

TASK-BASED LEARNING AND ITS EFFECT ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This study explains how Task-Based Learning (TBL) helps ESL learners improve their vocabulary. Many students find it difficult to remember new words when they only study word lists. TBL gives learners real tasks where they must use new vocabulary to communicate. In this study, one group learned vocabulary through TBL activities, and another group learned with traditional exercises. After eight weeks, the TBL group learned more words and remembered them better. They also said that learning with tasks was more interesting and made them more confident. The results show that TBL is a useful way to help students learn and use new vocabulary.

Keywords: *Task-Based Learning; vocabulary learning; ESL learners; language tasks; word retention.*

Аннотация: В этом исследовании объясняется, как обучение на основе заданий (TBL) помогает студентам ESL лучше учить словарный запас. Многим студентам трудно запоминать новые слова, если они только учат списки слов. TBL дает им реальные задания, где нужно использовать новые слова для общения. В исследовании одна группа учила слова с помощью TBL, а другая — через обычные упражнения. Через восемь недель группа TBL выучила больше слов и запомнила их лучше. Студенты также сказали, что задания были интереснее и давали больше уверенности. Результаты показывают, что TBL — полезный метод для изучения новых слов.

Ключевые слова: TBL; изучение слов; студенты ESL; языковые задания; запоминание слов.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot Task-Based Learning (TBL) usulining ESL o'quvchilarida lug'at boyligini oshirishga qanday yordam berishini tushuntiradi. Ko'p o'quvchilar yangi so'zlarni eslab qolishda qiynaladi, ayniqsa faqat so'z ro'yxatlarini yodlaganda. TBL esa o'quvchilarga yangi so'zlarni haqiqiy vazifalarda ishlatish

imkonini beradi. Tadqiqotda bir guruh soʻzlarni TBL orqali, ikkinchi guruh esa anʼanaviy mashqlar orqali oʻrgandi. Sakkiz haftadan soʻng, TBL guruhi koʻproq soʻz oʻrgandi va ularni yaxshiroq eslab qoldi. Ular vazifalar orqali oʻrganish qiziqarliroq va ishonchliroq boʻlganini aytdi. Natijalar TBL usuli yangi soʻzlarni oʻrganish uchun foydali ekanini koʻrsatadi.

Kalit soʻzlar: *Task-Based Learning; soʻz oʻrganish; ESL oʻquvchilari; til vazifalari; soʻzlarni eslab qolish.*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the most important parts of learning a new language. Without enough words, students cannot speak, read, or write well. Many ESL learners say that vocabulary is their biggest problem. A study by Nation (2013) shows that an English learner needs at least 2,000–3,000 common words just to communicate in daily life, but most students in ESL classrooms know only 1,000–1,500 words. This means they cannot understand many simple texts or express their ideas clearly. Traditional vocabulary learning, such as memorizing word lists, often does not help students remember new words for a long time. Research from Brown (2014) shows that learners forget up to 70% of new words after one week if they only study lists without using the words in real communication.

Task-Based Learning (TBL) is a method that helps students learn vocabulary by using the language to complete real tasks. For example, students may plan a trip, solve a problem, or describe pictures. In these activities, they must use new words naturally. Studies show that TBL increases motivation and improves vocabulary retention. Lambert (2022) found that students who used TBL remembered more than twice as many words compared to students who studied from word lists. Because many ESL learners struggle with vocabulary, this study explores how TBL can help them learn and remember new words better. It compares students who learn vocabulary through tasks with students who learn vocabulary using traditional exercises.

Methods

This study was done with 36 seventh-grade students from a public middle school. All students were 12–13 years old, and they had been learning English for about 4 years. The research lasted for eight weeks during the school's regular English lessons. Before the study started, the students took a simple Vocabulary Levels Test based on Nation (2013). Their average score was 850 words, which is normal for this age group according to Cambridge Assessment (2021).

The students were divided into two groups of 18 students each. The first group was the Task-Based Learning (TBL) group. This group learned new words through weekly tasks. The tasks were designed to be fun and suitable for 7th graders. Some examples include creating a class schedule, planning a birthday party, describing pictures, completing a treasure-hunt task, and making a simple dialogue. Each week, the TBL group learned 8–10 new vocabulary items, and they had to use the words inside the task, not just memorize them. The second group was the traditional learning group, which learned vocabulary through normal classroom methods. They used word lists, translations, gap-fill exercises, and matching tasks. They studied the same 8–10 new words each week but did not use them in communication or group tasks.

Both groups had three English lessons per week, and each lesson lasted 45 minutes, which is the standard lesson time in many middle schools. The same English teacher taught both groups to make the comparison fair. The teacher used vocabulary from the school's official 7th-grade English textbook so that the lessons matched the national curriculum. At the end of the eight weeks, both groups took the same vocabulary test again to see how many new words they had learned. One week after the post-test, the students took a short retention test to check how many words they still remembered. Research shows that younger learners forget new words quickly if they do not use them actively (Brown, 2014), so this extra test helped measure real learning. Students also wrote short comments about how they felt during the study. They answered simple questions such as: “Was this method easy?”, “Did you enjoy learning?”, and “Did you remember the words better?” These comments helped the researcher understand how the students experienced each learning method.

Results

The results of the study showed a clear difference between the two groups of seventh-grade students. The group that learned vocabulary through Task-Based Learning (TBL) improved much more than the group that learned vocabulary through traditional classroom methods. After eight weeks, the TBL group learned an average of 42 new words. The traditional group learned an average of 18 new words. This means that the TBL group learned more than twice as many words as the traditional group. The TBL group also remembered more of the words during the follow-up retention test. One week after the post-test, the TBL group remembered about 72% of the new words. The traditional group remembered only about 39%. This shows that students who used words in real tasks could keep the words in their memory for a longer time.

Students' comments supported the test results. Many students in the TBL group said that learning with tasks was more enjoyable and helped them remember the words because they used them while talking, planning, and working in groups. They also said they felt more confident using English during the tasks. Students in the traditional group said it was difficult to remember the word lists, and they sometimes forgot the meanings quickly. The test scores and student reflections together show that Task-Based Learning helped seventh-grade students learn and remember vocabulary more effectively than traditional methods. Using the words in real-life tasks made learning easier, more meaningful, and more enjoyable for the students.

Discussion

The results of the study show that seventh-grade students learned vocabulary better when they used Task-Based Learning (TBL). The students in the TBL group learned more words and remembered them longer because they used the new vocabulary inside real tasks. When students use words in speaking, planning, or group work, the words become more meaningful to them. This helps the brain remember the words more easily. Research also shows that young learners learn faster when they connect new words with real actions and situations, and the results of this study support that idea.

The traditional group did not learn as many words because they mostly memorized word lists and did simple exercises. Many students said that this method was boring and difficult. They often forgot the words because they did not use them in real communication. This matches earlier studies that show that vocabulary learned through memorization often disappears quickly if it is not used in context.

Students in the TBL group also reported higher motivation. They said the tasks were fun, active, and helped them work with classmates. Some students mentioned that the tasks made them feel more confident speaking English, even if they made mistakes. This is important because confidence helps students practice more, and more practice leads to better learning.

Although TBL was more effective, some students said that tasks sometimes took more time and required group cooperation. A few students felt shy speaking in front of others, but this problem decreased over time as they became more comfortable. This shows that TBL requires practice and teacher support, especially at the beginning.

Overall, the discussion suggests that TBL is a strong and effective method for teaching vocabulary to seventh-grade ESL learners. It helps students understand, use, and remember new words better than traditional methods. Using tasks makes learning more meaningful, enjoyable, and active for young learners. At the same time, teachers should guide students and help them work together so that all learners benefit from the tasks.

Conclusion

This study shows that Task-Based Learning (TBL) is a very effective method for helping seventh-grade ESL students learn new vocabulary. The students who learned through tasks improved more than the students who learned through traditional exercises. The TBL group learned more words, remembered them longer, and felt more confident using English. This shows that using vocabulary in real-life tasks helps young learners understand the meaning of words and keep them in their memory. The study also shows that students enjoy learning more when they are active and working together. The tasks made the lessons more interesting and fun, so students were motivated to learn. When students are motivated, they try harder, practice more, and learn faster. Traditional methods, like memorizing word lists, did not give the same level of motivation or long-term learning. However, the study also suggests that teachers play an important role in making TBL successful. Some students needed help working in groups or understanding how to complete the tasks. With the teacher's guidance, the tasks became easier and more enjoyable. This means that TBL works best when teachers support students and create a positive learning environment.

In general, the conclusion of this research is clear: Task-Based Learning helps seventh-grade ESL students learn vocabulary in a more meaningful, enjoyable, and effective way. Future studies can look at how TBL can improve other skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing. Using TBL regularly in middle school classrooms can help young learners develop stronger language skills and feel more confident using English.

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