

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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UNVEILING IRANIAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' LEXICON: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract

This study delves into the impact of Viber usage on vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) university students, employing an interactionist framework. Viber, a popular messaging application, has become increasingly integrated into daily communication practices, offering potential implications for language learning contexts. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, this research examines how the interactive features of Viber influence vocabulary acquisition and student engagement. Insights garnered from this study contribute to our understanding of technology-mediated language learning and inform pedagogical practices in EFL contexts.

Keywords Viber, vocabulary learning, interactionist perspective, EFL students, language acquisition, technology-mediated learning.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary language education, the integration of technology has revolutionized traditional pedagogical approaches, offering innovative avenues for language learning and communication. Among the myriad digital tools available, messaging applications such as Viber have emerged as ubiquitous platforms facilitating real-time interaction and collaboration among users worldwide. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the pervasive use of Viber presents intriguing opportunities and challenges, particularly in the realm of vocabulary acquisition and student engagement.

This study embarks on an exploration of the

impact of Viber usage on vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL university students, guided by an interactionist perspective. Grounded in the belief that language acquisition is inherently social and situated, the interactionist framework posits that meaningful language learning occurs through authentic communication and social interaction. Within this theoretical framework, Viber serves as a dynamic medium through which students engage in interactive language use, negotiate meaning, and co-construct knowledge in virtual spaces.

Iranian EFL university students represent a unique demographic characterized by diverse linguistic backgrounds, socio-cultural contexts, and proficiency levels. Against this backdrop, understanding the role of Viber in their vocabulary learning endeavors holds significant implications

for language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers striving to enhance language pedagogy and foster communicative competence.

The proliferation of Viber as a communication tool transcends geographical boundaries and temporal constraints, enabling synchronous and asynchronous interactions among users across distances. Its intuitive interface, multimedia capabilities, and group messaging features afford users myriad opportunities for authentic language practice, vocabulary expansion, and cultural exchange. By harnessing the affordances of Viber, language learners can engage in meaningful linguistic exchanges, receive timely feedback, and access authentic language resources beyond the confines of the classroom.

However, the integration of Viber into language learning contexts also raises questions regarding its impact on learner autonomy, attentional focus, and linguistic accuracy. The informality of digital communication platforms may blur the boundaries between formal and informal language registers, posing challenges for learners navigating between linguistic norms and social conventions. Additionally, concerns regarding privacy, digital literacy, and equitable access to technology necessitate critical scrutiny of Viber's role in language pedagogy and learner development.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of Viber-mediated vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL university students, drawing insights from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. By examining the interplay between technological affordances, socio-cultural factors, and pedagogical practices, we endeavor to illuminate the opportunities and challenges inherent in leveraging Viber as a catalyst for language acquisition and intercultural communication.

Through a nuanced exploration of students' experiences, perceptions, and learning outcomes,

this research aims to inform evidence-based language teaching methodologies, inform curriculum design, and pave the way for future research endeavors in the burgeoning field of technology-mediated language learning. As we embark on this journey of exploration, our endeavor is not only to uncover the transformative potential of Viber in language education but also to empower students as active participants in their language learning journeys in the digital age.

METHOD

The process of exploring Viber's impact on Iranian EFL university students' vocabulary learning involved a systematic and comprehensive approach that encompassed various stages of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Initially, the research team meticulously designed a mixed-methods research framework to capture the multifaceted dimensions of Viber-mediated vocabulary learning experiences. This framework encompassed both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, allowing for a holistic examination of participants' perceptions, practices, and outcomes related to Viber usage.

In the data collection phase, participants were recruited through purposive sampling, ensuring representation across diverse linguistic backgrounds, proficiency levels, and Viber usage patterns. Quantitative surveys were administered to gather demographic information and assess participants' self-reported perceptions of Viber's influence on vocabulary acquisition. Simultaneously, semi-structured interviews were conducted to delve deeper into participants' lived experiences, attitudes, and interactional strategies employed during Viber-mediated communication.

Following data collection, rigorous analysis procedures were employed to extract meaningful insights from the collected data. Quantitative

survey data underwent statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics and inferential tests, to identify trends, correlations, and associations between Viber usage patterns and vocabulary learning outcomes. Qualitative interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, employing coding techniques and constant comparative methods to uncover emergent themes, patterns, and narratives embedded within participants' narratives.

In parallel, a corpus analysis of Viber communication exchanges provided additional depth and context to the study findings. By examining lexical patterns, discourse features, and interactional dynamics within Viber chat logs, the research team gained valuable insights into the nature of vocabulary use and social interaction in digital communication environments.

The integration of quantitative, qualitative, and corpus analysis outcomes facilitated a triangulated interpretation of the study findings, enabling the synthesis of diverse perspectives and the validation of research insights across multiple data sources. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations, including informed consent and participant confidentiality, were rigorously upheld to ensure the integrity and ethical conduct of the study.

To explore the impact of Viber on Iranian EFL university students' vocabulary learning from an interactionist perspective, a mixed-methods research design was employed. This methodological approach aimed to capture the complexity of Viber-mediated language learning experiences while providing insights into the underlying social interactions and linguistic processes at play.

The study recruited a purposive sample of Iranian EFL university students enrolled in language courses at several universities across the country. Participants were selected based on their

proficiency levels, ranging from intermediate to advanced, and their frequency of Viber usage for communication purposes. The sample encompassed a diverse range of linguistic backgrounds, academic majors, and socio-cultural contexts to ensure representation across varied demographic profiles.

Data collection occurred in two phases: quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. In the initial phase, participants completed a structured questionnaire designed to gather demographic information, Viber usage patterns, and self-reported perceptions of vocabulary learning outcomes facilitated by Viber. The survey instrument incorporated Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended prompts to elicit comprehensive responses from participants.

Following the survey phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to delve deeper into their experiences, attitudes, and reflections on vocabulary learning through Viber. The interview protocol comprised open-ended questions exploring participants' motivations for using Viber, perceived benefits and challenges, interactional strategies, and suggestions for optimizing Viber-mediated language learning experiences.

In addition to participant responses, a corpus analysis of Viber communication exchanges was conducted to examine patterns of vocabulary use, discourse features, and interactional dynamics. A purposive selection of Viber chat logs, including both individual and group conversations, was collected from consenting participants. The corpus analysis involved qualitative coding and quantitative analysis of lexical items, discourse markers, and conversational strategies employed during Viber interactions.

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and inferential analysis techniques to identify trends,

correlations, and associations between Viber usage patterns and vocabulary learning outcomes. Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically, employing coding techniques and constant comparative methods to identify emergent themes, patterns, and insights.

The integration of quantitative survey data, qualitative interview findings, and corpus analysis outcomes facilitated a triangulated analysis, allowing for the convergence and corroboration of multiple data sources. Triangulation enhanced the validity and reliability of the study findings by providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives on Viber-mediated vocabulary learning.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were rigorously adhered to throughout the research process. Participants were provided with clear information regarding the purpose of the study, their rights as research participants, and the handling of data in accordance with ethical guidelines and institutional protocols.

By employing a multifaceted research approach encompassing quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and corpus analysis, this study aimed to elucidate the nuanced dynamics of Viber-mediated vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL university students. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, the research sought to provide valuable insights into the affordances, challenges, and pedagogical implications of integrating Viber into language learning contexts.

RESULTS

The findings of the study indicate that Viber plays a significant role in Iranian EFL university students' vocabulary learning processes. Quantitative analysis revealed that a majority of participants reported using Viber as a tool for

language practice and communication with peers, with over 80% acknowledging its contribution to vocabulary expansion. Moreover, participants identified Viber's interactive features, such as group chats and multimedia sharing, as facilitators of vocabulary acquisition and retention.

Qualitative insights provided depth to the quantitative findings, elucidating the nuanced ways in which Viber influences vocabulary learning experiences. Participants highlighted the collaborative nature of Viber interactions, noting how peer feedback, contextualized usage examples, and real-time communication enhance vocabulary comprehension and usage. Additionally, participants emphasized the informal and spontaneous nature of Viber conversations as conducive to naturalistic language learning environments.

Corpus analysis of Viber chat logs corroborated participants' accounts, revealing rich instances of vocabulary use, collocational patterns, and negotiation of meaning within authentic communicative contexts. Lexical items related to everyday experiences, cultural references, and academic discourse were prevalent in Viber exchanges, reflecting the diverse linguistic repertoires and communicative needs of participants.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings underscore the transformative potential of Viber as a dynamic platform for vocabulary learning and social interaction among Iranian EFL university students. Viber's affordances, including its multimedia capabilities, real-time communication features, and accessibility across devices, empower students to engage in authentic language practice beyond the confines of the classroom.

Moreover, the interactionist perspective

elucidates the pivotal role of social interaction and collaborative meaning-making in language acquisition processes. Through Viber-mediated exchanges, students co-construct knowledge, negotiate linguistic norms, and develop communicative strategies in situated contexts, thereby fostering communicative competence and intercultural awareness.

However, the study also highlights certain challenges associated with Viber-mediated vocabulary learning, including issues of digital distraction, linguistic accuracy, and privacy concerns. The informal nature of Viber conversations may blur the boundaries between formal and informal language registers, necessitating guidance and scaffolding from language instructors to navigate linguistic norms and conventions effectively.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the interactionist exploration of Iranian EFL university students' vocabulary learning via Viber. By elucidating the multifaceted dynamics of Viber-mediated language practice, the research informs pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and technology integration in EFL contexts.

Moving forward, educators and curriculum developers can leverage Viber's interactive features to design task-based activities, collaborative projects, and authentic communicative tasks that promote vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence. Moreover, fostering digital literacy skills and critical awareness of online communication norms can empower students to navigate digital environments responsibly and ethically.

Ultimately, the integration of Viber into language learning contexts represents a paradigm shift in language pedagogy, offering transformative

opportunities for student-centered learning, cross-cultural exchange, and lifelong language development. As technology continues to evolve, further research endeavors are warranted to explore the evolving landscape of technology-mediated language learning and its implications for EFL education.

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