

You've Been Framed – Learning English Vocabulary through Game

Tengku Farah Petri Tengku Mahmood, Afni Anida Adnan, Sharina Salmi Azmi, Ruhil Nadiah Abu Bakar

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Abstract— Vocabulary acquisition is vital in learning a language. To express ideas and communicate clearly, sufficient amount of vocabulary is required for language learners. Learning vocabulary maybe challenging to second language learners, so language instructors come up with many ways to make language learning interesting. One of the ways to learn English vocabulary is through games. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether second language learners could acquire new vocabulary through “You've Been Framed” game. This study designs a vocabulary based game for language learners. Then it uses a set of questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the game. The results of the study would include whether players can understand the rules of playing the game and enjoy playing it. Besides that, the effectiveness of the game in learning new vocabularies through implicit learning was also investigated. This study contributes to the language learning literature particularly in implicit language learning through games.

Keywords— board game, implicit learning, language games, vocabulary, games, word play

I. INTRODUCTION

Playing language games is one of many ways to draw students' attention to learn language. Students may feel more relaxed when playing games and they may try to improve their gaming skills to win the games. According to Taspinar, Schmidt and Schuhbauer (2016), teaching students in an enjoyable and effective way requires the addition of interactive elements in the mix of educational elements. One of the problems about second language learners is having lack of vocabulary. In learning a language, vocabulary is an essential part because there is an apparent link between students' vocabulary size and their performance of language skills. Students with limited vocabulary may have trouble to express themselves when they write or speak. Thus, to improve students' vocabulary, the researchers created a vocabulary based game to introduce English words to second language learners. It is hoped that with this game, second language learners may learn more English vocabulary.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Previously in language acquisition, vocabulary teaching and learning were given little importance (Alemi and

Tayebi, 2011). However, according to Alemi and Tayebi (2011) the significance of vocabulary and its significance in learning a language have become more accepted. They further explained that vocabulary is a basic component of language proficiency which provides the basis for learners' performance in other skills, such as speaking, reading, listening and writing. At present, there were many studies that showed the importance of teaching vocabulary in learning a language (Huckin & Coady, 1999; Griffiths 2003; 2006).

In fact, vocabulary knowledge was viewed to be of primary importance by language learners themselves and they often feel that many of their difficulties in both receptive and productive language use result from inadequate vocabulary (Nation, 1990).

Laufer (1998) stated that the major difference between native speakers and non-native speakers of English is in the amount of vocabulary they possess. Acquiring sufficiently large amount of vocabulary is the single most significant challenge faced by language learners (Lewis, 2000).

III. IMPLICIT LEARNING

According to Ellis (1994:1) terminology, implicit learning is typically defined as acquisition of knowledge by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation, while explicit learning is said to be characterised by more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure. This concurred with Cleeremans, Destrebecqz and Boyer (1998:406) who defined implicit learning as the ability to learn without awareness, when we acquire new knowledge without intending to do so in such a way that this knowledge is difficult to express.

Incidental vocabulary acquisition often takes place in second language learning. Huckin and Coady (1999) reported that most scholars agree that except for the first few thousand most common words, L2 vocabulary is predominantly acquired incidentally while Gass (1999) believed incidental vocabulary acquisition is the side effect of another activity neglects the active role of the learner in this process. Rieder, (2003) explained that in the field of vocabulary acquisition, incidental learning is largely defined as the learning of vocabulary as a by-product of any activity not explicitly geared towards vocabulary learning. It seems that past literature showed that second language learners may acquire vocabulary as by an entailment of other activities which are not geared explicitly towards vocabulary learning. This study aims to investigate whether second language learners are able to acquire new vocabulary through “You’ve Been Framed” game.

IV. GAME DESIGN

Game mechanics

This section explains how “You’ve Been Framed” is played. Players may make some changes to the game play according to their proficiency level. Beginners may use a dictionary to help them find suitable words and advanced players may not use a dictionary and may set a time limit to make the game more challenging. The following are the steps to play “You’ve Been Framed”.

- a. Each player decides on his/her colour.
- b. Each player takes four consonants and three vowels.
- c. Players decide on their turns.
- d. The player who goes first, must form a word and place frames, other than his/her colour.
- e. The player with the colour of the last frame will have to form the next word.

- f. If he/she has no similar letter, he/she must take the number of letters presented by the previous letter.
- g. If the next player has a similar letter and can use it, he/she must take only the number of letters before the similar letter in the previous word.
- h. If the player is unable to form a word, he must take 2 consonants and 1 vowel. If he/she still unsuccessful in forming a word, he must forfeit his/her turn.
- i. The winner is decided when there are no frames left and the player with the least number of letters wins.
- j. For reverse frame, player may use reverse frame to reverse the colour of the last frame. For example the player uses green (H), blue (I) and red (T) for the word **HIT**. The one uses the reverse frame may choose any colour besides RED to play for the next turn.

V. GAME EVALUATION

A game evaluation was carried among 28 respondents aged between 14 to 32 years old. Respondents were briefed about the game before they start playing. To control total time played, players were given only 2 minutes to come up with a suitable word for their turn. To obtain feedbacks on the game the researchers had developed a questionnaire for players to answer after the played the game. The evaluation was intended to test the effectiveness of “You’ve Been Framed” game and its overall design for future improvements.

Table 1 and 2 below reveal that 100% of the respondents enjoyed playing the game and they found the game interesting. This might be because the players are in control of the game. They are able to create words with the letters they have in hand and decide who will play in the next turn. They may strategise the game play by forming allies to make the it more entertaining. Thus, 92.9% of the respondents decided to recommend the game to their friends (see Table 3).

Table 1: I enjoyed playing the game

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	9	32.1
Strongly Agree	19	67.9
Total	28	100.0

Table 2: I find the game interesting

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	8	28.6
Strongly Agree	20	71.4
Total	28	100.0

Table 3: I would recommend this game to my friends

	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	2	7.1
Agree	7	25.0
Strongly Agree	19	67.9
Total	28	100.0

Table 4 reveals that 89.3% agreed that the game helped them think of words very quickly. This may be because the feel pressured to come up with a suitable word as others are waiting for their turn.

Table 4: The game helps me think of words very quickly

	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	3	10.7
Agree	6	21.4
Strongly Agree	19	67.9
Total	28	100.0

Table 5 reveals that 96.4% of the respondents like playing the games with their friends. This may be because they can interact freely with their friends while playing the game.

Table 5: I like playing the game with my friends

	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	1	3.6
Agree	2	7.1
Strongly Agree	25	89.3
Total	28	100.0

Table 6 and 7 reveal that 85.7% respondents found that the game is easy, however there were mixed opinions about whether the game is confusing. 39.3% of the respondents found that the game was rather confusing. This maybe because it was the first time the respondents played the

game. The game play is also relatively complicated to play. It might require the respondents to play a few times to get accustomed to it. However 50% of respondents found that the game was not confusing at all. This maybe because they could understand the concept of the game play well.

Table 6: I find the game easy

	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	4	14.3
Agree	15	53.6
Strongly Agree	9	32.1
Total	28	100.0

Table 7: I find the game confusing

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	21.4
Disagree	8	28.6
Neutral	3	10.7
Agree	8	28.6
Strongly Agree	3	10.7
Total	28	100.0

Table 8 reveal that only 21.4% of the respondents required a dictionary to play the game while 46.4% of the respondents claimed that they did not need a dictionary to play the game. This maybe because the respondents were quite proficient in English.

Table 8: I need a dictionary to play this game

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	14.3
Disagree	9	32.1
Neutral	9	32.1
Agree	3	10.7
Strongly Agree	3	10.7
Total	28	100.0

Table 9 reveals that 46.5% of the respondents needed more time to form words while 35.7% of the respondents did not require extra time to form words.

Table 9: I need more time to form words

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	3.6
Disagree	9	32.1
Neutral	5	17.9
Agree	8	28.6
Strongly Agree	5	17.9
Total	28	100.0

Table 10 reveals that 89.3% of the respondents agreed that they learnt new words after playing the game. This is because the respondents learnt new words not only from their friends but also from the dictionary they used when playing the game. Besides that, they can also check whether words created during the game play was correct or not by referring to the dictionary.

Table 10: I have learnt new words after playing this game

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	3.6
Neutral	2	7.1
Agree	6	21.4
Strongly Agree	19	67.9

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper was an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of “You’ve Been Framed” game in acquiring English vocabulary among second language learners. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this preliminary study is students could acquire English vocabulary through game in a more relaxed and interactive environment. Based on the analysis, it showed that “You’ve Been Framed” is an interactive and beneficial game to introduce new vocabulary to second language learners.

REFERENCES

[1] Alemi, M. & Tayebi, A. (2011). The influence of incidental and intentional vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary

strategy use on learning L2 vocabularies. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(1).

[2] Cleeremans A., Destrebecqz A., & Boyer M. (1998). Implicit learning: News from the front. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2, 373-417.

[3] Ellis, N. C. (1994) “Introduction: implicit and explicit language learning – an overview”. In Ellis, Nick (ed.). *Implicit and explicit learning of languages*. London: Academic Press, 1-31.

[4] Gass, S. (1999). Discussion: Incidental vocabulary learning. *Studies of Second Language Acquisition* 21, 319-333.

[5] Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of language learning strategy use. *System* 31, 367-383.

[6] Griffiths, C. (2006). Language learning strategies: Theory and research. Iran. *ILL Language Teaching Journal*, 2, 1.

[7] Huckin, T. & Coady, J. (1999). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21.

[8] Laufer, B. (1998). The development of passive and active vocabulary in a second language: Same different? *Applied Linguistics*, 19 (2), 255-271.

[9] Lewis, M. (2000). Introduction. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation. Further developments in the lexical approach*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.

[10] Nation, P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. New York: Newbury House.

[11] Rieder, A. (2003). Implicit and explicit learning in incidental vocabulary acquisition. *Paper presented at the EUROSALA Conference*, Edinburgh.

[12] Taspinar, B., Schmid, W. & Schuhbauer, H. (2016). Gamification in education: a board game approach to knowledge acquisition, *Procedia Computer Science* 99, 101 – 116.