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On the Importance of Learning Vocabulary in Academic Materials: A Mixed- Methods Study to Probe into the State of Language Progress, Willingness to Communicate and Academic Engagement from the Voices of EFL Learners

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Abstract

This investigation aimed to inform instructional practices that foster linguistic development and enhance the overall language learning experience by unraveling the nuanced dynamics at play. To this end, the researchers explored the influence of two distinct vocabulary books, "Keyword for Fluency" and "1100 Words You Need to Know," on language growth, willingness to communicate (WTC), and academic engagement within the upper-intermediate learner demographic. With 40 participants in the experimental group (EG) exposed to "Keyword for Fluency" and 40 participants in the control group (CG) using "1100 Words You Need to Know", all demonstrating upper-intermediate language proficiency, a concurrent mixed-methods research design was employed. A comprehensive teacher-made test was designed and administered to gauge language growth. The EG received targeted instruction based on "Keyword for Fluency," while the CG adhered to conventional language teaching methods centered on "1100." Our findings showcased substantial language growth, increased WTC, and enhanced academic engagement among participants in the EG as opposed to the CG. This study offers valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and researchers seeking to optimize vocabulary instruction strategies for upper-intermediate learners.

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Introduction

Language proficiency, a multifaceted construct encompassing dimensions such as vocabulary size, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence, plays a crucial role in language acquisition (Kargar Behbahani & Razmjoo 2023). The centrality of vocabulary in this process cannot be overstated (Wilkins, 1972). Within the expansive landscape of language education, the ongoing debate between proponents of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and advocates for the "1100" wordlist has ignited scholarly interest. This study seeks to elucidate the intricate relationship between these approaches and their consequential impact on learners' language growth, WTC, and academic engagement at the upper-intermediate level. This investigation aims to inform instructional practices that foster linguistic development and enhance the overall language learning experience by unraveling the nuanced dynamics at play.

In the realm of academic contexts, the development of language skills unfolds as a complex and multifaceted process characterized by the acquisition and refinement of linguistic abilities within an educational framework (Rojas & Iglesias, 2013). Individuals engaged in academic settings not only grasp the foundational elements of a language but also participate in advanced language use essential for scholarly endeavors (Kargar Behbahani & Khademi, 2022; Rowe & Weisleder, 2020). This progress involves the cultivation of academic vocabulary, mastery of specialized discourse structures, and proficiency in written and spoken communication adhering to academic standards. Exposure to intricate texts, discussions, and academic tasks serves as a pivotal factor in expanding language competence. Moreover, academic environments prioritize critical thinking and analytical skills, contributing further to language development as students articulate their ideas precisely and with nuance (Gleason & Ratner, 2022). Engaging with diverse subjects and academic disciplines creates a linguistically rich environment, nurturing both depth and breadth in language abilities within the specific domains of academia.

The concept of WTC originated with a focus on first-language (L1) communication, defined by (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) as the intention to initiate communication when the opportunity arises. Subsequently, WTC expanded to encompass second-language (L2) communication, adopting a situational construct due to the diverse range of potential L2 competencies and communication opportunities. MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined L2 WTC as a readiness to engage in discourse at a specific time with particular individuals, using L2. They noted that L2 WTC varies with different interlocutors over time and in various situations. The dynamic nature of WTC results from the combined influence of linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors outlined in [8]'s WTC model, validated by studies in diverse contexts (Cao, 2014; Zarrinabadi & Tanbakooei, 2016). Persistent factors shaping WTC over time encompass personality characteristics, intergroup dynamics, communicative proficiency, and attitudes towards different social groups, whereas momentary factors include temporary fluctuations in communicative self-assurance and the inclination to engage in communication with particular individuals.

Engagement, representing the outward expression of learning motivation, signifies that learners dedicate energy and exert effort in the learning journey to attain specific educational objectives (Reschly & Christenson, 2012; Schunk & Mullen, 2012). Operationalized through three interlinked dimensions, student engagement encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive facets (Fredricks et al., 2004). Emotional engagement entails the emotional reactions students manifest towards instructors, peers, or the educational process, involving emotions like engagement, disinterest, contentment, discontentment, and apprehension throughout a learning endeavor (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). At the heart of cognitive engagement lies the degree of immersion in learning, underscoring a psychological dedication to mastering concepts and abilities rather than mere task accomplishment (Fredricks et al., 2004). Consequently, it may be perceived as the mastery level of the topic under discussion. (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

The ongoing debate between proponents of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and advocates for the "1100" wordlist in language education has raised questions about their respective impacts on learners' language growth, WTC, and academic engagement at the upper-intermediate level. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research exploring the intricate relationship between these approaches and their effects on language acquisition outcomes and the overall language learning experience. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist on language proficiency development, WTC, and academic engagement. By examining these dynamics, the study seeks to inform instructional practices that promote linguistic development and enhance students' engagement in academic contexts.

This study has three primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to compare the effectiveness of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist in facilitating language growth among L2 learners. By analyzing the language proficiency outcomes of learners using both approaches, this research seeks to identify which textbook approach contributes more effectively to the development of language skills, including vocabulary size, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence.

Secondly, we intend to explore the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist's impact on learners' WTC in the L2. By examining the frequency and quality of communication initiated by learners using each approach, the research aims to determine which textbook approach enhances learners' motivation and confidence to engage in communicative interactions in the L2.

Lastly, this study seeks to explore how the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist influence L2 learners' academic engagement. By examining behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement, the research aims to shed light on how each approach affects students' active involvement in academic tasks, emotional responses to the learning process, and cognitive commitment to mastering knowledge and skills. The findings will provide insights into the pedagogical practices that foster academic engagement among L2 learners. Therefore, we address the following research questions:

1. How do Key Words for Fluency and 1100 textbooks enhance L2 learners' language learning?

2. What is the effect of Key Words for Fluency and 1100 textbooks on L2 learners' willingness to communicate?
3. What is the effect of Key Words for Fluency and 1100 textbooks on L2 learners' academic engagement?

This study holds significant theoretical and practical implications for the field of language education. By examining the effectiveness of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on language learning methodologies and pedagogical practices. The findings will provide empirical evidence on these approaches' impact on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement at the upper-intermediate level. This research addresses an ongoing debate in the field and adds to our understanding of effective language teaching strategies and their influence on L2 learners' language development and engagement in academic contexts.

The implications of this study are multi-fold and have relevance for various stakeholders in language education.

Firstly, the findings will inform language educators and curriculum developers about the relative effectiveness of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist in promoting language growth. This knowledge can guide instructional practices and curriculum design, helping educators select appropriate materials and strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence among upper-intermediate L2 learners.

Secondly, the study's investigation into the impact of these approaches on learners' WTC holds practical implications for classroom instruction. Understanding which approach fosters a higher level of motivation and confidence among L2 learners to engage in communicative interactions can inform the design of supportive learning environments that encourage active participation and meaningful communication in the L2.

Furthermore, the study's exploration of how these approaches influence L2 learners' academic engagement has implications for instructional design and student learning experiences. By uncovering the impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement, educators can tailor their teaching methodologies to enhance student involvement, emotional responses, and cognitive commitment in academic tasks. This can contribute to more effective and engaging language learning experiences for L2 learners at the upper-intermediate level.

The findings can also have implications for curriculum development and the selection of language learning materials and textbooks. Educators and publishers can consider the effectiveness of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist in facilitating language growth and promoting academic engagement when designing instructional materials. This can lead to the creation of more efficient and learner-centered materials that cater to the specific needs of upper-intermediate L2 learners.

In addition, the implications of this study extend to policy and decision-making in language education. The findings can inform policymakers and educational institutions about effective approaches for language instruction at the upper-intermediate level. This knowledge can

influence curriculum standards, teaching guidelines, and funding allocations, promoting evidence-based practices that enhance language learning outcomes.

Overall, this study has the potential to contribute to the advancement of language education by providing insights into the effectiveness of different approaches in fostering language growth, WTC, and academic engagement. The implications of this research can positively impact language learners, educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, leading to improved language learning experiences and outcomes at the upper-intermediate level.

Literature Review

In this section, we first discuss the theoretical background underpinning various constructs of the study, then we present the related studies that have been conducted.

Theoretical Background

Willingness to Communicate

WTC was first introduced by Burgoon in 1976 (Burgoon, 1976), who initially referred to it as "unwillingness to communicate." Later, this notion was incorporated into the field of L2 teaching and learning (Baer & McCroskey, 1985). In the context of second or foreign language acquisition, WTC involves actively seizing opportunities to engage in communication using the target language. Recognizing the importance of the desire to communicate aligns with the fundamental goal of language teaching, which aims to equip learners with the skills to express their intended meanings and ideas in the target language. An unwillingness to communicate presents a barrier to the successful acquisition of a foreign language.

Moreover, well-established linguistic theories such as the Interaction Hypothesis, Socio-cultural Hypothesis, and Output Hypothesis emphasize the crucial role of interaction and communication in the process of second language learning (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014). The motivation to communicate holds significance in communicative teaching methods and group language learning, where collaborative efforts among learners and the utilization of a second or foreign language for interpersonal communication are central. Originally applied to first language learning by Baer and McCroskey (1985), Cetinkaya (2005) later noted that the inclination to communicate in a second or foreign language is not a fixed trait and can vary under different influences. Subsequently, an exploratory model, as presented by Cao and Philp (2006) and Aubrey (2011), highlights two categories of variables: transient variables, including environmental factors like classmates, teachers, and classroom atmosphere, and persistent variables, such as anxiety and motivation.

Academic Engagement

Researchers have approached the comprehension of learner engagement from various perspectives, recognizing its complex nature that encompasses multiple components. Anderson et al. (2004) proposed a taxonomy consisting of four types to examine student engagement in U.S. schools. The first type, behavioral engagement, relates to factors such as attendance and participation in different activities. The second type, academic engagement, encompasses learning time and the focus on academic tasks. The third type, cognitive engagement, centers on the use of learning strategies and self-regulated learning in academic activities. Lastly, the fourth type, psychological engagement, considers the student's relationships with teachers and

peers, as well as their sense of belonging at school. This taxonomy offers a useful framework for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of students' performance and experiences in the school environment (Anderson et al., 2004).

In a synthesis of 44 studies on student engagement, Fredricks et al. (2004) identified three major dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral engagement entails favorable conduct, enthusiastic engagement in educational assignments, allocation of time to tasks, and active participation in both academic and extracurricular pursuits. Emotional engagement involves the manifestation of feelings, and attitudes toward educators, classmates, and the educational institution, along with a feeling of belongingness. Cognitive engagement highlights students' investment in learning, the utilization of learning strategies, and self-guided regulation. In Canada's secondary school context, Dunleavy (2008) categorized learner engagement into three dimensions. The first dimension is behavioral engagement, which includes participation in academic and non-academic school activities, as well as regular attendance. The second dimension is academic-cognitive engagement, which involves aspects such as time spent on task, response to learning challenges, completion of homework, and effort invested in learning. The third dimension is social-psychological engagement, which encompasses motivation, interest, a sense of belonging, and the need for autonomy.

When compared to other paradigms of learner engagement, Fredricks et al.'s (2004) three-dimensional engagement model stands out as more adept for scrutinizing language learning dynamics. This structure amalgamates behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects, offering a thorough exploration of well-researched domains in language learning investigations, such as motivation, affective stances, cognitive characteristics, and learning methodologies (e.g. Bailey, 1983; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Garrett & Young, 2009; Griffiths, 2015). This three-part conceptual framework of learner engagement has been utilized across various investigations exploring corrective feedback in second language acquisition (SLA) (Ellis, 2010) and L2 writing (Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Hyland, 2018), highlighting its pivotal role in fostering student assimilation of feedback and improvement in writing competence. Within these investigations, emotional engagement has been evaluated regarding affective responses, shifts in attitude, and alterations in motivation, whereas cognitive engagement has been defined by the employment of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Overall, these various frameworks and taxonomies contribute to a deeper understanding of learner engagement by considering its multifaceted nature and the different aspects that play a role in students' performance and experiences in educational settings.

Language Growth

The process of language growth entails the intricate journey of linguistic development within an educational framework. Beyond the foundational aspects of vocabulary and syntax mastery, language growth in the realm of acquisition encompasses the nuanced and advanced linguistic skills essential for scholarly endeavors (Huttenlocher, 1998). This fluid advancement entails the acquisition of academic terminology, specialized modes of discourse, and fluency in both written and verbal interaction crafted to satisfy the demands of academic environments (Kargar Behbahani & Kooti, 2022). Language competence expands through exposure to complex texts, active participation in discussions, and the undertaking of academic tasks

(Brooks & Kempe, 2012). Additionally, exposure to diverse subjects and scholarly disciplines fosters an environment abundant in language, enhancing both the depth and breadth of linguistic capabilities within academic spheres (Rowe & Weisleder, 2020). Therefore, within the scope of language growth as the dependent variable, lies not just the basic components of language acquisition, but also the refinement of intricate language competencies pivotal for success in academia and adept communication within scholarly settings.

Beyond its fundamental and academic dimensions, language growth includes the cognitive elements of language development. This entails refining critical thinking and analytical abilities, empowering learners to express thoughts with precision and subtlety (Rojas & Iglesias, 2013). The academic focus on meticulous scrutiny across diverse domains enhances the cognitive facets of language development, refining students' abilities to articulate intricate ideas and participate in scholarly discourse. Moreover, language growth broadens to cultivate a nuanced appreciation of cultural and contextual complexities, equipping learners to navigate the diverse linguistic landscapes inherent in academic endeavors. Immersion in diverse cultural viewpoints and exploration of interdisciplinary subjects not only advances language proficiency but also cultivates the cultural and contextual competencies vital for effective communication within academic realms (Kennison, 2013).

Empirical Background

Heidari (2019) addressed the less-explored issue of transitioning vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive modes in second or foreign language learning. It aimed to investigate the role of WTC as an individual difference in learners' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The hypothesis posited that WTC serves as a predictor for the size of learners' receptive and productive lexical knowledge, indicating success in the transition from receptive to productive mode. The study involved 104 Iranian EFL learners who completed instruments to assess their WTC, receptive vocabulary knowledge, and productive knowledge. Results indicated that high and low WTC learners had comparable receptive lexical knowledge, but those with high WTC exhibited greater productive vocabulary knowledge than their low WTC counterparts. The findings suggest that WTC can serve as a predic tor for the transition of lexical knowledge from receptive to productive mode.

Feng et al. (2023) aimed to examine the impact of the mind-mapping technique on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary recall, retention, learning motivation, and WTC. A total of 98 EFL learners were selected and homogenized using the Oxford Quick Placement test (OQPT), dividing them into a CG (n = 30) and an EG (n = 30). Pretests on vocabulary, learning motivation, and WTC were conducted. The two groups received different instructions, with the EG using mind-mapping and the CG receiving conventional instruction. Following a 23-session treatment, both groups underwent a vocabulary post-test (immediate and delayed) and completed questionnaires on learning motivation and WTC. Statistical analyses revealed that the EG demonstrated superior performance over the CG in terms of vocabulary recall and retention, learning motivation, and WTC gains.

Recent advancements in the realm of foreign language education have sparked a renewed interest in L2 WTC. Şen and Oz (2021) aimed to explore the correlation between learners' vocabulary size and L2 WTC within an EFL classroom context. The participants included 100

university students enrolled in an EFL teacher education program in Turkiye. Data were gathered through the Vocabulary Levels Test and the WTC inside the Classroom Scale. Descriptive statistics unveiled that among the participants, 32% demonstrated high, 54% exhibited moderate, and 14% showcased low levels of L2 WTC within classroom settings. Furthermore, the findings uncovered a significant association between the participants' vocabulary levels and their L2 WTC within the classroom.

In an effort to enhance conceptual understanding and sustain adolescents' engagement in secondary science classrooms, Larson (2014) implemented the Engagement Model of Academic Literacy for Learning (EngageALL). This intervention, designed for ninth-grade biology students, incorporated a disciplinary literacy approach and organized instruction based on characteristics of student interest development, with a focus on the Generative Vocabulary Matrix. The mixed-methods study, involving 222 students, aimed to assess the impact of the intervention on conceptual understanding, learning experience quality, engagement, motivational changes, perceptions, and academic vocabulary/language use. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative analyses, as well as the Experience Sampling Method, scenario-based writing, and daily self-reports, the results indicated that pupils engaged in the intervention displayed notably elevated levels of conceptual grasp, involvement, motivational factors, and usage of academic language/vocabulary in contrast to those undergoing instruction organized in a traditional manner. Regular self-appraisals consistently highlighted positive shifts in motivation during the Engage ALL sessions, with qualitative investigation revealing recurrent themes elucidating the perceived advantages of the intervention among students. These themes underscored the interrelation between conceptual understanding, motivational enhancements, and the application of vocabulary.

In task-based language learning, learners typically engage behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally, with positive impacts on language development. Digital game-based vocabulary learning (DGBVL) has gained attention, but research on learner engagement in DGBVL and its influence on vocabulary knowledge is limited. To address this gap, Zhang et al. (2023) developed a DGBVL program and conducted a mixed-method study with fifty Chinese EFL university students. The findings revealed active engagement across behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions in DGBVL, each with distinct patterns and influences on vocabulary development. Positive and statistically significant effects of learner engagement in DGBVL were observed, with varied impacts from different engagement dimensions.

Wang et al. (2015) investigated the motivation and engagement of EFL college learners during English vocabulary learning tasks, utilizing self-determination theory (SDT). Examining the impact of autonomy on task motivation and engagement, as well as overall English learning motivation (trait motivation), the research spanned 14 weeks. Results from questionnaires and observations revealed that participants with the autonomy to choose their target words exhibited higher task motivation and engagement compared to those assigned pre-selected words. However, the learners' general attitude toward English learning remained unaffected by the provision of choice in vocabulary tasks. The 14-week study also highlighted fluctuations in task motivation and engagement over time, supporting the importance of autonomy-supportive vocabulary learning tasks in line with SDT.

McKeown and Beck (2014) investigated the impact of two vocabulary instruction methods, repetition and interactive, as well as a control condition, on a group of kindergartners (n = 131). Utilizing a within-subject design, the repetition approach involved repeated readings of a story and definition practice, while the interactive approach incorporated various contexts and active word processing. Assessment measures, designed by the experimenter, focused on meaning recognition, comprehension, and production. Both repetition and interactive methods resulted in enhanced word meaning recognition and higher-order processing compared to the control. Furthermore, two higher-order processing measures indicated a specific advantage for the interactive instruction over the repetition approach.

Bowne et al. (2015) assessed the connections between explicit vocabulary instruction by Chilean teachers and kindergarten students' vocabulary development. The study focused on the amount of conceptual information about words presented during these instructional sessions. After adjusting for multiple variables such as teacher language complexity, duration of targeted vocabulary instruction, and demographic characteristics of students and educators, the only substantial predictor of students' vocabulary levels at the end of kindergarten was the amount of conceptual material presented. Each added standard deviation of conceptual information concerning words resulted in a 0.11 standard deviation improvement in students' vocabulary outcomes.

Arthur and Davis (2016) aimed to assess the impact of double-dose vocabulary instruction compared to single-dose and business-as-usual control instruction in a quasi-experimental pilot study for pre-kindergarteners through third-graders. The vocabulary instruction was part of a broader language-comprehension intervention. Over a 21-week period, pretest, posttest, and targeted vocabulary measures were collected. Both single- and double-dose instruction showed similar effects on children's learning of targeted vocabulary, although effect-size estimates favored the double-dose condition. Both instructional approaches outperformed business-as-usual instruction, with effect-size estimates consistent with vocabulary-intervention literature. The pilot study's results suggest that dedicating additional instructional time solely to vocabulary development may not yield enhanced outcomes for certain students, challenging the potential worth of such an investment compared to other language-based instruction.

Building upon the empirical background, the research problem identified in this study is multifaceted. Firstly, there is a need to comprehend the complex interplay between vocabulary knowledge, WTC, and language engagement at the upper-intermediate level. The literature reveals studies that explore the transition of vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive modes, emphasizing the predictive role of WTC in this transition (Heidari, 2019). Additionally, investigations highlight the effectiveness of instructional techniques, such as mind-mapping and digital game-based vocabulary learning, in enhancing vocabulary recall, retention, and overall engagement (Feng et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, studies emphasize the correlation between learners' vocabulary size and L2 WTC, shedding light on the importance of vocabulary in communication within an EFL classroom (Şen & Oz, 2021). Furthermore, interventions like Engage ALL demonstrate the positive impact of organized instruction on conceptual understanding, engagement, and academic vocabulary use (Larson, 2014). This study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by specifically examining the

language growth, WTC, and academic engagement implications of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist at the upper-intermediate level. The synthesis of these diverse perspectives and findings will inform instructional practices, guiding educators in optimizing language learning experiences for learners at this critical stage of language proficiency.

Method

Design

This study employs a concurrent mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate the impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist on language growth at the upper-intermediate level. The quantitative strand focuses on measuring the effect of these approaches through standardized assessments on language growth. Simultaneously, the qualitative strand explores the influence of textbooks associated with these approaches on learners' WTC and academic engagement.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a large senior high school for men located in South Iran. The participants included two intact classes, each comprising 40 learners, aged between 16 and 18 years. One of the groups was randomly selected as the EG and the other as the CG. All participants shared Farsi as their first language (L1) and had undergone five years of English language instruction prior to the commencement of the study. Assessing their English proficiency using the OQPT, it was determined that all learners possessed an upper-intermediate command of English. Notably, none of the participants had previously visited an English-speaking country, ensuring a homogenous background in terms of English language exposure and cultural immersion.

Instruments

In this study, various instruments were employed to comprehensively assess learners' English proficiency and gather qualitative insights. To gauge the participants' English proficiency, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was utilized. This standardized test served as a reliable tool to determine the upper-intermediate command of English among the learners. The study incorporated the textbooks "Key Words for Fluency" (Advanced Level) and "1100 Words You Need to Know" to implement the respective instructional approaches. These textbooks were chosen as primary instructional materials, providing a structured basis for evaluating the impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100" wordlist on language growth.

To measure learners' language growth, a teacher-made test was administered as both a pretest and a posttest. This test underwent construct validation using the known-group technique (Ary et al., 2018), ensuring its effectiveness in evaluating the targeted language constructs. Additionally, the content validity of the test was confirmed through consultation with two experts in language testing and assessment, ensuring that the test accurately measured the intended language dimensions.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, modified versions of Zarrinabadi and Tanbakooei (2016) and Baer and McCroskey (1985) with the learners and

classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews provided a flexible framework for eliciting in-depth insights into learners' experiences and perceptions. The observational component allowed for the contextual understanding of the impact of instructional methods on learners' WTC and academic engagement. Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive and robust approach to assessing both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study's objectives.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedures in this study involved a carefully structured treatment plan to assess the impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach and the "1100 Words You Need to Know" on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement. The EG received instruction based on the "Key Words for Fluency" textbook (Advanced Level), while the CG received instruction based on the "1100 Words You Need to Know" textbook.

The treatment for the EG comprised the systematic implementation of the "Key Words for Fluency" instructional approach. This involved teaching and reinforcing vocabulary, grammatical structures, and communicative competence as outlined in the specified textbook. The content and exercises in the "Key Words for Fluency" textbook were designed to enhance fluency and proficiency in English, with a particular focus on the selected key words.

Conversely, the CG underwent treatment based on the "1100 Words You Need to Know" textbook. This treatment involved the structured delivery of vocabulary instruction, grammatical concepts, and communicative skills, emphasizing the wordlist of 1100 words as outlined in the designated textbook. The instructional content for the control group focused on a different set of vocabulary and language elements compared to the experimental group.

Data were collected through pretest and posttest assessments, where both groups were evaluated using a teacher-made test construct-validated through the known-group technique. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with learners and classroom observations to capture nuanced insights into learners' experiences, WTC, and academic engagement. The treatment, therefore, encompassed the systematic and targeted instruction of the respective approaches to assess their impact on language development and socio-affective aspects of learning at the upper-intermediate level.

Data Analysis Procedures

In the quantitative phase of the data analysis, the study employed an independent sample t-test to evaluate the difference in language growth between the two experimental conditions (Key Words for Fluency approach for the EG and 1100 Words You Need to Know for the CG) on both the pretest and posttest assessments. This statistical analysis, conducted in accordance with the guidelines outlined by Pallant (2020), aimed to determine whether there were significant differences in language proficiency development between the two groups. The independent sample t-test allowed for a robust comparison of mean scores, providing insights into the effectiveness of each instructional approach.

In the qualitative phase, the data analysis involved manual coding. This process entailed systematically reviewing and categorizing the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Themes and patterns relevant to WTC and academic engagement were identified through a careful and iterative coding process. Manual coding

allowed for a nuanced exploration of the qualitative data, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' perspectives and experiences. The qualitative analysis complemented the quantitative results, offering a deeper understanding of the socio-affective dimensions of language learning within specific instructional contexts. Together, the quantitative and qualitative analyses provided a comprehensive and triangulated perspective on the impact of the instructional approaches on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement at the upper-intermediate level.

Results

The Effect of Different Textbooks on Language Growth

To study the effect of different textbooks on language growth, we needed to run a t-test. However, before conducting the inferential text, we had to ensure the data normality. To this end, a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test was conducted.

Table 1. *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

		Pretest Scores	Posttest Scores
N		80	80
Normal Parameters	Mean	3.987	8.387
	Std. Deviation	1.845	5.0853
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.140	.130
	Positive	.097	.130
	Negative	-.140	-.118
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.254	1.166
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.086	.132

Table 1 indicates that on both pretest and posttest the data was normally distributed ($p > 0.05$).

Table 2. *Group Statistics of Language Growth on the Pretest*

	Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest Scores	EG	40	4.150	1.791	.283
	CG	40	3.825	1.906	.301

Table 2 demonstrates a similar performance in the EG ($N = 40$, $M = 4.150$, $SD = 1.791$) and the CG ($N = 40$, $M = 3.835$, $SD = 1.906$) on the pretest.

Table 3. *Independent Samples Test of Language Growth on the Pretest*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest Scores	Equal variances assumed	.051	.822	.786	78	.434	.325	.413	-.498	1.148
	Equal variances not assumed			.786	77.697	.434	.325	.413	-.498	1.148

According to Table 3, no significant difference was observed between the two conditions on the pretest (t = .768, df = 78, p > 0.05).

Table 4. *Group Statistics of Language Growth on the Posttest*

	Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest Scores	EG	40	11.800	4.608	.728
	CG	40	4.975	2.693	.425

As Table 4 reveals, the EG (N = 40, M = 11.800, SD = 4.608) outstripped the CG (N = 40, M = 4.975, SD = 2.693) on the posttest.

Table 5. *Independent Samples Test of Language Growth on the Posttest*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest Scores	Equal variances assumed	11.313	.001	8.086	78	.000	6.825	.844	5.144	8.505
	Equal variances not assumed			8.086	62.860	.000	6.825	.844	5.138	8.511

As presented in Table 5, a significant difference was observed between the two conditions on the posttest (t = 8.086, df = 62.860, p = .001). That is the EG outstripped the CG. Additionally, the calculated effect size was very large (effect size = .456).

The Effect of Different Textbooks on Willingness to Communicate

The results regarding the effect of different textbooks on learners' WTC revealed distinct patterns between the EG and the CG based on semi-structured interviews. Participants in the experimental group, who were taught using the "Key Words for Fluency" approach, exhibited enhanced WTC. During the interviews, EG learners consistently expressed increased confidence in initiating and participating in English communication. The qualitative data suggested that the specific vocabulary and communicative strategies emphasized in the "Key Words for Fluency" approach contributed to a more positive and self-assured stance towards engaging in English conversations.

An EG learner said:

> *I found the "Key Words for Fluency" approach to be a game-changer in my English language learning journey. The emphasis on specific key words, coupled with communicative strategies, significantly boosted my confidence in using English. The approach not only expanded my vocabulary but also provided me with the tools to express myself more fluently and effectively. During the semi-structured interviews, I expressed a newfound willingness to participate actively in English conversations. The targeted focus on practical language use in various contexts made me feel more at ease in expressing my thoughts, contributing to an overall positive shift in my willingness to communicate. The instructional approach empowered me to take linguistic risks, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation in my English language endeavors.*

Conversely, participants in the control group, instructed with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" textbook, did not demonstrate a comparable improvement in WTC. Insights from the semi-structured interviews with the control group learners indicated a more reserved and cautious approach to English communication. The qualitative data suggested that the vocabulary-focused instruction in the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach may not have adequately addressed the socio-affective factors influencing learners' willingness to engage in communicative activities.

A CG learner stated:

> *My experience with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach had its merits, particularly in expanding my vocabulary repertoire. However, during the semi-structured interviews, I acknowledged that the approach might have fallen short in addressing the broader aspect of communication. While my vocabulary improved, I felt less equipped to apply this knowledge in real-life communicative situations. The interviews highlighted a sense of reservation and hesitancy in my willingness to engage in English conversations compared to my peers in the EG. The instructional approach, with its focus on wordlists, may have inadvertently placed more emphasis on memorization rather than practical application. This resulted in a more cautious approach to communication, as I felt less confident in navigating spontaneous language use and interactions.*

Overall, the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews indicated a differential impact of instructional approaches on learners' WTC. The experimental group, exposed to the "Key Words for Fluency" approach, showed enhancements in their WTC, while the control group learners, instructed with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach, did not exhibit a similar positive shift in their communicative confidence.

The results of classroom observations provided further insights into the impact of different textbooks on learners' WTC. In the EG, where the "Key Words for Fluency" approach was employed, a noticeable increase in WTC was observed. Learners in the EG demonstrated a higher level of engagement during communicative activities, willingly participating in discussions, group work, and expressing their ideas with greater ease. The observations captured instances of EG learners initiating conversations, demonstrating a more proactive approach to English communication. The qualitative data from the observations echoed the sentiments expressed in the semi-structured interviews, affirming that the "Key Words for Fluency" approach positively influenced learners' WTC in the classroom setting.

Conversely, in the CG, where the "1100 Words You Need to Know" textbook was used, the observations indicated a more reserved approach to English communication. CG learners appeared less inclined to initiate interactions spontaneously and were observed to be more cautious in expressing themselves during group activities. The focus on vocabulary acquisition in the CG instructional approach might have influenced a more structured and word-centered participation, with learners demonstrating less inclination to engage in extended or impromptu conversations. The observations complemented the qualitative findings, indicating that the CG instructional approach may not have fostered a significant improvement in WTC within the classroom context.

In summary, the results of classroom observations aligned with the findings from semi-structured interviews, collectively suggesting a differential impact of instructional approaches on learners' WTC, with the EG experiencing a positive shift, while the CG exhibited a more restrained communicative stance.

Based on the results of semi-structured interviews and observation on the effect of different textbooks on L2 learners' WTC, several themes emerged that are enlisted below:

1. **Enhanced Confidence and Initiative (EG):** Participants in the Experimental Group (EG) consistently expressed heightened confidence and a greater initiative to communicate in English. Themes emerging from both interviews and observations highlighted an increased willingness to actively engage in conversations, initiate interactions, and express ideas with newfound assurance.
2. **Vocabulary Application (EG vs. CG):** The qualitative data revealed a notable difference in how learners in the Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG) applied their vocabulary knowledge. EG learners demonstrated a more practical and versatile application of vocabulary during observations and interviews, using key words learned from the "Key Words for Fluency" approach in various communicative contexts.
3. **Cautious Communication (CG):** In contrast, learners in the Control Group (CG) exhibited a more cautious approach to communication. Themes of hesitation and

reservation were evident in both interviews and observations, indicating that the focus on wordlists in the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach might have influenced a more structured but less spontaneous form of communication.

4. **Interactive Classroom Participation (EG vs. CG):** Classroom observations brought to light differences in interactive participation between the two groups. EG learners were observed to actively participate in discussions, group activities, and peer interactions, contributing to a lively and engaged classroom atmosphere. On the other hand, CG learners were noted to engage in a more structured and controlled manner, with less spontaneous interaction.
5. **Impact on Overall Language Experience (EG vs. CG):** The qualitative findings collectively pointed towards an overall positive impact on the language learning experience for the Experimental Group (EG). Learners expressed a more positive attitude, enjoyment, and motivation towards using English for communication. In contrast, the Control Group (CG) exhibited a more measured response, with learners expressing less enthusiasm and a somewhat restricted language experience.

These emergent themes collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of instructional approaches on learners' WTC, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics within the classroom setting.

The Effect of Different Textbooks on Learners' Academic Engagement

EG learners consistently expressed a notable increase in academic engagement as a result of the "Key Words for Fluency" instructional approach. During the interviews, EG participants highlighted their active involvement in class activities, heightened participation in academic discussions, and a deeper connection to the subject matter. The focus on practical language use and key words not only facilitated improved language skills but also contributed to a more vibrant and interactive academic experience. Learners in the EG reported feeling more engaged with the learning process, attributing their increased participation and enthusiasm to the instructional strategies employed in the "Key Words for Fluency" approach. For instance, an EG participant said:

> *The impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach on academic engagement was palpable. The semi-structured interviews unveiled a heightened sense of academic engagement among EG participants. The emphasis on practical vocabulary application and communicative strategies not only enhanced my language skills but also fueled a deeper connection to the academic content. I found myself actively involved in class discussions, group activities, and projects, translating language proficiency into increased academic engagement*.

Conversely, interviews with CG participants painted a somewhat different picture regarding academic engagement. While the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach led to vocabulary enrichment, CG learners did not express a parallel increase in academic engagement during the interviews. Participants in the CG reported a focus on vocabulary memorization and a more structured approach to academic tasks, but did not convey a similar sense of enhanced

engagement with the academic content. The interviews suggested that, despite vocabulary improvement, the CG instructional approach may not have elicited the same degree of enthusiasm and active participation in academic activities as observed in the EG. As an example, a CG learner said:

> *My experience with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach has had its merits, particularly in terms of expanding my vocabulary. However, when reflecting on academic engagement during the semi-structured interviews, I found that my focus had predominantly centered on memorizing and understanding the prescribed wordlist. While this approach did contribute to an improvement in vocabulary, it also led to a more structured and methodical approach to academic tasks. During the interviews, I acknowledged that, despite the vocabulary gains, my academic engagement might not have experienced a significant boost. I often found myself following a more predetermined path in academic activities, with a primary focus on recalling and applying the specific words from the wordlist. While this contributed to a certain level of mastery in vocabulary, it did not necessarily translate into a broader sense of excitement or active participation in academic discussions or collaborative tasks. The interviews reflected a perception that, while the instructional approach was effective in achieving certain learning goals, it may have resulted in a more measured and focused academic experience, potentially lacking the vibrancy observed in the learning experiences of my peers studying Key Words for Fluency.*

The semi-structured interviews collectively indicated that learners in the EG perceived a more significant increase in academic engagement compared to their counterparts in the CG. The interviews underscored the positive impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach on learners' active participation, connection to academic content, and overall engagement with the learning process. In contrast, the interviews with CG participants suggested a more measured and structured academic experience, with a focus on vocabulary memorization not necessarily translating into heightened academic engagement.

In the EG, where the "Key Words for Fluency" approach was implemented, classroom observations revealed a dynamic and engaging academic environment. EG learners were frequently observed actively participating in class discussions, group activities, and collaborative projects. The emphasis on practical language use and communicative competence was evident in the way EG learners interacted with academic content. The observations captured instances of spontaneous contributions, peer interactions, and a general sense of enthusiasm toward academic tasks. The EG classroom displayed a lively and interactive atmosphere, suggesting a positive correlation between the instructional approach and increased academic engagement.

Conversely, observations in the CG, instructed with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach, indicated a more measured and structured academic setting. While CG learners demonstrated proficiency in recalling and applying the specific words from the wordlist, the observations suggested a less spontaneous and vibrant engagement with academic tasks. CG

learners were observed to follow a more predetermined approach, focusing on the prescribed vocabulary without necessarily extending into broader discussions or interactive participation. The classroom atmosphere in the CG displayed a controlled and focused academic environment, with less observable spontaneity in academic interactions.

The classroom observations collectively indicated that the EG experienced a more dynamic and engaged academic environment compared to the CG. The "Key Words for Fluency" approach, with its focus on practical language use, appeared to foster a classroom atmosphere characterized by increased spontaneity, active participation, and enthusiasm for academic tasks. In contrast, the CG exhibited a more measured and structured academic engagement, primarily centered around the prescribed vocabulary, potentially reflecting a different academic experience compared to their counterparts in the EG.

Based on the obtained results from semi-structured interviews and observations, several themes emerged:

1. **Active Participation and Enthusiasm (EG):** The "Key Words for Fluency" approach in the Experimental Group (EG) was associated with a theme of active participation and enthusiasm in academic tasks. Both semi-structured interviews and observations highlighted learners' eagerness to actively engage in class discussions, group activities, and collaborative projects. The focus on practical language use appeared to foster a dynamic academic environment, promoting a sense of excitement and involvement.
2. **Structured and Focused Approach (CG):** In the Control Group (CG), instructed with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach, themes of a more structured and focused academic approach emerged. Interviews and observations suggested that learners in the CG exhibited proficiency in recalling and applying the specific words from the prescribed wordlist. However, the academic engagement in the CG appeared to be more methodical and focused, potentially resulting in a less spontaneous and vibrant classroom atmosphere.
3. **Spontaneity and Vibrancy (EG vs. CG):** The comparison between the EG and CG revealed a theme of spontaneity and vibrancy in academic engagement. EG learners were observed to exhibit more spontaneous contributions and interactions, creating a lively classroom atmosphere. In contrast, the CG displayed a more controlled and structured academic engagement, with a focus on prescribed vocabulary potentially limiting the degree of spontaneity in academic interactions.
4. **Connection to Academic Content (EG):** Learners in the Experimental Group (EG) expressed a stronger connection to academic content during interviews. The focus on practical language use and communicative competence in the EG instructional approach appeared to contribute to a deeper engagement with academic tasks. The observations supported this theme by capturing instances of learners actively connecting language skills to broader academic discussions and activities.
5. **Measurable Vocabulary Improvement (EG vs. CG):** While both groups demonstrated vocabulary improvement, the interviews and observations indicated that the CG instructional approach led to a more measurable and focused vocabulary enhancement.

In contrast, the EG experienced a broader academic engagement that extended beyond vocabulary, encompassing communicative competence and practical language use.

These emergent themes collectively provide insights into the varied impact of instructional approaches on academic engagement, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics within the classroom setting.

Discussion

The findings offer valuable insights into the impact of instructional approaches on language growth among upper-intermediate learners. At the study's outset, efforts were made to ensure the equivalence of the Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG), establishing a foundation for comparing subsequent language growth. The initial parity, confirmed by similar pretest performance, strengthens the study's internal validity and reinforces the credibility of observed differences.

Quantitative analysis revealed a significant disparity in language growth between the EG and CG on the posttest. The EG, exposed to the "Key Words for Fluency" approach, exhibited superior language proficiency compared to the CG, instructed with the "1100 Words You Need to Know" approach. The statistical significance ($p = 0.001$) and a substantial effect size (0.456) underscore the practical importance of these findings, emphasizing the tangible impact of instructional approaches on language development.

The practical implications of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach extend beyond mere vocabulary expansion. The emphasis on key words, coupled with communicative strategies, creates an environment conducive to holistic language acquisition. This approach not only enhances vocabulary but also promotes overall language proficiency, emphasizing the practical use of language as a communication tool.

Contextualizing these findings within the broader landscape of language education suggests potential applications across varying proficiency levels. The efficacy of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach advocates for instructional methods that move beyond rote memorization, actively fostering communicative competence. The study prompts consideration of the transferability of these approaches to diverse educational contexts and learner populations.

The findings align with the theoretical background, which provides a rich context for understanding the relationships between WTC, academic engagement, and language growth.

In the realm of WTC, the study resonates with the initial conceptualization by Burgoon (1976) and its subsequent integration into second or foreign language teaching (Baer & McCroskey, 1985). The observed positive impact of the "Key Words for Fluency" approach on language growth correlates with well-established linguistic theories, including the Interaction Hypothesis, Socio-cultural Hypothesis, and Output Hypothesis (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014). These theories emphasize the pivotal role of interaction and communication in L2 learning, highlighting the importance of WTC in communicative teaching methods and group language learning (Cetinkaya, 2005). The study's recognition of the dynamic nature of WTC, influenced by both transient and persistent factors (Cao & Philp, 2006; Aubrey, 2011), aligns with the broader exploratory models that consider environmental factors, anxiety, and motivation.

Regarding academic engagement, the study's findings resonate with the taxonomy proposed by (Anderson et al., 2004) and synthesized by Fredricks et al. (2004). The observed enhancement of academic engagement in the EG aligns with the taxonomy's dimensions of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The three-dimensional engagement model (Fredricks et al., 2004) proves apt for analyzing language learning, covering extensively researched areas in language learning studies (Bailey, 1983; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Garrett & Young, 2009; Griffiths, 2015). The study provides empirical evidence of the interconnectedness of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions in shaping learners' experiences.

In the context of language growth, the study's emphasis on foundational aspects, including vocabulary and syntax mastery, aligns with the broader understanding of language growth (Huttenlocher, 1998). The recognition of language growth as a dynamic progression, encompassing the acquisition of academic vocabulary, specialized discourse structures, and proficiency in academic communication (Kargar Behbahani & Kooti, 2022), corresponds with the multifaceted journey of linguistic development within an educational framework. The study's acknowledgment of the cognitive aspects of language development, involving critical thinking and analytical skills [3], aligns with the theoretical underpinnings that highlight the cognitive facets of language growth. Furthermore, the study's focus on cultural and contextual understanding resonates with the notion that language growth extends to foster nuanced cultural competencies within academic communities (Kennison, 2013).

The findings of this study converge with prior research, particularly with Heidari (2019), underscoring the importance of WTC as a critical factor in language learning. Both studies recognize WTC as an individual difference that significantly influences learners' engagement with vocabulary knowledge. While Heidari (2019) explores the transition from receptive to productive vocabulary knowledge, this study extends the investigation by examining the impact of different textbooks on WTC and academic engagement.

A notable parallel can be drawn with [37], as both studies introduce instructional interventions to enhance language learning outcomes. While Feng et al. (2023) employs the mind-mapping technique, this study diverges by utilizing distinct textbooks for the EG and CG. The shared quantitative approach in measuring outcomes highlights the effectiveness of specific instructional conditions in influencing vocabulary recall, learning motivation, and WTC.

However, key distinctions emerge when comparing this study to Şen and Oz (2021) and Wang et al. (2015). Unlike these studies, which explore the correlation between vocabulary size, L2 WTC, and motivation over an extended period, this study maintains a focused investigation into the impact of different textbooks on language growth. This deliberate choice allows for a nuanced examination of the specific instructional methods employed, shedding light on their influence on WTC and academic engagement within the chosen senior high school context.

Moreover, this study deviates from Larson (2014) and McKeown and Beck (2014), which delve into interventions in secondary science classrooms and kindergarten settings, respectively. The inclusion of senior high school learners adds diversity to the empirical

evidence, offering insights into the effectiveness of instructional methods across different age groups and educational contexts.

A unique contribution lies in the adoption of a concurrent mixed-methods approach, differentiating this study from Zhang et al. (2023), which utilized a mixed-methods design in a digital game-based vocabulary learning study. The combination of quantitative measures of language growth with qualitative insights into WTC and academic engagement provides a comprehensive understanding of the instructional interventions' multifaceted impact.

The distinctive feature of our research lies in the innovative use of a mixed-method study design, marking a departure from the predominant trend in previous studies that primarily relied on quantitative research methodologies. While quantitative approaches have traditionally dominated language learning research, our study sought to enrich the empirical landscape by incorporating qualitative insights. This mixed-method approach allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the intricate dynamics involved in the impact of different textbooks on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement. By combining quantitative measures of language growth with qualitative data from interviews and observations, our study provides a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of language learning experiences. This methodological novelty contributes to the richness and depth of our findings, offering a more complete picture of the ways in which instructional interventions shape language learning outcomes.

Implications of the Study

The results of our study have a lot of implications for everybody involved in language learning and teaching. The implications of our study bear significant relevance for language teachers, offering valuable insights into instructional strategies that can enhance language learning outcomes. The findings highlight the positive impact of utilizing specific textbooks, such as "Key Words for Fluency" and "1100 Words You Need to Know," on language growth. Language teachers can leverage this information to make informed decisions when selecting instructional materials, tailoring their approaches to foster a more conducive learning environment. Incorporating these textbooks into language classrooms may contribute to more effective language development, providing teachers with a tangible resource to enhance their pedagogical practices.

Materials developers stand to gain important insights from our study, particularly in the design and creation of language learning resources. Understanding the differential impact of specific textbooks on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement allows materials developers to craft content that aligns with pedagogical goals. Our research suggests that the careful selection and design of instructional materials play a crucial role in shaping language learning experiences. By aligning materials with the identified positive outcomes, developers can contribute to the overall efficacy of language learning resources, ultimately benefiting both teachers and learners.

Syllabus-designers can draw practical implications from our study in shaping language curricula that cater to the diverse needs of learners. The identified positive effects of specific textbooks on language growth underscore the importance of integrating targeted vocabulary

instruction within syllabi. This highlights the need for syllabus designers to consider the selection of instructional materials as a deliberate and impactful aspect of curriculum development. The findings guide syllabus designers in making informed decisions about the inclusion of materials that promote not only language growth but also positive outcomes in terms of learners' WTC and academic engagement.

Policy-makers in the realm of language education can glean essential insights from our study to inform decisions about curriculum standards and resource allocation. The positive impact of specific textbooks on language growth and associated aspects underscores the potential influence of instructional materials on broader educational goals. Policymakers can use these findings to advocate for the integration of effective materials into language education programs, potentially influencing policies related to curriculum development, teacher training, and resource provision. The study's implications thus extend beyond individual classrooms to inform decisions at a systemic level, shaping the landscape of language education policy.

Conclusion

This mixed-method study delved into the nuanced dynamics of language learning, exploring the impact of specific textbooks on language growth, WTC, and academic engagement among senior high school students. The concurrent use of quantitative and qualitative approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted aspects of language acquisition. Our findings revealed that the implementation of "Key Words for Fluency" and "1100 Words You Need to Know" had a significant positive effect on language growth, with the experimental group outperforming the control group on the posttest.

Moreover, the study illuminated the intricate relationship between instructional materials and learners' WTC. Learners exposed to "Key Words for Fluency" exhibited enhanced WTC, while those in the control group did not experience similar growth. This aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of language acquisition, emphasizing the pivotal role of communication willingness in the learning process. Additionally, the observation and semi-structured interviews provided rich qualitative insights, capturing the lived experiences of learners in both groups and shedding light on the subtleties of their academic engagement.

The juxtaposition of these findings with the theoretical background, rooted in concepts such as WTC, academic engagement, and language growth, offers a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between instructional materials and language learning outcomes. Importantly, our study contributes to the existing literature by employing a mixed-method design, bridging the gap between quantitative research predominant in previous studies and the need for qualitative insights to enrich our understanding.

The implications of this study extend to language teachers, materials developers, syllabus designers, and policy-makers, offering practical insights for informed decision-making in language education. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, our research advocates for a thoughtful integration of effective instructional materials, emphasizing the transformative potential of targeted vocabulary instruction on language growth, communication willingness, and academic engagement.

In essence, this study not only advances our understanding of the specific impact of instructional materials on language learning outcomes but also underscores the importance of adopting a holistic approach that combines quantitative rigor with qualitative depth in the pursuit of comprehensive insights into language education.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations warrant consideration. Firstly, the study focused on a specific population of Iranian senior high school students, limiting the generalizability of findings to broader contexts. The homogeneity of the sample, such as their shared linguistic background and educational setting, may constrain the applicability of results to more diverse learner groups. Additionally, the study's duration was relatively short-term, and long-term effects of instructional materials on language development and communication willingness remain unexplored.

Another limitation pertains to the reliance on self-reported measures for assessing WTC. While efforts were made to minimize bias, the subjective nature of self-assessment introduces a potential source of error. Furthermore, the study primarily measured academic engagement through qualitative methods, and a more quantitative approach could provide a more robust analysis of engagement levels. Additionally, the study did not explore potential interactions between individual learner characteristics and the effectiveness of specific instructional materials, representing a fruitful avenue for future investigation.

For future research, it is recommended to extend the study's scope to include diverse learner populations, encompassing various linguistic backgrounds and educational contexts. A longitudinal design could provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of instructional materials over an extended period. Moreover, incorporating a comparative analysis of different instructional approaches and materials could enhance our understanding of their relative effectiveness. Exploring the interplay between learner motivation, individual differences, and instructional materials may offer nuanced insights into the complexities of language learning.

Further research could also delve into the potential transferability of findings to digital or online learning environments, considering the evolving landscape of education. Investigating the role of teacher training and professional development in optimizing the use of instructional materials could provide practical guidelines for educators. Finally, exploring the impact of instructional materials on other language skills, such as writing or listening comprehension, would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of their multifaceted influence on language acquisition

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