

Effects of using Triple Play Plus English on vocabulary learning among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners

Riaziat, Pargol

Najafabad University, Iran (pargolr@yahoo.com)

Rafiee, Marzieh ✉

Najafabad University, Iran (Rafieemarzieh@gmail.ir)



ISSN: 2243-7738
Online ISSN: 2243-7746

OPEN ACCESS

Received: 3 July 2017

Revised: 18 March 2018

Accepted: 20 April 2018

Available Online: 23 April 2018

DOI: 10.5861/ijrset.2018.1869

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effects of using triple play plus English software on vocabulary learning among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners. To this end, 32 Iranian male and female pre-intermediate EFL learners whose ages were between 9 and 12 years old participated in the study. The participants were randomly assigned to two equal groups of control and experimental and each group contained equal number of male and female learners. Before performing the treatment, all participants were tested to assess their vocabulary knowledge. Triple Play Plus (TPP) software was used for teaching vocabulary to the participants of the experimental group while the participants of the group were taught by traditional methods. A questionnaire was also administered to the learners of the experimental group to elicit their opinions about learning vocabulary by the software. The results revealed that the software was very effective for vocabulary learning since the participants of the experimental group significantly outperformed on the posttest. In addition, the participants had positive attitudes towards the software. The results of the study may offer practical implications for English teaching, vocabulary teaching, and curriculum development.

Keywords: electronic learning; CALL; vocabulary; vocabulary learning; Triple Play Plus

Effects of using Triple Play Plus English on vocabulary learning among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Words are blocks of language because it is impossible for learners to learn the other parts of the language without learning words. Most learners cannot remember the words and their meanings if they do not learn them with an effective method. The regular method, which is board and chalk, is not supported by teachers and language learners anymore and words need other productive approaches to be learned. Using multimedia especially games is one of the most productive and effective ways to use in order to memorize the vocabulary (Tabar & Khodareza, 2012).

Words are the most important parts to learn a language and communicate in second language, and also it is the main skill of language to learn the other skills such as speaking or reading (Nation, 2001). Although words are very important and necessary, a few students have a wide range of words and most students feel difficulty in memorizing words (Lee, 2007). Unfortunately, for the lack of time in class, teachers cannot use productive ways to teach the words and also learners do not use effective and new approaches to memorize them and they just use the old method which is just memorizing words and their meaning by repeating them. They should add extra methods to increase the range of words in their memories. Multimedia programs and interesting games can be used for this purpose. Learners will learn more words and also easier while they are matching pictures or watching videos or listening to music (Chou, 2014).

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1). The purpose of CALL is to find alternatives to using computers for the aim of teaching and learning the language. Technology has the potential to play a significant role in foreign/second language teaching and learning. In other words, CALL has acquired significant attention from different entities containing researchers and writers. CALL is a language learning and teaching approach in which the computer is used as a tool for presentation, assisting students, and evaluating material (Jafarian, Soori, & Kafipour, 2012).

Triple Play Plus English is a package includes CD, user’s guide, plug-and-play microphone, and technical book that is designed for beginners to intermediate ESL learners and ages (8 to up). This game was designed by Carolyn B. Mitchell in 1995 and helps learners in listening, speaking, and reading. Triple play plus English is used for self-study, in classroom teaching, and also by researchers. The software includes 32 varied games, with six main topics. These consist of food, numbers, home and office, people, activities, and places and transportation. Triple Play Plus comes in some other languages such as Spanish, French, German, Hebrew, Japanese, and Italian, but our focus is on English one (Mackey & Choi, 1998).

Learning English vocabulary is a challenging area for most language English learners especially EFL learners who do not have enough exposure to the authentic English and cannot use their English knowledge outside of the classroom in real situations. However, teaching English vocabulary in most EFL classes is based on listening and repetition that does lead to learn the words by learners properly (Mukoroli, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to apply effective methods of teaching vocabulary to learners in the class.

2. Review of Literature

AbuSeileek (2012) explored the effect of cooperative learning small group size and two different instructional modes (positive interdependence vs. individual accountability) on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate learners’ communication skills (speaking and writing) achievement in computer-based

environments. They also examined the effects of disclosing/blinding the participants' identities while interacting around computers on their post-test. The findings of the study revealed that the computer-based environment enabled the participants to blind their identities and reduce their anxiety from face-to-face debate, and so was very helpful in developing their communication skills.

Bakar and Nosratirad (2013) explored how a computer game can be adapted as a learning tool to sustain adult vocabulary learning independently. They used the existing SIM 3 game as a selected platform to investigate the vocabulary learning among ESL adult learners in an independent learning environment. The analyses of the findings revealed that computer games are advantageous for sustaining language learning, especially in providing opportunity to learn independently.

Vahdat and Behbahani (2013) explored the effect of video games as a new tool for Iranian EFL (English as a foreign language) vocabulary learning. To conduct the study, 40 pre-intermediate EFL learners, both male and female, were chosen through a TOEFL proficiency test. The participants were divided into two groups (10 males and 10 females in each): a control group and an experimental group. While the control group studied vocabulary via traditional classes, the experimental group experienced vocabulary learning (the same words) via a video game called "Runaway: A Road Adventure." The results of the study revealed that learning vocabulary via video games is beneficial, and that males are more inclined toward video-game learning than females.

Naraghizadeh and Barimani (2013) examined the effects of the application of CALL on students' attitudes towards CALL before and after the instruction. To carry out the study, 60 homogeneous male and female Iranian EFL learners were selected and randomly assigned into two groups, the traditional group and CALL group. A vocabulary achievement test as pretest was administered to participants of both groups. The results of the posttest revealed that there was a significant difference between experimental and control group regarding their vocabulary knowledge. CALL instruction improved EFL learners' knowledge of vocabulary. Besides, the results of descriptive statistics showed that the group who received CALL outperformed in this study.

Maftoon, Hamidi, and Sarem (2015) explored the effects of CALL on vocabulary learning. To this end, 40 Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners participated in the study. The participants were randomly divided into a control and an experimental group. The words were taught to the participants of the control group through computer software and to the participants of the control group without a computer software. The results revealed that the participants of the experimental groups significantly outperformed.

2.1 Research Questions

This study was performed to find answers to the following research questions:

- Does using Triple Play Plus have a significant effect on vocabulary learning by Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners?
- How do Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners perceive using Triple Play Plus for improving vocabulary learning?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 32 Iranian female EFL learners. The researcher chose 32 learners because the research was conducted in two classes which each one had sixteen students. Two classes were chosen randomly out of different levels of Gooyesh English Institute and Zabansara Institute, Isfahan, Iran. Their ages ranged between 9 and 12 years old. The participants' overall English knowledge was assessed by the institutes and the results of the placement test indicated that they were all pre-intermediate EFL learners. They

were randomly divided into two equal groups of control (CG) and experimental (EG) after administrating the placement test.

3.2 Instruments and Materials

The following instruments and material were employed for conducting the study.

Pretest and Posttest - A test was prepared which included 20 questions that were chosen randomly from the participants' final exam for that specific term and all were about vocabularies that they learned in that level. Learners had 20 minutes to answer the questions. It was performed to estimate the level of words for each learner and the results were saved for learners' records. After the pretest, Triple Play Plus was used to help learners to memorize more words. Finally, the same test as pretest was applied again to check the effects of using new game and that would be posttest. The reliability of the test was measured by KR-21 and it was revealed that the test had good reliability ($r = .86$). To make sure about the validity of the test, three experts who had Ph.D. degrees in TEFL were consulted and they confirmed its validity.

Questionnaire - A questionnaire for estimating Iranian EFL learners' opinions about using Triple Play Plus to improving vocabulary was prepared. The questionnaire included 10 Likert-Scale questions. The questionnaire was researcher-made and reliability and validity were tested in advanced. Since the participants' level of proficiency was pre-intermediate, the questionnaire was designed and administered to the participants in the Persian language. The reliability was measured by Chronbach's Alpha ($r = .722$). To make sure about the validity of the questionnaire, three experts who had Ph.D. degrees in TEFL were consulted and they confirmed its validity.

Triple Play Plus - Triple Play Plus was designed by Carolyn B. Mitchell in 1995. It is a very strong and interesting game that presents a wide range of words and different games for each topic. The game should be installed on participants' laptops. Then they can open the program and then choose one of the game and also specific topic, then start to play. There are so many programs or games to learn English words, but Triple Play Plus is the most effective one.

3.3 Procedure

As the first step, participants took a test which included 20 multiple choices questions. They had 30 minutes to answer the test. Next, learners were divided randomly into two groups. Both groups consisted of equal numbers of female and male participants. The software was used for teaching and exercising new words to the participants of the experimental group. The software was used for this purpose at the end of each session for about 15 minutes. The learners in control group did not use the software and they learn words with the traditional way. Flashcards and pictures were used for teaching and exercising new words to the participants of the control group and the learners learned the new words by listening and repeating method. The treatment lasted for 15 sessions and each was 90 minutes. After completing the treatment, a posttest was administered to all participants and the researcher analyzed their scores to test the effect of using Triple Play Plus on vocabulary learning. Finally, the questionnaire was administered to the participants of the experimental group to understand their attitudes towards learning English vocabulary by the software. The results of the tests and questionnaire were collected for further analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Addressing Research Question One

The first research question focused on determining if using Triple Play Plus affects vocabulary learning among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners. To find answer to this research question, Independent-Samples

t-test was conducted by the researcher to compare the results of participants in the control and experimental groups on the posttest. The results are shown in the following part.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Comparing the Results of the CG and EG on the Posttest

	Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Scores	Control	16	16.25	1.07	.27
	Experimental	16	18.19	1.17	.29

The table indicates that the mean score of the EG ($M = 18.19$) was greater than the mean score of the CG ($M = 16.25$). To figure out if this difference was statistically significant, an Independent-Samples *t*-test was conducted. The results show that there was a significant difference between the CG ($M = 16.25$, $SD = 1.07$) and the EG ($M = 18.19$, $SD = 1.17$) since the *p* value was lower than .05 ($p < .001$). It means the participants of EG were significantly better than the participants of CG.

4.2 Addressing Research Question Two

The second research question focused on investigating how Iranian EFL learners perceive using Triple Play Plus for improving vocabulary learning. With this aim, a questionnaire was administered to the participants of EG. The questionnaire, which was used in this study, contained Likert-scale questions format which means there were five alternatives for each question ranging from 1 to 5 and the mean was 3. The following table indicates the results of descriptive statistics performed for this purpose.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Scores	16	4.13	.83	.22

The attitude mean score of the EG learners was found to be 4.13, which was larger than 3.00. This implies that the learners were motivated by Triple Play Plus. To find out whether this motivation was of statistically significant or not, it was necessary to examine the *Sig.* (2-tailed) value in the One-Sample *t*-test. Results show that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' mean attitude score ($M = 4.13$) and the average value of the choices (i.e. 3) due to the fact that the *p* value was smaller than the specified level of significance ($p < .001$). It could be thus concluded that using Triple Play Plus for learning English vocabulary significantly motivated the participants and they had positive attitudes towards it.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

According to Alsied and Pathan (2013) using computer significantly improves all language skills of EFL learners including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary knowledge. Considering vocabulary knowledge, it exposes EFL learners to more real contexts of using English vocabulary. In addition, it provides learners with an exciting milieu of learning words and colossal interesting exercises which enable learners to improve their vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, EFL learners can learn the correct pronunciation of the words more easily and learn the words more effectively. These findings are in line with the results of the present study since the participants of EG who learned vocabulary through the software outperformed on the posttest.

It can be noted that providing an exciting atmosphere for learning vocabulary for EFL learners especially kids is very important. Learning English vocabulary in foreign contexts is considered a tedious task for the majority of EFL learners. However, using computers and computer games can facilitate the process of teaching and learning English vocabulary for EFL teachers and learners.

The results of the present study approve Ahmadian, Amerian, and Goodarzi (2015) who compared paper-based and computer-based contextualization in vocabulary learning of EFL students. They stated that implementing computer-based contextualization of vocabulary teaching can help the students improve their vocabulary learning. They also maintained that EFL learners can gain mastery of the vocabulary knowledge due to interaction via computer-based contextualization of the words. Kids are interested in playing games and learning by games. One of the most interesting forms of games to kids is computer game. Therefore, by implementing computer games in EFL classes, teachers can teach vocabulary to children more effectively.

According to Alsied and Pathan (2013), most EFL learners consider the computer programs that are designed for teaching English very interesting and useful and they have positive attitudes towards them. Akyel and Erçetin (2009) and Sadeghi and Soltanian (2012) stated that computer-based language learning can improve EFL learners' reading comprehension considerably and they have positive attitudes towards learning reading comprehension through computer. These findings are in line with results of the current study since the participants had positive attitudes towards learning English vocabulary via Triple Play Plus software.

Ikonta and Ugonna (2015) investigated the effects of Rosetta Stone software on improving EFL learners' general English knowledge including vocabulary knowledge and their attitudes towards using the software for learning English. They maintained that the participants' vocabulary knowledge was drastically improved by the software and they had positive attitudes towards it. These results are parallel with the findings of the current study since the participants had a strong positive attitude towards learning English vocabulary towards Triple Play Plus. Hence, it can be concluded that Triple Play Plus is an interesting computer program to EFL learners for teaching English especially vocabulary which this positive attitude can lead to learning vocabulary by learners more easily.

Based on the above-mentioned discussion the following points can be drawn as the conclusions of the study. First, Triple Play Plus is a very effective material for teaching English vocabulary to EFL learners especially children. This software teaches English vocabulary through numerous pictures and provides learners with many interesting games for practicing the words. Therefore, it helps children to learn so many English words easily and improve their vocabulary knowledge more effectively. Second, Iranian EFL learners have positive attitudes towards learning English vocabulary through Triple Play Plus. Since this software provides learners with many attractive pictures and numerous games for practicing words, it can motivate learners to learn English words and enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

For employing Triple Play Plus in the class, some points must be taken into account. First, this software must not be used as the only way of teaching vocabulary to learners in the class. It must be used as an extra source of teaching and practicing new words in the class besides the regular methods of teaching vocabulary. Second, allocating 10 minutes in each class to this software for teaching and practicing vocabulary is enough. Dedicating more or less the suggested time is neither useful nor educational. Third, since this software provides so many words related to each area, instructors must pay attention to this point in order to avoid exposing their students to numerous unnecessary words and making them confused which can demotivate them to learn English vocabulary.

6. References

- AbuSeileek, A. F. (2012). The effect of computer-assisted cooperative learning methods and group size on the EFL learners' achievement in communication skills. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 231–239.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.07.011>
- Ahmadian, M., Amerian, M., & Goodarzi, A. (2015). A comparative study of paper-based and computer-based contextualization in vocabulary learning of EFL students. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(2), 96–102.
- Akyel, A., & Erçetin, G. (2009). Hypermedia reading strategies employed by advanced learners of English.

- System*, 37(1), 136–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.05.002>
- Alsied, S. M., & Pathan, M. M. (2013). The use of computer technology in EFL classroom: Advantages and implications. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 1(1), 61–71.
- Bakar, N. A., & Nosratirad, E. (2013). Sustaining vocabulary acquisition through computer game: A case study. *Asian Social Science*, 9(5), 235–242. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n5p235>
- Chou, M. (2014). Assessing English vocabulary and enhancing young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' motivation through games, songs, and stories. *Education 3-13*, 42(3), 284–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2012.680899>
- Ikonta, N. R., & Ugonna, N. C. (2015). The effect of Rosetta Stone (computer-assisted language learning) software on English as second language students' proficiency in English language. *African Educational Research Journal*, 3(1), 69–79.
- Jafarian, K., Soori, A., & Kafipour, R. (2012). The effect of computer assisted language learning (CALL) on EFL high school students' writing achievement. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 27(2), 138–148.
- Lee, H. (2007). *Investigating EFL adult learners' vocabulary acquisition through reading picture books*. Indiana: Indiana University.
- Levy, M. (1997). *CALL: context and conceptualisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mackey, A., & Choi, J.-Y. (1998). Review of TriplePlayPlus! English. *Language Learning & Technology*, 2(1), 19–20.
- Maftoon, P., Hamidi, H., & Sarem, S. N. (2015). The effects of CALL on vocabulary learning: A case of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 3(4), 19–30.
- Mukoroli, J. (2011). *Effective vocabulary teaching strategies for the English for academic purposes ESL Classroom*. Master's Thesis. The SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.
- Naraghizadeh, M., & Barimani, S. (2013). The effect of CALL on the vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 3(8), 1–12.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524759>
- Sadeghi, A. R., & Soltanian, N. (2012). Motivational and learning effects of computer-aided procedures on students' reading comprehension. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 2(3), 107–139.
- Tabar, H., & Khodareza, M. (2012). The effect of using multimedia on vocabulary learning of pre-intermediate and intermediate Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Basic and Applied Research*, 2(12), 12879–12891.
- Vahdat, S., & Behbahani, A. R. (2013). The effect of video games on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning. *Reading*, 13(1), 61–71.

