The Effects of a Task Based Instruction (TBI) Software for Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

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Abstract

Due to the increasing demands to use technological tools in education, many institutions around the world seek for a program that can be utilized in the teaching processes. Because of this situation, language teachers face with difficulties while satisfying the needs of their students regarding technological tools. On this aspect, the combination of an approach with a technological tool may yield fruitful results. As an approach, it has been found out that TBI can provide a different experience for young learners [1]. In another study, Butler and Zeng [2], highlighted the interactional patterns that are available thanks to task based assessment. The study is going to create a task based instruction experience for young learners who are 4th grades of a primary school in Turkey. For the implementation of such an experience, the researcher is going to create a task-based course in line with the class. The researcher is going to use such a task in one of the classrooms (experimental), and the other classroom (control) is going to continue to use their own syllabus. In addition to obtaining the statistical data, the researcher is also going to ask for the comments of the students in order to gather qualitative data.

1. Introduction

In the last few years, there has been a tendency to use technological tools in the language teaching settings. Therefore, the importance of using the effective tools in line with an effective approach for those settings has been gaining importance. In this respect, language teachers face with difficulties while satisfying the needs of their students regarding technological tools since they may not seperate enough time for preparing materials for their classroom settings. Due to this increasing need for using technological tools, research on Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has become very popular lately [3], [4], [5], [6] [7].

As a consequence of these researches, various CALL applications have already been welcomed by vocabulary classes. Among the voices from those educational settings, Kılıçkaya & Krajka [8] conducted a study on the use of technology for teaching vocabulary, and they have found out that teachers generally use wordlists, flashcards and online activities. Moreover, Clark [9] emphasized that teaching vocabulary through technological tools is fruitful.

As for the importance of words in language teaching, Wolsey et al. states[10] "words are not just collections of letters separated by spaces; a word captures an idea." (p. 449). Since words are pivotal in meaning as suggested by Wolsey et al., such a computer-assisted approach may lead to success if it is combined with a Task Bask Instruction (TBI) approach. As an approach, TBI has already led to success in language classes. As a consequence of their study, Zhang & Hung [11] favored the use of Task Based Language Teaching in big-sized classrooms in that the students had same or better achievements when compared with the students in traditional classrooms; it influenced oral English performance of the students, and they had positive learning attitudes. Moreover, Sarani & Sahabi [12] used TBI for teaching vocabulary to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students. Therefore, based on the approach presented in TBI and CALL, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of TBI software for teaching vocabulary to young learners. For the preparation of tasks, the definition of Nunan has been utilized. Nunan [13] defines tasks as follows:

> My own definition is that a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end (p. 4).

So as to shed light onto the preparation of such a pedagogical task as proposed by Nunan [13], the methodology section of the paper is thoroughly described in the following section.

2. Methodology

2. 1. Method
As for the method, the researcher used experimental method in order to see the effects of TBI software. As Walliman [14] points out "its main characteristic is that it is essentially an 'on the spot' procedure, principally designed to deal with a specific problem evident in a particular situation" (p. 41).

2. 2. Participants
The participants of the present study are 62 students who are 4th grade students of a primary school in Turkey. They are 10 years old, and their level is A1 according to Common European Framework.

2.3. Procedure & Data Analysis
As for the procedure, the researcher used TBI software to teach vocabulary to young learners. The teacher of the two fourth grade classes taught vocabulary of the unit "My family" with the help of the technological software in the experimental group, and the teacher taught vocabulary with traditional techniques proposed by the coursebook in the control group. Figure 1 below displays a screenshot from the software.
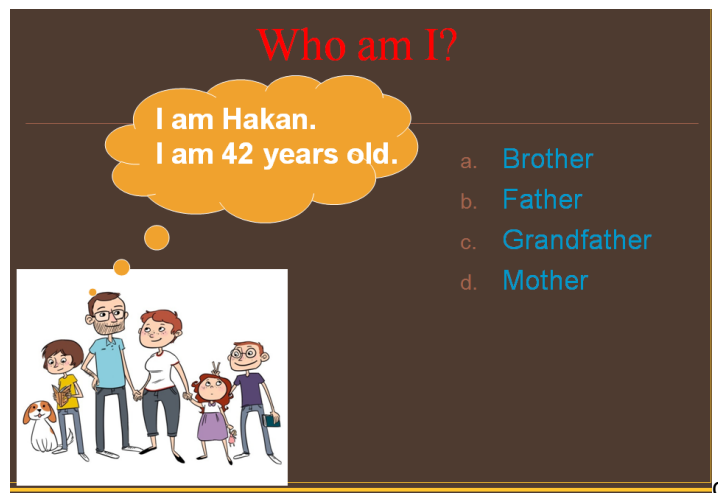

Figure 1. The screenshot from the software

As it can be seen from Figure 1, the teacher used a question "Who am I?" to obtain answers for completing the task. In line with the visual, the young learners provided answers to the task. For every correct answer, they were given right to go on the task. After such an application, the researcher gave the same achievement test for the both classes. For the data analysis, the researcher used a statistical package programme [15].

3. Results & Discussion

In order to grasp the level difference between the two classes, the same vocabulary test has been given before the treatment.

Table 1. Vocabulary achievement levels of the students before the application

Pre test	N	X̄	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control group	32	5.03		
Experimental group	30	4.80	-0.85	.725

As can be seen from Table 1, there is not a statistically significant difference (p >0.05) between control group (M=5.03) and experimental group (M=4.80) before the application. Since the vocabulary achievement levels of the both classes were not different at a significant level, the study design for finding out the effects of the TBI software was appropriate for the both classes. Table 2 below displays the vocabulary achievement levels of the students after the application

Table 2. Vocabulary achievement levels of the students after the application

Post test	N	X̄	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control group	32	5.17		
Experimental group	30	5.47	1.865	.260

According to the results highlighted in Table 2, the change in the mean scores of control group (M=5.17) and the experimental group (M=5.47) does not indicate a statistically significant difference between the two classes after the application of TBI software. However, it has been observed that there is a slight increase in the mean scores of the experimental group when their results are compared as before the application (M=4.80) and after the application (M=5.47).

4. Conclusion & Implications

Though the results of the present study are contradictory with many studies in the literature, which have favored the use of technological tools for teaching vocabulary [16], [17], they still have their own implications. To begin with, despite the fact that TBI and CALL have their own successful applications regarding vocabulary teaching, they have not led to fruitful results when they are used together. In that sense, the combination of these approaches may not be appropriate according to the results of the present study. Obviously, further research will be required to validate the effectiveness of TBI and CALL. There are still several questions remain to be addressed.

On the basis of the findings presented in this paper, work on the remaining issues is going on and is going to be presented in future papers.

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