



The Effectiveness of Vicarious Learning among EFL University Students

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SUBMISSION
09/04/2023

ACCEPTED
14/06/2023

E-PUBLISHED
10/09/2023

P-ISSN: 2074-9554 | E-ISSN: 8118-2663

 <https://doi.org/10.25130/jaa.15.55.1.26>

Vol (15) No (55) June (2023) P (365-374)

ABSTRACT

Vicarious learning is obtaining knowledge through seeing the activities and results of others. One can acquire new knowledge, abilities, and habits without necessarily experiencing them firsthand. Vicarious learning is a very successful method of education that can occur in a variety of contexts, including the classroom, business, and daily life.

An individual observes the conduct of others and learns from the repercussions of their actions without engaging in the behavior themselves. By examining and assessing the activities of others, students can improve their problem-solving and critical thinking skills through observation.

By observing the behaviors and emotions of others, students can learn how to manage their emotions and interact with others in a positive and productive manner.

Students can gain essential social skills such as empathy, collaboration, and cooperation, which are essential for success in both academic and non-academic settings.

To gather information, a test instrument has been constructed by the researcher. A sample of (40) students divided into two groups (experimental and control one), from the English Department at the College of Education for Humanities / University of Diyala of the academic year (2023).

KEYWORDS

Vicarious Learning, Effectiveness, Engagement, Classroom



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1.1. The Problem of the study and its Significance:

Vicarious learning is important because "it offers students a different method of learning and gaining new information and skills. Without actually participating in the action themselves, it enables students to gain knowledge from other student's encounters" (Askew, 2015, p. 22).

The following are some of the main significances of this kind of learning:

A. Enhancing Learning Outcomes: By giving students more chances to learn and pick up new skills, vicarious learning can help students learn and achieve better learning outcomes.

B. Accessing New Educational Possibilities: Vicarious learning can be used to give students access to educational chances that they might not otherwise have. For instance, students can watch and learn from subject-matter specialists in their area of expertise or from other learners with various backgrounds and viewpoints.

C. Increasing Motivation: Seeing others achieve can inspire students and boost their confidence in their own abilities. Increased effort and perseverance in learning and success may result from this.

D. Vicarious learning can encourage cooperation and social learning because students can learn from and with one another. This may promote a feeling of neighborhood and cooperative education.

E. Lowering Risk: By studying others' blunders and successes, students can reduce their own risk of making mistakes. In high-risk or complex settings where mistakes can have severe repercussions, this can be especially helpful. (Ibid, p.24)

1.2. The Aim of The Study:

One of the key aims of using vicarious learning is to stimulate student engagement and motivation. When students see others successfully completing a task or mastering a skill, they may feel inspired to do the same, and may be more motivated to learn.

1.3. Hypothesis:

The hypothesis underlying the use of vicarious learning in the classroom is that:

1. Students can learn through seeing the conduct of others and its effects.
2. Vicarious learning has a positive effect on university students.
3. Students who watch a video of a classmate using a new English word in context effectively will be more likely to recall and utilize that word than students who did not watch the video.
4. There is a statistical difference among the control and experimental groups.

1.4. Limits:

The current study is limited to an academic year's (2023) of EFL students from the College of Education for Humanities at the University of Diyala who are enrolled in the third level of English language department.

1.5. Procedures:

There procedures that are used to facilitate vicarious learning in the classroom:

1. Students divided randomly into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.
2. The experimental group is given a video of a peer answering the problem successfully, whereas the control group is not.
3. Both groups are allowed time to solve the problem independently.
4. The responses of the students are gathered and evaluated for accuracy.

2. Theoretical Background:

2.1. Definitions of Vicarious Learning:

Vicarious learning is "a method of education that enables students to absorb knowledge from the experiences of others. It is a deliberate process that entails observing, experiencing, and empathizing with what others are doing as well as making notes and assessing what has been observed. Vicarious learning is drawn from indirect sources like listening and seeing rather than

direct, hands-on instructions. Indirect sources include things like watching a video, listening to a tale, reading a book, or imagining a scenario, as well as seeing or hearing it in real life". (Rachman, 1977, p. 456)

Vicarious learning, also referred as "social learning or observational learning, is a form of learning that takes place by watching the actions and experiences of others. Instead of immediately experiencing those repercussions, one learns from them by observing how others behave" (Schreier & Heinrichs, 2010, p. 23)

Vicarious learning "can happen through a variety of observational techniques, such as students-watching, hearing to other student's experiences, and reading about other students's experiences. It can also happen through media, such as films, television programs, or social media platforms, where students can watch how others behave and the results of that behavior" (Roberts, 2010, p. 233). "It is based on the social learning hypothesis, which holds that humans may acquire skills by observation alone" (Bandura, 1965, p. 265).

Accessing students' imaginations and eliciting an emotional response also appear to be essential elements of vicarious learning. Student self-reflection stimulates an "affective response" that can result in enhanced learning" (Roberts, 2010, p. 255).

According to Stegmann et al., (2012, p. 164) "conducted that participant displayed learning when given a collaborative learning scenario and scripted feedback. However, if the observation situation is complicated, students should be advised where to focus their attention. In addition to having consequences for socialization and behavior, vicarious learning can also have ramifications for socializing. It can impact a person's attitudes, values, and beliefs, as well as their behavior and decision-making. Children, for instance, might acquire violent conduct by witnessing it in others, and employees can learn excellent communication skills by studying their successful coworkers".

Bruner (1986) writes that "most of our encounters with the world are not direct encounters" (p. 122), which seems to indicate that it is possible to acquire knowledge through means other than direct or primary experience.

2.2. Types of Vicarious Learning:

According to (Askew, 2015, p. 21) which "stated that there are numerous types of vicarious learning:

1. Imitation is the most fundamental form of imitation learning, in which a person mimics the actions of another person. For instance, a young kid may pick up the skill of shoe tying by imitating their parent or an elder relative.
2. Observational learning entails watching how others behave and picking up knowledge from the results of those actions. A student might be inspired to engage themselves if they see their peers getting praise for contributing to class talks, for instance.
3. Modeling is a more intentional form of vicarious learning in which a person attempts to imitate the actions of an instructor or role model. A young athlete might, for instance, base their exercise schedule after that of a productive professional athlete.
4. Comparing one to others in order to assess one's own skills and success is known as social comparison. For instance, a student can assess their scholastic success by comparing their test results to those of their peers.
5. Mirror neurons: This is a form of indirect learning that entails the brain's mirror neurons, which give a person the ability to feel and experience another person's feelings. For instance, by merely watching someone else's facial expressions or body language, a person may develop empathy for their suffering or distress".

2.3. The Benefits of Vicarious Learning:

According to Askew, (2008, p. 133), which confirmed that "there are many benefits of vicarious learning, including:

1. Better skill acquisition: Vicarious learning enables students to pick up new habits and skills without resorting to trial-and-error learning. Individuals can learn new information and abilities more swiftly and effectively by observing others.
2. Error risk is decreased because students are less likely to make blunders when they learn from the missteps and successes of others. In high-risk or complex settings where mistakes can have severe repercussions, this can be especially helpful.
3. Increased motivation: Seeing others achieve can inspire students and boost their confidence in their own abilities. Increased effort and perseverance in learning and success may result from this.
4. Greater accessibility: students who may not have direct access to specialists or tools may find that vicariously learning is especially helpful. Students can learn from many different sources and obtain information and skills that might be challenging to acquire otherwise by watching other students.
5. Vicarious learning can be a joint and societal process because students can learn from and with one another. This may promote a feeling of neighborhood and cooperative education”.

2.4. The Drawbacks of Vicarious Learning:

According to Askew and Hagel (2015, p. 7) which stated that “there are many disadvantages to take into account. These consist of:

1. Limited input: When learning by sight, students might not get immediate feedback on how they performed or understood the subject. It may be challenging to spot and clarify mistakes or misunderstandings as a result.
2. Vicarious learning may not be tailored to a person's unique learning requirements or tastes due to the limited personalization. Because of this, a one-size-fits-all strategy may not be as successful for all types of learners.
3. Potential for biases in observational learning: students might be more likely to learn from students they believe to be comparable to themselves, which could lead to prejudices in the knowledge and abilities acquired.
4. Lack of practical experience: Vicarious learning may not give students the practical experience they need to perfect particular abilities or jobs.
5. Limited transmission of learning: The knowledge acquired through vicarious experiences may not always be transferable to new circumstances or settings. The practical application of the information and skills being acquired may be constrained as a result”.

2.5. How can Vicarious Learning Used in The Classroom?

Vicarious learning can be a potent instrument for fostering motivation, engagement, and social-emotional learning in the classroom by enabling students to gain knowledge from the triumphs and failures of others in a protected setting.

Vicarious learning can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways, including:

1. **Role Modeling:** Teachers can set an example for students to follow by engaging in good actions and dispositions like attentive attention, respectful dialogue, and problem-solving.
2. **Peer Learning:** By encouraging students to work in groups or couples, teachers give them the chance to watch and absorb the attitudes and behaviors of their peers.
3. **Videos and other Multimedia Tools** can be used by teachers to demonstrate good actions and abilities, such as giving a speech in front of an audience, carrying out a scientific experiment, or solving a math issue.
4. **Field Excursions or Guest Speakers:** Teachers can organize for students to tour workplaces or invite lecturers, giving them the chance to interact with experts in various areas and learn from their experiences.

5. Reflective Talks: Teachers can lead discussions in which students consider their own experiences and compare them to those of their classmates. This enables them to gain knowledge from others' accomplishments and difficulties.

6. Collaborative Learning: Teachers can promote activities that enable students to watch and learn from each other's methods and tactics, like group projects or peer reviews.

2.6. Behavioral Reactions to Exposure of Communication Visibility:

The term "behavioral responses to communication visibility" refers to how students act or react when information is made transparent or visible to them, either through direct contact or by watching how others behave. This may entail actions like better achievement, elevated engagement, or alterations in behavior.

"Vicarious learning is the process of learning from the events and acts of others. It entails picking up information, abilities, or dispositions through simulated encounters rather than by doing the tasks directly" (Myers, 2018, p. 928).

Reusing knowledge or information means putting it to use in fresh settings or circumstances. In order to make decisions and solve problems, this may entail using prior experiences, best practices, or the knowledge of others.

By observing and learning from the actions and experiences of others, including their classmates, instructors, or subject-matter experts, students can interact through vicarious learning. "There are several methods to accomplish this, including:

1. Students can pick up tips from their peers by watching how they participate in talks and collaborate on tasks in groups during class. They may gain better interpersonal and cooperative abilities as a result.
2. By viewing online lessons and educational films, students can gain knowledge from professionals in a variety of fields. Students who want to learn more about a specific topic in-depth may find this to be a useful resource.
3. Attending seminars and conferences: Students can go to seminars and conferences where they can learn from subject-matter specialists. Through networking with other students and workers, they will have the chance to learn about the most recent developments in their field's study and industry trends.
4. Reading case studies and articles: By reading case studies and articles that detail effective communication strategies or methods, students can gain insight from the experiences of others. They can better their ability to collaborate with others and develop their own speaking skills as a result" (Ibid, p. 929).

2.7. Applying Vicarious Learning:

In the EFL classroom, vicarious learning can be implemented in a variety of ways to improve students' language-learning experiences. Here are several strategies:

1. Encourage students to watch and learn from the language usage of their peers. We can pair students and have them practice communicating with one another, for instance. This allows them to observe and learn from one another's language usage, pronunciation, and fluency.
2. Video / Audio Recording: Students can view and learn from video or audio recordings of language models. This can be accomplished by recording a native speaker speaking the target language or by capturing the language use of excellent students. We can also employ popular media such as television series, movies, and podcasts in the target language.
3. Role playing is a great technique for fostering vicarious learning in the classroom.

Students are able to observe and learn from one another's use of language in order to improve their own communication. For various scenarios and situations, we can assign roles or allow students to choose their own.

4. As a teacher, we can demonstrate correct language usage in several circumstances, such as speaking, writing, and reading. We may also employ roleplaying or a video/audio recording to demonstrate excellent language proficiency.

5. Encourage students to reflect on their own language learning experiences and determine what they can learn from their classmates, teachers, and language models. This can be accomplished via writing assignments, group conversations, or self-reflection activities (<https://www.valamis.com/hub/vicarious-learning>).

Overall, incorporating vicarious learning strategies in the EFL classroom can be an effective way to promote language learning, improve language use, and build students' confidence in communicating in the target language.

3. Methodology:

3.1. The Participants:

Students who observe a video of a peer successfully solving a complex math problem will be more likely to solve the same problem correctly compared to students who did not observe the video. The study's sample consists of forty students selected at random and divided into two groups, an experimental group and a control group, from the department of English language in the College of Education at Diyala University. The experimental group consists of 20 students who are taught the textbook's material with an emphasis on teaching through video using the vicarious learning technique, while the control group consists of 20 students who are taught the same material using the traditional method of instruction, i.e. without using the vicarious learning technique.

3.2. The Experiment:

During the first three months of the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023, the researcher taught the first four units of the textbook to the two groups.

Using the following steps, the researcher applied the vicarious learning methodology to the experimental group:

1. The students are divided into five groups, with eight students in each group.
2. Showing students videos or demonstrations of other students or individuals performing a task or solving a problem, and then observing the students' learning outcomes to see if they were able to learn and apply the information they observed.
3. By showing a video a student successfully completing a difficult task, and then ask the class to try the same task on their own. The teacher would then assess whether the students were able to successfully solve the problem based on what they observed in the video.
4. In order to increase competitiveness and motivation among the students, the researcher has awarded prizes to the winning group. The winning group is the one that completes this task first.
5. Both groups are provided with a list of ten new English vocabulary terms to study.
6. The experimental group is shown a video of a classmate using the vocabulary words in context, while the control group is not.
7. Both groups are provided with time to study and apply the new terminology.
8. Both groups are administered a vocabulary knowledge and application test.
9. Using statistical analysis, compare the quiz scores of the experimental and control groups.
10. The researcher concluded that students in the experimental group who observe the video of a peer successfully solving the problem will perform better on the problem compared to the control group.

Thus, this experiment could provide evidence of the effectiveness of vicarious learning in the classroom, particularly for students who benefit from observing and modeling the problem-solving strategies of their peers.

3.3. Instrument of The Study:

For the purpose of determining the impact of employing the vicarious learning technique to teach textbooks on the students, the researcher has produced a test for the two study groups. She has gathered their response papers and corrected them using an appropriate scoring scheme that awards one point for each correct word and zero points for each erroneous word. The total score on the exam is 40 points.

4. Results of The Experiment:

The following are the primary findings of the study:

In order to meet the purpose of the study, a t-test was used to two independent samples. The researcher compared the value of the computed t-test with the value of the t – table after obtaining the mean and standard deviation of the two groups' vocabulary test responses using descriptive statistics. The results suggest that the estimated t-value of 5.75 is greater than the tabulated value of 1.97 at 86 degrees of freedom and a significance level of (0.05).

This result indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the two study groups, in favor of the experimental group.

Table (1) The Result of The Test

Group	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of freedom	Calculated T-Test
Experimental Group	20	22.50	13.89	86	5.75
Control Group	20	5.868	13.25	86	5.75

The observations made by the researcher during the implementation of this technique revealed that it may be used to offer any instructional material to students of any level. According to Purnawati (2017, p.49), "it is also an effective approach for motivating students to learn". "The team performance results linked with vicarious learning reciprocity (particularly through its moderating effects on external learning) also have significant implications for the study and practice of external learning in teams.

The necessity for businesses to participate in both exploratory and exploitative learning is a fundamental dichotomy" (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Thus, a vicarious learning lens may facilitate the integration of prior research on knowledge sharing and knowledge seeking into a more unified perspective of interpersonal learning at work, as well as a mechanism for aggregation at the collective level through the distribution of vicarious learning dyads across a larger group, team, or organization." (Myers, 2018, p. 940).

Table (2) The Results of the Experimental Group Performance

Task Performance	Sample	Mean	Standards Deviation	Degree of freedom	Calculated T-Test
Completing work on time	20	4.33	66	86	5.77
Responding quickly to problems or opportunities	20	27.61	1.21	86	5.77
Overall team performance	20	3.87	35	86	5.77

This indicates that when implementing task performance, the students are able to increased language proficiency over time, this may indicate that vicarious learning has been beneficial in assisting them to acquire and utilize the language. If pupils are able to use the language more precisely, especially in terms of grammar and syntax, this may suggest that observing and learning

from others has helped them develop more exact language abilities. If students are able to communicate with others in the target language more effectively, this may indicate that vicarious learning has assisted them in learning how to utilize the language in context and in response to appropriate social cues.

5. Conclusions:

Vicarious learning, or learning through observing others, can be an effective method for acquiring a second or foreign language. Teaching EFL students through vicarious learning can have various advantages:

- A. By watching other students successfully using the language, EFL students can be motivated to work harder to acquire the same competency level.
- B. Improved comprehension: As students witness others using the language, they can obtain a greater knowledge of how to utilize it in context, which can improve their comprehension skills.
- C. Seeing and listening to others can offer EFL students with a model for correct pronunciation, grammar, and syntax, enabling them to produce language with greater precision.
- D. Increased cultural awareness: Vicarious learning can expose pupils to diverse cultures and points of view, thereby enhancing their comprehension of the language and its speakers.

So, Teaching EFL students vicarious learning can be an excellent strategy to enhance language acquisition, boost motivation, and promote cultural awareness.

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Appendix (1):

A sample of Questions Asked to students after seeing a video:

No.	The Questions
1	Did you find the vicarious learning intervention helpful in improving your language skills?
2	How much did observing the native speaker's grammar and sentence structure aid in your own language improvement?
3	How much new vocabulary did you acquire through the intervention of vicarious learning?
4	Did you feel more comfortable using the target language after completing the intervention for vicarious learning?
5	Did you find the supplied key phrases and expressions useful in completing the task?
6	What aspect of the intervention for vicarious learning did you find the least beneficial? (such as video duration, accent of the speaker, and task difficulty).
7	Would you recommend the use of vicarious learning to other EFL learners?
8	How would you rate your overall performance on the task?
9	What aspect of the intervention for vicarious learning did you find most beneficial? (e.g., new vocabulary, grammar use, key phrases).