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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING A COMPUTER-BASED ENGLISH
COURSEWARE TO TEACH VOCABULARY SETS TO LOWER SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

6 October 2006

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In the name of Allah the most merciful and most compassionate. My benediction and salutation be upon Prophet Muhammad, the Last Apostle.

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ABSTRACT

A suitable method for English language learning is important to determine the effectiveness of mastering this language. Thus, this study investigated the effectiveness of using English Computer-based Courseware towards the learning of basic vocabulary sets among Form One students. The aim of the study was to investigate the extent of the use of an English Computer based Courseware in helping students to learn the English basic vocabulary sets in the classroom. This study also determined the students' attitude towards the development of basic English vocabulary sets by using the computer courseware approach. The researcher also determined whether there was a significant relationship between the students' attitude toward the use of computer courseware and their English vocabulary skills performance. Sixty Form One students were chosen for this study. The experimental design and survey design were utilized to carry out this case study. The questions for getting the information are related to student's background and the English vocabulary lessons. Data collected was analyzed by using the SPSS software and were then tabulated in the form of tables. The findings showed that the use of computer courseware approach was more effective than the use of conventional classroom instructions in enhancing students' vocabulary skills performance. The research findings also showed that the students generally had positive attitudes toward the use of English Computer based Courseware in learning vocabulary sets in the classroom. Lastly, the findings also showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the students' attitudes toward the use of computer based courseware and their vocabulary skills performance.

ABSTRAK

Kaedah pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang bersesuaian adalah penting bagi menentukan keberkesanannya terhadap penguasaan bahasa kedua ini. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini adalah mengenai keberkesanan kaedah penggunaan perisian komputer Bahasa Inggeris terhadap pembelajaran set asas perbendaharaan kata pelajar –pelajar Tingkatan Satu. Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk melihat sejauhmanakah penggunaan perisian Bahasa Inggeris dapat memberi kesan dalam membantu pembelajaran set asas perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris pelajar-pelajar di dalam kelas. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji sikap pelajar-pelajar terhadap perkembangan pembelajaran set asas perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris dengan menggunakan kaedah perisian komputer. Pengkaji juga melihat sama ada terdapatnya satu hubungan yang signifikan di antara sikap pelajar terhadap kaedah penggunaan perisian komputer dengan pencapaian kemahiran perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris. Seramai 60 orang pelajar Tingkatan 1 dipilih untuk kajian ini. Kajian kes ini dijalankan dengan menggunakan rekabentuk penyelidikan eksperimen dan soal selidik. Soalan –soalan bagi mendapatkan maklumat adalah berkaitan dengan latar belakang pelajar dan pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan perisian SPSS dan dikumpulkan dalam bentuk jadual. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kaedah penggunaan perisian komputer adalah berkesan terhadap pembelajaran set asas perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris pelajar. Walau bagaimanapun, Selain itu, kajian ini menunjukkan sikap pelajar adalah positif terhadap set asas pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris dengan menggunakan perisian komputer. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan terdapatnya suatu hubungan yang signifikan diantara sikap pelajar terhadap penggunaan perisian komputer dengan perkembangan pencapaian kemahiran set asas perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.0 Introduction

The teaching and learning of vocabulary is a difficult and rather neglected area. Elementary course books place some emphasis on basic vocabulary sets, such as furniture, transport and types of buildings, and more advanced ESP courses are much concerned with specialist lexis for engineering, medicine and business. Therefore, the vocabulary sets is a very crucial element in mastering the four language skills and other language contents. It for the content required to learn the oracy (listening and speaking) and literacy (reading and writing). Since the implementation of the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) syllabus, the focus on vocabulary in language teaching has





varied over the years. According to Nunan (1991) adequate vocabulary is important for successful second language use. According to Chitravelu (1995) without vocabulary, structures and functions cannot be used for comprehension and communication. In the classroom the computer can serve as a supplement to the teaching and learning process. The use of audio cassette players and recorders, video cassette recorders, overhead projectors are common media for imparting knowledge and raising the level of comprehension and critical thinking when suitably used. Their uses in interesting ways help to motivate the learners. Nowadays, the computer and suitable courseware represent a more recent addition to the teaching equipment. Similar to other teaching aids, computers as well as careful matching of courseware with curriculum objectives and learning outcomes can produce the maximum effect from proper and planned use. Yusup Hashim (1993) stated that the integration of multimedia and teaching process is very

important in this era, as mentioned below:



The introduction of courseware to the classroom makes the material environment more supportive or knowledge construction..... the computer and its multimedia applications are said to have potential as cognitive tools. Every teacher should have the ability to structure and encourage information for the purposes of teaching and learning in this information age agrees this. (Yusup Hashim, 1993:19-34)





The use of technology-based resources plays a vital role to the teachers. With the current emphasis on information technology it is essential that the training curriculum provide teachers with hands-on experience in the use of a variety of technology or media for teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education, Malaysia introduced the computer – based courseware in order to make the learning process more beneficial to teachers and students. The courseware has a potential to work as a cognitive tool in helping students in the classroom. Nowadays, most of the teachers are using the courseware to teach English, Science and Mathematics. By using the courseware, students can develop their English language skills especially in word pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary and develop the student's performance in English language. Besides, the students can enhance their skills in learning new terminologies in Science and Mathematics and learn the subjects effectively in the classroom. Moreover, the use of courseware will help to support the teachers in applying various teaching technique, facilitating and managing the virtual environment and upgrading teaching performance. Recently, a media unit was set up in every college for this purpose. Computer labs were also set up in colleges to provide students the much-needed hands-on use of computers. A similar set of concepts was also applied at the universities. Thus, it could be seen that preparation of teaching materials are becoming increasingly media-based.

1.1 Need for the study

This study is needed because it will contribute towards the educational theory and practice in three main domains: the teachers, the students and language studies.





The first reason is because the researcher wants to determine whether the computer courseware approach is an effective way to learn vocabulary in the classroom. Unlike the usual conventional strategy of teacher-directed vocabulary exercises where the learning outcomes are already predetermined, the English computer-based courseware may benefit students with new ways in understanding new vocabulary items. As a result, the lesson will be more interesting and effective. Besides, it can also enable students to have some fun in learning language. This study is also needed because the findings of the study will influence teachers to explore the possibility of adding another dimension to their vocabulary teaching strategies. Moreover, the teachers may use the computer courseware approach as an alternative way in teaching especially in developing the student's vocabulary skills.

This study will provide grounds for future research on the same subject. It is because vocabulary learning is very important for the development of language skills. For example, to improve student's listening and speaking skills, to introduce paralanguage, and to practice reading and writing skills.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Previous studies indicate that the use of media and teaching technology among ESL teachers in Malaysia are still at a very low level. This is because most of the teachers put great emphasis or focus on the syllabus and try to complete it (Sim Ah Hock, 1986, Abd Latif Gapor.1989, M. Balakrishnan, 1994) (cited in Abd Latif, 1998).The present problem is that many Malaysian students face difficulties in understanding and comprehending the





English reading materials. Limited vocabulary has been identified as one of the main causes of the student's inability to use the target language satisfactorily.

To overcome the problems, the use of computers may help the students to overcome their difficulties and arouse the interest in learning the target language specifically, the vocabulary. Besides, the use of computers may help the teachers to deliver their lesson effectively and also make their teaching more interesting and enjoyable. Thus, it will help to improve the student's language proficiency in English language. The use of computers in schools for teaching and learning has a potential to raise the student's achievement across the curriculum. A way in which these difficulties can be overcome is by using an effective multimedia educational computer-based courseware. Based on the stated findings, the researcher feels that a study on this problem has to be done to find out whether the computer-based courseware can help the student's performance in vocabulary learning. Besides, the study will also find out whether there is a relationship between the students' attitudes toward the computer-based courseware and their vocabulary skills performance.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of learning vocabulary through the use of computer-based courseware. The study also aimed to identify the student's attitude towards the use of computer-based courseware in learning basic vocabulary sets and the relationship with their academic performances.

In this context, the researcher is hoping that the findings obtained from this study





will encourage teachers to use this technique in the teaching of English vocabulary in the classroom.

1.4 Research questions

The following are the research questions for this study.

1. Is the use of Computer-based English Courseware more effective than the conventional classroom instruction in the teaching of basic vocabulary sets to lower secondary school students?
2. What are the students' attitudes toward the use of computer-based courseware in the teaching of basic vocabulary sets?



3. Is there any relationship between the students' attitude toward the computer-based courseware approach and their vocabulary skills performance?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following are the research hypotheses for this study:

Null Hypothesis 1 (H_{01})

The use of computer based English Courseware is not more effective than the use of conventional classroom instructions in enhancing students' vocabulary skills performance.



**Alternative Hypothesis 1 (H_{a1})**

The use of computer based English Courseware is more effective than the use of conventional classroom instructions in enhancing students' vocabulary skill performance.

Null Hypothesis 2 (H_{02})

The students do not have positive attitudes toward the use of computer based English courseware in learning vocabulary sets in the classroom.

Alternative Hypothesis 2 (H_{a2})

The students have positive attitudes toward the use of computer based English courseware in learning vocabulary sets in the classroom.

**Null Hypothesis 3(H_{03})**

There is no statistically significant relationship between the students' attitudes toward the use of computer based courseware and their vocabulary skills performance.

Alternative Hypothesis 3 (H_{a3})

There is a statistically significant relationship between the students' attitudes toward the use of computer based courseware and their vocabulary skills performance.





1.6 Definition of terms

Vocabulary skills

The skills needed to recognize and use words correctly and appropriately in a variety of social contexts. The student has to be familiar with not only the meaning of the word but the many forms it may take. In the context of this study, the scores obtained by the subject in the pretest and posttest measure the basic vocabulary skill sets.

Teaching Courseware

Teaching courseware means students will view a lesson from a big screen with the teacher in control; students do not work alone or in pairs on individual personal computers. Teaching courseware is used in the classroom, not in the computer lab. It is like watching TV in some ways, but the teacher plays a major role. The teacher will determine when to repeat a screen or video, when to pause for explanation and when to stop and carry out some class activities. As such, a teacher must be very familiar with a courseware and has a lesson plan to go with it before she or he uses it in class. For this study, the courseware that will be used is known as the English Form One Courseware, which was implemented by the Ministry of Education since May 2002.

Computer –assisted language learning (CALL)

CALL consists of various programs and activities, which are active elements for language learning. In these programs, the data include the list of questions and expected





answers. It might be, for example, a series of adjectives and their opposites, but could just as well be a list of irregular verbs and their past tenses, male nouns and their female equivalents, or synonyms. Thus, CALL is a means of presenting, reinforcing and testing particular language items (Higgins and Johns, 1984). For this study, the courseware that is used contains several CALL activities to develop vocabulary skills.

Attitude

A state of readiness, a tendency to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli (Oppenheim, 1966). For this study, the attitude to be measured refers to the attitude of the subjects towards the English computer-based courseware approach in developing their vocabulary skills.

Proficiency Level



For this study, the proficiency level is based on the grades obtained by the subjects for English in the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) examination. Students who obtained A and B grades in English at UPSR are considered as proficient while the rest are considered as less proficient.

