



The Implementation of Specific Word Instruction in a Primary ESL Classroom: A Study on Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

While most studies on ESL vocabulary instruction have focused on effective teaching and learning strategies, there is a lack of research that binds the gap between research and practice especially in the use of specific word instruction and vocabulary knowledge. In fact, there is a lack of implementation of the Specific Word Instruction (SWI) in ESL classrooms in Malaysia. This study seeks to investigate the perspectives of ESL students on the implementation of SWI in their classroom with the goal of informing more effective and tailored vocabulary teaching strategies. SWI was implemented during English lessons where 37 Year 4 primary school students in a primary public school in Petaling Jaya were exposed to new vocabulary. Upon completion of experiencing English lessons using SWI, students were required to complete a survey to gauge their perceptions of using SWI as an approach in learning vocabulary. The findings discovered a positive outcome on the implementation of SWI in an ESL classroom where participants of the study felt more motivated and positive in acquiring new vocabulary when SWI approach is implemented in the classroom. It is recommended that language instructors implement SWI into their vocabulary lessons to encourage and enhance students' vocabulary learning experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding vocabulary is essential for achieving language proficiency, allowing learners to effectively comprehend and produce spoken and written communication. However, vocabulary acquisition can be a significant challenge, particularly for English Language Learners who encounter extensive arrays of unfamiliar terms (Silverman et al., 2018). In response, SWI has emerged as a promising teaching method

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that systematically focuses on high-frequency, relevant vocabulary, aiming to improve retention and learner motivation (Boroughani et al., 2023).

Recent research has explored various aspects of SWI and its impact on vocabulary learning. A study examining the effects of an interactive shared reading intervention found that targeting vocabulary with specific word characteristics, such as imageability and abstractness, can lead to immediate and sustained improvements in word learning for young English learners (August et al., 2020). Additionally, research has highlighted the significance of providing students with various encounters and opportunities to analyse and use new vocabulary in different contexts, as this approach has been shown to be more effective than instruction that relies solely on personal experiences (Rimbey et al., 2016).

SWI is based on various fundamental educational ideas, particularly those of Vygotsky (1978) and Schmidt (2015), which highlighted the significance of context and interaction in language acquisition. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) hypothesis posited that learners most efficiently acquire new concepts when engaged with tasks that somewhat exceed their existing capabilities but may be accomplished with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). SWI leverages this concept by choosing vocabulary that is not only suitable for learners' existing competence levels but also crucial for their immediate linguistic requirements, guaranteeing that new terms are both pertinent and demanding. Furthermore, recent advancements in vocabulary acquisition theory underscore the significance of both depth and breadth in vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2014). Vocabulary depth encompasses not just the comprehension of a word's definition but also an awareness of its subtleties, collocations, and potential applications across diverse situations. SWI mitigates this issue by offering learners numerous encounters with new vocabulary through contextually rich activities, hence enhancing comprehension and promoting long-term retention (Laufer & Goldstein, 2017). Teachers of English as a second language should not feel confined to a single style of instruction, even though there are numerous approaches of teaching vocabulary out there. Instead, teachers should adopt a more flexible approach, choosing a method or a mix of approaches that is in accordance with the requirements of their students and makes it easier for them to accomplish the objectives of the lesson (Sani, 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Specific Word Instruction (SWI)*

Considering the significant impact of vocabulary on reading comprehension and the limited incidental vocabulary acquisition among students, it is imperative to integrate explicit vocabulary training in educational settings (Daniels, 2009). Targeted and specific vocabulary training is seen as a deliberate pedagogical method in education (Beck et al., 2002). The use of SWI signifies a pedagogical approach focused on vocabulary acquisition and is regarded as an element of direct vocabulary learning. Vocabulary acquisition occurs through focused instruction, in which learners are explicitly taught specific words and methods for acquiring them. SWI signifies a comprehensive educational approach that fosters active involvement with vocabulary, leading to enhanced word learning (Beck et al., 2002).

The frequency with which pupils utilise new vocabulary and their capacity to apply these terms in diverse circumstances positively correlates with their likelihood of achieving a thorough comprehension of the words to which they have been exposed. Studies indicate that adolescents demonstrate improved vocabulary acquisition when exposed to terms often and in varied contexts. A favourable correlation exists between children's exposure, auditory perception, and active engagement with certain words, and their eventual learning and retention of those words. When educators deliver thorough education that promotes active involvement, they indirectly present students with several opportunities to engage with foreign vocabulary. When students engage with the vocabulary in their given texts, their exposure to these unfamiliar lexical elements increased. Beck et al. (2002) asserted that specific vocabulary education can improve reading comprehension. This occurs as students can improve their comprehension of vocabulary through focused and precise instruction, which entails teaching specific terms to the learners. Pre-teaching

specific vocabulary before reading activities positively influences vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Before interacting with a text, it is advantageous to offer students explicit training on particular vocabulary terms they will find within it. Beck et al. (2002) noted that presenting substantial vocabulary before reading activities can aid students in learning uncommon words and improve their text comprehension.

SWI is acknowledged as a pedagogical method that promotes engagement in vocabulary development and improves word comprehension. Armbruster et al. (2001) asserted that optimal vocabulary learning in children transpires through extended instruction and active engagement with the words. It additionally indicates that students' likelihood of acquiring new vocabulary is positively correlated with the regularity of usage and the diversity of contexts in which they apply these words, particularly when the words are explicitly taught. SWI is a pedagogical method that involves the repeated presentation of vocabulary in diverse contexts within English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. Pupils acquire new vocabulary more effectively through repeated exposure in diverse contexts. In a similar vein, a 2024 study by Chai et al. investigated the impact of integrating specific word recognition instruction with visual aids on Malaysian primary ESL learners. The findings indicated that this combined approach significantly enhanced vocabulary achievement. By incorporating specific instruction, learners could better associate words with meanings, leading to improved retention and understanding. These studies collectively underscore the importance of specific and structured vocabulary instruction in ESL education.

2.2 Vocabulary in Malaysia's Standardised English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR)

In Malaysia, the English language possesses considerable social status and significant economic importance. Even so, it is often seen as a difficult skill to master among Malaysian pupils. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), an essential document in national educational policy and planning, categorises English as a secondary language to be incorporated into school curricula, as specified by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). English is a compulsory subject in Malaysian national elementary schools, featuring a curriculum that comprises 10 periods each week, amounting to roughly 5 hours of instruction. This involves delivering one hour of English instruction daily to Malaysian ESL learners. The existing English language curriculum for primary schools in Malaysia, referred to as KSSR, requires all national schools to furnish a list of vocabulary for children to acquire and master throughout their six years of primary education (Ministry of Education, 2014). The Ministry of Education Malaysia has mandated that educators integrate vocabulary education with other language skills, recognising the crucial role of vocabulary acquisition in reading comprehension. The explicit delineation of target vocabulary for student acquisition is evident in the word lists used in the curriculum materials from Year 1 to Year 6. The acquisition and mastering of vocabulary from the syllabus word lists are anticipated to improve the development of the four essential language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading, in students.

Analysis of the curriculum standards established by the Ministry of Education Malaysia reveals that the Year 4 English language syllabus includes a collection of vocabulary lists that educators are required to teach and establish English as a Second Language (ESL) learners with. The vocabulary list is organised into three distinct categories: a compilation of frequently utilised words, a recommended selection of terms associated with diverse themes and subjects explored in Level 2 (Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6), and a collection of terminology that students might encounter in their Mathematics and Science studies. A minimum of 81 frequently encountered sight words is present, accompanied by 54 thematic terms pertaining to personality traits, occupations, modes of transportation, and legal frameworks, in addition to a compilation of 140 words linked to Mathematics and Science terminology. The Ministry of Education Malaysia, in conjunction with the Curriculum Development Centre, has curated a comprehensive collection of 275 terms, ranging from the elementary to the intricate (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The Year 4 English textbook serves as the primary repository of vocabulary for both instructors and students, encompassing these terms. This compilation seeks to support educators in fostering student engagement in English, both in the classroom and in broader contexts (Ministry of Education, 2014). To improve and refine English instruction in educational institutions, it is recommended that educators incorporate additional vocabulary considered significant, despite the fact that these terms are provided to them. The provision of these word lists could serve to assist children by granting educators the opportunity to employ the terms across diverse contexts, thus promoting the development of an extensive vocabulary that will enrich their linguistic growth. Malaysian ESL learners are exposed to many new words and terms through the varied skills and approaches employed by their teachers, as the KSSR syllabus implements a modular structure that divides daily class focus into listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and language arts (Ministry of Education, 2014). The implementation of targeted word instruction is poised to significantly improve the comprehensive acquisition of new vocabulary among Malaysian ESL learners, as it addresses various dimensions of vocabulary, encompassing form, meaning, and usage of words. Feldman (2009) posited that children acquire a more extensive vocabulary through focused training rather than relying exclusively on direct vocabulary instruction. The expansion of the English language and the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into the English curriculum have significantly influenced vocabulary instruction in Malaysia. Prior to the 1990s, the Malaysian educational framework primarily utilised the translation of vocabulary, commonly known as the "translation method," for English instruction. The instruction progressively emphasises communication as it develops. The current curriculum and policies, along with English educators and learners, should evaluate the methodology for teaching vocabulary designed for various objectives. Effective vocabulary instruction necessitates the careful selection of vocabulary targets and clarity in the use of SWI. Additionally, effective vocabulary instruction is systematically structured to emphasise the specific meanings of words (Schneider, 2011). The researcher argues that English language educators should consider the vocabulary specified in the Malaysian English language curriculum and potentially incorporate additional relevant terms, as targeted vocabulary instruction is an effective and practical approach for implementation in daily classroom environments.

2.3 SWI as the Teaching Approach

SWI is defined by the explicit and focused teaching of words that are contextualised within literature, pertinent to the text, and utilised across diverse situations (Spencer, 2013). This indicates that the teacher is actively guiding students on meticulously selected terminology, hence improving understanding and augmenting their lexicon (Spencer, 2013). Additionally, it provides extensive, detailed understanding of vocabulary, together with clear, accessible explanations and illustrations of their meanings. Specific word education is a method that allows an educator to offer students several explicit encounters in various circumstances. This approach would enhance learners' active engagement in the class and their application of language in new circumstances.

Given the substantial influence of vocabulary on reading comprehension and the limited incidental vocabulary acquisition among students, it is essential to incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction into educational environments (Daniels, 2009). Beck et al. (2002) characterised the application of targeted vocabulary training as a deliberate pedagogical strategy in the domain of education. The use of targeted word instruction is a pedagogical method applied to teach vocabulary and is considered a facet of direct vocabulary acquisition. Students receive explicit instruction in vocabulary acquisition through direct teaching of specific terminology and procedures for learning words. Specific word training is a thorough educational method that encourages active interaction with vocabulary, therefore aiding in the acquisition of new words (Beck et al., 2002). The fundamental principle of targeted word instruction, especially regarding the acquisition of English vocabulary, asserts that children attain the best word learning results when they actively interact with the words throughout the instructional process and receive extended-duration instruction.

The probability of pupils achieving a thorough comprehension of new vocabulary is positively associated with the frequency of their usage of these terms and their capacity to employ them in diverse contexts. Research indicates that pupils enhance their vocabulary acquisition when exposed to these words consistently across many contextual circumstances. A positive association appears to exist between the subsequent learning and retention of specific words and children's exposure, aural perception, and active engagement with these words. Educators offer students multiple opportunities to engage with unfamiliar terminology through thorough instruction that promotes active involvement. Students' exposure to these new lexical items is heightened when they meet the specified terms in their assigned readings.

Beck et al. (2002) asserted that specific vocabulary instruction can improve an individual's reading comprehension. This occurrence arises from learners' ability to improve their comprehension of word meanings through targeted education, which entails the teaching of particular words. The preliminary instruction of targeted language has favourably influenced vocabulary learning and reading comprehension before reading tasks. Equipping pupils with comprehensive training on the specific terminology they would encounter in a workplace before their involvement is beneficial. Research indicates that students can gain from the prior introduction of substantial vocabulary before participating in reading activities, as it aids in the acquisition of novel terms and enhances text comprehension (Beck et al., 2002). Research indicates that kids enhance their vocabulary learning by regular exposure to these words in many settings. A favourable association appears to exist between children's learning results and their exposure, auditory input, and active engagement with certain words. Educators offer students multiple opportunities to engage with unfamiliar terminology through thorough instruction that promotes active involvement. Students' familiarity with these new lexical items is enhanced when they meet the specified terms in their assigned readings.

2.4 Input Hypothesis Theory by Krashen (1982)

Krashen (1982) is a prominent figure in the field of second language acquisition, particularly within the constructivist framework. His Monitor theory has gained significant recognition among language educators, primarily owing to its intuitive nature and direct applicability in instructional settings. The five hypotheses that comprise this framework are as follows: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the natural order hypothesis (Lightbown & Spada, 1990). According to the Input Hypothesis, language acquisition is contingent upon the reception of comprehensible input, which refers to the ability to understand messages conveyed by others. When the input is slightly above the learner's proficiency level, both comprehension and acquisition will take place through incremental learning, characterised by gradual steps. Teachers should consistently ensure that language instruction is delivered in a progressive manner, guided by appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Furthermore, the Input hypothesis posits that the process of language acquisition takes place when learners are exposed to messages that are within their comprehension, a phenomenon commonly referred to as comprehensible input. In this context, the utilisation of explicit vocabulary instructions permits teachers to identify the specific words that ought to be imparted to learners, thereby fostering an environment conducive to comprehensible learning. Nevertheless, Krashen additionally proposes that the comprehensible input provided to learners should be slightly more advanced than their existing language proficiency, denoted as $i + 1$, to facilitate ongoing language acquisition. Krashen argues that when learners are exposed to this " $i + 1$ " input, they are more likely to engage in natural language processing and internalize new vocabulary and linguistic features. This approach encourages learners to make incremental progress by building upon their existing knowledge, rather than overwhelming them with input that is too difficult to understand. When arranging the words according to degree of difficulty, pupils will not feel overwhelmed by the new knowledge received. The researcher ensured that the words introduced start with common sight words (nouns) and then followed by more complex words like verbs

and adjectives. By providing learners with comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level, Krashen believes that learners can gradually expand their vocabulary and improve their overall language proficiency in a more natural and effective manner. This leads to the reason behind why the researcher has carefully selected words and arranged them in degree/tier of difficulty and themes. This is to ensure that the words the participants encounter are of lower level to a higher one, in which the introduction of new words are gradually increasing in terms of difficulty. This is why common sight words and nouns are introduced first, followed by verbs and lastly adjectives, this is to ensure that the participants do not feel overwhelmed which could affect their affective filter which will then lead to hindrance in learning and acquiring new words as well as improve their vocabulary knowledge.

2.5 Issues that ESL/EFL Students Face in Learning English Vocabulary

English is recognised as a second language in Malaysia. Although English is not the designated official language of the country, it holds significant importance in various domains such as education, employment, and social standing. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that while English serves as a second language for the majority of learners in Malaysian schools, it may also function as a third language or even a foreign language for certain individuals. This variation can be attributed to factors such as socio-economic status, social dynamics, racial and ethnic disparities, and the varying levels of English language proficiency among Malaysian students. Malaysian students encounter difficulties in the English classroom, particularly in comprehending word meanings and discerning distinctions, primarily due to their limited exposure to the subject matter and language. According to Washburn (1992), non-native English-speaking students frequently encounter difficulties in comprehending reading materials as a result of the vocabulary contained within the texts. According to Washburn (1992), challenging vocabulary refers to words or phrases that impede the understanding of written text. To enhance students' reading comprehension, it is imperative for educators to acknowledge the significance of vocabulary in relation to reading comprehension, as well as familiarise themselves with effective strategies for teaching vocabulary.

Language learning anxiety is a prevalent obstacle encountered by ESL/EFL students in their pursuit of acquiring a second or foreign language, such as English. Language acquisition anxiety is a phenomena marked by emotions of apprehension stemming from the absence of familiar signs and symbols of social interaction, which individuals may not consciously recognise (Brown, 2008, as cited in Liu, 2011, p. 11). The lack of familiarity with acquiring new vocabulary can present a significant challenge, compounded by the onset of anxiety, which may result in learners experiencing discomfort when faced with assigned tasks. Coates (2004, as cited in Liu, 2011) posits that language learning anxiety may stem from various factors, including difficulties encountered in acquiring unfamiliar terminologies and content, feelings of social isolation, identity confusion, and disparities in educational systems that may result in divergent evaluations of learners. According to Liu (2011), language learning anxiety is acknowledged as a prominent characteristic that hinders students from utilising their English skills outside of the classroom. Individuals often experience persistent anxiety or fear, which acts as a barrier preventing them from utilising the language beyond the confines of the educational setting. This is a matter that is frequently addressed by educators during routine English language instruction. Efforts to reinforce the notion that the classroom serves as a secure environment for embracing and learning from mistakes continue to present difficulties.

In addition to the aforementioned primary challenges and obstacles in acquiring English vocabulary, namely insufficient linguistic exposure, unsupportive educational culture and environment, and inadequate reading materials, Kabilan et al. (2009) further elucidate that ESL/EFL learners in Malaysia encounter additional issues and difficulties, particularly within the context of primary school education. One notable challenge pertaining to the choice of teaching approach in vocabulary instruction is balancing explicit teaching with opportunities for incidental learning, as both have been shown to support

vocabulary acquisition in different ways (Nation, 2001). The lack of varying suitable, comprehensible vocabulary input presents a significant concern.

2.6 Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the perceptions of Year 4 primary school ESL/EFL learners' perceptions on the use of specific word instruction (SWI) on English language vocabulary learning.

2.7 Research Question

This paper aims to answer the following research question:

- (i) What are the year 4 primary school ESL/EFL learners' perceptions on the use of specific word instruction (SWI) on English language vocabulary learning?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is of a survey research manner in which a questionnaire was employed to 37 participants of the study to elicit useful information on their views in the implementation of SWI in learning vocabulary. In this same study, quantitative data collection methodology was employed to elicit students' perceptions of using SWI as a medium of vocabulary language learning. This study included 37 primary 4 ESL students in a year 4 from a public school in Selangor. The students were then exposed to the implementation of SWI in the classroom as they learned vocabulary during English lessons. The survey was administered to the 37 students upon completion of the SWI implementation that took place for 8 weeks. Administered survey was facilitated by an English teacher and instead of using the standard Likert scale, the Likert scales were replaced by smiley emojis instead to indicate strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree. This study purposely selected a class of 37 Year 4 mixed ability students. The selection was based on a purposive sampling technique where the respondents fulfilled these criteria:

- (i) English is their second language,
- (ii) Year 4 students,
- (iii) had only been taught in public schools in Malaysia.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To gain feedback on the students' perception on the implementation of SWI, a set of questionnaires was administered to elicit their responses immediately after they had completed the task assigned to them after SWI was administered in the classroom as a teaching approach for vocabulary. The following are the findings and discussion of the study.

4.1 Students' Perception of the Use of Specific Word Instruction (SWI) in Learning Vocabulary specifically and explicitly

Table 1. Results of Question1: I am able to learn vocabulary better when it was presented in specific and explicit ways (Pictures, Sounds, Definitions & Examples)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	15	40.5	40.5	40.5
	Strongly Agree	22	59.5	59.5	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	100.0	

The question focuses on learners' preferences for vocabulary acquisition methods. It specifically targets multi-sensory learning, encompassing visual (pictures), auditory (sounds), and semantic/textual

(definitions and examples) approaches through SWI. The question aims to gauge the effectiveness of diverse SWI approaches in vocabulary learning. Based on the survey given to the students, 59.5 % students strongly agreed that they are able to learn vocabulary better when presented in specific and explicit ways and the remainder of 40.5% agreed. A total of 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This indicates a clear preference for vocabulary learning through SWI incorporating pictures, sounds, definitions, and examples. The data strongly supports the effectiveness of SWI, multi-sensory vocabulary instruction. The overwhelming agreement (100%) and the dominance of "Strongly Agree" responses highlight a clear preference among learners for this approach.

4.2 Students' Perception of the Use of Specific Word Instruction (SWI) in Learning vocabulary pecifically and explicitly

Table 2. Results of Question 2: I am now able to answer different types of vocabulary activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	22	59.5	59.5	59.5
	Strongly Agree	15	40.5	40.5	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	100.0	

The question "Q2 – I am now able to answer different types of vocabulary activities" assesses the perceived impact of SWI on students' ability to engage with various vocabulary exercises. It focuses on the practical application of learned vocabulary and aims to measure whether the instruction translates into improved performance on different activity types. The results strongly suggest that the SWI has been effective in enhancing students' ability to engage with a range of vocabulary activities. The unanimous positive response (100% agreement) is a clear indicator of the instruction's positive impact. This aligns with the goal of vocabulary instruction, which aims to equip learners with the skills to apply their knowledge in diverse contexts. This shows that with the implementation of SWI, students find it easier to answer different types of vocabulary activities.

4.3 Students' Perception of the Use of Specific Word Instruction (SWI) in a More Fun and Less Stressful Environment

Table 3. Results of Question 3: I believe that learning vocabulary is now more fun and less stressful

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Uncertain	2	5.4	5.4	5.4
	Agree	15	40.5	40.5	45.9
	Strongly Agree	20	54.1	54.1	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	100.0	

The question, "Q3 – I believe that learning vocabulary is now more fun and less stressful," directly probes students' affective responses to vocabulary instruction. It aims to gauge whether the implemented methods have created a more enjoyable and less anxiety-inducing learning experience. This is a crucial aspect of effective pedagogy, as positive emotions can significantly enhance learning and motivation.

The data strongly suggests that the instructional interventions have successfully created a more fun and less stressful vocabulary learning environment for the majority of students. The high percentage of positive responses (94.6%) and the dominance of "Strongly Agree" indicate a positive shift in students' affective experiences. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of positive emotions in language learning, as highlighted in sources like Gonzalez (2023) and He et al. (2017). However, the presence of "Uncertain" responses suggests the need for on-going monitoring and potential adjustments to cater to all learners.

Table 4. Results of question 4: English lessons should have more vocabulary questions and activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	12	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Strongly Agree	25	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	100.0	

The question, "Q4 – English lessons should have more vocabulary questions and activities," directly assesses students' desire for increased emphasis on vocabulary development within their English curriculum. It gauges their perceived need for more opportunities to engage with vocabulary through targeted questions and activities. This feedback is valuable for educators in tailoring their instruction to meet student's needs and preferences. The data unequivocally demonstrates that students strongly favour incorporating more vocabulary questions and activities into their English lessons. The 100% agreement rate highlights a clear need and desire for increased focus on vocabulary development. This aligns with the understanding that a rich vocabulary is fundamental to language proficiency, as it underpins reading comprehension, effective communication, and overall academic success.

The study's findings indicated that the use of SWI fosters favourable impressions of this strategy in the classroom. These results are consistent with previous research as highlighted. The survey's findings revealed that all participants either highly agree or agree that the implementation of SWI has improved their English vocabulary and their perceptions and attitudes towards utilising and learning the language in the classroom. Although there are differences in the methods and practices for explicit vocabulary instruction, researchers (Marulis & Neuman, 2013; Silverman et al., 2013) generally agree on a set of effective strategies for enhancing vocabulary knowledge. These strategies include providing students with both definitional and contextual information about a word, ensuring multiple explicit encounters with the word, and engaging students in rigorous practice that deepens their understanding of the word's form, meaning, and usage. These practices form the foundation of targeted vocabulary instruction, making it an excellent resource for improving the lexical skills of ESL students. When learning is made clear and accessible, learners' perspectives on acquiring a new language improve, making vocabulary acquisition easier rather than more difficult.

In SWI, all input provided by the teacher were not only student friendly, but the progress was gradual. If the affective filter was high, no input could take place. With gradual input and carefully selected word, the affective filter under Krashen's Input Hypothesis theory was easily managed. Concept of (i+1) was also a big proponent of SWI that was implemented here to ensure that the learning environment was positive and input given was one degree higher than their prior knowledge. Furthermore, it is imperative to provide students with definitions that are accessible and easy to comprehend, or better known as student friendly definition along with contextual information that elucidates the various meanings of the word. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of the text they are reading but also facilitates their enjoyment and engagement in the process of acquiring new vocabulary. Comparison with past studies were not made as there has not been any known study on the use of SWI and how Year 4 pupils perceive the use of this method in learning new vocabulary.

5. SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although SWI was helpful in improving learners' overall vocabulary knowledge and perception of the method, the study's lack of generalisability to different year or grade levels hinders a definitive conclusion on the genuine efficacy of the SWI teaching approach. Therefore, comprehensive further research is necessary to ensure the accuracy of the results, potentially by employing a substantially larger sample size that includes students from diverse years and grades, not only to yield representative outcomes but also to generalise the findings to a wider population.

However, the research methodology of the study constrains its scope, leading to an insufficient examination of the evaluation area in SWI, as it pertains exclusively to a cohort of Year 4 student. Consequently, further research on SWI in classroom assessment would significantly improve the domain of vocabulary comprehension. The study's emphasis on the effects of SWI exclusively on English vocabulary highlights the need for further research to assess its influence on other aspects of the English language, such as grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening, English literature, and English learning motivation, among others. The researcher posits that the experiment could be replicated by others on a larger scale and in varied contexts, both within Malaysia and in other nations where English is taught as a second or foreign language. Future research should systematically examine learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of SWI using qualitative methods such as interviews and observations. A diverse strategy will produce a significant range of outcomes. Additionally, examining the correlation between learners' self-assessed vocabulary proficiency and their actual vocabulary performance may enhance the understanding of perceptions.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that SWI demonstrably facilitates vocabulary acquisition and learning among ESL learners. Addressing the research objective, which sought to explore student perceptions of SWI utilisation, the results suggest that SWI constitutes a valuable pedagogical approach for Year 4 primary ESL students. Furthermore, the implementation of SWI appears to enhance student motivation and engagement in vocabulary learning, as evidenced by questionnaire responses. While analysis revealed minimal significant differences in SWI implementation between students, all students generally perceived SWI as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition and expressed a preference for this approach. These findings underscore the importance of integrating SWI into vocabulary instruction for primary ESL learners, advocating for its adoption by language educators. This aligns with recent research emphasizing the efficacy of morphology-focused instruction, such as SWI, in enhancing vocabulary development and directly answers the research question and meets the research objective.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Evanna Devi completed the field work, wrote the introduction, literature review, methodology and findings. Siti Noor Aisyah Hasnan discussed the suggestions for further research, wrote the conclusion, organised the structure of the paper and reviewed the paper.

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