

# The Effect of Using Web-Site Games on Saudi Pupils' Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Motivation

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## Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of using web-site games on the route and the rate of Saudi pupils' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation quantitatively and qualitatively. The sample of the study consisted of forty male pupils from Madinah Directorate of Education. Anwar AL-Faihaa' School was randomly chosen from the total number of basic schools in that directorate in the first semester of the academic year 2011-2012. In that school, there were two sixth grade classes: Section (A) consisted of 20 students and it was assigned as an experimental group, while the other was decided to be a controlling group. It was also consisted of 20 students. Data were collected with twelve weeks via a pre-posttest design for equivalent group. The results of the study indicated that students who were taught using web-site games had better results than those who were taught using the traditional method. The researcher concluded that web-site games could facilitate pupils' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition since they motivate students and make them involved in the teaching process. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education represented by the Directorate of Curricula should accompany the main English textbooks with links to web-site games that do not harm or contradict with our traditions and our culture. Additionally, there is a need for more computerized games to teach other language components and skills. Moreover, the educational philosophies, methodologies, and curricula should be rearranged to design other web-sites of educational games as integral strategies to meet the needs of the new age since they contribute to the development of students' language skills and mental growth.

**Keywords:** Web-Site Games, Motivation, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Acquisition, Saudi Pupils.

## 1. Introduction

Web-site games have an essential role in the teaching process because students feel relaxed while practicing language skills. Games have also an essential role in breaking the educational obstacles since teachers who adopt them must take into consideration individual differences among students. Using Language games requires teachers to plan in advance for what they have to do and to provide students with the necessary materials. Furthermore, teachers should provide students with the experiences which make the class more energetic and communicative (Atiyat, 1992). Betzm (1995) argued that games should not be considered as kinds of useless media in a classroom, but rather as tools which stimulate the communicative activities. Furthermore, Ersoz (2003) argued that in language teaching, it is preferable to use games. Teachers also help students to learn how to organize their thoughts through arranging a group of activities directed toward the students. Kim as well (1995) claimed that instructional games not only make learning a language possible but also allow the learners to enjoy themselves as they do that. She cited the following as some of many strategies of using instructional games in the classroom:

- The aims of the games must be in advance decided.
- The games must suit students' level and cognitive abilities.

The Saudi Ministry of Education has been spending a good deal of money on technology over the last two decades. Computers, networks, and CD Rom drivers are common sights in most Saudi schools, perhaps not in the numbers, many students, teachers or parents would like, but certainly in quantities which should suggest this investment is having an effect on teaching and learning.

Activities such as web-site games are practiced in the various language skills. They encourage learners to interact and communicate to create a meaningful environment for language use (Sutheo, 2004).

Some web-sites offer a flashcard maker or an online game like a crossword. These ways are also helpful because users have fun, but learning all at the same time. Games are used not only for fun, but also for the useful practice. They are motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to practice language skills (Sari, 2006).

If web-site games are worth paying attention to and implementing in the FL classroom as they motivate learners, promote communication competence, and generate fluency (Uberman, 1998).

Web-site games bring an authentic context into the FL classroom, enhance students' use of English in a flexible communicative way, accordingly, the role of games in teaching vocabulary cannot be denied (Huyen and Nga, 2003).

Furthermore, vocabulary learning through games improved learning and retention while making learning fun and arousing interest. The added advantage of using games is the opportunity to practice vocabulary informally

(Shaw, 2009).

Additionally, web-site games enable students to develop their communicative skills. Many experts of language teaching agree that playing games is a good way to learn vocabulary. In addition, it is one of the activities, which require students to communicate with their classmates, using their own English (Huyen & Nga, 2003).

Vocabulary learning through Web-Site games improves learning and retention while making learning fun and arousing interest. The add advantage of using games is the opportunity to practice vocabulary informally (Uzun, 2009).

With web-site games, language teachers can create contexts in which students ought to use language to communicate, exchange ideas and express their own opinions (Wright, Betteridge & Buck, 1984).

In addition, Coleman (1990) regarded web-site games as one of the oldest and simplest techniques, which have a prominent role in the teaching to achieve the educational goals. Coleman considered educational games as integral strategies since they contribute to the development of the individual language skills and mental growth. According to Gardner (1998, cited in Ningsih, 2008), web-site games have an effective role in the teaching process because students feel relaxed while practicing language skills. Games have also an essential role in breaking the educational obstacles since teachers who adopt them must take into consideration individual differences among students.

More importantly, using web – site games requires FL teachers to plan in advance for what they have to do and to provide learners with the needed materials. Furthermore, teachers should provide students with the experience, which make the class more energetic and communicative (Coleman, 1999).

Levy (1997) claimed that games should not be considered as kinds of useless media in a classroom, but rather as tools, which stimulate the communicative activities.

More importantly, (Ernoz, 2000) argued that web-site games engage students in activities involving the targeted skills, and help them to achieve some desirable learning outcomes independently of a teacher. Furthermore, computer games provide learners with an environment in which they solve problems, accomplish tasks and so on.

Like others, Nagy (1989) found out that learning achieved via computers, audio books and multimedia facilities could positively influence students' vocabulary learning and reading comprehension.

Folse (2004) argued that it is a myth to say that learning vocabulary is not as important as learning grammar or other aspects of language learning, when in reality vocabulary learning has extremely important role in English language learning. This is because the more words students know, the more they are able to comprehend what they hear and read; hence the better they are able to say what they want when speaking or writing (Cited in Zuraina et al. 2012).

### *1.1 Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem*

Although foreign language learning and teaching have been quite popular for a long time, little attention has been devoted to the use of games in language teaching. However, the emergence of new technological equipment, environments, and software has created a new generation of learners, namely digital natives (Coleman, 1999)

It is clearly observed that many persons have noticed the flexible solutions that technology serves, and its advantage to enhance learning. There are several university programs that are run online. There are also a number of online web-sites and materials for FL learning.

Web-site games offer to unify these different interests and needs. In other words, because every person likes playing games letting people learn while enjoying themselves would be a great idea. Throughout this paper web-site games were used to investigate their effect on Saudi student's vocabulary growth and reading comprehension.

Foreign language learners find it uneasy to communicate openly in the target language. This might be due to the methods of teaching and the learning environment, which might be ineffective for learning a foreign language. In order to get a better idea about the attitudes of both teachers and students of the sixth grade toward using modern methods for teaching vocabulary and to judge the effect of such methods on students' communication skills, the researcher conducted two surveys, involved 56 students and 40 teachers. The major results of the surveys showed that about 53% of students stated that they prefer that the teachers adopt modern methods. About 75% of the students agreed that the method affect their achievement. Concerning the attitudes of students and teachers

toward using modern technology for teaching learning vocabulary, about 84% of the students and 86% of the teachers affirmed that they would use modern technology if they have a chance to use it. About 83% of the students stated that they have the ability to use the web-site games which may have a positive effect on their communication skills.

These results showed the necessity for adopting modern methods such as using web-site games for teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension, which will help in the development of students' communication skills such as using web – site games and reading comprehension.

More importantly, the researcher has supervised FL teachers who taught textbook for the elementary classes' students and noticed that vocabulary was one of the major problems confronting students. The researcher attempts to find out the effect of using web-site games on students' vocabulary learning and reading comprehension.

This study aimed at investigating the effect of using web-site games on students' vocabulary use in meaningful contexts and reading comprehension since they suffer from some problems in the comprehension of what they read or hear.

Besides, the aim of investigating the effect of using web-site games on students' rote and rate of vocabulary learning, it also aims to determine if there is any effect of web-site games on helping the students' apply the words they have learned in like-life situations.

The present study offered pedagogical applications for teachers, students, as well as curricula designers. More importantly, the results might help teachers to have a better view on using a variety of activities as games in creating contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

Furthermore, the study assured the importance of using web-site games for learning vocabulary on students' communication skills development. In addition, it is expected that this study will help students in applying the words they have learned in real life situations.

English speaking sites provided excellent possibilities to meet authentic texts. On the other hand, the web is a medium in which students can be exposed to an authentic learning experience. (Stitheo, 2004).

Moreover, the significance of this study stems from the fact that it provides FL teachers with objective evidence about the usefulness of using web-site games in teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension to sixth grade students. It also helped teachers increase students' motivation towards learning vocabulary as they were taught through computerized games in a class full of enjoyment to excitement (Ernoz, 2000).

### *1.2. Questions of the Study*

- Do web-site games have any effect on students' acquisition of vocabulary
- Do web-site games have any effect on students' vocabulary use in contexts and reading comprehension.
- Do students respond positively and with motivation to the web-site games? Did they enjoy playing these games?

### *1.3. The Hypotheses of the study*

The study assumed that:

- 1: There are no significant differences in students' adequate use of vocabulary in contexts verbally and graphically due to the use of web-site games.
- 2: There are no significant differences in the extent effect of web-site games at  $\alpha = 0.05$  on students' communication and reading comprehension.
- 3: Students have negative attitudes towards web-site games. They did not interact with happily and enthusiastically.

## **2. Literature Review**

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of web-site games on learning vocabulary and reading comprehension. Some others indicated no effect for the web-site games and others suggesting the advantage of web-site games on students' vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

In a very fruitful study, Alemi (2010) investigated the role of using word games in expanding the learner's vocabulary. The participants were selected randomly from a male /female group of third grade junior high school students studying at a private school. This study investigated one of the most important issues in EFL instruction, i.e., vocabulary development. It revealed that word games have a lot of potentialities, which can be of great use in EFL classroom settings.

Additionally, a scientific study aimed to draw attention to the use of web-site games in language teaching and learning conducted by Uzun (2009) suggested that using games, as a learning method is promising and has a potential to be quite effective. Also this study underlines the necessity to develop more educational games that can be used in CALL. The researcher affirmed that there is more need for empirical data related to the use and effect of games in FL teaching. From the results of his study, the researcher in the FL field recommended improving that accelerates learning of foreign languages.

A study conducting by Ningish (2008) aimed at developing student's vocabulary by using web-site games with songs and pictures applied integratedly in teaching vocabulary for kindergarten students and to know the result of teaching vocabulary by using web-site games with songs. The result of the study shows that using web-site games with songs and pictures interestedly is more effective for teaching vocabulary for kindergarten students, because games with songs and pictures make the lesson enjoyable and help them learn vocabulary easily. Besides, games make the teachers handle the class better and make almost all student can practice their vocabulary.

Yip & Kwan (2006) examined the effectiveness of web-site games as a tool for teaching and learning English Vocabulary. The study aimed at investigating the usefulness of web-site games in vocabulary learning for some undergraduate students. Three teachers and 100 engineering students participated in a quasi-experimental study for approximately nine weeks. The experimental group learnt vocabulary from two selected web-sites, whereas, the control group learnt the same vocabulary through activity based lessons. A pre-test and post-test were conducted in the first and ninth weeks. The results appeared to suggest that learning conducted in the first and ninth weeks. The results appeared to suggest that learning with web-sites games is more effective than activity-based learning, also learners playing web-site games tend to learn better and could retain the learnt vocabulary for a longer period of time and retrieve more words than those simple attended face-to-face lessons accessing the vocabulary games.

Furthermore, in a study aimed to discuss the advantages of using online resources in language learning and to investigate the importance of vocabulary teachers. Sutheo (2004), analyzed some web-sites in the light of their use in language teaching. She concluded that teachers benefit very much from using the World Wide (www) in language teaching.

In a study titled: 'learning Vocabulary through web-site games, conducted by Huyen & Nga (2003) tried to answer the following question " Do games help students learn vocabulary effectively, and if so, how?"

Concluded that learning vocabulary through games is an effective and interesting tool that can be applied in our FL classrooms. The results of this research suggested that games are used not only for mere fun, but, for the useful practice and review of language lessons, thus leading toward improving learner's communicative competence.

Lingnau et al. (2003) claimed that web-site games have been played for the sake of entertainment for many years, whereas the application of simulation and games in the educational domain is a recent development. One of the main concerns of current approaches in education is how to change the traditional classroom atmosphere and the learning environment that had been characterized by the teacher as an authoritative transmitter and the student as a passive receiver. The aim was to create an active environment where the teacher is a facilitator and the student is an active participant.

Levy (1997) examined the computers' effect on the learning of new words. Eleven first grade children in the experimental group were taught specific sight words via the computer while eleven children of the control group were using flashcards in the classroom. Results indicated that the experimental group obtained a significantly higher score than those in the control group.

Coleman (1999) claimed that familiarity is a significant variable in recognition, learning, and recall. All foreign words are unfamiliar to the learner at their first learning. The more frequently a word is used, the more association value it acquires and the faster it is learned. He also said that the interaction within a group of words to be learned at the same time was reviewed in terms of serial position, semantic relationship, amount of intake, and context.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Population and the sample of the study*

The population of the study was the sixth grade students at Madinah Directorate of Education. The approximate number of the male and female students in the sixth grade in that Directorate was thousand. Anwar AL-Faihaa' Elementary School for Girls was randomly selected as a sample of that study.

#### *3.2. The Study instruments*

Two instruments were applied during that study; including test and web-site games:

- 1- Test: This instrument was of three-parts test, the first part measured the students' use of vocabulary in context verbally and graphically and the student's ability for applying the words they have learned in a life like situation. The third part measured their reading comprehension.
- 2- The web-site games: This instrument was web-site games that are appropriate for the students' ages and levels. Certain games were included within the experiment.

The home page presents an opening screen including the title of the program, the class and the researcher's name the third screen consists of a table of contents buttons (next, back) and the Teacher's Overview. The Teacher's Overview is a menu that provides a concise lesson plan and offers teachers a list of the words, which appear in each game. Students can click on the icon that represents the game on which they wish to play. If the students want to quit an exercise and practice another one, they can click on the main button to go back to the table of contents. Another one, they click on the main button to go back to the table of contents. From this menu, students are able to choose which game like to enter.

The menu contains Vocabulary and spelling games. In the vocabulary games, students have to drag the suitable item and drop in its correct position, students, have three alternatives to answer.

The second consists of the spelling games, having the same background and buttons but the color of the background is different. In the spelling game there are four faces which will be crossed out gradually with every mistake students commit. The instructional games and designed around the certain topics that suit students' aptitudes.

#### *3.3 Instruments validity*

The first instrument (Test) was given to a jury of experts and a group of teachers of English in order to support its validity through their views about the accuracy, clarity and the appropriateness of the instrument. Then, the instrument was modified depending on their recommendations.

#### *3.4. Instrument reliability*

The reliability of the first instrument was calculated after testing and retesting technique. The Kuder – Richardson's Formula was used by the researcher to calculate the reliability coefficient of the results of the tests. To determine the reliability of the test, the researcher used the test-retest technique. The test was administered twice to 27 students with a three-weeks period between the test and the retest.

The 27 students were not included in the sample. The reliability coefficient of the test was calculated using Pearson correlation. It was found to be (0.84).

#### *3.5 The variables*

The variables of the study included the teaching method (using web-site games) as independent variable. The students' post-test score (which measured students' reading comprehension and their ability to retain the words) as a dependent variable.

#### *3.6 Study design and procedure*

The experiment of the study was conducted for 12 weeks during the second semester of the academic year 2011/2012. The study sample consisted of 40 sixth grade students in two groups chosen randomly from Anwar AL-Faihaa' for Girls. The students sat to a pre-test in order to assure the students' levels and students' individual differences. Certain words were taught for the groups of the experiment. The control group's subjects were taught traditionally. The teachers participating in the experiments were 2 teachers with more than five years of teaching experience in teaching English for the primary stage. The teacher in the experiment group was with a good computer literacy. After conducting the classes and activities, a post-test was given to the students, then it was scored and the scores were tabulated and prepared for statistical analysis.

### 3.7. Limitations of the study

- The material of the study included certain words, which were stated in the students' book used by the Ministry of Education in KSA.
- The duration of the study was limited to a period of 12 weeks.
- Measuring the effect of using web-site games on students' efficient use of vocabulary in context verbally and graphically at the elementary stage, reading comprehension and motivation.
- This study was limited to the sixth grade students who learned English at the Madinah Directorate of Education in the second semester of the academic year 2011/2012.

## 4. Findings of the Study

This study aimed at investigating the effect of using web-site games on EFL sixth grade students learning of vocabulary and using them in communication compared to the traditional techniques of teaching vocabulary and using them in communication.

### 4.1. Quantitative statistical analysis

#### 4.1.1 Results and discussion

According to the quantitative analysis of the examinees' pre-test results, no significant differences existed between the subjects in the control group (mean score 52.08) and the experimental group (mean score 53.75). This indicated that the two groups were equivalent and homogeneous in their vocabulary growth

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation for Both Groups on the Pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	DF	T value	Sig.
Control-pre-test	20	52.8	13.25	38	0.205	0.881
Experimental pre-test	20	53,75	15.87			

The proper statistical means showed that the subjects in the control performed very similarly in the pre-test (M: 52, .8; SD: 13, 25) compared to the subjects in the experimental group (M: 53.75, SD: 15, 87). An independent samples T test indicated that the difference between the subjects' test results in both groups in the pre-test was not statistically significant,  $p > 0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that there were not any significant differences in the subjects' vocabulary knowledge levels in the pre-test.

Because of the experiment based on the web-site games, there was clear progress related to the vocabulary knowledge of the subjects, with superiority of those in the experimental group (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Experimental and Control Group Students' Results on the Pre and Post-tests

Control Group		Experimental Group	
Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
55	58	54	62
56	54	55	63
55	51	57	65
50	52	53	60
51	55	54	61
53	54	57	68
55	57	52	60
40	50	51	60
58	60	56	64
48	52	50	59
50	52	53	63
50	52	53	62
55	56	58	63
54	56	55	65
47	51	51	59
51	53	50	58
50	51	53	60
52	56	55	63
50	52	56	66
56	57	52	60
<b>52.08</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>53.75</b>	<b>62.05</b>

The results presented in table 2 demonstrated that the experimental group subjects exceeded the vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of the control group. This means that playing web-site games in the classes had a positive effect on student' L2 vocabulary acquisition of the students and their reading comprehension.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of the Control and Experimental Groups' on the Post test

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	DF	T value	Sig.
Control-post-test	20	53,95	11.51	38	2.030	0.000
Experimental post-test	20	62,05	13.63			

The statistical analysis showed that students in the control group seemed to perform less successfully in the post-test (M:53, 95; SD:11,51) than their counterparts in the experimental group (M:62,05; SD: 13,63). An independent samples T test was carried out to see whether the differences between the students' test results in both groups in the post-test were statistically significant. The results revealed that the difference between the groups' scores were statistically significant with a medium effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that the subjects in the experimental group scored statistically higher scores on the post-test in comparison with the students in the control group.

#### 4.2. Qualitative analysis

The researcher's observations revealed that the students in the experimental group were more excited than control group's students. It was clear that students in experimental group were more comfortable during the classes. According to their comments, the experimental group subjects indicated that the English classes have become more motivating and interesting. They also added that playing improved their social relationship. They added that they learned new lexicons that were not in their course book.

##### 4.2.1 Qualitative observations

The present study reveals the effects of using web-site games on the subjects' acquisition of English words, reading comprehension, and motivation. The experimental groups' comments regarding their new experience of using web-site games was included at the end of every answer sheet were a source of the qualitative dimension of the study to understand pupils' views of web-site games.

The results of the study showed that there is a positive effect of using web-site games on the experimental group. The results may be due to the fact that students feel more relaxed as they feel free to the activity which they like to practice.

Moreover, web-site games change the teacher's role from a manager to facilitator, that is, the teacher provides the students with help to do their tasks.

According to the researcher' qualitative analysis and interpretations of the experimental group students' responses to the question " Did you feel happy about web-site games?", he might be allowed state that the experimental group pupils were happy and relaxed while working on computers; they were clapping, and smiling. Moreover, computer games broke the routines. For instance, students shouted, clapped, sang, and enjoyed their time. They also cooperated with each other.

In addition, they liked sounds and music. Web-site games lead to a more comfortable atmosphere, which encouraged the learners to interact and communicate.

Furthermore, web-site games gave the shy students a chance to express themselves freely and openly without any hesitation.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, the researcher examined the effect of web-site games on vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension and motivation of Saudi students, and proposed a model for material development. The researcher's observation was that FL students can benefit significantly from even traditional games.

Additionally, from the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of web-site games motivates students towards positive learning and creates a comfortable atmosphere. It also enhances the students' reading comprehension and learning of vocabulary and using them in life – like situations within contexts weather graphically or verbally. They also facilitate the teacher's job by changing his role from a manager to a facilitator. So, web-site games can be judged better than traditional games in teaching English vocabulary items and using them in contexts.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Further similar studies for other classes can be conducted in order to make the results more valid and more widely applicable. Undergraduate students can be given courses on using web-site games in teaching English.
- The Ministry of Education can activate the role of web-site games and adopt them in its curricula.
- The Ministry of Education should train teachers by giving workshops on using web-site games.


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### Autobiography

Ahmad M. Bataineh is an associate professor of applied linguistics. He worked as a member of English curricula at the Ministry of Education from 1999-2002. He is a member of the National Team of Curricula. He worked as a member of a committee for promoting teachers working at the Ministry of Education in Jordan. He evaluated more than 80 English language books taught at Jordanian private schools, and prepared reports for the Council of Education for approving or disapproving the teaching of these books. He was a member in the Jordanian National Team for preparing new English curricula and text books for grades from 1-12. He participated in editing and revising English language text books taught in Jordan. He has a number of research papers in English language and literature, methods of teaching Eng, as well as designing its curricula. He worked on the preparation of English learning plan and its adaptation by the Institute of English language in (Oregon) USA to Americanize teaching English in Jordan. He gave seminars on foreign language teaching and testing, and the integration of language and culture at local and international different universities. He gave seminars on machine translation, Muslim-Christian dialogues, human rights and peace. He Teaches MA and PhD courses at his university and at Amman Arab University. He has supervised on PhD students at different universities. He worked as a head of the Conferences Department at AL-al Bayt University. He is works as a head of Quality Assurance Department. He has multi – experiences in curricula, teaching English as global language, teaching English as foreign language, methodology, conferences, quality assurance, Muslim-Christian dialogues, human rights and peace. He has new orientations towards having change in foreign language classes, because he strongly believes that language is an ear and a tongue. He believes in teaching language with its culture, because language can be regarded as a body and its culture is a soul.

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