions correctly with ease during the pre-tests, she even asked for more questions... (Observation field notes)</p>

As per earlier studies, the purpose of this study is to determine whether Facebook stories may help pupils in rural schools learn more vocabulary. Modern students, according to Malik and Asnur (2019), are aware of the part cellphones play in their digital learning. Even though the setting is in a rural school, they are still exposed to the use of technology but not as much as their urban peers. The findings showed that they were very eager to use familiar social media in the classroom. The participants were very excited in using interactive technology as compared to the traditional chalk and talk or pencil and paper method. With majority of them (6 out of 8 participants) demonstrated improvements in the Pre-test, it showed that Facebook Stories was able to solve the problems identified in vocabulary learning.

Social networking websites are very well-liked by ESL students since they can help them learn more vocabulary and spark an interest in studying a second language (Abbas et al., 2019). Facebook Stories is built with multiples learning elements such as moving images (Gifs), audio,

and interesting backgrounds which made it visually attractive to the young children especially. The range of platforms provided by digital media for language acquisition enables greater impromptu memorising of vocabulary (Haryanto et al., 2019). The findings proved that the pupils loved the visual aspect of this intervention which made it more appealing to the young children.

Facebook's use as a digital learning tool has significantly improved users' language acquisition, vocabulary expansion, and involvement in the learning process (Alharthi et al., 2020). From the data obtained, the researcher asserted that Facebook's interactive features and content, which enable students to speak whenever they want and at their own pace, have contributed to students' positive attitudes about learning, which is line with Koc (2005) that stated that students can use ICT at any time and any place to cooperate, share, and communicate. By exploring more ICT-based learning possibilities, they might have the possibility to build concepts, explore ideas, and analyse problems. Positive attitudes such as quiet pupil was enthusiastic in learning the language during the intervention, the most successful learners were helping the least successful pupils in achieving the learning objectives and independent learner was able to collaborate well with their peers were the outcomes of using Facebook Stories as an educational intervention in vocabulary learning.

Conclusion

The researcher can draw the conclusion that her research was successful in enhancing Year 4 students' vocabulary learning through the use of Facebook Stories based on the findings. Prior to the intervention, the participants had difficulties in remembering English vocabularies. With little regard for language accuracy, participants frequently write incoherently on the English words or phrases. Following Facebook Stories intervention, the majority of the participants displayed progress by performing better and earning higher marks on the Post-test.

It is clear that the use of Facebook Stories undoubtedly aided the students in developing a thorough comprehension of the idea of vocabulary learning. Vocabulary classes were still using the traditional approach which did not incorporate critical and creative thinking; as a result, teachers frequently employ a routine style of instruction. ESL teachers can employ Facebook Stories as a teaching alternative in solving their pupils' difficulties in learning vocabulary; especially for weak pupils.

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