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Students' Attitude Towards The Use Of Three eTools Compared To The Practices Provided In Course Books, by Edin Omerovic

Abstract: *Many foreign language teachers and researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important, if not the most important component in learning a foreign language. With that in mind, finding and creating ways on how to efficiently help learners acquire vocabulary is no small task. Do learners think they benefit more from traditional book-based practices, or do they consider more interactive ways of vocabulary practices to be more effective? That is what this action-based research is set to analyze; students' reaction to the use of three different classroom eTools: **Kahoot!**, **Quizlet**, and **Socrative** compared to the practices provided in the course books for the purpose of revising vocabulary related to the unit topics and to check whether these boost students' motivation to learn, and whether students take these type of practices serious (i.e., whether students consider them to be productive and efficient).*

Keywords: vocabulary, interactive classroom tools, motivation, benefit, enjoyment

Introduction

The importance of successfully acquiring new vocabulary is something that most ESL and EFL teachers and instructors will emphasize when advising second language learners on how to become better users of the target language. Wilkins (1972) stated, "Without *grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.*" Similarly, Alqahtani (2015) stated that there was not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one was not to get the vocabulary that needed to convey what one wishes to say. While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.

That should not be a struggle considering all the developments and research in the field of language learning with which EFL and ESL teachers now have a great variety of methods and ways of how to present and practice vocabulary with learners. That should make the process of vocabulary acquisition quite simple, but in practice, many teachers will agree that it is not that facile. Choosing the most effective method or way to present and practice vocabulary has become a tedious responsibility and toil. "Many students

consider learning vocabulary (as) a tedious job . . . (and) start blaming their poor memory . . . They come to rely on incidental learning; finding individual studying boring and insufficient” (Gnoinska, 1998, p.12)

That is where the question arises on what factors teachers should take into account when coming up with vocabulary practices? If one asked learners, which in fact should be the case because they are the ones who are supposed to acquire new knowledge and who teachers and researchers work for, they would argue that practices should be fun and interesting. As for teachers, the case might be a bit different because teachers want the practices to be as efficient as possible. Teachers do not necessarily strive from fun and interesting methods, but we do not put them at the top of the list as learners do. Besides these two, there is a third factor that plays a crucial role in language learning, and that is motivation. It is a fact that motivation influences one's will, work, and success in all spheres of life, and language learning is no exception to this.

Having decided on these three factors as the most important ones for vocabulary acquisition, I have set out to present learners with two different ways of practice and check which ones learners prefer overall, find to be more fun, motivating and effective, and conducted the following action-based research.

Methodology

Research Question

The action-based research thus focused on analyzing students' attitude towards the use of three different classroom eTools: Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Socrative compared to the practices provided in the course books for revising vocabulary related to the unit topics and checking which ones learners find to be more fun, motivating and effective.

Participants of the study

The participants of the study were three different classes of the School of Foreign Languages of Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University. At the time of research, the classes were three different levels: Repeat B (12 students), B (15 students), and C+ (9 students) level. There was a total of 36 participants.

The reason for choosing three different levels was to cover learners with different levels of knowledge and motivation for studying. Repeat level learners are considered to be the most demotivated ones to study because they had failed to pass the AGE exam required to move on to their departments the year before. Regular B level learners are in their first year of preparatory school, and their motivation is higher than the Repeat B students', but their English level is not very high, and they will most probably face difficulties in passing the exam. As for the C+ level students, they were the highest level at the preparatory school, but being so they might have the assumption that they can pass the exam easily and so their motivation to study might not be as high as instructors expect it to be.

Procedure

The study reported here lasted for about two months. The entire study was accomplished in four sessions from February to March.

The main instructors of each level used all three mentioned tools to prepare a vocabulary revision and do the vocabulary exercises from the course books (North Star series).

In the North Star series course books, there are two sets of new vocabulary within each unit. Instructors revised one set of new vocabulary using one of the classroom eTools and the other set of new vocabulary using exercises from the course books.

In the week of 25-01 (Feb-March), instructors prepared a 'Kahoot!' vocabulary revision practice for the first set of vocabulary as well as completed the vocabulary exercises from course books for the second set of vocabulary.

In the week of 4-8 March, instructors repeated the same using the classroom eTool 'Quizlet.'

In the week of 11-15 March, instructors used the classroom eTool 'Socrative' along with practices from course books.

On Friday, March 15, after the instructors had completed and used all the mentioned eTools, a survey was conducted with students.

Instruments

The instrument of the study was a survey designed by the researcher to collect data for this particular study. It consisted of three parts where students expressed their preference of methods used to practice and revise new vocabulary. It asked students to grade the use of interactive classroom eTools and practices from the course books based on three main points: Benefit, Motivation, and Enjoyment.

Findings

1.1 Survey

All participants have answered all the questions of the survey.

Motivation

88,9% of participants find interactive classroom eTools to be extremely or very motivating, and what should be noted is that none of the participants said that it is not motivating.

The level which finds these interactive practices to be the most motivating is the C+ level, where all students find it to be either extremely or very motivating.

Contrary to the interactive eTools, only 27,8% of participants find course books to be extremely or very motivating, and a total of 33,3% find them to be slightly or not motivating. Again, the level which finds it to be slightly or not motivating at all is the C+ level.

Overall, 88,9% of participants have chosen interactive classroom eTools to be more motivating compared to 8,3% who chose course books practices.

Here are some of the students' comments and explanations as to why they prefer interactive classroom eTools:

S1: *'I feel motivated when I enjoy and see my improvement.'*

S2: *'Because Kahoot! and Quizlet are very exciting. They motivate me to learn a word's meaning.'*

Benefit

When asked how beneficial they find interactive classroom eTools, 88,5% of participants said they are very or extremely beneficial, and none of the participants said that they are not beneficial.

Contrary to that, 30,5% said that course books are slightly or not beneficial, and 41,7% of the participants find them to be very or extremely beneficial for revising vocabulary.

In the third part of the survey, where the participants were asked to choose which of the two methods they find to be more beneficial, 69,4% choose interactive classroom eTools to be more beneficial than practices from course books.

Here are some of the students' comments and explanations as to why they prefer interactive classroom eTools:

S1: *'Interactive classroom tools are a more effective way to learn and revise vocabulary because when we work as a group we learn new things from each other. Also, it's a fun and beneficial way to improve our knowledge of vocabulary.'*

S2: *'I really don't like practicing from books because I get bored and I don't focus on exercises. On the other hand, interactive classroom tools are not boring and I notice that I am improving my vocabulary and because of that I find them to be more beneficial.'*

Enjoyment

Rather unsurprisingly, 94,2% of the participants consider the interactive classroom eTools to be extremely or very enjoyable for vocabulary revision, and none of the participants said they that they are slightly or not enjoyable.

S1: *'Doing something together and faster is more enjoyable.'*

S2: *'They are very enjoyable because we compete with each other and have fun.'*

Conclusion

In this study, the fundamental aim was to reveal students' attitude towards the use of Kahoot!, Socrative, and Quizlet compared to the exercises provided in course books used in the Preparatory school. What should be taken from it is that it is highly essential for instructors to follow and use innovations in technological improvement and take advantage of online tools and applications and have them integrated into their lessons. In that way,

instructors will provide students with a better, more engaging, and more motivating education.

Using online tools makes lessons more interesting and engaging. eTools like Kahoot!, Socrative, and Quizlet are an excellent choice for teaching university students, in any subject and especially when teaching and practicing vocabulary in a language class. Students are eager to use their mobile phones or tablets and implement technology in the classroom. These online learning tools have shown to provide a positive environment in the classroom, increase students' energy, and add an element of fun to conduct lessons according to students' needs and wishes.

This study was encouraging as it shows the positive effect that using mentioned eTools improves motivation, and the students' attitude towards using such eTools is highly positive.

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Edin Omerovic is a graduate of English Language and Literature with 8 years of teaching experience with both young and young-adult learners.