

لعبة الشطرنج واثرها في اكتساب مفردات اللغة الانكليزية لغير متكلميها: دراسة ميدانية

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مستخلص البحث :

مفردات اللغة الانكليزية. واخيرا بين الباحث مدى تأثير لعبة الشطرنج في اكتساب المفردات واعتبار السياق الشطرنجي اضافة اخرى لمحاور دراسة علم اللغة (اللسانيات).

The Game of Chess and the Acquisition of English Vocabulary

by Non-Native Speakers: A Case Study

Life is like Chess

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Abstract

From the very beginning of this research paper, the researcher has adopted a concept of modern linguistic which is *the game of chess* to present a specific area of the study of language. It is related to the acquisition of English vocabulary represented by the current study entitled "The game of chess and the acquisition of English vocabulary by non-native speakers: A case study".

After the involvement of brief introduction about the topic of study, five sections have been dealt with to indicate the core design applied. Accordingly, the researcher has referred to the related studies in the field of

منذ البدايات الاولى لعلم اللغة المعاصر (اللسانيات), برز مفهوم لعبة الشطرنج كأساس في الدراسات التحليلية لهذا العلم . ولقد كان المفكر اللغوي دي سو سير من اوائل المنظرين في هذا المجال من خلال ثنئياته المذكورة في اغلب كتب علم اللغة (اللسانيات). دي سوسير يعتقد ان اللغة تشبه في معطياتها لعبة الشطرنج على الرقعة وان تبادل الادوار والمواقف في اللغة هي نفسها عند النظر الى رقعة الشطرنج. وعلى اية حال فان ورقة البحث الحالي وضفت لعبة الشطرنج بمنحى اخر هو في الحقيقة جزء من الادوار التي تقوم فيها هذه اللعبة في التأثير على اولئك اللذين يمارسون اللعبة فعليا. في هذه الورقة البحثية, ارتأى الباحث ان يستقصي مدى تأثير هذه اللعبة ,لعبة الشطرنج, على لاعبيها من حيث عدد مفردات اللغة الانكليزية المكتسبة. وقد قسمت الورقة البحثية الى اقسام ضمت توصيف لدراسات سابقة وبعض الأسئلة والفرضيات. وقد صيغ الجانب العملي ليشمل مجموعتين من المساهمين (لاعبين وحكام وجمهور). وتوصلت الدراسة الى قائمة معتبرة من



position, the synchronic system of relations, arbitrariness of the value of the sound value and rules govern the system. In the same regard, chess metaphor also sheds light on syntax. It can be treated in term of the position value or the system rules, etc. The idea is that a word's function depends on its syntactic position. In addition, chess pieces move according to specific rules and like this the rules of grammar govern syntactic structures. Regarding semantics, De Saussure put forward certain ideas of how meaning works in language. He introduced the binary terms *signifier/signified*. He argued that the relationship is arbitrary. Meaning does not come from things themselves but from the differences between signs.

Semantics is our concern in the current study due to the view point that vocabulary is a concept which refers to meaning in language. However, it is of benefit to indicate that the current study deals with the game of chess as a kind of sports game. It is not related to the game of chess as a metaphor for linguistics analysis. It is a case study of the impact of the game of chess on the acquisition of English vocabulary. That's it sheds light on a specific community in the social affair.

1. Preliminary Remarks

1.1 Research question

Though it is descriptive in nature, the study is to answer the question:
What English verbal words or expressions are commonly used during the game of chess?

1.2 Hypothesis of the study

It is hypothesized that the game of chess has a significant impact on the acquisition of English vocabulary.

1.3 Statement of the problem

It is clear that English is the most used language all over the world. Thus, the study of English vocabulary is an angle of the study of the language it self. In this regard, the researcher has attempted to shed light on how

study. Though they take another orientation, those studies have helped in clarifying the position of the game of chess in the process of learning English as a second language.

Basically, the researcher has begun by certain preliminaries which have been put forward to lead the research such as a research question and a hypothesis. Building on this, the experimental part has been designed to include two groups, namely the control group and the experimental one. Accordingly a number of results have been reached of. The research has concluded that the game of chess can help in achieving better acquisition of specific vocabularies of English. The conclusion also presents the game of chess as a valuable context for studying vocabulary acquisition of non-native speakers.

Key words: chess acquisition English vocabulary

Introduction

No doubt that the game of chess has its influence on general linguistics, starting with the very beginning of modern linguistics. De Saussure, often considered the father of modern linguistics, put the corner stone that the study of language is better treated in regard to the game of chess. In his "Course in General Linguistics", he explains that a linguist is likely to be interested in the moves of the pieces and how they aligned on the board. It is not important to pay attention to the way the chessmen are made of, but rather to the rules of the game. It means that the study of language is a matter of understanding the consequence of its components to be analyzed. Accordingly, the main scope of linguistics covers three basic components which are phonology, syntax and semantics.

The game of chess applies to phonology in a number of key ways, which are the value of



games; invented poker, Chinese chess, and go bang. They found that all three games have its significant impact of vocabulary learning.

Under the title *The Semantic Extension and Generalization of Chess Words and Phrases*, Wang (2020) addresses the issue of chess vocabulary in China. It studies the relationship between the Chinese chess vocabulary and Chinese chess playing culture. The study concludes that “Many chess vocabulary eventually enter into the general vocabulary through metaphors and extensions, becoming a common language in society” (Wang, 2020: 428). It is a result of cultural development in terms of ancient chess vocabulary which has enhanced “a cultural background for the emergence and enrichment of chess vocabulary” (Wang, 2020: 431).

Tomas Zapounidis (2021), in his article entitled “Young learners, Maths, EFL and Chess: With CLIL they all progress”, claims that research literature acknowledged the matter of chess instruction in schools. Thus, his research is an orientation of explaining the benefits of chess instruction for young learners. Chess, in this regard, is a means of cognitive development of children. Scholars such as Fissler, Kolassa and Schrader (2015), agree that games of cognitive demanding can enhance cognitive abilities. However, what is related to the current study is that the chess instruction is basically introduced with English language.

In his “English Chess Terminology: A field Approach”, Zhuravleve (2024) refers to the special vocabulary of English used in chess terminology. The study is to analyze the lexical and semantic aspects of chess terms. He indicates that “one of the peculiarities of the language of the chess game is that it is used for the purpose of professional sports communication both for experts (who use exclusively terms) and for amateur players” (2024: 4). In this case, chess vocabulary is ranging from terms to jargon and that the

English vocabulary is used and acquired contextually in authentic and interactive settings.

1.4 Aims of the study

The study aims at putting forward a list of the expected total number of English vocabularies that Iraqi players get by practicing the game of chess. The vocabularies often learned through conversation during face to face chess games or even through voice chat when games are played online. By extension, the study aims to identify the encountered English vocabulary in the context of the chess game. Such context may include playing the game, watching tutorials, reading chess books or magazines and engaging in English-speaking chess communities.

1.5 The scope of the study

The scope of study is related to Iraqi chess players of all ages as a sample of non-native speakers of English. It is also of importance to indicate that the study is limited to include only vocabularies encountered during chess games not other situations of chess (such as watching tutorial, reading chess books, etc.). It is highly tightened with spoken English expressions commonly used during live chess games and excludes written language like chess books.

2. Related Studies

Leading the current study, a number of related studies are to be referred to. It can help in providing more suggestions and practical implications. They are related to the current study in terms of the impact of game-based vocabulary learning in general and chess-based in particular.

Generally speaking, game based vocabulary significantly improved the learner's ability to expand encyclopedic knowledge of vocabulary. Liao and Chen (2012) conducted a study entitled *Game Based Vocabulary Learning*. The study had been designed to include three kinds of



issue in this situation is the interaction between the rivals and the staff of referees by means of English vocabulary used all over the world. According to Holme (2009: 183), the very general point in foreign language learning is that learners have to entrench words and their encyclopedic meanings. Encyclopedic knowledge is the most relevant concept of enhancing vocabulary learning in FL. It “refers to all the information we store in our minds” (Littlemore, 2009: 71).

However, the current study is not closely related to ELT and TEFL or even ELL. It is rather related to the impact of certain contexts on learning English vocabulary. The purpose is to document and describe English vocabulary that appears in verbal communication during chess games. It is a descriptive case study of situational context.

4. The basic components of the game of chess

Chess as a kind of sports is done by the existence of several components. The components are the players, the concrete equipment of the game and the rules of the game of chess.

4.1 The players

In fact, every game of chess is played by the existence of two rivals. Each one of the two has his own strategy and style to win the game. In certain cases of tournaments the age of the players are equally considered. In other cases, age is not important that they are open to all ages

4.2 The concrete equipment of chess

Chess involves three things of equipment. They are the board of chess, the chessmen and the watch. The board of chess consists of 64 squares which are divided into two parts with 32 squares for each part. The board is designed to have two colours which are mostly white and black. These colours are arranged in a systematic sequence. Where one square has white colour the next is black and so on. The board of chess is numbered vertically from 1 to 8. It is also designed to

“lexical semantic field of Chess Game includes such categories of specialized terms” (ibid).

3. SLA, ELL and Vocabulary

Acquisition is a term used to refer to the process of learning language rules and structures such as grammar, phonology and so on. Accordingly, the term can be used to distinguish between native and non native speakers of a language. Native speakers are those people who acquired the language naturally and effortlessly in childhood. For a language of native speakers, the term First Language Acquisition (FLA) is used. Some governments use the term Mother Tongue for political purposes. They assign the language to specific minority groups.

Second language acquisition is another term, which is used to refer to non native speakers who acquire a second language. Research in SLA is concerned itself with the acquisition of a second not native language adopt the idea that the term can be used interchangeably with the term ELL (widely used to refer to *English Language Learner*). It is said that English is a Lingua Franca. The term refers to people who speak “a new variety of English which depend neither on childhood acquisition nor on cultural identity, and is often used in communication in which no native speaker is involved” (Cook, 2003: 29). English is additional language for Iraqis who study in schools or universities. In this regard, the terms English Language Teaching (ELT) and Teaching English as a foreign Language (TEFL) are more acceptable than the term SLA. However, the term *ELL* is more applicable in this study. This is because of the context of situation of the game of chess we are supposed to be in. Throughout the context of situation of the game of chess, a number of vocabularies are learned or acquired by Iraqi players.

It is mentioned earlier in this study that the game of chess has its impact on players’ development of English vocabulary. A central





6	F	Bishop		الفيل
7	G	Knight		الحصان
8	H	Rook		الرخ
9	Ø	Pawn		البيدق

Table 1: Names and distribution of the chess pieces

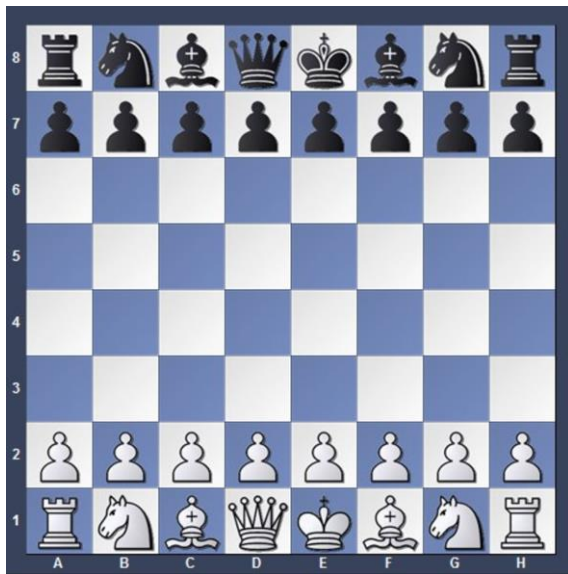


Diagram 2: Chess pieces

• Administrative Data and Methods.

A number of Iraqis in the chess community have participated consciously and unconsciously in this study. The data have been collected during the context of situation of the game of chess. In each situation, the informants are not equal in number. Though basically there are two rivals of players, the attendants around the board vary from situation to situation. In certain situations, the attendants may be only the rivals of. In other situations, the attendants may be more than two. It is clear that this case is out of the control of the researcher. However, the researcher has used certain methods like recording what informants utter during face to

have a letter on each one of the eight squares found in the very beginning of the board. The letters are arranged alphabetically from a to h.

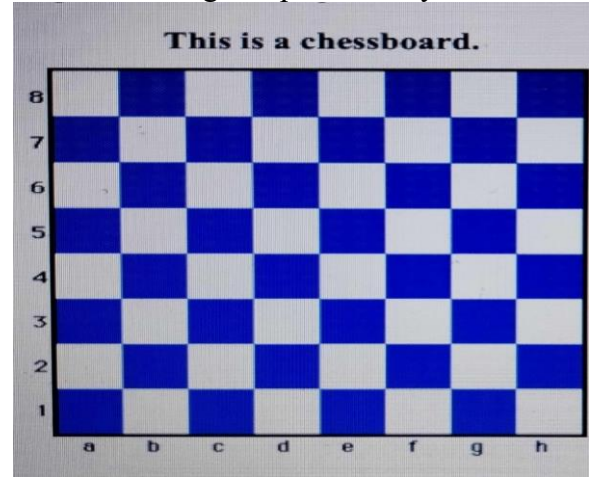







Diagram 1: Chess Board

The chessmen are 32 in number which represent any of the pieces used in the game of chess. These pieces are also divided into two colours, white and black. If a player makes use of the white pieces, the other player uses the black ones. Each one of the players has the ability to move 16 of the chessmen on their own. Eight of the pieces of each side of the game resemble soldiers in the military. The other eight pieces have their own names and jobs. The following table shows the names of the chess pieces in English and Arabic:

No.	Letter on the board	Name	Shape	Arabic meaning
1	A	Rook		الرخ
2	B	Knight		الحصان
3	C	Bishop		الفيل
4	D	King		الملك
5	E	Queen		الوزير

				h origin
5	tournamen t	مسابقة		
6	Pieces	قطع		
7	blunder	خطا جسسيم		
8	Big advantage	فائدة كبيرة		
9	Family fork	طلب ثلاث قطع		

**Table 3.
Informant C**

No.	English Vocabulary	Arabic Meaning	Literal Meaning	Notes
1	strategy	ستراتيجية		
٢	pressure	ضغط		
3	tactics	تكيك		
4	time	وقت		
5	blunder	خطا جسسيم		
6	Big advantage	فائدة كبيرة		
7	Family fork	طلب ثلاث قطع		

**Table 4.
Informant D**

No.	English Vocabulary	Arabic Meaning	Literal Meaning	Notes
1	Draw	تعادل	Finish without winning	The same
٢	Fork	طلب مزوج بالحصان	A tool for eating	Different
3	Pin	تسميرة	To attach something into another	Different

face or online games. Another method which has been used is to conduct interviews with players on their experience with spoken chess.

•1. The control group

Conscious participants are informed of the idea of the current study and they represent the control group. Selected randomly, they have been asked to list the number of English vocabulary they acquired by practicing the game of chess. Collecting the data of the study, five lists of five informants have been taken as follows:

**Table 1.
Informant A**

No .	English Vocabular y	Arabic Meanin g	Literal Meaning	Notes of Compariso n
1	Checkmat e	مات الملك	King captured	The same
٢	Stalemate	جمود	Cannot move any piece	The same
3	Castling	تموضع في الزاوية	In a corner square	The same
4	En- passant	العبور	Without giving informatio n	French origin/ Different
5	Promotion	ترقية	A move to a higher rank	The same

**Table 2.
Informant B**

No .	English Vocabular y	Arabic Meanin g	Literal Meanin g	Notes
1	Capture	ياسر		
٢	Defense	دفاع		
3	Game	لعبة		
4	Loss	خسارة		Frenc

has his comment on specific case of the game. In fact their communication has been in Arabic with certain English vocabulary uttered her and there. For the study requirement, the researcher has translated the whole conversation from Arabic into English by which the words uttered in English are underlined:

A: Hi everybody, Shall we start our game?

B and C: yes, let's do it.

A and B are rivals now. After three minutes:

A Take your turn.

B: big advantage.

C: ZugZwang

A: fork

B: Trick is on the way

By the end of the game

C: Are you kidding. You are in short of time.

B: can be resolved by sacrifice.

A: mistake

C: you are loser. B has a decisive advantage .

B: I have got a terrible blunder.

A: Checkm

Table 6. The experimental group

N.	English word	Arabic meaning
١	Turn	دور
٢	advantage	فائدة
٣	zugzwang	اجبار
٤	Fork	شوكة
٥	Trick	فخ
٦	Short of time	ضيق الوقت
٧	mistake	خطا
٨	decisive advantage	افضلية حامة
٩	blunder	خطا فادح
١٠	Checkmate	كش ملك مات

**Table 5.
Informant E**

No.	English Vocabulary	Arabic meaning		Notes
1	Skewer	ثوابت	Go to an area	Different
٢	Attack	هجوم مزدوج		
3	(Back) rank	الصف الخلفي		
4	Open file	الملف المفتوح		

On the other hand, unconscious participants represent the experimental group. They do not know every thing about the current study. They are only informants to give knowledge of the reliability of the vocabularies listed by the conscious participants. During the periods of practicing the game of chess, the researcher has made use of audio devices. They are technical tools for recording within the whole conversational interaction, the English vocabularies said by people of the community of the game of chess. Approaching the mentioned situation, a specific procedure has been adopted. It is to list the number of English vocabularies uttered by the informants around the table of the game of chess.

٥.2 The Experimental Group

The experimental group involves the players and the others who are around the table of the game of chess. In order to get information about the number of English vocabularies uttered by the community of the game of chess, the researcher has attended several situations of the game of chess. He has recorded the chess community interactions with each other.

The following example of conversation can help in showing the case of acquiring the English vocabulary. Three friends have their communication about the game. Every one

25	Pressure		25
26	Tactics		26
27	Time		50
28		Turn	20
29		advantage	22
30		zugzwang	11
31		Fork	12
32		Trick	23
33		Short of time	28
34		Mistake	33
35		decisive advantage	12
36		Blunder	12
37		checkmate	8

Answering the question raised in this study, several lists have been reached to describe the impact of the game of chess on vocabulary acquisition. It is of benefit to indicate that these lists are not inclusive for all English vocabulary of the game of chess but they are samples of the population related to the verbal expressions of English vocabulary.

In fact, each situation during the game of chess has its impact on the acquisition of English vocabulary. The frequency of English vocabulary is effected by the context such as the opening of the game, the players' reaction, the game ending, etc. it shows how language is functionally used in such

٦. Analysis and discussion

The following table includes the frequency of words of both groups: the control group and the experimental group.

Table 7.
the frequency of English vocabulary

1	Control group	Experimental group	Frequency
2	Checkmate		8
3	Stalemate		6
4	Castling		4
5	En-passant		3
6	Promotion		20
7	Draw		15
8	Fork		6
9	Pin		7
10	Skewer		4
11	Attack		8
12	(Back) rank		8
13	Open file		9
14	(closed) position		18
15	Capture		12
16	Defense		24
17	Game		30
18	Loss		24
19	Tournament		30
20	Pieces		40
21	Blunder		8
22	Big advantage		9
23	Family fork		10
24	Strategy		16



contexts. The game is rich of English vocabulary that the players logically exposed to with natural and contextual use of vocabulary.

One more advantage to be gained is that the current study adds insights to English learning contexts. It deals with real world interaction language. Following the results gained by data description, it is recommended that such a study can be generalized to involve the role of the game of chess on students who learn English in Iraq. It can be also specified to refer to the categories of vocabulary whether they are verbs, nouns, etc.

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