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The Effect of a Suggested Strategy Based on a Holistic Approach of Language in Improving EFL Students' English Vocabularies

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Abstract

Improving students' vocabulary requires effective instructional strategies that promote integrated language learning. The instructional process relies on well-designed programs based on holistic linguistic and cognitive principles that respond to learners' needs and enhance their linguistic competence. The aim of the present study is to identify the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on a holistic approach to language in developing EFL learners' English vocabulary. The researcher considered the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group that studied using the holistic strategy and the control group that studied using conventional vocabulary learning methods in the post-test of English vocabulary knowledge. The data

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were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The findings showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group in the post-test, indicating the effectiveness of the holistic strategy in increasing vocabulary knowledge. This study concludes that the use of holistic and multimodal strategies plays a positive role in improving vocabulary learning of EFL learners and recommends their integration into classroom instruction.

Keywords: Suggested Strategy, Holistic Approach, EFL Students, English Vocabularies

اثر إستراتيجية مقترحة قائمة على المدخل الكلي للغة في تنمية مفردات اللغة الإنكليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية

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المستخلص

تحسين مفردات الطلاب يتطلب استراتيجيات تعليمية فعالة تعزز التعلم اللغوي المتكامل. تعتمد العملية التعليمية على برامج مصممة بشكل جيد تستند إلى مبادئ لغوية ومعرفية شاملة تستجيب لاحتياجات المتعلمين وتعزز كفاءتهم اللغوية. الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو تحديد فعالية استراتيجية مقترحة تقوم على نهج شامل للغة في تطوير مفردات اللغة الإنكليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. اعتبر الباحث الفرضية الصفرية التي تقيد بأنه لا يوجد فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط الدرجات للمجموعة التجريبية التي درست باستخدام الاستراتيجية الشاملة والمجموعة الضابطة التي درست باستخدام أساليب تعلم المفردات التقليدية في اختبار ما بعد الدراسة لمعرفةهم بالمفردات الإنكليزية. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام البرنامج الإحصائي للتحليل الاجتماعي والعلوم الإحصائية. أظهرت النتائج أن المجموعة التجريبية أدت أداءً أفضل من المجموعة الضابطة في اختبار ما بعد الدراسة، مما يشير إلى فعالية الاستراتيجية الشاملة في زيادة المعرفة بالمفردات. تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن استخدام الاستراتيجيات الشاملة والمتعددة الوسائط يلعب دوراً إيجابياً في تحسين تعلم المفردات لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتوصي بإدماجها في التعليم داخل الفصل الدراسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية مقترحة، نهج شامل، طلاب اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، مفردات اللغة الإنكليزية

1.Introduction

The holistic approach is also in line with the research that emphasizes the role of strategy-based learning (Noprianto and Purnawarman, 2019; Alahmadi and Foltz, 2020; Liu, 2020; Ta'amneh, 2021). Vocabulary is the foundation of language learning (Nopriyanto and Poornavarman 2019: 263). Without sufficient vocabulary, students will not be able to communicate with others, and they may not be able to communicate themselves and understand others. (Al-Ahmadi et al., 2018, 15). Many EFL learners' when they learn vocabulary, they tend to learn words one by one in a long list, and this is not the best way for them to get a deep and long-term vocabulary (Bi, 2020, 79). This conventional approach fails to acknowledge that language is not a set of discrete elements, but a dynamic system that words take on meaning in the process of being used and understood within context and interaction (Lin and Lin, 2019, 30). Recently, there has been a growing focus on the need to integrate the approach of a holistic language learning into the research. (Liu, 2020; Wang, 2020; Jon et al., 2022; Zha and Liu, 2023). Language is perceived as a set of skills related to reading, writing, listening, and speaking as a whole rather than the sum of its parts (Embong et al., 2015, 36). Activities that develop students' multiple language skills can help students learn the vocabulary in context and reinforce it naturally (Peng, 2022, 3). This kind of teaching is based on the real use of language and may result in more sustainable learning outcomes (Peng 2020, 123). The holistic approach has been confirmed that students' memory of new words and their effective use of new words in authentic communication. It can be promoted when they are encouraged to use a variety of strategies including contextual cues, extensive reading, cooperative activities, and vocabulary usage (Peng, 2022; Ma, 2014; Zha and Liu, 2023). Such a change from memorization towards strategic and contextual learning enables students to make connections between words, their meaning, and how words are used in the world, helping them to become independent and motivated learners (Akpınar et al., 2015, 95). Although these developments have occurred, many EFL classes are still dominated by Teacher-Centered and Context-Centred Vocabulary Instruction (TCVI and CCCVI) that can restrict students' opportunities to experience the whole language (Alizadeh, 2016, 23). Thus, the need to investigate strategies that try to include a holistic view into the teaching of

vocabulary becomes imperative. This study is to explore the effect of a proposed strategy using a holistic approach to language learning on enhancing English vocabulary of EFL students. This study aims to become a part of the academic discourse on effective vocabulary instruction and to offer practical information for teachers who are working to enrich their students' learning experiences.

Maureen and de Jong (2018) indicate that technology has become a part of students' daily experiences, and they are likely to have countless encounters with different forms of digital communication. Today, modern applications must enter every detail of their lives, especially academically, to develop their skills and knowledge.

Digital culture is considered an important part of the educational system. The correct use of digital technology should be the foundation upon which the educational process is built. It helps teachers and educators teach students how to access information, respect laws, responsibilities, and freedoms, and use technology in an organized manner (Yustika & Iswati, 2020: 68).

There are many developed countries that teach students in schools subjects related to digital culture within the framework of digital education. In the same context, Australia launched a project under the slogan 'Connecting with Confidence: Developing Australia's Digital Future,' which stipulates the widespread teaching of digital education to students along with training parents and teachers on it according to a comprehensive plan. France also plans to make digital culture a major national issue (Heitplatz, 2022: 426).

New technologies have changed the way we communicate, allowing us to overcome time and ideological barriers of distance, and providing a new way to connect. So, it is essential to have knowledge for using and managing new digital resources, as well as understanding their scope and multiple benefits.

Khanlou & Zangeneh (2021) indicate that learning technological concepts and using digital technology has positive effects on students' social and economic integration, supporting their independence, and facilitating the learning process.

Vocabulary Educational Program

An effective vocabulary instruction program should be designed around structured, research-based principles that consider both the cognitive and linguistic needs of language

learners. Such programs seek not only to expand learners' vocabulary knowledge, but also to enhance their ability to use words in meaningful communicative contexts. Recent studies emphasize that vocabulary learning is most effective when embedded in holistic, multimodal instructional approaches that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities (Jon et al., 2022; Liu, 2020; Peng, 2020; Zha and Liu, 2023).

The current program focuses on the presentation of vocabulary in context-rich environments. Authentic materials and multimedia along with interactive activities that involved both receptive and constructive engagement with words were used to introduce learners to new vocabulary (Alahmadi and Foltz, 2020; Alyami and Mohsen, 2019; Boutorwick et al., 2019). This approach involved repeated exposure to the words in multiple formats, enabling students to successfully internalize word meanings, word forms, and patterns of word use (Uchihara et al., 2019; Feng, 2019).

The program involved different kinds of activities to support deeper learning in the form of inference tasks, contextual guessing activities, and consultation of a dictionary that would involve a range of strategies that enhance vocabulary learning (Akpınar et al., 2015; Alahmadi et al., 2018). To encourage active participation, communicative tasks should be introduced, such as role play, conversation and word game (Peng, 2022; Jonathans et al., 2021). This also included the concepts of frequency and relevance, with learners being exposed to the word items that needed to be read and used frequently in order to improve reading and oral communication skills (Schmitt et al., 2011; Bi, 2020; O'Loughlin, 2012). The programme included assessment and feedback systems that enabled learners to be monitored throughout. The vocabulary level test (Webb et al., 2017; Webb and Nation, 2012) was used for pre and post testing to gain quantitative data of vocabulary gain, and reflective assignments and self assessment exercises were used to enable learners to be able to monitor their learning processes. Research has indicated that these mixed assessment methods can not only predict learners' learning outcomes, but also enhance their metacognition and learning strategies (Hariati, 2020; Heidari, 2019; Tekir, 2021).

Features of a Vocabulary Educational Program

The main characteristics should be included in a good educational program, which helps the learners to acquire the vocabulary knowledge. A crucial aspect is that words are

selected systematically, allowing the learner to be exposed to high frequency and school-related vocabulary (Bi, 2020). It is important to make priorities by using the vocabulary lists, such as the lists created by Webb and Nation (2012), which will assist learners to focus on the words that will most likely appear in authentic language contexts (Webb & Nation, 2012). Choosing vocabulary carefully, programs can meet the immediate communicative needs of learners while also laying a solid foundation for future learning (O'Loughlin, 2012).

An additional important component is the ability to combine several learning strategies that address the preferences of several learning styles and learning modalities. Vocabulary instruction has been shown to be enhanced by a combination of explicit instruction, a context-based approach, inferencing, and dictionary work. Word-based learning methods enable students to interact with words actively instead of passively listing them; this will increase the retention of words and help them use them productively (Akpınar et al., 2018; Ta'amneh, 2021).

Contextualised learning is also stressed during a robust educational program. Vocabulary should be learned in the context of meaningful texts, authentic conversations, or thematic texts that show words in their natural environment of communication. Contextualization can enhance comprehension and allow students to draw inferences and make sense of new words based on context, helps students to form semantic networks to facilitate long-term retention and recall (Alahmadi and Foltz, 2020; Alyami and Mohsen, 2019; de la Garza and Harris, 2017).

In addition, successful programs build repetition and reinforcement in multiple modalities such as reading, listening and writing tasks. Repeated exposure to words in multiple contexts enhances the association between form and meaning and facilitates transfer from receptive to productive vocabulary learning (Feng, 2019; Hariati, 2020; Heidari, 2019; Uchihara et al., 2019). The use of multimodal activities also caters for a variety of learning styles to enhance engagement in learning, thereby making it more dynamic and interactive (Lin and Lin, 2019; Liu, 2020).

Lastly, a quality vocabulary educational program offers assessment and feedback systems to track progress and modify instruction. Through formative assessments, quizzes

and pre and posttests, instructors can determine what lexical knowledge gaps exist in learners and adjust their teaching plans accordingly. Feedback helps to reinforce correct usage and encourages learners to pursue new vocabulary (Ma, 2014; Noprianto and Purnawarman, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2011).

Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning that is holistic in nature focuses on the integration of several language skills and methods that will encourage meaningful and sustained learning. In contrast to the conventional approach which is merely memorizing words individually, holistic approaches are aimed at presenting words in a way that involves the student's cognition, emotion, and context, so that words will not be just memorized but actively used in communication (Embong et al., 2022; Peng, 2022; Zha and Liu, 2023). Holistic strategies link listening, reading, speaking and writing tasks to help learners interact with new words in different context, thus improving word retention and transfer to real-world communication (Liu, 2020; Wang, 2020).

Contextualization is an important component of a comprehensive vocabulary program. Words are used in authentic texts, dialogues, and/or multimedia, providing opportunities for students to infer meaning and understand patterns of usage (Alahmadi and Foltz, 2020; Alyami and Mohsen, 2019; de la Garza and Harris, 2017). Context-based learning helps students to form mental models of words and their relationships with other words, allowing them to process knowledge more deeply and retain it longer (Peng, 2020; Jonathans et al., 2021).

Multimodal exposure is also a central point of the holistic strategies. Incorporation of visual aids, audio recordings, interactive tasks, and collaborative activities in learning to suit the diverse learning styles (Lin and Lin, 2019; Liu, 2020; Rahimah et al., 2015). Multimodal engagement allows students to process the vocabulary by both ways (a receptive and productive), enhancing the neural connections made with word forms, word meaning, and word use. Several studies revealed that repeated exposure to different modalities has significant benefits for vocabulary acquisition than monomodal learning (Feng, 2019; Hariati, 2020; Uchihara et al., 2019).

Furthermore, holistic approaches emphasize active engagement and strategy use of the learner. Learners are encouraged to make inferences, form sentences and engage in role plays and peer discussion, thus not only engaging cognitively but also motivated (Akpınar et al., 2015; Alahmadi et al., 2018; Ta'amneh, 2021). As learners use the vocabulary in communicative tasks, they learn to produce the words, not only to understand them but to use them in meaningful ways (Boutorwick et al., 2019).

Last but not least, holistic vocabulary instruction is sometimes accompanied by assessment and feedback systems for monitoring and adapting instruction. Formative activities, pretests, posttests and self-reflection activities can give insights to learners' progress, whereas learners' persistent gaps can be addressed by adjusting some interventions provided by teachers (Ma, 2014; Noprianto and Purnawarman, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2011). Continuous assessment promotes learning and motivates learners to actively learn the vocabulary, which is in line with the whole education (Embong et al., 2022; Zha and Liu, 2023).

A holistic vocabulary teaching strategy is essentially combining multimodal input, meaningful context, active participation, and continuous assessment, to make it an engaging and learning-oriented environment. Empirical evidence indicated that this method leads to a greater amount of word knowledge and depth of knowledge, especially for EFL learners aiming to enhance their communicative competence (Peng, 2022; Jonathan et al., 2021).

Advantages of Holistic-Based Vocabulary Education

A holistic strategy for vocabulary teaching offers numerous advantages over conventional, isolated approaches, particularly in terms of increased retention, engagement, and communicative ability. One of the most important benefits is deep and meaningful learning. By exposing learners to vocabulary through multiple modalities—listening, reading, speaking, and writing—holistic teaching enables learners to process words in a variety of contexts, thereby strengthening memory associations and facilitating long-term retention (Jon et al., 2022; Peng, 2022; Zha and Liu, 2023). This multifaceted engagement ensures that learners not only recognize words, but can also use them effectively in authentic communicative situations (Liu, 2020; Wang, 2020).

Another benefit is increased learner motivation and engagement. Conventional vocabulary instruction often relies on rote memorization, which can be monotonous and boring. In contrast, holistic strategies integrate interactive activities such as role-playing, peer discussions, multimedia exercises, and contextual assignments that stimulate learner interest and active participation. This active engagement creates a positive emotional environment in which learners are encouraged to experiment with new words and take responsibility for their own learning process (Akpınar et al., 2015; Ta'amneh, 2021; Jonathans et al., 2021).

Another advantage to be mentioned is the improved retention and transfer of vocabulary. Immersive instruction is language-based instruction that offers students meaningful contexts for learning vocabulary, opportunity to infer meanings, understand subtle patterns of usage and recognize collocations (Alahmadi and Foltz, 2020; Alyami and Mohsen, 2019; de la Garza and Harris, 2017). Reading words in various linguistic and real-world contexts enhances receptive and productive knowledge, and the successful use of new vocabulary in other communicative contexts (Feng, 2019; Hariati, 2020; Uchihara et al., 2019).

The cognitive and metacognitive strategy development is also fostered by using an immersive strategy. New words are actively processed by learners using inference, contextual guesswork, generation and introspection. These techniques enable learners to move towards independence in learning and to tackle new words without relying on others, which is important for lifelong language learning (Alahmadi et al., 2018; Akpınar et al., 2015; Noprianto and Purnawarman, 2019).

But also, holistic approaches promote integration of vocabulary with language skills. Instead of learning words in isolation, the students learn the words through listening, reading, speaking and writing activities that are based on real-world communication (Peng, 2020; Jon et al., 2022).

Overall, this integration enhances learners' competence, helps them move from knowledge to application, and helps to close the gap between knowledge and correct language use (Boutorwick et al., 2019). Finally, holistic vocabulary instruction allows for ongoing assessment and feedback that helps teachers monitor learning progress and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. Ongoing assessment ensures that learning

difficulties are identified at an early stage, while feedback reinforces correct use and encourages learners to reflect, contributing to more effective and sustainable vocabulary learning (Ma, 2014; Schmitt et al., 2011; Jonathans et al., 2021).

Previous studies

Studies on holistic and vocabulary educational programs, table (1).

Table (1): Studies on Holistic and Vocabulary Educational Programs.

Name of researcher	Place	Grade	Aim of the Study	Number of Specimens	Gender	Results
Akpınar, Aşık, and Vural	Turkey	University /EFL learners	The aim was to examine the relationship between vocabulary presentation modes and learners' attitudes.	90 students	Males and Females	The study highlighted that corpus-based contextual guessing and online instruction improved vocabulary learning and learner attitudes more than dictionary use.
Alahmadi, and Foltz	Saudi Arabia	University/EFL learners	It aimed to investigate the effects of language skills and strategy use on vocabulary learning.	60 students	Males and Females	Found that using lexical translation combined with inferencing enhanced vocabulary learning.

Alyami and Mohsen	Saudi Arabia	University/EF L learners	The study aimed to explore the use of a reading lexicon to aid contextual vocabulary acquisition	50 students	Males and Females	The results of the study highlighted that contextualized reading improved vocabulary learning more effectively than isolated memorization.
Boutorwick, Macalister, and Elgort	New Zealand	University/EF L learners	The study sought to compare two extensive reading approaches and their effects on L2 vocabulary development.	72 students	Males and Females	The findings showed that extensive reading in meaningful contexts significantly improved vocabulary retention and comprehension.
Peng	China	University/EF L learners	The goal of the study was to investigate holistic language teaching in college English vocabulary teaching using multimedia.	60 students	Males and Females	The study showed that multi-modal holistic instruction led to higher vocabulary acquisition and better engagement.
Zha and Liu	China	University/EF L learners	The aim was to explore a holistic system of English learning	48 students	Males and Females	The study found that holistic strategies improved vocabulary learning efficiency and learner motivation.

			strategies among successful EFL learners.			
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Methodology

Research design

The present experimental study examined the effectiveness of a holistic vocabulary teaching strategy on improving the vocabulary knowledge of low-intermediate EFL learners at the Language Center of Salahuddin University. Initially, 90 students completed the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) to determine their general English language proficiency. Based on the results, students who scored between 20 and 25 were identified as low-intermediate learners. Using a purposive sampling method, 52 students (26 males and 26 females) were selected and then randomly assigned to the experimental or control group, ensuring equal gender distribution (13 males and 13 females in each group).

All participants completed a pretest with the updated Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) (Webb et al., 2017) prior to the intervention to determine vocabulary knowledge at the start of the intervention. The test was administered in one session to minimize test bias and to ensure reliability of the results. In the treatment phase, the experimental group was instructed using a holistic approach based on contexts and using contextualized reading texts, multimedia input, communication tasks and reflection activities like vocabulary notebooks. Vocabulary was introduced in meaningful contexts, then repeated in a variety of tasks, and rehearsed with receptive and productive activities. The teaching method used in this study was the interaction between language skills and cognitive engagement, which was in line with the concept of holistic language learning (Peng, 2022; Zha and Liu, 2023.)

This contrasts with the conventional vocabulary approach that used teacher-led explanations of vocabulary, memorization of word lists, and little context in which to practice vocabulary in the control group. This method was similar to the generally adopted one in EFL classes and was used as a benchmark for comparison.

Instructional intervention lasted a total of 12 sessions, for a 6-week period. Upon completion of the program, each subject received a post test to measure vocabulary growth with an equivalent version of the VLT. The interval between the pretest and posttest was chosen to minimize recall effects and to capture the actual learning.

The collected data were analysed statistically with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the difference between the experimental group and the control group in vocabulary gain and the potential gender differences.

Research Population and its Sample

The population of the present study was lower intermediate level (I2) learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) studying at the Language Center of Salahuddin University in the year 2024-2025. Of this total, 52 students were chosen as the subjects of the research. Thus, the final sample was 26 males and 26 females ranging in age from 18 to 25 years (mean age: 22, SD: 1.02). The sample was randomly split into two groups; experimental ($n = 26$) and control ($n = 26$) to prevent selection bias and insure fairness. In each group there were 13 males and 13 females and were balanced to investigate any differences in the effectiveness of the instructional strategy between males and females.

The target population for the study was randomly sampled

90 students attended the Language Center of Salahuddin University to first take the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The test results were used to classify students as lower intermediate, which is in line with the level of proficiency required in the present study, as students with the score range of 20-25 were classified as lower intermediate learners. Of this group, 52 students were purposively selected. The participants were then randomly split into two groups, experimental group and control group with 26 students (13 males and 13 females) in each group. The random assignment reduced the risk of bias and improved the internal validity of this study by equating both groups before intervention with respect to language proficiency, gender, and learning background. (Akpınar et al., 2020). Table (2) shows the distribution of sample members.

Table (2) The members of the Research Sample

Group	Class	Subclass	Number of students	%
Control	Lower Intermediate	A	26	50
Experimental	Lower Intermediate	B	26	50
Total			52	100

Equivalence of the two research groups

To confirm baseline equivalence, the pretest scores were analyzed using Levene's test for equality of variances and an independent-samples t-test. The results are presented in Table (3).

Table (3) The Baseline Equivalence of Participants

Test	F (Levene)	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Pretest	0.427	0.516	-1.289	50	0.203	-0.538	0.418	-1.378	0.301

Levene's test ($F = 0.427$, $p = 0.516$) indicated equal variances between the experimental and control groups. The t-test for equality of means ($t = -1.289$, $p = 0.203$) revealed no statistically significant difference in pretest scores. These results confirm that the two groups were equivalent at the beginning of the study, and ensure that any differences observed at the posttest can be attributed to the holistic intervention, and not to pre-existing inequalities in their vocabulary knowledge.

Internal and external safety of the experimental design

To ensure the internal safety (internal validity) of the experimental design, several methodological controls were implemented. First, both experimental and control groups were matched in terms of proficiency level based on the results of the Oxford Rapid Placement Test, ensuring that participants had similar English language backgrounds prior to the experiment (Webb and Nation, 2012; Alahmadi et al., 2018). Furthermore, pretest equivalence, confirmed by independent samples t-test ($p > 0.05$), indicated that there were no significant differences in vocabulary knowledge between groups at baseline. This reduced selection bias and the observed differences in the post test can only be attributed to the educational intervention, rather than to the pretest differences (Ma, 2014; Akpınar et al., 2015). To reduce the possible confounding of the instructional effect, environment effect, or instructional bias, the intervention sessions were standardized in terms of instructional time, classroom environment, and the teacher. (Jon et al., 2022). Moreover, the application of validated instruments, such as the Vocabulary Levels Test (Webb et al., 2017), helped to obtain reliability in the measurement, which minimized the chances of experimental errors. All of these controls helped to ensure the internal validity of the study and the confidence that the findings were related to a comprehensive teaching approach .

In terms of external safety (external validity), the design was structured in a way that it reflects authentic EFL classroom setting at the Language Center of Salahuddin University which guarantees ecological validity. The subjects were realistic in terms of their number in this study, as they were EFL learners in the low-intermediate level who are the common subjects for encountering problems in word acquisition in many educational contexts in Iraq and similar EFL contexts (Peng, 2022; Liu, 2020). In the experiment, the language tasks employed were real-life based, the language input was presented in the form of media and the language practice was communicative, which are common in modern EFL teaching practice. (Jonathans et al., 2021; Embong et al., 2015). As a result, this study can be meaningfully applied to other settings that aim to integrate holistic language learning approaches to enhance vocabulary development.

Research Supplies

This study used a holistic set of instructional and assessment materials designed to support the implementation of a holistic approach-based **vocabulary teaching strategy**:

- Standard classroom materials: whiteboards, markers, notebooks, and pens to facilitate daily instructional activities and student engagement.
- Holistic vocabulary teaching resources: multimedia tools, visual thinking grids, and interactive exercises that engage multiple senses—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—and promote deeper vocabulary learning and retention (John et al., 2022; Peng, 2022; Embong et al., 2015).
- Academic achievement tests: researcher-designed vocabulary pre and post tests by experts to measure students' progress to assure reliability and scope of learning outcome.
- Supplementary materials: Visual aids (pictures, flashcards and videos) developed based on the holistic approach in order to supplement and strengthen vocabulary learning experiences in context and meaningfulness.
- Digital learning tools: computer-based resources and audio-visual materials to enhance motivation and engagement, as well as reinforce vocabulary learning (Embong et al., 2015; Peng, 2022).

Research Tool

- The study used several research instruments to ensure that participants' vocabulary knowledge was accurately measured and the effectiveness of the holistic instructional strategy was achieved:
- The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT; Webb et al., 2017) was used to identify participants' overall English language proficiency and intermediate to low intermediate proficiency participants for the study.
- Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT): Pre and posttest to determine students' receptive and productive vocabulary levels. The test is validated and reliable (Webb et al., 2017) with a reliability coefficient of 0.96. Two

equivalent versions of the VLT were used to minimise memorisation and to provide a fair assessment of learning outcomes.

- Researcher-developed instructional materials: Worksheets, exercises and vocabulary assignments designed based on the holistic principles and incorporating multiple modalities (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) that will support meaningful and contextualized practice (Peng, 2022; Embong et al., 2015; John et al., 2022).
- Observation and monitoring checklists: These can be used by the researcher to ensure accuracy of the instruction, to monitor student engagement, and to confirm that the holistic approach is being consistently implemented across sessions.

Statistical Findings:

The statistical means used:

The SPSS statistical bag was used to find the following:

1. Descriptive statistics
2. Test of normality
3. Paired-samples t-test
4. Independent-samples t-test
5. ANCOVA

Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive data for pre test and post test scores for both the experimental and control groups are given in Table (4). The experimental group had a pretest mean of 52.50 (SD = 1.36) and a posttest mean of 83.73 (SD = 2.41). The control group had a pretest mean of 53.04 (SD = 1.64) and a posttest mean of 63.69 (SD = 2.38). These results indicate that both groups started with similar vocabulary skills, but showed differences after the intervention.

Table (4) Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Group	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)
Experimental	26	52.50 (1.36)	83.73 (2.41)
Control	26	53.04 (1.64)	63.69 (2.38)

Test of Normality

The researcher writes many kinds of test that related to different scholars for example (Webb et al., 2017). For each criterion, significant values (all $p > 0.05$) did not show any significant deviation from normality. This finding supports the use of parametric tests (independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test) in later analyses.

Table (5) Test of Normality for Pretest and Posttest Scores

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.
Pre_Experimental	0.183	0.207
Pre_Control	0.171	0.134
Post_Experimental	0.096	0.251
Post_Control	0.121	0.228

The results:

1. The results related to the first hypothesis, which states the following:
The mean scores of the students from the experimental group who received English vocabulary instruction using the holistic instructional strategy is not statistically significantly different from the mean score of students in the control group who were taught English vocabulary using the conventional instructional strategy at the 0.05 level of significance in the vocabulary

achievement test.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, the following inferential statistics were performed.

Paired-Samples t-Test

To assess within-group improvement, paired-samples t-tests were conducted for both the experimental and control groups. As presented in Table X, the experimental group showed a significant increase in scores from pretest to posttest, with a mean improvement of 31.23 points ($t(25) = -57.67, p < 0.001$). The control group also showed significant improvement, with a mean increase of 10.65 points ($t(25) = -32.49, p < 0.001$). These results indicate that while both groups benefited from the training, the holistic strategy implemented with the experimental group was significantly more effective in increasing students' vocabulary knowledge.

Table (6) Paired-Samples t-Test for Pretest and Posttest

Group	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	52.50	83.73	-31.23	-57.67	25	0.000
Control	53.04	67.69	-10.65	-32.49	25	0.000

Independent-Samples t-Test

Independent t-test was performed to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The Levene test confirmed the equality of variances ($F = 0.012, p = 0.914$). The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t(50) = 30.18, p < 0.001$), so that the experimental group obtained higher post-test scores than the control group, indicating the effectiveness of the holistic educational strategy.

Table (7) Independent-Samples t-Test for Posttest Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	26	83.73	2.41	30.18	50	0.000
Control	26	63.69	2.38			

ANCOVA

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, while controlling for pretest scores. The results showed that the intervention had a statistically significant effect on post-test scores ($F(1,49) = 1050.0$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.955$), indicating that the higher post-test performance of the experimental group was attributed to the holistic instructional strategy rather than pre-existing differences in vocabulary knowledge. In addition, pretest scores significantly contributed to the post-test results ($F(1,49) = 8.636$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta^2 = 0.150$), confirming that controlling for initial vocabulary levels provides a more accurate assessment of the intervention's impact.

Table (8) ANCOVA for Posttest Scores Controlling Pretest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5262.969	2	2631.484	529.095	0.000	0.956
Intercept	69.261	1	69.261	13.926	0.000	0.221
Pretest	42.949	1	42.949	8.636	0.005	0.150
Group	5220.618	1	5220.618	1050.0	0.000	0.955
Error	243.704	49	4.974			
Total	288043.000	52				
Corrected Total	5506.673	51				

The researcher attributes the significant differences observed in post-test vocabulary scores between the experimental and control groups to the implementation of a holistic teaching strategy. This updated vocabulary teaching method successfully combines reading, listening, speaking and contextual approaches to help learners understand, remember and apply new vocabulary. The approach of going from conventional rote-learning methods to a holistic approach will likely have enhanced the learners to be active agents in the process of meaning-making, instead of passive recipients of the vocabulary knowledge. Holistic teaching in teaching-learning practice

is emphasized by Embong et al. (2015) that learning is a process which integrates the cognitive, affective and experiential aspects of learning, and the holistic learning approach is more meaningful and sustainable. Also, Jon et al. (2022) agreed that integrated instruction could enhance interest and participation by using language not just as individual parts.

The positive effects of the holistic program could also be attributed to its interactive and student-centered approach, as compared to the conventional model. New words were introduced in different ways, such as reading texts, listening to text via audio recordings or film, matching words with images and using them in conversations and activities. This helped to increase awareness of word meanings, combinations, and usage patterns and fostered receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) and Elyami and Mohsen (2019) found that a holistic approach in teaching involving inferences, contextual inputs, and interactive practice has a more effective effect on vocabulary learning than memorization. In addition, the collaborative tasks prompted students to talk about their strategies and to reflect on and compare their own, as well as to enhance metacognitive awareness which Schmitt et al. (2011) and Ke (2017) have shown is essential for successful language learning. The program organized lessons into meaningful learning stages (introduction, exploration, collaboration, application) that enhanced engagement in learning, thereby boosting performance and retention.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the holistic approach can be explained because of some factors related to each other. First, it can connect new words to the words learned earlier, which helps to remember and use the old words again, thus improving the long-term retention of words (Peng, 2020; Wang, 2020). Second, the program improves motivation and self-regulation: Liu (2020) and Zha and Liu (2023) confirmed that vocabulary learning within meaningful contexts will improve vocabulary internalization and usage. Thirdly, holistic education is participatory and reflective, which enhances the interaction in the classroom and the involvement of students, thereby fostering cognitive and emotional learning. Finally, the multimedia, contextual and communicative exercises help learners to express their ideas and use the language correctly, which boosts their confidence and language proficiency (Peng, 2022; Jon et al., 2022).

The results of this research therefore clearly show that a holistic approach to

vocabulary teaching is beneficial not only for vocabulary acquisition but also for learners' cognitive, social and motivational development, which makes it an effective vocabulary teaching strategy for low-intermediate students of English as a foreign language.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the statistical analysis and research conducted:

1. The proposed holistic based strategy proved to be effective in enhancing the knowledge of English words for the low intermediate learners of EFL. The experimental group that was trained with this method demonstrated significant improvement as compared to the control group that was taught vocabulary in the conventional manner.
2. The holistic approach helped students understand the meanings of words, their pronunciation and context, rather than treating them in isolation. The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) provided a better opportunity for the learners to gain understanding of word usage, which helped build more accurate and flexible vocabulary learning.
3. Results showed that vocabulary instruction in meaningful linguistic contexts (as opposed to in isolation and/or lists) fosters deeper cognitive engagement and long-term retention of vocabulary.
4. The holistic teaching strategy also boosted the students' motivation and participation in communicative and contextual activities which connected the form, meaning, and function of words.
5. The effectiveness of the proposed strategy underscores the need to employ modern, learner-centered strategies in the teaching of EFL with a focus on integration, meaningful comprehension and practice, and less on memorization.

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