



Peer Feedback Practices in Improving English Vocabulary Learning among ESL Learners



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Abstract: *Improving one's command of vocabulary knowledge is essential for advancing English language skills. Hence this study was undertaken using a qualitative technique to investigate students' perceptions of the Peer feedback strategies their teachers employ to improve English vocabulary learning among them. The population of this study consisted of all the enrolled students in the high schools in the city of Multan. By using a convenient sampling technique, 22 students were recruited to collect the data from conducting interviews. The findings of the study indicate that ESL teachers incorporate various helpful peer feedback techniques in their teaching practices that enable students to reinforce their language knowledge and enhance their vocabulary knowledge. These approaches include vocabulary games and vocabulary quizzes. Along with ESL teachers, the management authorities must give support to the faculty members to ensure their success.*

Key Words: Peer Feedback; English Vocabulary; ESL Learners; Vocabulary Games; Vocabulary Quizzes

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Introduction

English is widely regarded as the most understood language globally, with an estimated 1.5 billion people speaking it, including both native and non-native speakers. This language has become a universal mode of communication for people from diverse cultures and regions, and its importance in various fields cannot be overstated (Tan & Bensal, 2022). Learning English is essential for individuals who seek

to succeed in today's globalized world.

One of the primary reasons why English is considered the most important language to learn is its dominance in international business, politics, and education. English is the official language of the United Nations, which is the primary forum for international diplomacy (Beshaj, 2015). It is also the language of international trade, and most business communication is conducted in English. In addition, English is the primary language used in higher education, with

many top universities across the world using it as the language of instruction (Zainuddin et al., [2019](#)). Thus, learning English provides individuals with access to global opportunities in these fields.

Furthermore, English is the language of the internet and technology (Akram&Abdelrady, [2023](#); Al-Adwan et al., [2022](#)). The majority of websites, software, and applications are developed and maintained in English, making it an essential tool for communication and accessing information online (Akram et al., [2021](#); [2022](#)). In addition, English is the language of science and research, with a vast majority of scientific papers published in English. Thus, proficiency in English is crucial for individuals who seek to pursue careers in these fields.

Moreover, English is the language of popular culture, including music, films, and literature. Learning English enables individuals to access a vast range of entertainment and media from different parts of the world, which would otherwise be inaccessible to them (Rao, [2019](#)). It also facilitates cross-cultural communication and understanding, as people from different cultures can share and appreciate their art and literature through a common language.

In addition, English is the primary language of academia and research, and proficiency in English is necessary for academic and professional success. Many universities and research institutions require academic writing in English, and international academic conferences are conducted in English (Zein et al., [2020](#)). Thus, being able to write and communicate effectively in English is essential for academic achievement and advancement. In addition to the professional benefits, being able to write and communicate effectively in English has significant personal advantages. It allows individuals to engage with a broader range of literature, music, and film, as well as connect with people from different cultures and

backgrounds. This can broaden one's horizons and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world (Em et al., [2022](#)).

In order to communicate and write in an efficient manner, vocabulary is an essential component. According to González-Fernández and Schmitt ([2017](#)), it is the collection of words and phrases that an individual use when communicating in a given language. A strong vocabulary enables individuals to articulate their ideas and thoughts in a way that is both clear and effective, as well as to comprehend the nuances that are present in both written and spoken language.

The ability to write well and communicate effectively is improved in a number of different ways by having a large vocabulary. In the first place, it enables people to use language in a manner that is suitable and accurate (Vu & Peters, [2021](#)). This guarantees that their writing or communication is easy to understand, accurate, and successful in conveying the message they aim to express. According to Arkamy et al.'s research from 2022, using suitable vocabulary is one of the best ways to display a high degree of language ability and acquire the respect of the reader or listener.

Second, an individual's capacity to grasp both written and spoken language is enhanced when that individual has a vocabulary that covers a wide range of topics. It gives individuals the ability to comprehend the meaning of words with which they are not familiar, which is especially helpful when reading or listening to material that is academic, technical, or legal in nature (Khan, [2022](#)).

Thirdly, an individual's capacity to express themselves in a manner that is both vivid and creative can be improved by expanding their vocabulary. According to Bahri et al. ([2022](#)), this enables people to communicate their thoughts by making use

of a greater variety of evocative words and phrases. Writers, poets, and other creative workers who rely on their linguistic abilities to captivate their audience may benefit from this in a particularly significant way.

Moreover, having a sound vocabulary is an essential component of success in academic and professional fields. In academia, it is important to use technical vocabulary to express ideas and to understand the vocabulary used in academic research (Schmitt, 2019). In the professional world, using the correct vocabulary is crucial in various fields, such as law, medicine, and engineering, where precise and accurate language is necessary for success (Schmitt, 2019).

Many students in Pakistan have difficulty with vocabulary, despite the fact that it is considered to be an essential component of English language instruction in the classroom. This is due to a number of different factors. To begin, the instruction of the English language in many Pakistani schools is not of a high enough standard. According to Akram and Yang (2021), it's possible that educators lack the skills or resources necessary to properly instruct students in English vocabulary. Additionally, class sizes can be large, making it challenging for teachers to give individualized attention to each student (Fareed et al., 2016). Secondly, students in Pakistan may not have adequate exposure to English outside of the classroom. In many cases, English is not spoken at home or in the local community (Jadoon et al., 2020). This limits opportunities for students to practice and improve their vocabulary in natural settings. Moreover, many students in Pakistan may lack the motivation to learn English vocabulary (Hambali, 2018). They may not see the practical value of English in their daily lives, or they may find the learning process boring or difficult.

Addressing the challenge of English vocabulary learning in classrooms is crucial

to improving the language proficiency of students. One potential solution to this problem is to incorporate interactive peer feedback activities into English language classrooms. Interactive peer feedback activities involve students working in pairs or small groups to review and provide feedback on each other's writing or speaking (Gedera, 2012). This approach has several potential benefits for vocabulary learning. Firstly, interactive peer feedback activities can increase student engagement and motivation (Yu&Lee, 2016). By providing students with an opportunity to collaborate with their peers, they can become more invested in the learning process. Secondly, by reviewing and providing feedback on their peers' work, students' critical thinking and analytical skills may be developed, which can help to enhance their own vocabulary knowledge and understanding (Ekahitanond, 2013). Thirdly, by receiving feedback on their own writing or speaking, students can identify areas for improvement and work on refining their language usage (Kuyyogsuy, 2019).

Research on the effectiveness of peer feedback in language learning has primarily been conducted in Western countries, and there is limited research on its use in ESL contexts in Pakistan. This lack of research highlights the need for further investigation into the benefits of peer feedback as a tool for improving vocabulary learning outcomes for ESL learners in Pakistan. To address this gap in research, this study aims to investigate peer feedback practices in improving vocabulary learning outcomes for ESL learners in Pakistan. The study aims to accomplish the following questions:

1. How do students perceive the effectiveness of peer feedback strategies used by teachers to improve their English vocabulary learning?
2. How can students improve their English vocabulary? What alternative approaches can be recommended?

Research Method

The researcher used a qualitative technique and conducted student interviews to investigate students' impressions of what and how their teachers employ peer feedback strategies to improve their English vocabulary. The interviews were semi-structured (i.e., a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions) and directed by probing questions, allowing the researcher to collect in-depth information (Kallio et al., 2016). As a result, it is regarded as the most appropriate approach to investigating in depth the peer feedback procedures used by teachers to cultivate English vocabulary among pupils.

Sample Size and Population

The population of this study included all of the students enrolled in Multan's high schools. The researcher employed a procedure known as convenient sampling to collect the data, and 22 students were chosen at random to do so. Following that, the researcher personally performed all of the interviews after gaining permission from the different school principals. Furthermore, in order to safeguard the anonymity of those who participated in the study, their genuine names were replaced with fictitious ones.

Data Analysis

A semi-structured approach was taken to recording and transcribing each individual interview. The researcher went through the process of listening to and analyzing each recorded interview with a student to determine how well it matched the various categories of student interviews. Follow-up interviews were carried out by the researcher in order to gain a detailed and all-encompassing picture of the ways in which students see the challenging components of academic writing. The creation, processing, and categorization of transcriptions were all aspects of the qualitative analysis technique

that were required as part of the process. It was essential to track down the data, give it a more precise definition, place it in the appropriate categories, and add to it (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). We looked at motifs from interviews as well as motifs from other pieces of literature. When the coding was finally done, detailed descriptions were provided for each of the themes. Following the clarification, organization, and integration of the primary themes, the primary issues, as well as maybe a variety of findings, were brought to light (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A narrative provided an account of the evolution of ideas when they finally came around.

Results and Discussion

The comments made by the participants, which were directed by the research objectives of the study, pointed to a number of helpful peer feedback tactics that the participants' teachers use to enhance English vocabulary learning among them. These strategies are listed below:

Vocabulary Games

Vocabulary games are a popular and effective method for strengthening students' vocabulary skills. In the present study, it was found that vocabulary games were rated as the most effective technique for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among ESL learners. a student mentioned:

"Our teacher often set games in our classroom, by playing these word games, we become familiar with new vocabulary when my class fellows share their knowledge. In this way, we learn different vocabularies."

According to Bakhsh (2016), one of the reasons why vocabulary games are so effective is that they make learning fun and engaging for students. Instead of memorizing lists of words or completing tedious worksheets, students can play games that involve using and applying new vocabulary

terms in a meaningful way. Hashemi (2021) also asserts that vocabulary games help students to retain the words better and make connections between the new words and their real-life contexts. As mentioned by a student:

"Playing vocabulary games is more enjoyable and interesting than just reading and memorizing words from a book. It also helps me to remember the words better and use them in context."

- Another student mentioned:

"When I play games with my classmates, we can share our ideas and feedback on each other's choices, which helps us to learn from each other and expand our vocabulary."

In addition to being fun and engaging, Ni et al. (2020) mention that vocabulary games can also promote collaboration and communication among students. The present study's results also found that, by working together and providing feedback to each other, students can develop stronger language skills and build a sense of community within the classroom. As mentioned by a student:

"When we play vocabulary games in class, we have to work together to come up with new words and guess each other's words. It's really fun and helps us to get to know our classmates better. It also makes us more comfortable with each other and with using English in front of others."

This finding coincides with the findings of Stavy et al. (2019), accordingly, vocabulary games can facilitate peer feedback and promote collaboration among students. In this regard, the sense of community that can be built through vocabulary games is particularly important for ESL learners who may feel self-conscious or embarrassed about their language skills. By providing a supportive and collaborative environment, vocabulary games can help students to feel more comfortable and confident in using English.

It is therefore suggested that teachers introduce various vocabulary games in the classroom, such as word scrambles, word matching, or vocabulary bingo, to engage students in learning new words and reinforce their understanding. Teachers should also encourage students to provide feedback on each other's word choices during vocabulary games. This will enable students to improve their vocabulary learning outcomes by correcting each other's mistakes and suggesting alternative words. To further facilitate students' acquisition of vocabulary and to make the process more dynamic and interesting for them, educators may also make use of technological resources such as online vocabulary games or apps (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). In addition, teachers can also design vocabulary games that require students to work in teams or pairs to come up with new words. This will promote collaboration and allow students to learn from each other.

Vocabulary Quizzes

Vocabulary quizzes are a crucial component of the vocabulary learning process for ESL students. Quizzes provide students with an opportunity to test their knowledge and understanding of newly learned words, which helps them to retain the words more effectively. The peer review in vocabulary quizzes was indicated as another technique by the students that help strengthen their vocabulary knowledge. According to a student:

"Peer review in vocabulary quizzes allows us to exchange ideas with our classmates and identify gaps in our understanding of new words. It helps us to get feedback on our own knowledge and identify areas where we need to focus more."

In addition to the benefits mentioned by the student, research has shown that peer review in vocabulary quizzes can also promote critical thinking and deeper

learning. According to Hwang et al. (2012), when students are given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on their classmates' responses, they are required to engage in higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. This, in turn, can help them to develop a deeper understanding of the words and concepts being studied. As mentioned by a student:

"The process of reviewing our classmates' responses also exposes us to new ways of thinking about and using vocabulary words."

Based on this finding, it is recommended that teachers incorporate peer review activities into their vocabulary quizzes. Teachers can ask students to exchange their quizzes and review each other's responses, providing feedback on any errors or suggestions for improvement. This not only helps students to identify and correct their mistakes but also fosters critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of the vocabulary words. Additionally, teachers can encourage students to explain their reasoning for their answers during the peer review process, further promoting critical thinking and collaboration among students.

Moreover, peer review in vocabulary quizzes can help to create a collaborative learning environment where students are encouraged to help each other and work towards a common goal. As noted by Hwang and Chen (2017), collaborative learning can lead to improved academic achievement, increased motivation, and a stronger sense of community among students. As mentioned by a student:

"I think doing vocabulary quizzes with peer review is really helpful because we can learn from our mistakes and also help each other. It feels like we are working together as a team, and it's not just about individual scores."

- Another student mentioned:

"It is more fun to do quizzes when you can discuss the answers with your classmates and

learn from their perspectives."

Based on this finding, it is suggested that teachers incorporate peer review activities into their vocabulary quizzes to promote collaboration among students. Teachers can encourage students to provide feedback to each other, ask questions, and discuss the meanings of the words. This can also help to create a positive and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable sharing their knowledge and learning from each other. Additionally, teachers can provide opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups to complete vocabulary quizzes, which can further enhance collaboration and peer review.

Moreover, one of the benefits of vocabulary quizzes is that they can help students to identify areas where they need to improve. By taking quizzes, students can determine which words they have mastered and which words require further practice. This allows students to focus their efforts on the areas that need the most attention, which can help to accelerate their learning. In this context, a student mentioned:

"I find that vocabulary quizzes help me to identify my weak areas and focus on them more in my study. It's a great way to see where I need to improve and what words I need to practice more."

Based on this finding, it is suggested that teachers should incorporate regular vocabulary quizzes into their teaching to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses in vocabulary learning. Teachers can also use the quiz results to tailor their instruction to meet the specific needs of each student, providing additional support or challenges where necessary. Additionally, students can use the results to guide their own study and practice, focusing on the words that they struggle with the most.

Conclusion

In view of the presented findings, the study

indicates that ESL teachers incorporate various helpful Peer feedback techniques in their teaching practices that enable students to reinforce their language knowledge and enhance their vocabulary knowledge. These approaches include vocabulary games and vocabulary quizzes. However, ESL teachers

do their best to lend a hand in incorporating collaborative techniques in their teaching practices to help their students improve vocabulary knowledge in the classroom. Yet, the management authorities must give support to the faculty members to ensure their success.

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