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Wordwall platform to foster new vocabulary acquisition in young learners with A2 level

Plataforma Wordwall para fomentar la adquisición de nuevo vocabulario en jóvenes estudiantes con nivel A2

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the potential of the Wordwall platform to foster vocabulary acquisition and enhance the learning experience for A2-level students. The research explored how teachers utilize digital platforms and strategies to support vocabulary development and examined the impact of Wordwall on student motivation and learning outcomes. To gather data, researchers administered online questionnaires to teachers and surveys with open-ended questions to students. This approach gave an in-depth understanding of teachers' instructional practices and students' perceptions of Wordwall. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and qualitative methods to identify key themes and patterns. The findings revealed that teachers actively employed Wordwall to design diverse and engaging vocabulary activities. Students reported increased motivation and active participation in these activities individually and collaboratively. The research suggests that the Wordwall platform may contribute to increased vocabulary knowledge and a more enjoyable learning experience for A2-level students. This highlights the potential of Wordwall as a valuable tool for vocabulary instruction in EFL contexts.

Keywords: vocabulary, wordwall, strategies, motivation, 2 level

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo investigó el potencial de la plataforma Wordwall para fomentar la adquisición de vocabulario y mejorar la experiencia de aprendizaje de los estudiantes de nivel A2. La investigación exploró cómo los profesores utilizan plataformas y estrategias digitales para apoyar el desarrollo del vocabulario y examinó el impacto de Wordwall en la motivación de los estudiantes y los resultados

del aprendizaje. Para recopilar datos, los investigadores administraron cuestionarios en línea a los profesores y encuestas con preguntas abiertas a los estudiantes. Este enfoque brindó una comprensión profunda de las prácticas de instrucción de los maestros y las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre Wordwall. Los datos recopilados se analizaron utilizando métodos descriptivos y cualitativos para identificar temas y patrones clave. Los hallazgos revelaron que los profesores emplearon activamente Wordwall para diseñar actividades de vocabulario diversas y atractivas. Los estudiantes informaron una mayor motivación y su activa participación en estas actividades de forma individual y colaborativa. La investigación sugiere que la plataforma Wordwall puede contribuir a un mayor conocimiento del vocabulario y una experiencia de aprendizaje más agradable para los estudiantes de nivel A2. Esto resalta el potencial de Wordwall como una herramienta valiosa para la enseñanza de vocabulario en contextos de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: vocabulario, wordwall, estrategias, motivación, nivel a2

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INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency is crucial for young learners in today's increasingly interconnected world. A robust vocabulary is fundamental to developing communicative competence and fostering academic success (Padrini & Adnyayanti, 2022). At the A2 level, students strive to use more complex language and express themselves effectively in everyday situations, but expanding their vocabulary can be challenging (Yuni, 2023). Therefore, educators must create dynamic learning environments where vocabulary acquisition becomes an integral and engaging part of the learning process.

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2012) outlines that A2 level learners can understand phrases and basic information related to their personal lives, shopping, and places of interest. Digital platforms can further support these learners in identifying and producing longer, more detailed texts, such as letters, thereby enhancing their communicative competence.

This study explores the potential of the Wordwall platform as a dynamic tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention among young learners at the A2 level. Wordwall offers a user-friendly interface with a variety of engaging activities and games (Darmawan et al, 2023), enabling learners to acquire vocabulary in an enjoyable and stimulating manner, whether working individually, in pairs, or in groups.

Furthermore, Wordwall aligns with key learning theories such as connectivism and constructivism (Pappas, 2023). Its interactive nature encourages group interaction and conversation, fostering a collaborative learning environment where students can actively construct their understanding through experience and reflection (Purmama et., 2019).

Motivated by the need to optimize vocabulary acquisition for young learners, this research investigates the following question: How can the Wordwall platform foster vocabulary acquisition and make learning new words an enjoyable experience for A2-level students?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This qualitative study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the potential of the Wordwall platform to foster vocabulary acquisition and enhance the learning experience for A2-level students. Data were gathered through questionnaires administered to teachers and surveys with open-ended questions administered to students aged 12 to 15 years old. These students were enrolled in high schools in the Sierra region of southern Ecuador, a rural area with limited access to technological resources. This context allowed for an in-depth exploration of how Wordwall could be utilized to support vocabulary learning in a resource-constrained environment.

Research participants

To ensure a representative sample, participants were randomly selected from various educational institutions in the region. The sample included both male and female teachers and students, who were contacted via WhatsApp and provided with a link to the survey and questionnaire. To encourage candid responses, all data were collected anonymously.

The survey and questionnaire consisted of eight open-ended questions designed to explore the potential of the Wordwall platform to foster vocabulary acquisition. Both teachers and students expressed their perspectives on how Wordwall facilitated interactive learning and enhanced their vocabulary development.

Research Instruments

The research instruments were designed using Google Forms and applied online for students and teachers. This study applied Surveys and Interviews as instruments for data collection. Surveys are a traditional way of researching to gather information about what most people do or think about something; they mainly help describe reality (Burton & Mazerolle, 2011). For the interviews, the researchers used questionnaires. A questionnaire is a very convenient way of collecting information from many people within a period (Mathers et al., 2007). This requires the researcher to put some thought into asking relevant questions and, in a logical sequence, avoiding biased questions.

The survey and the questionnaires were designed using Google Forms. According to Vasantha & Harinarayana (2016), Google Forms is a free cloud data management tool to design and developing web-based questionnaires to gather opinions or beliefs.

Data Collection Method and Analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of vocabulary acquisition, the researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. They conducted surveys and questionnaires to gather insights into students' perceptions and learning experiences. This qualitative data provided valuable context and helped understand vocabulary acquisition's nuances. The researchers carefully analyzed the responses from both students and teachers, identifying key themes and patterns related to vocabulary learning and instructional strategies. This comprehensive approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of the factors contributing to effective vocabulary acquisition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to language learning, regardless of whether it's a first, second, or foreign language (Celce, 2001). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering vocabulary is crucial for developing both receptive and productive language skills (Astriani et al., 2024). A strong vocabulary empowers learners to communicate effectively and confidently, while a limited vocabulary can hinder their progress and create obstacles to successful communication.

Vocabulary encompasses the words and rules for combining them that constitute a language, a person's range of known words, and lists of words with definitions or translations (Hendra, 2011). It is the cornerstone of language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening making it essential for EFL learners to develop a rich and varied vocabulary (Pagallí, 2024; Brama et al. (2024).

Digital platforms like Wordwall offer innovative ways to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Wordwall provides a range of interactive and engaging activities, including matching games, quizzes, and puzzles, that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences (Purwitasari, 2022; Friza & Wahyu, 2023). Teachers can utilize pre-designed templates or create their own customized activities to reinforce vocabulary learning and assess student progress (Brown & Rojas, 2022). This versatility makes Wordwall a valuable tool for fostering vocabulary acquisition and creating enjoyable learning experiences for students of all levels (Dwiningrum et al., 2024).

Motivation plays a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition, impacting student engagement and the overall teaching-learning process (Brama et al., 2024). Intrinsic motivation, driven by internal factors such as interest and personal growth, leads to sustained learning and higher retention rates (Pierre & Frederic, 2007). Extrinsic motivation, stemming from external factors like rewards or grades, can also influence student behavior and contribute to vocabulary learning (Stonawski, 2022).

Furthermore, learning theories such as connectivism and constructivism offer valuable frameworks for understanding vocabulary acquisition. Connectivism emphasizes the importance of connections and

the role of technology in facilitating learning and knowledge sharing (Mendoza et al., 2021). Constructivism highlights the active role of learners in constructing meaning through experience, reflection, and social interaction (Lin, 2015). Both theories underscore the importance of active learner engagement and the creation of meaningful connections in vocabulary acquisition.

RESULTS

This qualitative research explored using digital platforms for vocabulary acquisition among A2 level learners. Thematic analysis of teacher and student questionnaires and surveys revealed four key themes: the role of digital platforms in vocabulary learning, practical strategies for retaining new vocabulary, the potential of the Wordwall platform for vocabulary acquisition, and student motivation.

Table 1

Themes found in questionnaires online applied in an interview with teachers

THEMES
Language proficiency
Productive skills
Digital strategies
Strategies to teach vocabulary
Interactive activities

Teachers reported utilizing a variety of digital platforms to support vocabulary instruction, including Quizlet, Duolingo, Kahoot, YouTube, Vocaroo, Padlet, and Bamboozle. While these platforms offer diverse features and functionalities, teachers preferred creating interactive vocabulary activities using Wordwall. They highlighted its user-friendly interface, diverse activity templates, and engaging game formats as key factors in their decision-making.

Table 2

Themes found in online surveys of A2 level students

THEMES
Student's motivation
Student center
Interactive classes
Vocabulary retention
Use of new vocabulary

Interestingly, students' responses corroborated the teachers' observations. They mentioned that their teachers frequently reinforced newly taught vocabulary through various digital platforms, indicating a consistent approach to technology integration in vocabulary instruction. This suggests that teachers are actively seeking ways to leverage technology to enhance vocabulary learning and create more engaging learning experiences for their students.

Likewise, the strategies teachers apply, such as describing characters, role-playing, visual aids like pictures and videos, and repetitive practice with games, strengthen vocabulary maintenance and make the learning process more student-centered and engaging. To evaluate the vocabulary words taught in class, teachers take a written lesson using the words and expressions in the classroom. Meanwhile, students answered that printed materials or digital activities help them to learn new vocabulary.

Besides, some teachers affirmed that the Wordwall platform helps them a lot in designing vocabulary activities related to any topic. They mentioned that Wordwall activities like matching games, word searches, puzzles, anagrams, drag-and-drop activities, and quizzes make the learning process fun and benefit students in remembering vocabulary in the long term. Also, the students said they appreciated the activities mentioned before because they could work individually, with peers, or in groups and have marvelous experiences.

Finally, teachers highlighted the significant role of Wordwall in boosting student motivation. They observed increased active participation within the classroom and in real-world communication scenarios. This suggests that Wordwall's engaging activities and game formats effectively bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical application. Students echoed this sentiment, expressing enthusiasm and heightened motivation when completing Wordwall template tasks. They reported that the platform's interactive nature and diverse activities facilitated a deeper understanding of new vocabulary at their A2 level.

DISCUSSION

Data analysis revealed a clear appreciation for the Wordwall platform's ability to foster vocabulary acquisition and create enjoyable learning experiences for A2 level learners. Digital platforms, particularly Wordwall, emerged as significant contributors to students' vocabulary growth. This finding aligns with Igir et al. (2024), who demonstrated the effectiveness of Wordwall in enriching students' vocabulary in rural schools.

Furthermore, the study highlighted how integrating effective vocabulary teaching strategies within the Wordwall platform enhanced both the enjoyment and retention of new lexis. This resonates with Arsyad (2024), who found that students exhibited greater interest and improved vocabulary retention when using Wordwall compared to traditional resources like textbooks or worksheets.

The research also underscored the motivational power of Wordwall. Wahyuni et al. (2022) observed that the platform's interactive games, audio-visual elements, and colorful templates fostered a joyful and motivating classroom atmosphere, promoting collaboration and friendly competition among students. Wordwall empowers students to actively construct their vocabulary knowledge and apply it to their academic pursuits by providing a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Both teachers and students identified Wordwall as a powerful resource for enhancing vocabulary acquisition and student engagement. Its diverse interactive activities, such as matching games, quizzes, and puzzles, actively involve students in learning and promote a deeper understanding of new vocabulary.

Wordwall's versatility and customizability make it particularly effective for vocabulary instruction. Teachers can tailor activities to meet the specific needs and interests of their A2-level learners, ensuring relevance and maximizing engagement. The platform's free interactive templates, vibrant visuals, and game-like formats significantly increase student motivation.

This heightened motivation translates into improved learning outcomes. As students become more engaged and invested in learning their vocabulary acquisition and retention are enhanced. This research contributes valuable insights into the potential of Wordwall as a tool for vocabulary instruction and encourages further investigation through experimental studies to quantify its impact on student learning.

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