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Vocabulary Acquisition through Viber Emoticons Messaging App among Iraqi Students

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Abstract

Rapid increase in the use of smart mobile phones and the proliferation of social media networking programs such as facebook, tweeter, whatsapp and viber etc. affects the learning attitude of second language. This research aims to investigate the effects of emoticons provided by Viber application on Iraqi students in context of vocabulary acquisition. 60 Iraqi students are randomly selected from X international school with the average of age 7 to 9 years. All the subjects are given 50 English words for five weeks, 25 English words were written on papers and the rest Viber stickers laden with English words. The results show that students recognize the vocabularies given by Viber stickers better than the written vocabulary. In general, students show positive attitudes towards learning vocabulary via Viber stickers.

Keywords: Viber, smartphones, vocabulary learning, and Iraqi students.

Adquisición de vocabulario a través de la aplicación de mensajería Viber Emoticons entre estudiantes iraquíes

Resumen

El rápido aumento en el uso de teléfonos móviles inteligentes y la proliferación de programas de redes sociales como facebook, tweeter, whatsapp y viber, etc. afectan la actitud de aprendizaje del segundo idioma. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo investigar los efectos de los emoticones proporcionados por la aplicación Viber en estudiantes iraquíes en el contexto de la adquisición de vocabulario. 60 estudiantes iraquíes son seleccionados al azar de X escuelas internacionales con un promedio de edad de 7 a 9 años. Todos los sujetos reciben 50 palabras en inglés durante cinco semanas, 25 palabras en inglés se escribieron en papeles y el resto Viber calcomanías cargadas con palabras en inglés. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes reconocen los vocabularios dados por los stickers de Viber mejor que el vocabulario escrito. En general, los estudiantes muestran actitudes positivas hacia el aprendizaje de vocabulario a través de calcomanías de Viber.

Palabras clave: Viber, teléfonos inteligentes, aprendizaje de vocabulario y estudiantes iraquíes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Acquisition of vocabulary among students is very important as it influences their lives and attitudes. The importance stems from the fact that strong vocabulary is related to high proficiency in reading (Dixon, 2011). For example, it has for a long time been established through correlational and factor-analytic studies that vocabulary and reading competence are closely related. This is clearly evident in reading using cognitive models where verbal coding, which also includes semantic codes informs comprehension.

The major problem lies in differences found in knowledge of vocabulary among Iraqi students; right from toddler stage to high Iraqi school level, and such differences in vocabulary remain permanently (Shamir, Korat, & Fellah, 2012). Therefore, the main aspects for facilitating vocabulary acquisition for bilingual students (Mirza J, 2007) must be considered in relation to low interest in vocabulary in Iraqi schools.

With the reality that unknown words exist in most of Iraqi school learning

materials, lack of emphasis on acquisition of vocabulary should not look odd. As noted by Scott et al. (2003) teachers emphasis more on mentioning and assigning. They fail to put more efforts in teaching new vocabulary. Furthermore, research studies (Baumann, Kame'enui, and Ash, 2003) conducted over several years in schools show that schools do very little to help students acquire new vocabulary.

The issue that arises from the above is, if the schools cannot address this issue that is teaching new vocabulary. So what is a possible way to teach the vocabulary to Iraqi students?

The recent trend of people nowadays is to use social networking such as Viber. This social media application has become a popular during the last few years, and it plays a vital role in our daily lives. It can helps us in the education field. One of the features of Viber application is collaborative language learning, For example, sharing questions with different people through messages or starting meaningful and useful discussion. In addition, the emoticons messages laden with many English words draw the attention of students with their bright colors and funny forms. This research is focused on the impact on these kinds of emoticon messages on Iraqi students in the context of English vocabulary.

A. Research objective

The main objective of this research is to 'investigate the effect of emoticons provided by Viber on Iraqi students for vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the researchs of Erbes, Folkerts, Gergis, Pederson and Stivers (2010) and Shapiro and Waters (2005), would be used to find answer to the objective. These researchers have have found that pictorial representation in combination with words affect positively an individual's ability to acquire new vocabulary

B. Significance of the study

This research is to investigate the impact and role of social media on the learning new words among Iraqi primary school students, this study would provide feedback on social media in the field of education which can help teachers, students, and other researchers in learning and teaching vocabulary. It would also help Iraqi teachers to have a deeper understanding of the effect of this kind of technology on Iraqi children. And how can they use it as a tool to assist in the teaching process. While it provides support Iraqi primary school with a ways to acquire vocabulary easily. And, it would assist the researchers in improving Iraqi student's vocabulary and insights on using mobile APPS to scaffold students learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent research studies (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Nikolova, 2002; Thornton & Houser, 2005) on acquisition of vocabulary have included textual and pictorial techniques alongside such other activities as vocabulary review. Such activities are effective in introducing new word concepts and require students to interact with word meanings so as to be able to make decisions on how to use words in different scenarios. Use of these techniques has proved effective in helping students acquire new vocabulary.

However, Godwin-Jones (2011) has addressed issues related to student's learning in iPhone or Android phone to select appropriate applications. The author has clarified that the potential of new apps with enhanced capabilities increase the interest level of students to learn English vocabulary. Joseph and Uther (2009) have investigated the effect of mobile devices in facilitating mobile language learning based on multimedia use in the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) theories. They have examined the level of interaction based training of a system called MAC and the image-based training of PhotoStudy. They have recommended that the additional studies need to be conducted for evaluating the effectiveness of mobile devices in language learning.

On the other hand, Penno, Wilkinson and Moore (2002) have suggested that words to be taught should be chosen on the basis of their own nature. In this respect, words need to be picked from a word database containing complicated words for the benefit of advanced language learners. Referred to as Tier 2 words (Penno et al., 2002) are general words that are more complicated than students are, to some extent, familiar with. For instance, notice would be a refinement of visualization and commotion would be a concept of running around noisily.

A good number of research studies in the area of computer assisted language learning (CALL) have conducted in the recent years (Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004; Ouellette & Beers, 2010). These studies have attempted to address the issue how multimedia annotations affect acquisition of a second language.

Akbulut (2007) has laid a strong emphasis on associating lexical items with different media to enhance recall cues and increase retention. Other has explored the impact of multimedia annotations on acquisition of L2 and comprehension out of reading a passage by use of written material and recognition test. Test items have paralleled the modality in which the information has presented. They have established that students have excelled in both tests when only a single annotation has used. Al-Seghay-

er (2005) has also established that combining two annotations enhance student retention memory. They have observed that students who use two annotations have excelled in written vocabulary recognition test than those students who have used only one annotation or who never have used any annotation at all and the previous studies has conducted on ESL student otherwise this study will investigate the EFL students.

Similarly, Jones (2004) have conducted two separate studies with the aim of establishing how pictorial and or written annotation(s) affect students' performance in vocabulary tests, tests that require students to either recognize or recall vocabulary learnt incidentally from oral text by use of pictorial or written test items. The study has been conducted first-time on English-speaking students. Materials used in the studies having four aural multimedia treatments. The material has presented to students in a way that they could only access their own computer screens.

Jone's study findings, the group of students who did not use annotations performed worse than the group of students who used annotations. On written vocabulary tests, the group of students who used all annotations or only used written annotation performed better than those in the group that did not use any annotation. On delayed test, the group that used written annotation showed the ability to retain more vocabulary than those who did not use the same. Jones (2004) states, "the presence of both pictorial and verbal cues can facilitate learning, in particular when the corresponding visual and verbal representations are contiguously present in working memory" (p.123). The researcher did his study on two groups one of them used annotations the other without while, this study has evaluated the improving of the same students in two teaching ways one by using Viber emetics the second with traditional annotations.

On the basis of earlier discussions, it is clear that most of these studies have a strong focus on adult vocabulary acquisition of L2 language. On the other hand, other studies have focused on establishing the essential elements for learning vocabulary by children. Our research however differs from the two studies undertaken. Our research sets out to establish the effect of using verbal explanations and animated pictures together with multimedia mode in teaching students L2 language on the basis of Viber emoticons.

Viber is the latest social networking application. It is a cross platform messaging application specially designed for use on Smartphones. In addition to sending text, the application also allows a Smartphone user to share such media as audio messages, videos and images over the Internet

(Gasmi, 2014). And there are other dimensions behind choosing Viber like Current widespread ownership of mobile and wireless devices which are in a position to take the lead and engage activities motivated by their personal needs and circumstances of use, including those arise from mobility and travel” (Kukulka-Hulme, Traxler & Pettit, 2007; Pettit & Kukulka-Hulme, 2007). Moreover in the current study the researcher has applied one new dimension which is the using of the emoticons which they already existed in Viber appreciation in the teaching and learning of new words.

The use of Viber among Iraqi students for acquiring English vocabulary as a second language can contribute to the field of learning in many different ways; first, identifying the effectiveness of Viber can enable schools to consider using it for students through the meaning of pictorial elements. And second, provide students with alternative tool for engaging in independent and collaborative learning experiences by chatting using emoticons.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a mix method study design, the experimental part adapted from the researches of Erbes, Folkerts, Gergis, Pederson and Stivers (2010) and Shapiro and Waters (2005) because they were effective manner to measure the effect of the pictorial in the process of acquiring new words, the experiment was implementing in this research in order to measure the efficacy of using emoticons in learning new words. Observations part was conducted for two reasons first- to support and enhance the results of the experimental part second- to study the students’ attitude towards using emoticons in Viber.

A. Research instruments:

Number of emoticons which contains picture and related word which can explain the pictures were used In order to observe and to get the accessibility to the data when it is necessary. The sessions documented by using an audio recorder. In particular, the observations were recorded in an authentic way where there was no outside stimulus to achieve specific purpose.

B. Participants:

The participants who in this research were selected from X international school in KL who learn English as a foreign language, 60 school age children 28 of them were male and 32 female, their ages were ranged between 7 to 9 years old. The participants were daily users of Viber they used to communicate with their family and friends.

C. Data analysis:

The data were analyzed using SPSS. ANOVA TEST between groups was used. The average mean of scores and standard deviations of the strategies were calculated and ranked, in order to answer the research questions.

D. Research procedure:

This study conducted in the class of in English language in the X international school; the subsequent steps are followed to collect the data, first of all the students are asked about their access to Viber emoticon icons. After the meeting of the coordinator of the school and explained the aim of the research to get the permission for the data collection the permission had given from the family of the children.

To find out the extent to which the students can receive and memorize new vocabulary in a short period of time, and the influence of the images associated with each word, a short experiment were applied. The students were given a list of 10 words weekly as homework for five weeks, which includes five words written on a paper, and five Viber stickers on paper. After that the students were instructed to memorize these words at the end of each week, the students were given a paper which includes ten pictures (five pictures of the five words written on a paper, and five Viber stickers) and instructed to write what they see on each picture.

The students were monitored and observed using Viber emoticons to perceive how students respond to the technique. The observations were recorded in observation logs which include work patterns, activities and the general impression of students toward using technology to learn new words.

The observations are focused on how students respond to the technique. For instance, how they react when new emoticons are introduced, this can be traced by the parents while monitoring their children

IV.. FINDINGS

The obtained result was organized into week based on achievement and analyzed with considering the differences in mean and standard deviation. Table 1 shows the results of descriptive and ANOVA test. The descriptive result showed that students had a small improvement where the mean was slightly increased throughout the period of the experiment (mean=2.33 & STD=1.03 for the first week, mean=2.30 & STD=0.94 for the second week, mean=2.49 & STD= 0.93 for the third week, mean=2.57 & STD=1.12 for

the third week, and mean=2.50 &STD=1.03 for the fifth week). Based on the ANOVA test and Figure 2, it can be summed that students who learned with the normal method had no significance differences in their achievement where $F(4,495) = 1,317$ and $p=0.262$ ($p>0.05$). This means that students did not find normal method to be efficient enough for improving their vocabulary acquisition in which it was limited to the interaction elements. This result is found to be consistent with the recommendations of Baumann, Kame'enui, and Ash (2003) and Akbulut (2007) who stated that students in their early stage of learning English vocabulary must be assisted and supported to do so.

Table 1: Descriptive and ANOVA results for the normal method

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		ANOVA	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	F	Sig.
Week1	60	2.3300	1.03529	2.1246	2.5354	1.317	.262
Week2	60	2.3000	.94815	2.1119	2.4881		
Week3	60	2.4900	.93738	2.3040	2.6760		
Week4	60	2.5700	1.12146	2.3475	2.7925		
Week5	60	2.5000	1.03962	2.2937	2.7063		
Total	300	2.4380	1.01992	2.3484	2.5276		

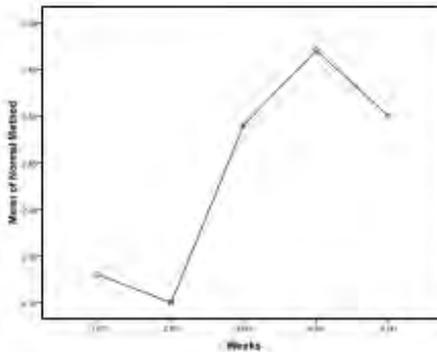


Figure 1: Visual representation for the mean changes with the normal method (traditional method)

Table 2 shows the results of descriptive and ANOVA test for student's achievement while using Viber. The descriptive result showed that there was a noticeable improvement in student's achievement throughout the

learning period (mean=3.24 & STD=1.27 for the first week, mean=3.36 & STD=1.16 for the second week, mean=3.40 & STD= 1.14 for the third week, mean=3.52 & STD=1.05 for the third week, and mean=3.73 &STD=1.11 for the fifth week).

Based on the ANOVA test and Figure 2, it can be summed that there was a significant differences in students achievement to learn using Viber where $F(4,495)= 2,588$ and $p=0.262$ ($p>0.05$). The obtained result sends a clear message that using emoticons messages in Viber promote better acquisition of English vocabulary.

This result is found to be in line with some previous studies like Jones (2004) who found that students recall better with pictorial elements than the written text. The obtained result also give additional insights alongside the one provided by Joseph and Uther (2009) in which learning English can be facilitated with mobile apps. It also enriches the current researches for examining the effectiveness of mobile apps in English vocabulary acquisition. From the observation the researcher found that the students shown more cooperative and enthusiastic to the vocabulary which is related to the Viber emoticons and the pay more attention to this emoticons. All of the time the students start to learn the emoticons before the other group of words and they were looking for them in each sessions.

Table 2: Descriptive and ANOVA results for the normal method

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		ANOVA	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	F	Sig.
1.00	60	3.2400	1.27224	2.9876	3.4924	2.588	.036
2.00	60	3.3600	1.16792	3.1283	3.5917		
3.00	60	3.4000	1.14592	3.1726	3.6274		
4.00	60	3.5200	1.05868	3.3099	3.7301		
5.00	60	3.7300	1.11785	3.5082	3.9518		
Total	300	3.4500	1.16198	3.3479	3.5521		

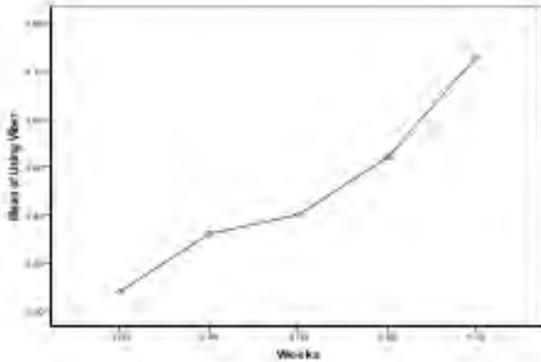


Figure 2: Visual representation for the mean changes with Viber

V. Discussion and conclusion

As mentioned earlier, a good number of research studies in the area of computer assisted language learning have conducted in the recent years (Coynes, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004; Ouellette & Beers, 2010). These studies have attempted to address the issue of how multimedia annotations affect acquisition new words.

Furthermore, many researchers such as (Jones; 2004, Al-Seghayer; 2005, Beck & McKeown, 2007; Nikolova, 2002; Thornton & Houser, 2005) are interested on acquisition of vocabulary which include textual and pictorial techniques alongside such other activities as vocabulary review. But unfortunately, the Vocabulary acquisition through social networking programs has not performed despite it is important and has significant effect on language learning. This study has more illustrating for the way by which can invest the dueling technology in the process of teaching and learning new words and its pictorial techniques.

The current study can be considered as a supplement to the Joseph and Uther (2009) study in which additional studies are recommended to be conducted for evaluating the effectiveness of mobile devices in language learning, but, this research focused on the effects of social networking programs provided by mobile devices in the acquisition of the second language learning especially by using the emoticons.

Furthermore, Godwin-Jones (2011) has clarified the potential of new apps of iPhone or Android phone with enhanced capabilities in increasing the interest level of students to learn English vocabulary, which has confirmed during present research work. Otherwise, this study concen-

trate on the capability and ability of memorize from the Viber stickers is higher than the list of words.

Beside all that and according to Jones (2004), “the presence of both pictorial and verbal cues can facilitate learning, in particular when the corresponding visual and verbal representations are contiguously present in working memory” we can note that, Jones (2004) confirms the presented results, and objectives of the current research.

The results illustrate that the Iraqi EFL students who participated in the research have positive attitudes toward English vocabulary acquisition using the Viber emoticons. The findings are supported by studies related to the use of mobile devices in learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, it can be concluded that this research has filled the gaps of the previous studies. Where it has covered all of the limitations and obstacles to the use of mobile pictorial technique in Iraqi EFL courses and, it touched three dimension of using the technology in the educational system (such as using mobile in the English vocabulary acquisition academic system, the importance of picture on the students behavior toward vocabulary acquiring, and the interaction between the students and the mobile devices.) It also carries a clear message to consider the use of the elements of emoticons messages for scaffolding the traditional learning. Additional emphasis can be explored in future studies by examining how students interact with emoticons messages and its relation to their recalling abilities.

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