

USING 'TELEGRAM' IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY AND PRONUNCIATION TO IRAQI EFL LEARNERS

Assist. Prof. Dr. Bushra Ni'ma Rashid

*The University of Baghdad/ College of Education/ Ibn Rushd for Human Sciences
The Department of English*

ABSTRACT

In actual classrooms, students face some difficulties, such as face-to-face interaction due to lack of confidence, preparation and time constraints, while using technological innovations allows students to be creative. Without the risk of being humiliated, such strategy will increase their interest and motivation and provide them with more opportunities to interact and gain feedback. McQuiggan, Kosturko and Sabourin (2015, p.7) state that "mobile technologies offer a new paradigm in connectivity, communication, and collaboration in our everyday lives." One of the most effective applications in electronic learning is "telegram" which is a messaging app that is fast, secure, simple and free. Through telegram, messages, photos, videos and files of any type (doc, zip, mp3, etc.) can be sent easily, and users can create groups up to 5000 students and channels for broadcasting to unlimited audiences.

This study aims to explore how telegram could be used in the teaching and learning process, prove the positive effect of using SMS in vocabulary learning, and measure the effectiveness of using telegram in teaching English pronunciation.

It is hypothesized that: 'The use of "telegram" has effects on learning vocabularies and pronunciation of Iraqi EFL learners.'

A group of postgraduate students, from both genders, were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups. The first group received the material in the classroom, while the other received it on Telegram broadcast channel. After a specific period of time, the two groups underwent a test to measure their improvement.

The significance of this study is to know how to employ social media applications in supporting the learning process.

Key words: Telegram, Teaching English Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Iraqi EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

The traditional classroom learning is known for being ineffective in comparison to electronic learning. In classrooms, students are expected to be fluent from the first days. Teachers normally demand output from students without ensuring they have had enough input. New, technological means were introduced to the teaching and learning process in order to motivate students to be self-learners and to enrich the home learning experiences. Among the advantages of electronic learning is to enable students from different geographical locations to continue their studies.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Learning Vocabulary and Pronunciation

Both vocabulary and pronunciation are vital in learning English as a foreign language. There is an agreement that vocabulary is a basic factor in the language-learning process. It is necessary to focus on building up vocabulary, at every stage of a learner's language development (Coombe, 2011). Aside from vocabulary lessons being the most interesting lessons in English, the lexical approach and lexical syllabus in the 1980s and 1990s implied the importance of correct vocabulary rather than syntax or grammar (Lewis, 1997; Willis, 1990; Willis & Willis, 1989).

Teaching pronunciation is also very important because of its relation to individual and social identities of learners (Seidlhofer, 2001).

Furthermore, teaching pronunciation urges students to be aware of different sounds and sound features, improve their speaking significantly and improves their comprehension and understanding of spoken English (Hamer, 2015).

Vocabulary Learning Types

Nation (2009) states that there are two types of vocabulary learning activities incidental and intentional vocabulary learning.

Incidental Learning

The Incidental learning is defined by Saragi, Nation, and Meister (1978) in terms of language acquisition as an effective way of learning vocabulary from context, and it refers to a specific type of learning in which students acquire vocabulary by extensive reading and guessing the meaning of new words without specific attention to vocabulary development (Huckin and Coody, 1999). According to Schmidt (1990) incidental learning is a passive process, which occurs when the attention is on some relevant features of input.

Intentional Learning

The intentional learning is a group of activities, which aim at specific vocabulary development (Nation, 2009). It is a process based on activities like synonyms, antonyms, word substitution multiple-choice, scrambled words and cross word puzzles without paying any attention to the context (Ahmed Jeddah, 2012). In this type of learning, students jam the word meanings into their minds without undergoing any cognitive process.

Pronunciation Learning Types

According to VanPatten and William (2015), there are two types of pronunciation learning, explicit and implicit, and there are no agreed-upon definitions for these concepts among researchers and scholars.

Implicit Knowledge

From Ellis's (2008) point of view, implicit knowledge is a natural procedure, that is systematically variable and automatic. Learners acquire their knowledge by perceiving the spoken language without being explicitly told about the pronunciation rule. Implicit knowledge is considered to be language focused learning which "involves the deliberate learning of language features such as pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and discourse" (Nation, Newton, 2009, p.7).

Explicit Knowledge

Ellis (2008) refers to explicit knowledge as a conscious, declarative, anomalous, and inconsistent process. It is considered to be reachable through controlled processing in planned language use.

PRACTICAL PROCEDURES

Sample

This study includes 50 Iraqi EFL learners who are postgraduate students. The sample consists of males and females whose age ranged between (23-33). The participants were divided equally into two groups. The first is called the (control) group, and the second is the (experimental) group, each having 25 participants. Both groups were subjected to ILTS and TOFEL tests to ensure that they are at the same level of proficiency, and their scores range between (4-7) in ILTS and between (45-85) in TOFEL.

MATERIAL

The data presented for both groups was taken from website: <https://jakubmarian.com/english-words-most-commonly-mispronounced-by-foreigners/> (appendix C), which consist of commonly mispronounced English words.

PROCEDURES

The first stage of the study included administration of pre-test in which the students were asked to read the sample sentences in (appendix A). Their voices were recorded for further analysis of pronunciation errors. A Telegram broadcasting channel was created for the experimental group. The learning process lasted for four weeks. The material was presented in the form of audio recordings and videos for the experimental group on Telegram. Whereas, the control group received the material in classroom in the form of a written list of vocabulary and their transcription. During this period, the experimental group participants were asked to practice and interact with each other on Telegram by recording their voices while pronouncing the given words. After these weeks, a post-test was administrated for both groups to test their pronunciation of the same target words using different sentences. The results of the post-test were recorded for analysis as well.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The results of this study were analyzed by comparing the recorded results of the pre-test with recorded results of the post-test. This analysis was conducted by a committee of experts in pronunciation. Both groups, control and experimental, were asked about the vocabulary given to them during these four weeks to test their vocabulary acquisition.

The analysis revealed that the experimental group acquired the vocabulary and improved their pronunciation in an interestingly more efficient way than in the control group in the normal classroom. Among the factors of this improvement was the availability and accessibility of the telegram class anytime and anywhere. This factor made their learning process more incidental than intentional.

Using audio and video broadcasting in the experimental group channel helped a lot in improving the way of pronouncing words. The focus on the commonly mispronounced words seems to be very effective to participants' acquisition.

On the other hand, the pronunciation of the control group did not improve during these four weeks, because they depended solely on reading the words without hearing the native pronunciation.

These findings showed that the use of social media network's Telegram contributed significantly in improving the participants' pronunciation and vocabulary. Hence, the hypothesis 'The use of "telegram" has an effect on learning vocabularies and pronunciation of Iraqi EFL learners' is proved to be accepted and completely true.

CONCLUSION

To sum things up, it is obvious that using technology in teaching language skills plays an essential role in the learning process. The classroom environment is not always adequate for teaching vocabulary and improving the pronunciation of students. This is because the time of the lecture might not be sufficient to provide the full material, the acoustic equipments might not be available, and students might get distracted during the lecture. Electronic learning is a relatively modern method in teaching, and it has a positive effect on participants. Students find this method exciting and easy. It provides opportunities for participants to practice and improve their pronunciation as well as making it more interesting to learn new vocabulary.

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Appendix A: The target words in sentences for the pre-test

Pre-test	Target items
1. Nobody can envisage the consequences of total nuclear war	Envisage
2. He does have some pretty loony ideas	Loony
3. A smear of paint on his shirt	Smear
4. Debris from the aircraft was scattered over large area	Debris
5. I went to buy a newspaper and lost my place in the queue	Queue
6. We reached home without mishap	Mishap
7. The petrol gauge was reading (full)	Gauge
8. Wash the lettuce and pat it dry	Lettuce
9. The company might stagger from crisis to crisis	Stagger
10. The garden strawberry is a large – fruited hybrid	Hybrid
11. John was bewildered by his daughter's reaction	Bewilder
12. He can submerge to a depth of about twenty meters	Submerge
13. After catching his first fish, the angler was very happy	Angler
14. The leaves started to shrivel up	Shrivel
15. She lived a careful and frugal life	Frugal

Appendix B: The target words in sentences for the post-test

Post- test	Target items
1. Marry is very much grieved over this mishap	Mishap
2. The new hybrid corps are much better at resisting disease	Hybrid
3. He could submerge his anger for only so long	Submerge
4. The paper started to shrivel and curl up in the heat	Shrivel
5. At first they all thought I was a loony	Loony
6. After he was attacked, he managed to stagger to the phone and call for help	Stagger
7. There was along queue at the post office	Queue
8. Milk, juice, cheese –oh, and put lettuce on the list too	Lettuce
9. the newspapers ran a smear campaign against him	Smear
10. Some of the world most famous economists were very frugal	Frugal
11. Rainfall had dislodged debris from the slopes of the volcano	Debris
12. The angler reeled out his fishing line	Angler
13. The driver was bewildered by the conflicting road signs	Bewilder
14. Use thermometer to gauge the temperature	Gauge
15. It should be quite simple ; I don't envisage any difficulty	Envisage

Appendix C: Items presented to both groups (control & experimental)

Week1	Week2	Week3	Week4
Height /hart/	Gauge /geɪdʒ/	shrivel/'ʃrɪv(ə)l/	Womb /wu:m/
Fruit /fru:t/	Mishap/'mɪʃæp/	stagger/'stægə/	Caveat /'kæviæt/
Subtle /sʌtl/	Lettuce /'letɪs/	submerge/səb'mə:dʒ/	Elite /i'li:t/
Queue /kju:z/	loony/'lu:ni/	angler/'æŋglə/	Comfortable/'kʌmfətəbl/
Albeit /ˌɔ:l'bi:t/	hybrid/'haɪbrɪd/	Recipe /'resəpi/	Infamous /'ɪnfəməs/