

Aprendiendo a Través de la Experiencia: Un Enfoque Inmersivo para la Enseñanza del Vocabulario a Niños en las Aulas de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

Learning Through Experience: An Immersive Approach to Vocabulary Teaching in Kindergarten EFL Classrooms

Imparare attraverso l'esperienza: un approccio immersivo all'insegnamento del vocabolario nelle classi di inglese come lingua straniera della scuola dell'infanzia

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Artículo de revisión integrativa y modelización conceptual

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Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto que tiene el uso de estrategias inmersivas en la enseñanza del vocabulario en aulas de clase de primera infancia (Kindergarten). Durante la presente evaluación, se utilizó un enfoque metodológico mixto que hizo posible determinar la efectividad de las actividades interactivas y dinámicas como recurso contextualizado, ayudando a los estudiantes en su entendimiento de vocabulario y conceptos, conectando y transformando el conocimiento previo con experiencias significativas nuevas. Los resultados del estudio expusieron una mejora significativa en la adquisición de nuevas palabras, además de una reducción importante en el filtro afectivo de los estudiantes, lo cual les permitió aprender activamente con interacciones continuas, motivación y participación durante las actividades aplicadas en el aula de clases. Finalmente, se demuestra que el aprendizaje inmersivo promueve la adquisición de vocabulario por medio de entornos de aprendizaje experienciales.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje experiencial, enseñanza de vocabulario, enfoque inmersivo, educación infantil.

Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of using immersive strategies for vocabulary instruction in early childhood (kindergarten) classrooms. A mixed-methods approach was employed to determine the effectiveness of interactive, dynamic activities as a contextualized resource; these activities aided students' understanding of vocabulary and concepts by connecting and transforming prior knowledge through meaningful new experiences. The results revealed a significant improvement in new word acquisition and a notable reduction in students' affective filter, enabling active learning characterized by continuous interaction, motivation, and

participation during classroom activities. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that immersive learning fosters vocabulary acquisition through experiential learning environments.

Keywords: Experiential learning, vocabulary teaching, immersive approach, kindergarten education.

Riassunto

Questo studio analizza l'impatto dell'uso di strategie immersive per l'insegnamento del lessico nelle classi della prima infanzia (scuola dell'infanzia). È stato adottato un approccio a metodi misti per valutare l'efficacia di attività interattive e dinamiche intese come risorsa contestualizzata; tali attività hanno favorito la comprensione del lessico e dei concetti da parte degli studenti, collegando e trasformando le conoscenze pregresse attraverso nuove esperienze significative. I risultati hanno evidenziato un miglioramento significativo nell'acquisizione di nuovi termini e una notevole riduzione del filtro affettivo degli studenti, favorendo un apprendimento attivo caratterizzato da interazione continua, motivazione e partecipazione durante le attività in classe. In conclusione, lo studio dimostra che l'apprendimento immersivo promuove l'acquisizione del lessico attraverso ambienti di apprendimento esperienziale.

Parole chiave: Apprendimento esperienziale, insegnamento del vocabolario, approccio immersivo, educazione dell'infanzia.

Introduction

Building vocabulary is essential for improving fluency. It serves as a foundation for communication, requiring children to understand not only individual words but also their usage and contextual relationships to use language appropriately. (Garton, 1995). However, teachers often find vocabulary instruction complicated because it requires active, engaging strategies to introduce new words. Since individually stored words can be vague and difficult to remember in the long term without context, educators prefer using word-association methods over isolated vocabulary entries. (Egamova & Sharofova, 2022).

On the other hand, learning English in Kindergarten must have a peculiar approach that matches students' stage of proximal development. This is because learners are just developing cognitive structures, largely through symbolic expressions. Moreover, they use assimilation and accommodation to fit new schemas with prior knowledge, shaping expertise in simple concepts through observation and meaningful stimuli. (Barreto Zúñiga et al., 2024). Whereas the use of traditional strategies would not be a good match to teach children, as it is centered on memorizing isolated vocabulary, limiting learners' ability to gain experiential and contextual understanding. In this way, it becomes difficult to develop communicative competencies in real communicative scenarios. (Arslan, 2024)

In this study, experiential learning strategies were applied to demonstrate how this approach enables learners to form stronger associations with real objects rather than relying on traditional resources. (Rini & Indah, 2023). In this manner, the research aims to explore how the application of meaningful resources can empower long-term memory by teaching vocabulary in immersive contexts. During the research process, a mixed-methods approach is used to investigate a kindergarten EFL classroom, implementing a learning-through-experience approach that encourages learners to actively participate in their education. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: To what extent does teaching vocabulary through an immersive approach enhance learning in kindergarten EFL classrooms?

Literature Review

The present section is a collection of an informative literature review that shows the connection between vocabulary acquisition in early EFL learning and the influence of experiential learning in EFL education, emphasizing its application in kindergarten students. It also discusses the use of immersive, contextualized vocabulary learning and its impact on word retention. In this way, this literature review aims to identify research gaps that substantiate learning through experience as a meaningful approach to promoting vocabulary learning in kindergarten EFL classrooms.

Vocabulary Learning in Early EFL Learning

Vocabulary learning represents a key component in any language. It becomes impossible to communicate any idea without enough words to materialize thoughts by reading or writing, creating an important communicational barrier (Mukhtar et al., 2023). As Bedilu & Degefu (2024) point out, during the vocabulary teaching process, the lack of expertise and inadequate application of strategies constitute a huge challenge. Due to this deficiency in these practices, the cognitive skills that are developed when students learn new vocabulary effectively could be affected. For this reason, the adaptation of the strategies and the study of engaging approaches in order to find appropriate techniques to fulfil students' necessities becomes essential.

Experiential Learning in EFL Education

The employment of experiential learning as a significant approach in EFL classrooms brings positive aspects such as active engagement and practical skills development, allowing students to acquire knowledge through hands-on experience. Thereby, learners conceptualize new meanings through contextualized and immersive activities instead of just hearing or reading unfamiliar terms (Rahmi, 2024). Likewise, Lucas (2023) considered “language play” as a strategy

to promote learning through diary and pleasant experiences that increased participation and active interaction in the foreign language within the classroom in authentic contexts.

Immersive and Contextualized Vocabulary Learning

Immersive learning has been established as a powerful and innovative source to learn a new language. At the same time, it tries to combine traditional methods, adapting its practices to the current expectations and needs in an English class (Arslan, 2024). Additionally, Rahmi (2024) expresses how this contextualized approach needs to follow a cycle that ensures learners are a resource during the class implementation and not just passively absorb information. In the same way, bringing concrete experience through active practice participation, reflecting observation to let the learner analyze the influence of the activity on their feelings and metacognitive process, abstract conceptualization for concepts and principles, and finally active experimentation to bring the task to real, authentic situations.

Multisensory instruction also has a significant role in experiential learning. By combining both approaches, students may engage in the complete experience through auditory, kinesthetic, or visual strategies (Mohammed Cherif, 2024). For example, instead of teaching fruit vocabulary by using flashcards, students can listen to the vocabulary while touching real fruits. By doing so, when they arrive home, they will connect the class concept to their real context.

Experiential Learning for Vocabulary Teaching in Kindergarten EFL

Experiential teaching of vocabulary can yield very positive results in Kindergarten EFL classrooms. While some studies confirm that this has no influence and improves writing tasks and vocabulary symbols, it has a positive impact on vocabulary recognition and discrimination (Rini & Indah, 2023). Similarly, Hamdi et al.,(2025) suggest playing a specific experiential strategy that allows kindergarten learners to repeat and memorize new words through contextually appropriate

scenarios. In this case, emphasizing the spontaneous use of vocabulary while playing in class as a facilitator of diverse learning experiences.

Vocabulary Retention Through Meaningful Experiences

Yangin Ersanli (2023), propose 3D content and storytelling help to recall and gets long term memory of vocabulary learning. Likewise, Sabgini & Wiraatmaja (2023) suggest that using videos during the input can be highly attractive to Young learners. Both combine audiovisual resources and look to catch students' attention, avoiding boredom through meaningful material that also requires learners to follow sequentially, involving the student in a multisensory but also experiential task.

Research Gap

During the literature review analysis, it has been explored concepts and perceptions of diverse autores in base on vocabulary learning in early childhood and their difficulties. In the same way, experiential learning has been seen as a possibility of facilitating the acquisition and understanding of new concepts through meaningful immersive activities and strategies appropriate to the diverse contexts that can occur in real life for ELF students.

Furthermore, strategies such as multisensory and hands-on vocabulary learning have been studied as a facilitator of allowing students to learn deeply through their body and senses. On the other hand, although the previous research led to a series of fundamental information about vocabulary learning applying experiential methods, it is necessary to highlight a research gap in a specific aspect and base as it is the updated information on the experiential approach implemented in Kindergarten EFL classrooms. Therefore, this research looks to contribute in a more specific way to the understanding of this immersive methodology as a bridge to vocabulary teaching in kindergarten EFL classrooms.

Methodology

Research Approach

The present study adopts a mixed-methods approach to analyze how an immersive methodology to vocabulary teaching can be meaningful for children's learning experience. Thus, a systematic data collection process will be conducted by gathering data from a literature review and empirical data collection strategies.

Research Design

This study is divided into three main phases: (1) literature review, (2) intervention process, and (3) data analysis. Through the literature review, recent studies identified will create a theoretical foundation. Moreover, in the implementation process, this study will take three months for pre and post-tests, as well as the application of immersive activities for vocabulary teaching to children. Finally, this study will gather all the data to analyze it by using a thematic analysis and descriptive statistics.

Participants

For the implementation process, a total of 20 kindergarten students from a private school will participate in the study. The participants are between 4 and 5 years old and are enrolled in an EFL program. The intervention will be implemented during regular English lessons using immersive activities and materials for vocabulary teaching.

Instruments

A pre and post-test will be implemented as instruments to measure the effectiveness of the activities and resources applied. Therefore, the pre-test will show the knowledge students have before the implementation of immersive strategies. On the contrary, the post-test will enable the

identification of how effective and meaningful it was for students when they learned vocabulary through experience.

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pre-test and post-test results will be examined through descriptive statistics to identify changes in students' vocabulary learning. Additionally, classroom observations will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to students' engagement and learning experiences during the intervention.

Results

Vocabulary Learning Outcomes

As a result of the pre- and post-tests administered to a sample of 20 students before and after the implementation of the immersive approach to vocabulary teaching, the following figures were collected.

Table 1
Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores.

	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Pre test</i>	6.64	2.04
<i>Post test</i>	9.44	0.80

Figure 1

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

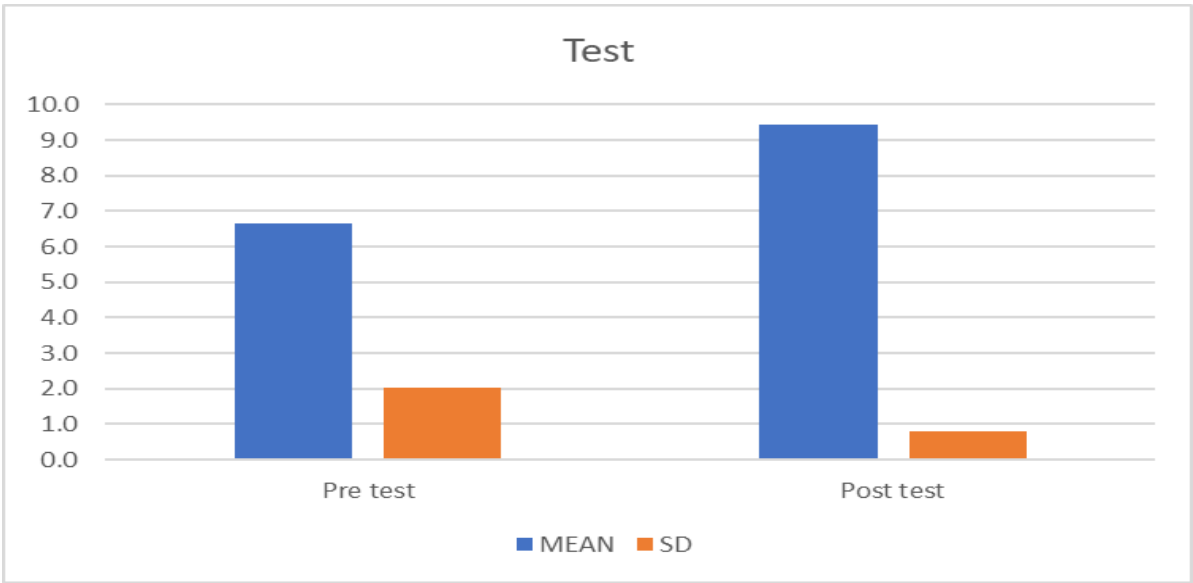


Table 1 and Figure 1 show the descriptive statistics of students' vocabulary performance before and after the intervention. The mean score increased from 6.64 on the pre-test to 9.44 on the post-test, indicating improved vocabulary learning. Likewise, the standard deviation decreased from 2.04 to 0.80, suggesting that students achieved more consistent learning outcomes after participating in the immersive activities.

Therefore, students' mean vocabulary score increased by **42.2%** after the implementation of the immersive approach, suggesting a substantial improvement in vocabulary learning as shown in the following table.

Table 2
Percentage of Improvement

Test	Mean	Improvement
Pre-test	6.64	—
Post-test	9.44	+42.2%

Furthermore, the thematic analysis of observable data revealed the following themes and observations:

Theme 1. Active Engagement Through Immersive Activities

Classroom observations reveal that children tend to recall the vocabulary more when an immersive approach to teaching is applied (Obs. 3). Moreover, most students demonstrated enthusiasm and willingly interacted with the materials and their classmates throughout the intervention (Obs. 5)

Theme 2. Vocabulary Learning Through Experience

During implementation, observations show that students understand the vocabulary better when it is contextualized in immersive settings (Obs. 7). For this reason, the resources and activities applied showed significance for learners as they allowed them to recall the words in the long term (Obs. 15).

Theme 3. Meaningful Learning and Interaction

Finally, the immersive activities encouraged real interaction among students (Obs.2). Children often used the target vocabulary while playing, working with peers, and taking part in classroom tasks (Obs. 4). This showed that vocabulary learning happened in genuine communication situations.

Discussion

The present study examined the application of diverse immersive approaches in kindergarten to acquire vocabulary from two perspectives, comparing and contrasting students’

performance in the pre-test and post-test. This demonstrated how the intervention enhances not only vocabulary acquisition, but also sustained learning outcomes. Furthermore, observations revealed an improvement in students' motivation, peer interaction, and engagement as part of the learning experience.

As indicated by Lucas (2023), early-age learners achieve English acquisition when the language is presented in immersive and playful experiences, which relates to Obs. 4 and 7, as they also suggest that immersive experiences and interactive activities create a more meaningful learning environment. Similarly, the results reinforce Rahmi's (2024) findings, who explained that knowledge is best constructed through active engagement, meaningful experiences, reflection, and experimentation rather than taught in isolation. This complements Obs. 15 because it indicates that learners can recall the information in the long term if the content is presented in an experiential and contextualized manner.

Thus, the qualitative findings show that after implementing an immersive approach to teach English students' mean vocabulary score increased by **42.2%**. This aligns with the results of Hamdi et al. (2025), who found that experiential activities and play-based learning enhance the use of contextual vocabulary, academic performance, collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication. The low affective filter level observed also corresponds with the conclusions obtained by Yangin, (2023) and Arslan, (2024), which highlight that interactive environments and engaging strategies are essential for learner motivation and as a result, language acquisition.

Overall, this study suggests through qualitative and quantitative data that an immersive and experiential approach brings meaningful learning opportunities for kindergarten learners. The application of these strategies promotes the acquisition of new words and contextualized meanings, while fostering collaborative participation that is essential for language development by letting children interact with meaningful materials in authentic real-world contexts.

Conclusion

The present research concludes that the employment of immersive strategies and resources effectively increases vocabulary learning in kindergarten EFL classrooms. Hence, the pre-test and post-test disclosed that children's scores increased by **42.2%** after assessing vocabulary that was taught using an immersive approach. In addition, the classroom observation showed that the immersive approach enhances motivation, transforming the classroom into a communicative and interactive environment for early childhood learners. Also, immersive vocabulary instruction contributes valuable strategies for bringing meaningful English learning experiences for young learners.

Finally, this research highly recommends the implementation of interactive resources that empower an immersive approach to teaching vocabulary to children. Nonetheless, it is also important to recognize that despite the positive results of this research. The number of students might be a limitation. Therefore, further research is encouraged to better understand how this approach might benefit learners in a bigger group and different educational contexts.

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