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Effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in Afghan EFL classrooms

Sayeed Asif Akramy^{*} , Abdul Qawi Noori[†] , Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan[†] and Aminuddin Hashemi[†]

*Correspondence:
asifakramy2013@gmail.com

English Department, Takhar
University, Taloqan, Afghanistan

Abstract

The present study investigated effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting. It also attempts to determine the impacts of the participants' demographic profile (i.e., gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences) on their responses. The data were collected from 93 randomly selected English teachers through a questionnaire containing 25 items. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was employed to analyze the data. To answer the research questions, descriptive and inferential statistics (independent sample *T*-test and one-way ANOVA tests) were used. The findings revealed that the overall attitude of Afghan EFL instructors towards applying effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting is positive. The respondents also reported that they warmly welcomed the techniques which led students to enhance their motivation for learning English vocabulary. Moreover, the study revealed that the participants' gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences had a significant impact on their responses.

Keywords: Afghan EFL teachers, Teaching strategy, Vocabulary, Techniques, Classroom

Introduction

Learning vocabulary is an essential part of language teaching. How the vocabulary may have to be learned and acquired in a foreign language context is a question which needs further research (Folse, 2004; Hukom, 2021; Hunt & Beglar, 2005). For this reason, teaching vocabulary has recently become an important topic for many EFL practitioners all around the globe (Calderon et al., 2005; Cheung & Slavin, 2005; Folse, 2006; Lee & Muncie, 2006). Namaziandost et al (2020) asserted that vocabulary helped learners improve their four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Furthermore, there will be a big obstacle to learning a language when the students have lack of vocabulary knowledge. That is, establishing a better communication in a language classroom is due to knowing a limited number of vocabularies. The more learners acquire vocabulary, the more interactive the learners can be. Consequently, the techniques and strategies of teaching help both teachers and learners to better work on their teaching and learning process (Akramy, 2022).

Learners may have to use various strategies and techniques to overcome their language problems comfortably (Zhelyazova, 2011). What is more, teachers are also responsible

to ensure the success of acquisition among the learners in a particular teaching context. This is because learners are always looking for helpful ways to receive vocabulary instruction (Barcroft, 2004). In most cases, learning vocabulary depends not only on how learners learn, but also how they are taught. As a result, many practitioners have come out with teaching and learning principles and techniques for their learners and teachers to teach and learn vocabulary properly. Of all the techniques and strategies of teaching vocabulary, a few of them have been found helpful and useful for both teachers and learners (Richards & Renandy, 2008), which are discussed in the literature review.

Relating this to the Afghan teaching context, the teachers usually make use of the teacher-centered approach while teaching vocabulary to their students (Akramy, 2021; Orfan et al., 2021a, 2021b). It can be accounted for by the fact that Afghanistan has gone through decades of conflicts, which has greatly affected its educational system (Akramy, 2020; Noori, 2021; Orfan, 2022). Moreover, EFL instructors are not required to have TEFL/TESL certificate when they embark on teaching English. An individual learning English for a year or so can start teaching English in an English language center. Furthermore, EFL instructors hired by higher education institutions receive little or no training workshop on how to teach English, which results in their adoption of traditional methods in teaching English particularly vocabulary.

Purpose of the study

The present study aims to investigate effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting. It also attempts to determine the impacts of the participants' demographic profile (i.e., gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences) on their responses.

1. What are the Afghan EFL teachers' perspectives of teaching vocabulary?
2. To what extent Afghan learners improve their range of vocabulary through playing games in the class?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences between participants' responses by their gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences?

Literature review

Amiryousufi and Dastjerdi (2010) stated that learning vocabulary helps to determine how much proficiency a learner has in an oral context. That is to say, it is an essential component to determine how much a student is able to communicate successfully. Students have to overcome lack of vocabulary knowledge in order to communicate effectively. Moreover, Pan and Xu (2011) reported that language of human beings is something related to learning a wide range of vocabulary which consists of three main parts, i.e., pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Grammar provides the overall patterns, and the vocabulary is the basic material to put into the patterns because the learners cannot produce even a sentence without knowing vocabulary. Additionally, Pan and Xu (2011) and Noori et al (2022) stated that knowing and learning a limited range of grammar structures enables learners to convey the target message well, but knowing less number of words prevent them from expressing themselves freely. It would also be

impossible for learners to convey what they have in mind properly. Students' abilities, thus, in listening, speaking, reading, and writing are more emphasized and influenced by vocabulary teaching process because it is teachers who can focus on giving effective and purposeful instruction to students to help them extend their range of vocabulary as to communicate successfully. However, the focus of the instruction is not always on the vocabulary learning process (Akramy, 2021).

Another helpful issue in teaching vocabulary is visual aids. Visual aids are a powerful tool for teaching vocabulary to students in an explicit way. The Multiple Intelligence Theories suggested some different types of intelligences. One of them is visual or spatial intelligence. In such kind of intelligence, the students are good enough at visualizing and are mentally able to learn objects. Moreover, they also have the capacity of learning more visuals pertaining to words (Faraj, 2015; Zheng, 2012). Learners of language with this spatial intelligence have a very good sense of guiding and direction. They can direct and coordinate things in a very proper way. Such types of students can think, observe, and mentally understand things even the world community from the pictures, images, and charts very well.

In addition to mentioning visual aids as an effective technique of teaching vocabulary, flashcards are also very helpful in learning new words. A flashcard is a cardboard consisting of a word, a sentence, or a simple picture on it (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2011). Furthermore, in these cards the words are usually written with a capital letter to help the learners to read the words easily and comfortably. There are more students sitting in the front and back of the class. If the words are with small letters, they will not be visible to all in the class. In one face of the flashcards, the target words are written while the meaning and translation of the words may be expected to be on the other side of the cards (Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012).

Another effective technique of teaching vocabulary to students is lexical inferences. When learners encounter new words, they may possibly establish connections using their knowledge sources and try hard to interpret the target words using different tricks and ways such as interlingual, morphological, grammatical, semantic, and rhetorical cues and make inferences of their meanings (Schmitt, 2010; Schmitt et al., 2011). Wessels (2011) also mentioned that learning new words through lexical items is the only best possible way to close learners to success.

A number of studies carried out to investigate the effects of using games on teaching vocabulary. For example, charades game sometimes called a pantomime game where the learners have to guess words from their peers in the classroom (Bafadal & Humaira, 2019; Farqi, 2014). When teachers use this game, they divide the class into two teams and have one person from each team select a piece of paper and act out the word. The teams may have to guess the correct word before the appointed time finishes. For each correct word, the team may receive a point. If the points of a team reach to ten, the team is announced winner. This game can also help students to remember the words easily and it is a helpful game which motivates learners to get involved in classroom activity more than they think (Lutfah, 2019). Moreover, this game has been employed in teaching vocabulary for senior school students, particularly when the students are about to start their lesson. In the absence of a useful warm-up activity, this game can be used to get students interested in the lesson (Astutik & Rahmah, 2020; Sari & Chairani, 2017).

Their findings also indicated that students found this game positive and helpful for their vocabulary learning.

Pictionary is another effective game in English learning vocabulary (Karam, 2013). When this game is conducted by teachers, the class will be divided into two teams and create a small column for each team on one side of the board. The teacher will record the points here. One student from one of the teams will come in front of the class and use picture based guessing word. The students in another team will guess to find the word to display their knowledge. That is to say, Darmawan and Fatmawati (2019) reported that Pictionary game is a game in which students involve in guessing words from drawing. This game requires learners to work in two different teams and each of them takes a turn to be the artist. Furthermore, Pictionary game helps students to increase their motivation in learning and the inactive students may get interested in the lesson after playing this game (Kartini & Kareviati, 2021).

Moreover, vocabulary bingo game is the third game which is widely used by teachers in EFL settings. This technique of teaching vocabulary provides an opportunity for students to self-assess their progress and for a teacher to assess students' progress informally without any stress or anxiety (Kavaliauskienė, 2000). Furthermore, this game consists of game cards, bingo markers and vocabulary cards pocket. On the game cards, there are pictures of words, vegetable, and fruits with their names. There should be at least nine words on each game card with their pictures. When it comes to the bingo markers, there are small pieces of papers for students to put on the game cards and one of the students announces the words to the class. A small picture of the sun is used as a marker. A word from the first language of the students will be announced and it will then be told by another student using English (Silsupur, 2017).

Unlike using games in teaching vocabulary, students can easily learn words through songs, movies and videos. A study conducted by Apriliyani (2021) whose findings indicated that students had a positive attitude towards songs and movies. The participants reported that songs and movies helped them learn pronunciation of the words. They also believed that they could remember words for longer. The researchers argued that this could be accounted by the fact that the learners saw heard the words multiple times and saw the events or actions conveyed by the words. Similarly, to encourage students to take part in language learning process, they were often given assignment to watch videos and listen to audios and to list the words (Peters, 2018; Peters et al., 2019; Vu & Peters, 2021). In Peters' studies, the learners were assigned to have a reasonable performance in the class. This way, students not only learned the target words from the class, but they could also learn a remarkable number of other English words outside their classroom.

In the long run, few studies conducted concerning teaching vocabulary in Afghan context. For example, a study carried out about Afghan EFL students' difficulties and strategies in learning and understanding English idioms and phrases by Orfan (2020), who reported the impact of students' gender and first language in his study. The findings of the study indicated no significant impact on students' attitudes towards learning English vocabulary, idioms, and phrases. Another study carried out by Hashemi (2021) who investigated the effects of using games on teaching vocabulary in reading comprehension. He found in his study that teaching vocabulary in reading comprehension can help students in their skills. The study also reported that students can take responsibility

when they are taught vocabulary through reading comprehension. Moreover, the study showed that there has been no significant influence on students' attitudes toward learning English vocabulary in terms of their gender and first language.

Method

Research design

The design of the current study is quantitative. A survey questionnaire with 25 items were used to collect data for the study. Furthermore, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data. The authors used descriptive statistics to determine frequency and percentage of the data.

Participants

The respondents of the study were 93 instructors who were teaching English at public and private higher education institutions based in Taloqan, a northeastern city of Afghanistan. Around 22% of the participants were female (see Table 1). The respondents' ages ranged between 20 and 35 years old. The participants of the study were from different languages. 56 (60.2%) of the participants were Dari speakers. Uzbek participants were only 25 (26.9%) while 12 (12.9%) were Pashto. Moreover, the participants had 1–15 years of teaching experiences in their home institutions.

Data collection instrument

The researchers designed the questionnaire through reviewing the literature. The questionnaire items were adopted from other studies (i.e., Ismail et al., 2017; Lockhart, 2015; Tavakoli & Gerami, 2013; Zabidin, 2015). The questionnaire had three parts. The first part sought the participants' demographic profile on teaching vocabulary including

Table 1 The respondents' demographic profile

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	73	78.5
Female	20	21.5
Total	93	100.0
<i>Age</i>		
20–25 years	29	31.2
26–30 years	25	26.9
31–35 years	39	41.9
Total	93	100.0
<i>First language</i>		
Dari	56	60.2
Uzbek	25	26.9
Pashto	12	12.9
Total	93	100.0
<i>Teaching experiences</i>		
1–5 years	41	44.1
6–10 years	42	45.2
11–15 years	10	10.8
Total	93	100.0

gender. The second part with 17 items sought the participants' response about effective techniques of teaching vocabulary (i.e., visual aids, lexical items, and using games). The last section with 8 items inquired the participants' perception of use of different skills of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting. The respondents were expected to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Data collection procedure

The data were purposefully collected from 93 English teachers who were teaching in both public and private universities in Taluqan City, Takhar, Afghanistan. The procedure of data collection was arranged in two months (November and December of 2021). The questionnaire was designed with a consent letter and it was anonymous because what perspectives the participants shared were confidential and only used for research purposes. The consent letter was prepared to take permission whether the participants were willing to take part in the study or not. The letter also explained the aim and purpose of the study and highlighted the importance of the findings in EFL communities, particularly Afghan EFL community. Answering each item of the questionnaire took only 10–15 min.

Data analysis

After the researchers collected the data, the data were shared with two of our colleagues in the department to check they were completed appropriately. When the colleagues sent their feedback, the researchers analyzed the data through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were conducted to show the frequency, the mean, and the standard deviation of the data. Furthermore, independent sample *T*-test and a one-way ANOVA test were also used to determine the differences between various variables (i.e., gender, age, teaching experience, and first language).

Results

Effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in Afghan language classrooms

Using visual aids in teaching vocabulary

The first six items of the questionnaire investigated that the Afghan EFL teachers conducted a number of activities concerning teaching vocabulary to their students which had visual aspects. Table 2 shows that 78% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed to teach their vocabulary to their student through picture. 88.4% of them accepted to choose color from the fruits and show to their students in the class. The table further clarified that 67.2% of the participants accepted to name different fruits and let their students to identify the colors. 64.5% of them used realia while teaching the target vocabulary as a separate session in the classroom. 79.5% of them were happy to encourage their students to learn the target English words through flashcards while the number of the teachers who used flashcards to teach vocabulary to their students reached to 82%.

Teaching vocabulary through lexical categories

The second six items of the questionnaire determined teaching vocabulary through lexical categories. Table 3 indicates that the majority of the Afghan teachers strongly agreed

Table 2 Teaching vocabulary through visual aids

No	Items	Frequency and percentage%	
		Strongly agree and agree	Mean
1	I use pictures to teach some vocabulary to students	52 (78%)	2.59
2	For teaching colors, I usually refer to fruits	45 (88.4%)	2.49
3	I name different fruits to allow students identify different types of colors easily	55 (67.2%)	2.57
4	While teaching vocabulary, I use "realia" to show the real objects of the words to students	60 (64.5%)	2.86
5	During teaching, I use flashcards to encourage students to learn the words better	60 (79.5%)	2.81
6	I use flashcards in the class because flashcards make the class fun to students	66 (82%)	2.86

Table 3 Teaching vocabulary through lexical categories

No	Items	Frequency and percentage%	
		Strongly agree and agree	Mean
7	I explain the verbs as target words with their past and past participle	89 (95.7%)	3.38
8	While teaching vocabulary, I provide examples to from past, present and future tenses	87 (93.5%)	3.58
9	I teach different classes of words, i.e., homophones and homographs	60 (64.6%)	2.72
10	While teaching vocabulary, I explain each word's parts of speech, (e.g., noun or verb) to students	88 (94.6%)	3.25
11	While teaching words, I often draw a timeline and make examples	76 (81.7%)	3.00
12	I ask students to practice the given words with examples in the past, present and future forms (e.g., she waits for the bus.)	80 (86%)	3.12

and agreed to use the lexical items of the language in the classroom. 95.7% of them accepted to explain the verbs as target vocabulary with their past and past participle. 93.5% of the participants were keen to make examples for each target vocabulary in the past, present and future forms. 64.6 of them taught vocabulary through homophones (word pronounced as another word with different spelling and meaning) and homographs (word that spelt like another word with different meaning and pronunciation). Furthermore, 96.6% of the Afghan EFL teachers accepted to teach the target vocabulary through different forms, (i.e., nouns, verbs, and adjectives). 81.7% of the participants drew timelines on the board while teaching vocabulary to their students while 86% of them used the target words in different tenses through the timelines they drew on the board.

Using games in teaching vocabulary

Items 13–17 confirmed that Afghan EFL teachers played five different games to teach the target vocabulary in their home institutions. Table 4 shows that 92.5% of the participants strongly agreed and agreed that they played the game Charades to teach the target vocabulary to their students in their language classrooms. 88.2% of them accepted to play the taboo words to help their students find synonyms and describe pertaining

Table 4 Using games while teaching vocabulary

No	Items	Frequency and percentage%	
		Strongly agree and agree	Mean
13	I engage the learners' minds both inside and outside the classroom to learn the words through context	86 (92.5%)	3.31
14	I often teach the target vocabulary through songs, videos and movies	82 (88.2%)	3.38
15	While teaching vocabulary, I use the MPF technique while playing the Charades game	84 (90.4%)	3.29
16	I teach my students vocabulary while I use the board game	82 (88.2%)	3.25
17	I engage students in games to practice the vocabulary in the class	70 (75.2%)	3.01

Table 5 Teachers' perception of use of different techniques of teaching vocabulary

No	Items	Frequency and percentage%	
		Strongly agree and agree	Mean
18	I teach vocabulary to students from the textbook and syllabus	91 (97.8%)	3.19
19	I teach words that can be applied into different contexts	86 (92.5%)	3.18
20	I drill the words as to help students understand and get the meaning of the words	82 (91.4%)	3.27
21	I use dictionary to show the parts of speech of the words in the class	54 (58.1%)	2.57
22	I teach simple and clear words without any complicated explanations	71 (76.4%)	2.96
23	During teaching vocabulary, I use both oral and written presentation	78 (83.9%)	3.18
24	I pay more attention to the words, which are difficult to learn	79 (85%)	3.22
25	I pay more attention to the words which are already in use in the community	51 (54.8%)	2.59

to the target vocabulary. The table further clarified that 90.4% of the teachers employed the bingo game in their classroom to help the learners learn how to win a competition. Only 88.2% of the participants were in support of Pictionary game to follow it in their language classrooms. They believed that this game can thrill students because they are looking for their actual and favorite words on the whiteboard or chalkboard.

Teachers' perception of use of different techniques of teaching vocabulary

The last eight statements of the questionnaire investigated the teachers' perception towards different teaching techniques in the class. Table 5 indicates that 97.8% of Afghan EFL teachers taught English words through textbooks and syllabi incorporated with skills of language. 92.5% of them, while teaching the target words, they tried to relate them with different context to help the learners use the words differently. 91.4% of the participants in the study reported that they drilled the words to their students to help them understand and get the actual meanings of the words. Moreover, only 58.1% of the teachers used dictionary to teach their students to identify the different forms of the words. The Table also shows that 76.4% of the participants accepted to select very simple words while teaching to their students. In case of need, they were also giving some small explanation regarding each target vocabulary to their students. 83.9% of the participants

Table 6 Descriptive statistics (gender)

Variable		N	Mean	SD	SE mean
Gender	Male	73	3.0329	.29637	.03469
	Female	20	2.9960	.48383	.10819

Table 7 Independent sample *T*-test (gender)

Levene's test		t-test for equality of means					
F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
17.516	.010	.425	91	.672	.03688	-.13561	.20936
.325		23.043		.748	.03688	-.19812	.27188

reported that they taught the vocabulary orally and sometimes used the written presentation to help their learners follow the same as teachers did. Finally, the table indicates that 85% of Afghan teachers paid more attention to those words which seemed difficult to both learners and teachers and only 54.8% of them focused on those words which were already in use in the community.

Demographic profile of the participants

There are a number of other factors in the demographic profile of the participants that the authors attempt to describe. The factors are, i.e., gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences of the participants.

Gender

To determine the impact of gender on participants' attitudes towards techniques of teaching vocabulary in Afghan EFL setting, descriptive statistics and independent sample *T*-test were conducted. Table 6 shows that the overall mean of male participants is 3.0329 (SD=0.29637) and overall mean score for the female participants is 2.9960 (SD=0.48383). The Table also describe that the difference between male and female participants is only (0.18746), which indicates that there is not any important difference between the two groups. Furthermore, an independent sample *T*-test was also conducted, (see Table 7), which shows that the *p*-value in both leven's test (17.516) and *t*-test (0.425) is greater than the alpha level (0.05). It can be concluded that there is not an important difference between male and female teachers' perceptions towards techniques of teaching vocabulary in Afghan EFL classrooms.

Age

An ANOVA test was conducted, (see Table 8). It thus shows that the *p*-value in the three groups (20–25, 26–30, and 31–35 years old) is 0.481 (F=0.738), which is greater than the alpha level. It can be concluded that the age of the participants in three different categories influenced their attitudes towards the techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL classroom.

Table 8 ANOVA tests (age, first language, and teaching experiences)

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
<i>Age</i>					
Between groups	.174	2	.087	.738	.481
Within groups	10.619	90	.118		
Total	10.793	92			
<i>First language</i>					
Between groups	.332	2	.166	1.430	.245
Within groups	10.461	90	.116		
Total	10.793	92			
<i>Teaching experience</i>					
Between groups	.254	2	.127	1.086	.342
Within groups	10.539	90	.117		
Total	10.793	92			

First language

In Table 8, the ANOVA test was analyzed to determine whether there are differences among the group variables (Dari, Pashto, and Uzbeki). The p -value in terms of the participants' first languages is 0.245 ($F = 1.430$) which indicates a very less important difference among the groups.

Teaching experience

In Table 8, the test also indicates that the p -value in the three categories (1–5, 6–10, and 11–15) of teaching experience of the participants is 0.342 ($F = 1.086$) which resulted in a less important difference among the group factors.

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting. It also attempted to determine the impacts of the participants' demographic profile (i.e., gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences) on their responses. To assess each participant's responses, descriptive statistics, ANOVA tests along with an independent sample T -test were conducted. The results of the study thus confirmed that the participants used a number of games (i.e., charades game, Pictionary game, and bingo words game) in their classroom to teach vocabulary to their students and believed that the games were much helpful to learners, particularly to those students who were passive. The finding is in line with the results of the studies carried out by Dwi (2017), Kartini and Kareviati (2021), Astutik and Rahmah (2020), who investigated using different games in EFL teaching classrooms. Their studies reported that using games like charades, Pictionary, and bingo words became more exciting and made learners enjoy the lessons. The studies further stated that by playing Pictionary game the learners got motivated and engaged in classroom participation actively. Astutik's and Rahmah's (2020) study showed that the students' motivation, ability, and cognitive understanding in language acquisition improved

after the charades game was implemented and used in the class. The participants of their study were very excited to write and speak in English.

Moreover, the participants of the study reported that they taught vocabulary to their students through visual aids like pictures, drawing, fruits, and real objects. The study also showed that the participants linked the vocabulary to the past experiences and showed the objects (realia) to the students when they were available. This finding is in support of the study conducted by Ismail et al. (2017), who reported that teachers used materials like real objects while teaching vocabulary to students. The study further showed that teachers related the target English words to the past experiences to depict the connection between new words and their meaning. Also, the current study revealed that the participants learn both the target vocabulary and some other words which represent the homographs and homophones. It means, teachers, while teaching vocabulary, teach the synonyms, the words that have the same spelling but with different meanings, and the words with the same sound but with different spelling to consolidate the participants' understanding in terms of lexical items of each word. This finding is corroborated by a study conducted by Tavakoli and Gerami (2013), who investigated how two different mnemonic non-verbal approaches and pictorial method to teaching lexical items affect learning and retention of vocabulary in an EFL setting.

The study also revealed that the respondents had a positive attitude towards the definitions of each words that their teachers give while teaching vocabulary. The finding is in line with the results of the study conducted by Dakhi and Fitria (2019), who reported that the participants required more information when they were being taught the vocabulary. He reported that the respondents of the study had strong attitudes towards receiving more information about the target vocabulary being taught by their teacher. However, the findings contradict those of the studies carried out by Basal et al. (2016) and Nation (2001), who investigated in their studies that the respondents were feeling bored when their teachers were explaining the vocabulary in terms of definition, lexical items of the words, and any other extra information.

In addition, the results of the study yielded that teachers of English had positive attitudes towards effective ways and techniques in teaching vocabulary by their gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences. There were also remarkable differences among the group factors in terms of first language and teaching experiences of the participants. Regarding these findings, the authors reviewed many studies and found no studies to be consistent with their findings. There is only one study from Orfan (2020), who reported that gender and first language did not have a significant impact on students' attitudes towards idiom learning and the use of strategies for learning and understanding idioms. The participants' attitudes towards effective principles of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting by their teaching experiences affected their language learning process. For example, after applying a wide range of effective techniques of teaching vocabulary, there have been many positive changes not only in teachers' teaching process but also in students learning process. The teachers even expressed their happiness from their students that they became active learners. The students not only participated actively in teaching classroom activities but they also became more creative when they were outside the classroom.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate effective techniques of teaching vocabulary in an Afghan EFL setting. It also attempted to determine the impacts of the participants' demographic profile (i.e., gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences) on their responses. The findings of the study showed that the majority of the participants use different games in their teaching classroom. They believed that games not only motivate students to take part in classroom activities but they also help the passive learners to be active. Visual aids another type of teaching vocabulary technique was welcomed by Afghan teachers as well. They thought that pictures, drawings, flashcards and those things which have pictorial aspects can help the learning and teaching go well. Besides applying the above key techniques, there were a number of effective and different teaching techniques for delivering English training, particularly vocabulary teaching were also used by Afghan EFL teachers and they expressed their interests in them. Furthermore, the study showed that gender, age, first language, and teaching experiences affected the participants' responses positively.

The results obtained from the study proposed a number of implications which could possibly be effective and helpful for English language practitioners, teachers and students in Afghan EFL context. The first implication is a call for all language teachers and researchers in a language teaching context to pay careful attention to L2 teaching vocabulary techniques. The results may motivate and encourage teachers who are still following the traditional teaching techniques in their teaching process. The results may also be effective for all university teachers who often lack skills and information of using effective vocabulary teaching techniques. Another implication in this study is to request EFL teachers to incorporate appropriate and practical principles for instructing their students in terms of teaching English vocabulary in their home institution. The Afghan EFL teachers would also be informed of the great and effective vocabulary teaching techniques and would also increase their positive attitudes towards the incorporation of effective and helpful teaching vocabulary techniques. In addition, the syllabus designers and textbook developers will also benefit from the findings of the study. They will be introduced with effective vocabulary teaching techniques as to enable them to develop and design their teaching materials in accordance to the level of their students' understanding.

Abbreviations

SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
M. Ed. TESOL	Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
SD	Standard Deviation
SD	Strongly Disagree
D	Disagree
U	Undecided
A	Agree
SA	Strongly Agree

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Author contributions

All authors designed the questionnaire of the study and gave to four experts for revision. SAA wrote the introduction along with the literature review sections. AH spread the questionnaire to offices through online form and papers to let the participants participate in the study and share their ideas. AQN and SAA participated in the design of the study and performed the statistical analysis. All four authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Authors' information

Sayeed Asif Akramy is a senior lecturer at Takhar University, Taloqan, Takhar, Afghanistan. He teaches linguistics, research, teaching methodologies, and study skills. He has Master's degree in the field of M. Ed. TESOL. He is also one of the British Council certified English teachers. He was a master trainer from 2017 to 2019 at British Council Afghanistan. He has been teaching English for eight years in different local and international sectors. He is also one of the civil society members working voluntarily for advocacy, education, and human rights. His areas of research are language attitudes, language learning and teaching, inclusive education, student-centered learning approaches, and online learning.

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Availability of data and materials

The authors do not wish to share the data of the study because in the consent letters the authors promised to the participants that their ideas are only used for the purpose of the research and kept confidential. Their demographic information and the perceptions they shared will not be given to second or third parties.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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