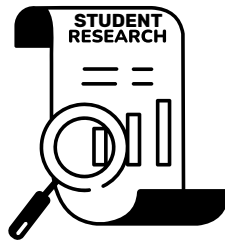


INVESTIGATING THE MOST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES IN MFL FOR RECALL OF VOCABULARY



**HAYA AL MANSOORI
TIZIRI L. AKLI**



مدرسة ديرة الدولية
DEIRA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
FESTIVAL CITY

 Al-Futtaim Education Foundation

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the use of various communicative methods in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) aids students in learning French by improving their recall their memorization of vocabulary. In this study, students practise literacy by completing tasks on Education Perfect that require reading, writing, reading with dictation, listening and writing, and writing alone. The study measures student attainment by checking the number of words they can correctly recall and use to discover which approach helps students remember vocabulary best. In this context, there are precisely 13 students, who mostly get instruction at school with a few outside lessons.

This issue focuses on designing communicative work to enhance learners' MFL vocabulary, which is crucial for developing strong and stable language skills. Many approaches to teaching are available, but it remains uncertain which ones help students remember the most vocabulary, mainly due to the slow growth of students' language outside of classroom work. The objective of this research is to provide helpful guidance for teachers and support improved language learning.

Background of the Problem

This investigation was conducted in a French classroom at an IB and British secondary school by intermediate-level students. It remains challenging to develop methods that enable people to remember new vocabulary over the long-term when communicating in a foreign language. Since students typically receive limited French instruction outside of school, they should strive to learn as much as possible in class. Here, learning new vocabulary is important for both current use of the language and a person's future growth and confidence in the target language. Learners may not develop further if vocabulary teaching methods are not complementary. A weak vocabulary memory can prevent learners from participating in complex language activities, lower their motivation and affect how well they do overall in the subject. Focusing on ways of speaking and writing that emphasise the proper vocabulary can support better learning, boost independent engagement and increase motivation for students and teachers. Because the course is specific and students are at intermediate levels, this research allows for personalised support and observing learner reactions to various teaching strategies which could inform similar classes and cohorts.

Literature Review

Many people agree that knowing and using new vocabulary matters in MFL, but there is still debate between experts regarding the best way to actualize this. Milton and Hopwood (2022) mention that effective methods for establishing the memory of new vocabulary are grounded in research and utilize activities that provide students with opportunities to share and receive information. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking all involve learning in several ways and help people remember new vocabulary more effectively. They found that teaching vocabulary using several different methods is more effective than using only one method for helping students apply the knowledge they have been taught.

Furthermore, Dareys (2021) examines the Interact method, which helps students use the target language in real-life scenarios. This technique aligns with the insights of Atkinson-Ward (2023), who analysed pupil involvement in foreign language conversations in MFL classrooms. He noted that with the increased frequency of communicating in the target language comes better confidence in their abilities and like learning more. Both researchers

emphasise that reading aloud or dictating, followed by writing practice, helps learners remember words more effectively than tasks that only focus on writing. It supports the view that being involved with language, primarily through production, enhances how well people learn.

In addition, Cragg (2023) examines how collaborative learning enables MFL students to develop autonomy and boost confidence. Cragg's emphasis on learning collaboratively in language tasks differs from the direct approaches we have examined, but it demonstrates why language activities should involve students working together. The results suggest that social and interactive ways of learning vocabulary can improve a learner's interest and ability to memorize.

The combination of these external studies exemplifies how MFL teachers should use a variety of activities that encourage students to use and recall new words. They also indicate that teaching approaches should be tailored to actual classroom conditions, which is why this research is investigating the most effective tools for helping intermediate-level French students remember vocabulary.

In fact, there is a lack of research directly evaluating the difference between reading and writing compared to listening and writing in the memory of new vocabulary among intermediate students. Furthermore, research tends to focus on large populations or other languages, leaving little information on French classrooms in schools. To address these issues, this study employs digitalised tasks to empirically investigate various methods of communication with specific learners.

Methods

Action research will be used to investigate the best communicative approaches as it allows for instantaneous feedback and observations from students. The classroom setting will provide us with a well-rounded, varied sample of abilities and levels, as well as authentic results. Students can be asked for their personal opinions, thoughts after the testing of each communicative approach, allowing an idea of whether student engagement is in alignment with results. The goal is to identify the communicative approach(es) that allow for students to learn the vocabulary with the least number of repetitions and the most accuracy.

Methodology

Research will be conducted via the online learning platform Education Perfect (EP) where assignments utilizing different communicative approaches will be completed by students.

Four combinations of communicative approaches will be investigated in the form of homework assignments on EP:

- The 'Reading' and 'Writing' sections on EP - Reading the target language vocabulary then writing target language vocabulary from its English equivalent
- The 'Reading', 'Dictation', and 'Writing' sections on EP - Reading the target language vocabulary, listening to the target language vocabulary and responding in the target language, and then writing target language vocabulary from its English equivalent
- The 'Listening', and 'Writing' sections on EP - Listening to the target language vocabulary and responding with the English equivalent, and then writing the target language vocabulary from its English equivalent

Different vocabulary lists will be assigned for each combination to ensure students are learning vocabulary each time and that results are not affected by the repetition or prior viewing of the words.

Participants

The action research will be conducted with an IB French B class of 13 students of varying skill levels, specifically IB Grade 4 to IB Grade 7.

Data Collection

Data is collected from the online platform Education Perfect which offers data on the number of attempts/ questions answered and the accuracy for each student.

Results

Table 1
Average no. of attempts per section for each communicative approach

STUDENT	READING & WRITING	READING, DICTATION, & WRITING	LISTENING & WRITING
1	134.5	189.7	139
2	105	-	95
3	131.5	-	96.5
4	109.5	-	81.5
5	104.5	167	118
6	88	153	92.5
7	87.5	146.5	110
8	99.5	186	100.5
9	126.5	194	104
10	172	235	210
11	148	236	152
12	130.5	209	122
13	97	-	162.5
AVERAGE	118	143.8	117.6
RANGE	84.5	62.8	128.5

Note: Each approach is counted as a section on EP i.e. for the Reading and Writing results there are two sections so the average of the attempts is taken. “-” indicates when a student has not completed an assignment.

Table 2
Accuracy as a percentage of attempts for each communicative approach

STUDENT	READING & WRITING	READING, DICTATION, & WRITING	LISTENING & WRITING
1	79	85	87
2	94	-	95
3	79	77	89
4	89	-	100
5	88	93	83
6	98	97	96
7	96	96	90
8	91	88	89
9	86	89	88
10	71	81	70
11	75	87	72
12	85	85	70
13	84	-	77
AVERAGE	85.8	87.8	85.1
RANGE	27	20	30

Discussion and Reflections

The study focused on identifying which communicative methods in MFL was the most effective in vocabulary recall among intermediate French students. The data collected from digital tasks reveals that students performed with the highest accuracy on the following tasks: reading, dictation, and writing (R + D + W), with an average score of 87.8% (see **Table 2**). This slightly outperformed only reading and writing (85.8%) and listening and writing (85.1%). Although the variation is only slight, the consistency in the results supports the idea proposed by Milton and Hopwood (2022) that the use of a several different methods enhances vocabulary acquisition more than one method.

The number of attempts per student provides further depth to the results. Students needed more attempts on average to complete L + W tasks (225.8) compared to R + D + W (143.8) (see **Table 1**). This suggests that although listening and writing can produce strong results, it is more demanding. It is notable that some students showed high accuracy and efficiency across all modes, suggesting that some learners achieve higher attainment at internalizing vocabulary regardless of method, possibly due to previous exposure to the vocabulary.

The differences in student performance also shows how no single approach is superior but rather that combining approaches allows for broader learner success. Cragg's (2023) insights into collaborative and interactive learning reinforces the significance of introducing various communicative approaches to complement the dynamic needs of learners.

Prior to this research, written tasks were favoured as the main method of instruction. However, after acknowledging the improvement in the accuracy of the students through integrative tasks it would be best to implement more listening and dictation exercises. Lessons should incorporate all four: approaches: reading, listening, speaking, and writing extensively. Feedback loops should be introduced to allow learners to reflect in performance which is bound to improve metacognitive engagement. Our approach regarding vocabulary recall has shifted from individual and passive to dynamic and experimental. Vocabulary is not about repetition but should be interacted with in varied forms

The structured use of data to analyse learning outcomes is one of the most transferable practices developed during this study. By tracking both accuracy and effort (attempts), we have established a more comprehensive way to assess student progress which could be easily implemented in various subjects, particularly MFL. The research also supports the use of digital platforms not just as supplementary tools, but as core components of instruction.

The study offers a clear model for how empirical methods can be applied to the classroom environment whilst using digital tools. The comparison between the effectivity of different communicative approaches using quantifiable data (accuracy and attempts) is replicable. The research also demonstrates how action research can lead to immediate, relevant pedagogical changes instead of long-term conclusions. Student performance data has shown that not all high-effort students are low-performing.

The ability to iterate quickly based on data is vital in order to refine instruction. Small scale action research can be as impactful as studies conducted on a large scale as they have the ability to respond directly to classroom challenges.

Conclusion

In summary, the combination of different communicative approaches is a powerful learning tool in language learning. As per the findings, each approach leads to a small difference in the average class difference, despite one approach demanding three sections to be completed instead of two. The reading, dictation, and writing combination only gave approximately a 2 percent increase in average accuracy, showing how assigning students homework assignments requiring more time and effort to complete necessarily leads to better recall and learning. Both the Reading & Writing combination and the Listening & Writing combination produce essentially the same accuracies and average number of attempts. The use of these two combinations is advised but could benefit teaching goals differently when applied. For example, the Listening & Writing combination could be favoured if students have an upcoming listening test, allowing them to easily learn new vocabulary while practicing exam skills.

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