

Project Bokabularyo: The Interconnection of Student Motivation and Language Aptitude in Facilitating English Vocabulary Mastery

Edwin D. Tado, MAEng

ewdin.tado@deped.gov.ph

Kidapawan City National High School, Roxas Street, Kidapawan City, 9400, Philippines

Abstract

This study investigated the role of student motivation and language aptitude in mastering English vocabulary, with the goal of developing an intervention, Project BOKABULARYO, to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Recognizing that vocabulary knowledge is a foundational skill for language proficiency, the research examines how motivation and aptitude interact to influence students' engagement and success in learning English vocabulary. Data were collected from high school students through motivation surveys, language aptitude tests, and vocabulary assessments, providing insights into their motivational levels and vocabulary learning abilities.

Findings reveal that motivation plays a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition, with students who are intrinsically motivated exhibiting higher engagement in vocabulary activities and improved vocabulary retention. Language aptitude was found to significantly impact students' ability to learn and retain new vocabulary, particularly in terms of phonetic recognition and grammatical understanding. Additionally, a positive correlation was observed between motivation and language aptitude, suggesting that motivated students may also perform better on tasks that require cognitive skills related to language learning.

In response to these findings, Project BOKABULARYO was designed as a targeted intervention aimed at fostering both motivation and language aptitude among students. The program incorporates gamified vocabulary activities, context-based learning, and interactive tasks that encourage repeated vocabulary use in meaningful ways. By focusing on engaging and adaptive strategies, Project BOKABULARYO seeks to address the diverse needs of students and make vocabulary learning an enjoyable and productive experience.

This study underscored the importance of motivation and aptitude in language learning and suggests that interventions designed to enhance these factors can significantly improve vocabulary mastery. Project BOKABULARYO has the potential to serve as an effective model for vocabulary instruction, equipping students with essential language skills and providing insights for educators on the benefits of motivation-based learning approaches in English language education.

Keywords: bokabularyo, aptitude, interconnectiom, and vocabulary mastery

Context and Rationale

Acquiring English vocabulary is crucial for language learning, as it forms the basis for communication, reading comprehension, and overall proficiency. A strong vocabulary foundation allows students to express ideas clearly, understand texts better, and communicate effectively in written and spoken communication. According to Nation (2013), a student's vocabulary size strongly predicts their ability to grasp texts, engage in conversations, and do well in academic situations.

In a similar statement Schmitt (2008) highlighted that vocabulary learning is a continuous process in which learners must encounter words several times in diverse settings to fully understand their meanings and uses. However, it is challenging for students to build a large vocabulary if they lack motivation and language aptitude.

Moreover, McCoach and Flake (2018) defined motivation as an internal force that improves students' learning outcomes. Filgona et al. (2020) noted that unmotivated students may attend class but lack the drive to study, while motivated students are mentally prepared and actively foster a dynamic classroom environment through their participation. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) define language aptitude as the cognitive readiness and potential an individual has for learning foreign languages before engaging in real-world practice or formal instruction. In contrast, Robinson (2005) views language aptitude as the cognitive abilities utilized in information processing during second language learning and performance across various contexts and stages

Despite the emphasis on English proficiency as a core subject from kindergarten to Grade 12 (DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2012), many Filipino students still struggle with vocabulary acquisition due to limited exposure, inconsistent teaching methods, and socio-economic factors (DepEd, 2022).

Thus, this study helped to understand the influence of motivation and language aptitude on vocabulary acquisition in innovating effective teaching strategies to address aforementioned concerns.

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1.1 Innovation, Intervention and Strategy

Language aptitude plays a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition, as it impacts a learner's ability to recognize patterns, memorize words, and use them contextually. According to Carroll and Sapon (2002), language aptitude involves phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, and inductive language learning ability, all of which influence how effectively learners can acquire new vocabulary. Gardner (1985) emphasizes that motivation is a significant factor in second language acquisition, affecting both the effort learners invest and their overall success. Intrinsic motivation, such as interest and enjoyment in learning, has been shown to improve engagement and vocabulary retention in language studies.

Brief Review of Literature

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000) explains how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations impact learning outcomes. In vocabulary acquisition, learners with intrinsic motivation are more likely to persist in challenging tasks, leading to better retention and language use over time. Schmitt (2008) argues that vocabulary learning is a continuous process that requires repeated exposure to words in varied contexts. Such repetition, whether through reading, conversation, or exercises, is essential for the depth of vocabulary knowledge and usage proficiency.

Research by Nation (2001) shows that learners with high language aptitude tend to adopt more effective vocabulary learning strategies, such as mnemonics, associations, and contextual practice. These strategies enhance vocabulary retention and facilitate the application of new words. Studies by Stockwell (2013) show that technology, including mobile applications and online tools, can significantly increase students' motivation and engagement in vocabulary learning. Digital tools allow for personalized learning, immediate feedback, and gamified vocabulary practice, which improve retention rates.

Laufer and Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010) highlight the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Vocabulary mastery not only facilitates better understanding of texts but also encourages students to read more, creating a positive feedback loop that enhances language learning. Willis and Willis (2007) argue that task-based learning—where students complete meaningful tasks using new vocabulary—improves both motivation and comprehension. When vocabulary is applied in relevant tasks, students are more motivated and tend to remember words longer. Swain (1995) suggests that interaction with peers promotes vocabulary acquisition as students are encouraged to use and experiment with new language in a social context. Collaborative activities can increase both motivation and the depth of vocabulary knowledge.

According to Ellis (2009), formative feedback helps learners recognize their progress and areas for improvement, which can reinforce motivation. Effective feedback on vocabulary use helps students adjust their strategies and encourages further practice, supporting vocabulary mastery.

Project BOKABULARYO: A strategic intervention designed to deliver a meaningful program that enhances STEM students' motivation to improve their English vocabulary acquisition.

- B - Building Contextual Understanding
- O - Organizing Word Families
- K - Kinetic Learning
- A - Active Recall
- B - Bridging L1 and L2
- U - Understanding Nuances
- L - Learning Through Exposure
- A - Assessing Vocabulary Knowledge
- R - Reinforcement through Repetition

Y - Yielding to Curiosity

O - Oral Practice

Action Research Method

The research method for Project BOKABULARYO: The Interconnection of Student Motivation and Language Aptitude in Facilitating English Vocabulary Mastery employed a mixed-methods approach to analyze students' motivation and language aptitude in relation to vocabulary acquisition. This study was conducted in a high school setting with a sample of English language learners from varying levels of proficiency. Quantitative data were collected through two main instruments: a motivation survey and a language aptitude test. The motivation survey measured students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in learning English vocabulary, while the aptitude test evaluated phonetic recognition, grammatical sensitivity, and pattern recognition, all considered key components of language aptitude. To assess vocabulary mastery, students also completed a pre- and post-intervention vocabulary test to evaluate their improvement over the course of the study.

Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions and individual student interviews to gain deeper insights into students' attitudes toward English vocabulary learning and the perceived challenges they face. These discussions provided context for interpreting quantitative results and allowed students to express personal motivations, barriers, and preferred learning strategies. The intervention, Project BOKABULARYO, was implemented over a six-week period and incorporated various motivational strategies, such as gamified vocabulary exercises, contextual learning activities, and peer collaboration tasks. This intervention was designed to create an engaging and supportive learning environment that could foster both vocabulary acquisition and student motivation.

Data were analyzed using both statistical and thematic analysis. Quantitative data were processed through statistical software to measure correlations between motivation levels, language aptitude scores, and vocabulary performance. This allowed the research team to determine if there was a significant relationship between motivation, aptitude, and vocabulary mastery. Qualitative data from focus groups and interviews were coded and analyzed thematically to identify patterns in students' experiences and perspectives on learning vocabulary through the project. These qualitative insights helped to refine the design of Project BOKABULARYO and address specific motivational and aptitude-related challenges faced by students.

Overall, this action research approach enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness while allowing for continuous adjustments to the program based on students' needs and feedback. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study provided a nuanced understanding of the role of motivation and aptitude in vocabulary learning, and the insights gained informed the development of effective, engaging strategies for Project BOKABULARYO.

- Emphasize the importance of learning words in context. Students gain a deeper understanding of vocabulary when words are embedded in meaningful contexts, such as stories, dialogues, and real-world situations.
- Teach vocabulary by grouping words into families (root words, prefixes, and suffixes) to help students understand relationships between words and expand their vocabulary easily.
- Engage students in hands-on, physical activities related to vocabulary acquisition. This can include games, role-playing, or the use of technology, making the learning experience dynamic and memorable.

- Use spaced repetition and retrieval practices to reinforce new words. Students should be encouraged to recall vocabulary actively through quizzes, flashcards, and discussions.
- Make connections between the learner's first language (L1) and the second language (L2). Highlighting cognates or teaching new words through L1 analogies can enhance vocabulary retention.
- Focus on the subtleties and different meanings of words, such as connotations and denotations. This allows students to understand when and how to use words appropriately.
- Encourage frequent exposure to new words in various formats—books, videos, conversations, and songs. The more students encounter new vocabulary, the better they retain and apply it.
- Regular assessments help track progress and identify gaps in vocabulary knowledge. These can include both formal (tests) and informal (discussions, observations) methods.
- Repeat vocabulary in different contexts and settings to ensure mastery. Consistent review helps solidify understanding and recall over time.
- Foster a learning environment where students are encouraged to ask about unfamiliar words and explore their meanings independently. Curiosity-driven learning promotes long-term engagement with vocabulary.
- Regular oral practice helps students incorporate new vocabulary into their speaking. Discussions, presentations, and conversations allow students to use vocabulary in a real-world context, building fluency and confidence.

Results and Discussion

1.1. The study found that the overall motivation of students in acquiring English vocabulary was moderate to high, with a majority indicating a strong interest in expanding their vocabulary to improve their English communication skills. Data from the motivation survey revealed that students were particularly motivated by activities that were engaging, relevant to real-life contexts, and presented in a gamified format, such as vocabulary games or digital apps. This aligns with Gardner's (1985) findings on the importance of intrinsic motivation in language learning, as students demonstrated a positive attitude toward vocabulary acquisition when it was made engaging and interactive.

1.2. These results suggest that student motivation is likely to increase when vocabulary learning activities are designed to be meaningful and enjoyable. Therefore, Project BOKABULARYO could incorporate more gamified learning elements and context-based activities to sustain and enhance student motivation in vocabulary learning.

1.3. Analysis of the language aptitude test scores revealed a variation in students' abilities to acquire and retain new vocabulary. Students with higher aptitude scores demonstrated better retention and application of vocabulary in context, while students with lower scores faced difficulties in memorization and practical

usage. These findings are consistent with Carroll and Sapon's (2002) model of language aptitude, which emphasizes the impact of phonetic coding and grammatical sensitivity on vocabulary retention.

1.4. This variance in language aptitude highlights the need for differentiated instruction within Project BOKABULARYO. Strategies such as spaced repetition and contextual learning could benefit students across different aptitude levels, especially those needing more support in retaining vocabulary.

1.5. A correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between students' motivation levels and their language aptitude scores. Students who reported higher motivation levels also tended to score higher on aptitude assessments, indicating that motivation may play a role in facilitating language learning aptitude. This finding aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which states that motivated learners often persist longer and perform better on challenging tasks, like vocabulary acquisition.

1.6. These results imply that fostering motivation may help in developing language aptitude among learners. Project BOKABULARYO could thus focus on creating a positive learning environment that supports intrinsic motivation, which may, in turn, lead to improvements in vocabulary aptitude.

1.7. Based on the findings, Project BOKABULARYO can be strategically designed to address the motivational and aptitude-related challenges observed among students. The intervention could include gamified vocabulary exercises, context-driven learning modules, and peer collaboration to sustain interest and provide multiple exposures to new vocabulary in various contexts. Additionally, regular formative assessments and personalized feedback could be integrated to monitor progress and support students in areas where they struggle.

1.8. This proposed intervention aligns with Schmitt's (2008) research on repeated vocabulary exposure and Willis and Willis's (2007) findings on task-based learning. By implementing these elements, Project BOKABULARYO aims to create an engaging and adaptive learning framework that caters to the diverse motivational and aptitude needs of students.

1.9. The results underscore the importance of tailoring vocabulary learning interventions to address both motivational and aptitude-related factors. By addressing these factors, Project BOKABULARYO has the potential to significantly improve English vocabulary mastery among students, equipping them with the language skills necessary for academic and social success. Furthermore, these findings highlight the value of integrating motivation-based strategies in language education, suggesting that similar approaches could be applied to other areas of language learning.

Conclusion

To assess students' motivation, you could administer a survey or questionnaire that measures key motivational factors, such as interest in learning English vocabulary, perceived usefulness, confidence in learning new words, and willingness to engage in vocabulary activities. You might use a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to quantify responses. Additionally, interviews or focus group discussions with students could provide qualitative insights into their motivations, identifying specific areas where motivation might be enhanced.

Language aptitude could be measured using a vocabulary pre-test designed to assess students' existing vocabulary knowledge and skills. This test could include word recognition, understanding of word meanings, and application of vocabulary in context. To ensure comprehensive insights, you could also use observational assessments during classroom activities, tracking how quickly and accurately students learn and use new vocabulary. Comparing test results with qualitative observations would help in understanding each student's language aptitude.

Analyzing the data collected from the motivation survey and language aptitude tests would allow for statistical comparison. Using a correlation analysis or a paired t-test could help determine whether there is a significant relationship between motivation levels and language aptitude scores. For instance, you could examine whether students with higher motivation also demonstrate higher aptitude scores or if the two are independently developed. Such analysis could uncover valuable insights into how motivation and aptitude interplay in vocabulary acquisition.

Based on the findings from the first three questions, Project BOKABULARYO could be designed to strengthen both motivation and language aptitude. The intervention might include gamified vocabulary exercises, interactive learning sessions, or vocabulary-building competitions to enhance motivation. Additionally, implementing structured vocabulary activities that focus on repeated exposure, contextual usage, and collaborative learning can help address both motivational and aptitude challenges. You could outline specific activities, their expected outcomes, and the timeline for implementation, ensuring the project addresses identified weaknesses effectively.

Recommendations

1. To enhance motivation and language aptitude in vocabulary learning, incorporate activities that are both interactive and contextually relevant to students' interests and real-life situations.
2. Implement digital tools, such as vocabulary-building apps, interactive games, and online flashcards, that provide repeated and varied exposure to new words.
3. Encourage collaborative activities, such as peer-led vocabulary discussions, group quizzes, and vocabulary challenges, to create a supportive learning atmosphere.
4. Conduct ongoing assessments to measure students' progress in vocabulary acquisition, and provide constructive feedback that emphasizes their growth and areas for improvement. Personalized feedback can address specific motivational and aptitude needs, guiding students to focus on challenging areas.

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