

Enhancing Students' Vocabulary Learning and Retention through Drama Activities

การพัฒนาการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์และความคงทนของความรู้
ของนักศึกษาผ่านกิจกรรมการแสดงละคร

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Abstract

This study was conducted with a sample group of 36 non-English major undergraduate students. The experiment was carried out for eight weeks. Data were collected using a vocabulary test administered before and after the implementation of the treatment. The scores the students obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were compared using paired sample t-test and Hedges' g effect sizes to measure the effects and the magnitudes of the effects caused by drama activities. Five months after the end of the experiment, the vocabulary test was administered again to measure students' learning retention.

Findings revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores students obtained from the pre-test and post-test of vocabulary achievement test at a significance level of 0.05. The effect sizes yielded the value of 4.69, which was considered very large. The results of the delayed post-test showed that the students lost 36.90 per cent of their vocabulary knowledge. The data obtained from the students' self-evaluation checklists and students' logs indicated that the students had positive attitudes towards drama activities.

Keywords: drama activities, retention, vocabulary

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ทำการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับกลุ่มตัวอย่างซึ่งเป็นนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีจำนวน 36 คนซึ่งไม่ได้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาเอก การทดลองใช้เวลาแปดสัปดาห์ การเก็บข้อมูลได้ดำเนินการโดยการใช้ข้อสอบวัดความรู้คำศัพท์ก่อนและหลังการทดลอง โดยนำผลคะแนนของนักศึกษาที่ได้จากการสอบก่อนและหลังการทดลองมาเปรียบเทียบโดยใช้ paired sample t-test และ Hedges' g effect size เพื่อวัดความแตกต่างของผลคะแนนและขนาดของความต่างที่เกิดขึ้นก่อนและหลังการสอนโดยใช้กิจกรรมการแสดงละคร ทำเดือนหลังจากสิ้นสุดการทดลองผู้วิจัยทำการทดสอบอีกครั้งหนึ่งโดยใช้ข้อสอบเดิมเพื่อวัดความคงทนของความรู้

ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผลคะแนนความรู้คำศัพท์ก่อนและหลังการทดลองมีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05 ขนาดความต่างมีค่าเท่ากับ 4.69 ซึ่งถือว่าเป็นขนาดความต่างในระดับมาก ผลจากการสอบวัดความคงทนของความรู้พบว่าทำเดือนหลังการทดลอง ความรู้ของนักศึกษาหายไป 36.90 เปอร์เซ็นต์ นอกจากนี้ผลการวิเคราะห์แบบประเมินตนเองและบันทึกการเรียนของนักศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่านักศึกษามีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการเรียนคำศัพท์ด้วยกิจกรรมการแสดงละคร

คำสำคัญ: กิจกรรมการแสดงละคร ความคงทน คำศัพท์

Introduction

As a fundamental element of a language, vocabulary plays a significant role in language learning development. Basically, the ability to exercise any language skills depends on one's knowledge of vocabulary. Therefore, limited vocabulary is considered one of the major obstacles preventing learners from successfully mastering important language arts skills such as reading comprehension and written expression (Alber & Foil, 2003). Vocabulary knowledge,

according to Harmon and Wood (2008), may be regarded as an indicator of general language development as well as success in foreign language acquisition. Based on these assumptions, it could be said that exploring ways to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition should be considered as the first priority in teaching the target language.

Despite scholarly recognition of the influential determinant role vocabulary knowledge plays in language acquisition, direct vocabulary instruction in most, if not all, English classes appears to be inadequate to foster students' vocabulary knowledge (Oxford & Crookall, 1990). Simply put, vocabulary is not sufficiently emphasized in English classes. This holds true to the current practice in the researcher's context. Students' vocabulary learning seems to be incidental learning from reading or through teachers' presentation of words and meanings as directed by a course book. With such a teaching method, students are assumed to acquire vocabulary through their accidental encounter with the words, instead of through facilitation by direct instructional processes. Therefore, it was found ineffective in nourishing students' vocabulary learning.

As Nation (2005) suggests, meeting with a word repeatedly is needed in order to ensure that it is learned. Hence, incidental learning or indirect teaching is probably insufficient to help students promote their vocabulary learning, for they actually require both time and effort to master vocabulary knowledge. They additionally need memorable learning experiences and repeated exposure to the word to help enhance their vocabulary learning retention (Martin, 1993 cited in Alber & Foil, 2003; Laufer, Meara, & Nation, 2005). Based on this, students require explicit instruction in vocabulary to help them learn. It is persuasively confirmed by Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) that explicit instruction is an effective

approach and is worth the teacher's time and effort. Therefore, to ultimately enhance students' English proficiency, ways to foster students' vocabulary knowledge should be extensively explored.

With recognition of the benefits students can gain from their vocabulary learning, a study was conducted to enhance students' vocabulary learning through specifically designed drama activities. This paper, therefore, aims to share experiences and report findings from the study which examined effects of teaching English through drama activities on students' vocabulary learning and retention.

Review of Literature

The key influence of vocabulary on achievement in other language skills seems to be generally acknowledged. Linguist David Wilkins's observation that "without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, *nothing* can be conveyed" (quoted in Thornbury, 2002, 13) expresses the underlying assumption. This assumption has led to extensive attempts among scholars to illustrate the significance of vocabulary knowledge and to explore the way to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

Since vocabulary knowledge consists of many subcomponents, learning vocabulary is considered to be more complicated than it might at first seem. Various views have been presented by scholars in the field concerning the components of vocabulary and what it means to know a word. Thornbury (2002), for example, proposes that to know a word involves at least knowing both its form and its meaning. Schneider, Healy, and Bourn (2002) divide vocabulary components into four subcomponents: the ability to pronounce or spell, the ability to differentiate one word from another, the ability to connect L2 words with their L1, and the ability to perceive the equivalence of L2 and L1. Based on these views, vocabulary

components can be broadly divided into two parts, namely form and meaning.

Vocabulary components may look simple. However, to enable learners to acquire those components is unexpectedly tough, whereas to enhance the retention of the vocabulary knowledge is even more difficult. For this reason, vocabulary instruction is more demanding than it may seem. Various techniques to promote vocabulary learning have been recommended, such as an application of SMS vocabulary lessons (Lu, 2008), self-directed learning through educational posters (Cetin & Flamand, 2013) or games (Sukkrong, 2010; Chaeye, Jantharangkul, & Aunmuang, 2012). Drama activities have become another prominent method.

In fact, drama has been considered a valuable and effective tool for education and language instruction for decades. Dougill (1987) suggested that drama can foster the social, intellectual, and linguistic development of a child. Heathcote (1984, quoted in Dougill, 1987, p. 4) likewise argued that “drama is a unique teaching tool, vital for language development”. Dougill (1987) adds that drama can satisfy primary needs of language learning. That is, drama can create motivation, confidence, and context in learning a language. Taylor (2000) points out that drama is useful to language learners and teachers, for it provides enjoyment and enhances motivation.

The benefits of drama activities specifically for vocabulary learning have also been widely acknowledged. According to Demircioglu (2010, 442), “drama as a teaching technique promotes long-term retention of vocabulary.” Janudom (2009) states that drama activities consist of various types, each of which serves different teaching purposes. With these different types, drama activities lend themselves well to the enhancement of students’

mastery of vocabulary. That is, vocabulary learning retention requires memorable events, meaningful contexts (Martin, 1993 cited in Alber & Foil, 2003) as well as repeated exposure to the word (Laufer, Meara, & Nation, 2005; Stivick, 1982). The variety of drama activities can serve precisely these needs.

A similar idea is shared by Sam (1990, quoted in Heldenbrand, 2003, p. 30) who claims that “drama helps to extend, retain, and reinforce vocabulary through role-play and communication games.” Empirical support has been provided through the concept of Cone of Learning presented by Dale (1969). Testing based on this concept found that after two weeks, individuals tended to remember 90% of what they say and do. This implies that providing students with active experience in learning such as doing a dramatic presentation, simulating the real experience, and carrying out a real task, can effectively help enhance students’ learning retention. Based on this, an application of drama activities can undoubtedly benefit students’ learning retention as they can provide students with active learning environment where they learn through an active involvement with repeated exposure to the targeted words as suggested in Dale’s Cone of Learning.

An assumption of the advantages of drama activities on vocabulary enhancement can also be made based on the findings from a certain number of studies. El-Nady (2000) and Demircioglu (2010), for example, achieved similar results from their studies, though conducted in different periods, suggesting that drama activities can better foster students’ vocabulary than giving instruction by following a course book. Sukkrong (2010) and Chaeye, Jantharangkul, and Aunmuang (2012) have reported identical findings from utilization of games, considered as one form of drama activity, to

improve students' vocabulary.

With these benefits of drama activities, educators have claimed it is worthwhile bringing the activities into language classrooms to enhance students' vocabulary. As a teaching technique, drama activities mainly gain strong support from the learning theory of cognitive constructivism postulated by Piaget in 1961. Piaget proposes four broadly articulated factors that are related to all cognitive development: maturation and heredity, active experience, social interaction, and equilibrium. Active experiences engender assimilation and accommodation; social interaction brings in disequilibrium, which is necessary for initiating the cognitive movement towards equilibrium.

He points out that it is through actions such as movement in space, searching with eyes and ears, or thinking that a child gains raw ingredients to be assimilated and accommodated which subsequently lead to a construction of knowledge. In terms of language learning, this theory suggests that children acquire language in an identical way to how they acquire all other knowledge. That is, they construct the knowledge through interaction with their social environment, which provokes adaptation processes (Wadsworth, 1996).

The implications of this theory for pedagogical practice underpin the application of drama activities in teaching. That is, drama activities provide learners with active experience, which Piaget considers one of the four factors related to all cognitive development. Drama activities require learners' active involvement, not only physically but also intellectually and emotionally. Hamilton and McLead (1993) state that drama involves the intellectual, physical, and emotional development of the individual. Through drama activities, learners are required to be active participants

rather than observers. They do not observe a feeling but experience the feeling, nor do they observe how people interact, but rather carry out the interaction themselves. It is this active experience that leads them to gain insights into what they are learning, according to Piaget's theory. With this theoretical support, drama activities are considered one of the most effective teaching techniques, and one which should be applied in the context of vocabulary instruction.

Research Questions

The present study aimed to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent can drama activities enhance students' vocabulary learning?
2. To what extent can drama activities affect students' vocabulary learning retention?
3. What are students' attitudes towards their learning experiences?

Research Methodology

As the main research objective was to evaluate the difference drama activities, had on one group of subjects before and after exposure to it, the design of the research was a one-group pretest-posttest design.

Participants

The study was conducted with an intact group of 36 second-year non-English majored undergraduate students, 32 females and four males enrolled in an elective course offered by the Prince of Songkla University called "English through Drama."

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study included lesson plans, vocabulary pre- and post-tests, students' self-evaluation checklists, and students' logs. The quality of the instruments was ensured

through validation by a panel of experts in the field. The research instruments were also tested to further confirm their quality before their utilization in the main study.

Lesson Plans:

In this study, ten lesson plans were designed based on drama activities to facilitate students’ acquisition of the target vocabulary. It is worth noting that only three types of drama activities—games, mime, and role play—were applied to support and reinforce students’ vocabulary acquisition and retention in the present study. The three types were chosen based on the main vocabulary pedagogical principles, which considered providing repeated exposures to the targeted words and establishing memorable events to be crucial factors in improving vocabulary learning and retention. The implementation of the lesson plans was carried out in the first ten weeks of the semester. Each lesson plan was used in every first hour of the course which lasted three hours. Students were required to learn five words for each lesson plan. Shown in the table below is a summary of a plan of one hour lessons over ten weeks.

Table 1
Summary of ten-week one hour lesson plan

Teaching steps	Time spending (minutes)	activities
Introduction	10	<p>Games: correct spelling, guessing the meaning, listening and spelling, matching words with pictures, flashing and writing, mixing up, and hangman</p> <p>Mime: miming personalities</p>

Making connection	20	Games: picking a word and telling of one's experience, watching and guessing, and describing and matching Role play/Mime: mime or role play to show experiences relating to the word
Practice	20	Games: listening and telling, describing and reasoning, matching and describing, listening and matching, and passing a ball Mime: miming and describing Role play: writing a short script of conversation and role playing
Reinforcement	10	Games: passing a ball, listening and matching, mixing up, and drawing and guessing Games and Mime: looking-miming-imitating, miming and matching, and miming-saying-writing Role play: role playing according to the contexts given

As shown in the table, in each lesson plan, the three types of drama activities were integrated into vocabulary instruction which was divided into four teaching steps:

(1) introduction

This step involved the introduction of both form and meaning of the targeted words to students. The targeted words included the words students needed to use when they discussed the characters in the play such as those indicating a character's personality, feeling, or background. The type of drama activities mainly employed in this step were games. Each week, various types of games such as listening and spelling, matching words with pictures, or hangman were used in the first step in order to promote students' active participation and to familiarize the students with the words. The students were assigned to work in

pair, in groups, or individually to compete with others to display their ability to identify the words, spell the words, or guess the meaning of the words being introduced through the clues given. The main reason of the competition was to foster enjoyment and to foster active participation.

(2) making connections

After being familiarized with the targeted words (for instance, words for the first lesson plan included *exhausted*, *thirsty*, *hungry*, *disappointed*, and *furious*) students were required to make a connection between the words they had learned and their prior experience to enhance the level of their comprehension. The three types of drama activities were regularly applied in this step. Games were used in some lessons to motivate students to narrate their previous experience relating to the word. Occasionally, the students were assigned to role play, in other words, to play the role of other people in different situations based on their everyday life experiences and demonstrate how they would react to such situations. Mime, which refers to non-verbal language such as gestures, facial expressions, or movement, was also sometimes introduced when the involvement of all students was required or when students seemed to be uncomfortable in expressing themselves verbally.

(3) Practice

In this step, students were provided with opportunities to practice applying the learned vocabulary in the context of sentences. Games, mime and role play were extensively utilized to support students' learning engagement. For instance, they were allowed to play games such as a competition in forming sentences using the words given. Examples of how the words could be used in sentences were first provided. Also, they were assigned to write a script using the words they had learned and to deliver their script in class.

(4) Reinforcement

The last step was designed with the aim of reinforcing students' internalization of the knowledge through both mime and games. Each group of students was assigned to do mime or role play in different situations to express the meanings of the five targeted words. Different games such as drawing and guessing or miming and matching were also implemented to encourage the students' repeated use of the words, which subsequently helped them acquire and retain the vocabulary.

It should be noted that after the first week, a revising session was added to all lesson plans. That is, before introducing new words, the words students had learned in the previous lessons were reviewed.

Vocabulary Test:

A vocabulary test consisting of 85 items was constructed to measure students' vocabulary knowledge concerning feelings, personalities, and personal background, respectively. The test was divided into three parts. Each part was composed of two sections. In the first section of each part of the test, students were asked to state their knowledge of the target vocabulary, that is, whether they knew the meaning of each word or not, or whether they were not sure. If they stated that they did, they were required to write the meaning of the given vocabulary in Thai. This section of the test consisted of 60 items. It was used to elicit students' ability to attribute meaning.

In the second section, which included 25 items, students were required to choose the words to fill in the blanks. In part one and part three of the second section, ten choices of words were given for students to choose and fill in the blanks to complete sentences. In part two, which was a multiple choice test, each item

contained four choices for them to choose and fill in the gaps provided in order to show their ability to apply those words in contexts. By doing so, the level of students' knowledge of the target words could be ascertained and the effectiveness of the activities implemented could subsequently be more reliably determined.

Self-evaluation checklist:

Self-evaluation checklists were used to investigate students' assessment of their vocabulary learning experiences through drama activities. The students' attitudes were examined in three major areas, consisting of (a) effectiveness of learning vocabulary through drama activities, (b) students' motivation in learning vocabulary, and (c) students' satisfaction with learning vocabulary through drama activities. Students were asked to fill in the form according to whether they agreed or disagreed with given statements. Each item of the statements was written in their L1 to ensure that students clearly understood the questions.

Students' logs:

Student logs were used to elicit students' attitudes towards drama activities. After finishing each lesson, students were asked to record in the provided logs what they thought about the drama activities implemented. In their logs, there were five questions used as guidelines for their responses: (1) 'To what extent could drama activities implemented today enhance your vocabulary acquisition? Why?,' (2) 'What kinds of activities did you like and dislike today? Why?,' (3) 'Did the activities today help you understand and remember the meanings of the vocabulary better? Why or why not?,' (4) 'Did the activities today help you understand the meanings and to remember all words? Why or Why not?,' and (5)

‘Do you want to learn vocabulary through these types of activities again? Why or Why not?’

Data Analysis

In order to determine the effectiveness of drama activities on students’ vocabulary knowledge, the dependent t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. The dependent t-test was later used to measure the differences between students’ immediate post-test scores and their delayed post-test scores to measure students’ vocabulary learning retention. Moreover, Hedges’ g effect size (Becker, 2000) was used to measure the extent of the effect produced by the experimental treatment. As for students’ responses to self-evaluation checklists, they were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages and means. The data obtained from students’ responses to the questions in the logs were analyzed by using content analysis.

Findings

The research findings were divided into three major areas consisting of students’ vocabulary knowledge improvement, students’ vocabulary learning retention, and students’ attitudes towards their learning experiences through drama activities.

Students’ vocabulary knowledge improvement

The findings regarding students’ vocabulary knowledge improvement are displayed in two parts. The first part exhibits the findings in terms of the vocabulary test scores, while the second part presents the findings with a focus on the numbers of students who gave the correct meaning to each individual word.

Following the experiment, the effectiveness of drama activities employed to enhance students’ vocabulary knowledge attainment was examined through students’ scores in the

vocabulary pre-test and post-test. The results of the t-test are illustrated in the following table.

Table 2

Comparison of vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores

	N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-statistics	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	36	85	9.22	4.86	-21.088**	0.000
Post-test	36	85	61.36	14.93		

** is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As presented in the table, with the total score of 85, the mean score of the vocabulary pre-test was 9.22 while that of the post-test was 61.36. The mean score of the post-test was statistically significantly higher than that of the pre-test at the 0.05 level. Further measurement of the effect utilizing Hedges'g formula indicated that the effect size was really large ($g = 4.69$). Based on this evidence, the conclusion could be drawn that the students achieved significant improvement in learning vocabulary through drama activities.

As each part of the test was divided into two sections, students' ability to give meaning in the first section and their ability to apply the learned vocabulary in sentences in the second section, a comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores of those two sections of the test was additionally made to shed more light on students' performance.

Table 3

Comparison of vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores (ability to give meaning)

	N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-statistics	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test (giving meaning)	36	60	4.39	3.80	-24.127**	0.000
Post-test (giving meaning)	36	60	47.30	11.03		

** is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As presented in the table 3 above, the mean score of the vocabulary post-test gained from the first section, ability to give meaning, was higher than that of the pre-test at the significance level of 0.05. It could be concluded that the students showed improvement in their ability to give meaning after the treatment was given.

Table 4

Comparison of vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores (ability to apply the words in contexts)

	N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-statistic	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test (using)	36	25	4.83	2.50	-8.942**	0.000
Post-test (using)	36	25	14.05	5.39		

** is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In terms of students' ability to apply the learned vocabulary in sentences, as shown in table 4, the post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test mean score, meaning that students' gains in terms of their ability to apply the learned vocabulary in the context of sentences was also exhibited after the

instruction was given through drama activities.

Apart from comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test to examine the difference before and after the experiment, the number of students who gave a correct meaning to each individual word was also tallied to investigate whether all words were learned by more students after the implementation of the treatment. Findings revealed that before giving the treatment, there was only one word for which more than 50% of the students knew the meaning. Also, of all 50 words, there were only 17 words that some students showed their knowledge of the words. None of the students knew the meanings of the other 33 words. However, after the treatment, all words were learned by the students. Almost every word was acquired by more than 80% of the students. There were only two words, *embarrassed* and *diligent*, that were learned by fewer than 50% of the students and only seven words to which fewer than 80% of the students were able to give correct meanings. Such evidence yielded further support to the previous conclusion that drama activities helped enhance students' vocabulary knowledge.

Students' vocabulary learning retention

Students' vocabulary learning retention was examined five months after the administration of the immediate post-test. As the same test was utilized, students' memory about the test might more or less have affected the test results. However, given the length of time between the immediate post-test and the delayed post-test, it could be claimed that such interference was diminished.

As shown in the table 5, compared to the mean score of

the immediate post-test, the mean score the students obtained from the delayed post-test decreased, both in terms of giving meaning and in usage, resulting in a decrease in the total delayed post-test mean score. In other words, the total mean score of the delayed post-test declined significantly. However, when multiplying the total mean score of the delayed post-test by 100 and dividing it by the total mean score of the post-test in order to find the percentage of the loss of students' vocabulary knowledge, it was found that over the five months the students lost only 36.93% of their vocabulary knowledge. According to Dale's Cone of learning (1969), after two weeks individuals tend to lose 10% of what they say and do. Therefore, to lose 36.93% within five months could be considered low. Based on this, it could be interpreted that drama activities created positive effects on students' vocabulary learning retention.

Table 5

Comparison of vocabulary post-test scores and delayed post-test scores using a paired sample t-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-statistics	Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-test (giving meaning)	22	49.73	9.02	-9.373**	0.000
Delayed post-test (giving meaning)	22	30.23	12.75		
Post-test (using)	22	15.32	5.48	-5.378**	0.000
Delayed post-test (using)	22	10.82	4.55		
Total Post-test	22	65.05	13.70		

Total Delayed Post-test	22	41.05	16.42	9.666**	0.000
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**is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Students' attitudes towards their learning experiences

To substantially confirm the quantitative findings from the test, the data obtained from students' reflections were also utilized to determine the effectiveness of drama activities on students' vocabulary learning in terms of students' attitudes towards their learning experiences through drama activities.

At the end of each class, self-evaluation checklists and students' logs were distributed to investigate students' attitudes towards their vocabulary learning experiences through drama activities. Students' attitudes were examined in three major areas: (a) effectiveness of learning vocabulary through drama activities, (b) students' motivation in learning vocabulary, and (c) students' satisfaction in learning vocabulary through drama activities. The findings were as follows:

Most students evaluated their vocabulary learning experiences through the drama activities as effective and most students agreed that drama activities were effective in helping them learn vocabulary. According to their responses, drama activities effectively enhanced their ability to understand and remember the meanings of the vocabulary. Four main reasons were given by the students to support their comments. First, drama activities provided them with enjoyable and relaxing learning experiences which subsequently helped them learn much more effectively. For instance, some students remarked that *"I learn much better because I enjoy learning. I am happy when studying. This enables me to remember the vocabulary better."*

Second, opportunities to be actively involved in the

activities provided fostered their vocabulary learning, as they reflected: *“We learn through our own performance. So, we understand and remember the vocabulary better.”* Third, the drama activities effectively drew their attention to what they were learning and therein fostered their vocabulary learning. For example, they remarked in their logs that *“Enjoyable activities draw our attention to the lesson. So, we learn the vocabulary better.”*

Finally, learning through the drama activities provided them with a variety of activities and memorable learning experiences resulting in their learning improvement. They expressed the sentiments, for example, that *“We learn vocabulary much better because there are various kinds of activities which help us learn”* or *“We learn new vocabulary through new memorable techniques which help us remember words better.”*

Despite highly positive responses concerning the effectiveness of drama activities, some students remarked that their ability to spell the words was not improved. However, the blame was not put on the implemented method. Instead, students reasoned that (1) *“The vocabulary is too difficult. I am not familiar with it. I need more time.”* or (2) *“Some words are very long. It is really difficult to remember the spelling. I need to practice more.”* Students’ clarification of their problem in spelling words clearly reflects the limitation of time in the learning. As Blachowicz and Fisher (2006) posit, word learning is a point in a continuum. Learners need time to gradually move from not knowing the word to mastering the word in both form and meaning. Therefore, students’ inability to spell words was probably due to the time constraint in learning the words rather than the inefficiency of the instructional technique implemented.

In terms of the students' motivation in learning vocabulary, it was found that almost all students (98.55%) agreed that learning vocabulary through drama activities motivated them to improve their knowledge by the end of each class. All of them reported they would like to learn vocabulary through drama activities again. Their reflection in the logs clearly explained why drama activities could enhance their learning motivation. They expressed such views towards the implemented activities as: (1) *"The activities motivate us well to learn. We want to learn and we want to know more vocabulary"* or (2) *"I have good fun. It's not boring. This encourages me to learn English. It makes me feel more interested in English."* Hence, it could be assumed from such evidence that drama activities provided students with enjoyment and a relaxing learning atmosphere which subsequently could improve their learning motivation.

As for the students' satisfaction with learning vocabulary through the drama activities, it was found that almost all students were satisfied with their learning experiences through the drama activities resulting in a very high percentage of positive responses on all items and a high mean value (99.00%). The result also demonstrated that 99.65% of the students liked learning vocabulary through drama activities, 98.85% enjoyed their learning, and 99.65% considered their learning through these activities as new and exciting learning experiences. As reflected by 98.01% of the students, learning through these activities also made them feel more confident in their learning.

Very high positive responses (99.65%) in terms of their satisfaction with the effectiveness of drama activities which helped them acquire vocabulary could also be perceived. They additionally expressed their satisfaction in their logs, as in: *"I know very few*

English words. After learning through these activities, I feel they helped me know more and remember the vocabulary better.” Or “We learn vocabulary much better because there are various different kinds of activities which help us learn.” Such a high level of satisfaction could be due to the experience of success they acquired from the learning activities provided. Simply put, their ability to understand and remember the vocabulary after learning made them feel they were successful in their learning.

Discussion

Based on the results of the study which have shown students' statistically significant improvement after the exposure to the treatment, it could be claimed that drama activities can effectively enhance students' vocabulary learning and retention. Four main reasons for the improvement may be tentatively posited.

First, learning vocabulary through drama activities provided students with active learning experiences. Through these activities, the students operated not as observers but as active participants who were required to actively engage in activities. They were not observing what the words were, what those words mean, or how those words were used. After the target words were provided, they were motivated to physically and emotionally engage in various kinds of activities to experience those words. They were not only learning the meaning but they were expressing the meaning in contexts as they usually do in their daily life. It could be that through this active experience the students internalized the vocabulary resulting in the significantly higher mean scores after the exposure to the treatment and minimal loss of their vocabulary knowledge as shown in their delayed post-test. This claim is clearly supported by Stevick (1982) who postulates that

intensity promotes long-term memory. According to Stevick, intensity refers to different aspects of learners' experiences. Physical and emotional responses in their learning experiences are considered one aspect of the term 'intensity.' Based on this, it could be claimed that learning through drama activities promoted intensity and subsequently resulted in students' vocabulary retention or long-term memory.

Second, drama activities provided the students with memorable learning experience which is one of the crucial factors of vocabulary learning. According to Martin (1993, cited in Alber & Foil, 2003), memorable events can help activate learners' memory of the word. This is consistent with the students' reflection in their logs. The students claimed that learning through drama activities provided them with memorable experience which subsequently enabled them to understand and remember the vocabulary better. Based on this, memorable learning experience could be another factor underlying the students' improvement in their vocabulary knowledge.

Third, giving instruction through drama activities allowed the teacher to present the words to the students repeatedly without boring the students. Being exposed to the words repeatedly could be another factor which promoted students' vocabulary mastery. This justification is supported by a claim proposed by Laufer, Meara, and Nation (2005) who remark that the repeated exposure to the word is vital to vocabulary learning. Additional support is granted by Stevick. According to Stevick (1982), frequency and intensity have an effect on long-term memory. He states that repeated exposure to the learned item provides learners with more chance to transmit the item to the long-term memory.

Finally, an enjoyable, relaxing, and friendly learning atmosphere could be another crucial factor which benefits students' vocabulary achievement. According to Via (1987) and Browne (2007), learning tension, fear, or anxiety are common language learning obstacles for students. With a similar view, Krashen and Terrell (1983) propose that learning with lower anxiety effectively supports language acquisition. These claims are in accordance with the students' reflections in their logs. After learning through drama activities, the students commented that they enjoyed themselves and felt relaxed when learning. This made them pay more attention to what they were learning and to actively engage in the activities. For this reason, they understood and remembered the vocabulary better. With all these claims, it could be concluded that the effectiveness of drama activities in enhancing students' vocabulary learning and retention was due to their capacity to create a positive learning atmosphere.

Conclusion

The evidence from the findings of the study yielded concrete support for the idea that drama activities are effective for the enhancement of students' vocabulary learning and retention. The significant difference between the mean scores on the vocabulary pre-test and post-test, a substantial effect size, as well as diminished loss of students' vocabulary knowledge determined by the delayed post-test seem to reflect the effectiveness of the treatment on students' learning achievement. The students' positive attitudes towards the treatment additionally provided more concrete support for the effectiveness of drama activities. Based on such findings, it could be assumed that it is worthwhile to introduce drama activities to actual EFL classes to enhance students' vocabulary learning and their vocabulary learning

retention.

Implications of the study

The implications of the findings for vocabulary instruction are as follows:

1. English teachers should provide direct instruction of vocabulary items to students. That is, items of words students need to know from a particular course should be brought into focus and taught directly and explicitly in order to help them acquire the words and enlarge their vocabulary repertoire, which will subsequently result in their success in other language skills, the ultimate goal of language teaching.

2. It is advisable to arrange a variety of activities in each step of teaching vocabulary so that students have a chance to work with the words repeatedly and in different ways. Such learning experiences will help increase the depth of their word knowledge without boring them. A variety of activities can also serve students' different learning preferences, which will better promote their learning capacity.

3. Drama activities utilized to teach vocabulary should be designed to promote active engagement both physically and emotionally as it is active engagement that enables students to internalize the words they are learning. It is noteworthy that active engagement is more effectively promoted in a relaxing, enjoyable and friendly atmosphere. Most, if not all, students feel anxious in their English class. They basically feel uncertain and lack confidence when being asked to participate in activities. Therefore, a relaxing and pleasurable learning atmosphere must be established to foster their active engagement.

4. Students normally feel more confident and tend to participate in activities more actively when they are allowed to

work in groups. Working in groups also helps diminish students' tension and anxiety. Hence, activities arranged for vocabulary learning should facilitate group work.

Recommendations for future studies

As the present study used a one-group pretest-posttest design, it might be questioned whether the increase in students' scores is actually due to the treatment or the nature of learning. Hence, further studies should be conducted to make a comparison between the effectiveness of drama activities and other vocabulary teaching techniques. In addition, the design of the present study was a one-group pretest-posttest design, there might be some doubt concerning the findings of the study. Therefore, the study should be replicated by using control and experimental groups to more empirically determine the effectiveness of drama activities. Finally, as there are many types of drama activities, each type should be tested in order to empirically determine which type is more suitable for a particular group of learners in helping them learn vocabulary.

Limitations of the study

1. As the recruitment of the study sample was carried out by means of purposive sampling, the findings may not be generalized to other demographics.

2. The delayed posttest was administered five months after the immediate post-test was taken. Thus, differences between the immediate and delayed post-test may have been affected by internal threats to validity such as students' exposure to the vocabulary in other contexts.

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