CHAPTER 4

CAPTION THIS! - AN ENGAGING WAY TO LEARN VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

One of the basic and main skills in the learning of the English language is the writing skill. Considering English as a second language in Malaysia, students are discouraged to produce creative writing due to their limitations in various areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and even spelling. An innovation called 'Caption This!' has been produced to counter these challenges and achieve better writing results among students. 'Caption This!' is a fun home-based learning activity that can be done during this Covid-19 pandemic on many different online learning platforms such as Whatsapp, Telegram, and Google Classroom. It centralises on students writing captions while at the same time, participating in an independent collaborative learning experience through enriched uses of vocabularies. This study aims to explore students' expansion of vocabulary acquisition besides their participation, motivation, and interest in the teaching and learning process of online English lessons. Results from students varying from the age of 11 to 15 years old, and from three different schools reveal that learning English can be fun, easy, and effective through such an innovation.

Keywords: vocabulary, captions, home-based learning, online learning

1. INTRODUCTION

The learning of English has grown in importance not only as an academic talent, but also for economic and cultural globalisation objectives. Empowering language skills, namely reading, writing, speaking, and listening, requires students to be constantly engaged in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, learning English as a second language has become challenging when the usage of this language is at the minimum in one's daily life during this Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic forced students to learn remotely through online with less guidance from the teachers which resulted in students

struggling more in learning the language. According to Yunus et al. (2019), writing is the most difficult aspect of learning English as a second language in school, as it is in all four aspects of language development. Consequently, writing has become a burdening task for students since they are required to use their creativity in producing quality writings. Students who lack vocabulary face problems in writing since they are unable to find the suitable words to write.

Subsequently, with the advent of the 21st century and the emergence of Education 4.0 in today's world, the integration of technology and ICT has become a popular trend among educators (Hashim et al. 2018; Pazilah et al., 2019) Hence, it is the teachers' responsibility to come up with an effective teaching methodology that can encourage students to participate in teaching and learning continuously in a more engaging way through online thus improving their language skills especially writing skills. Adding to this, Salikin and Tahir (2017) said that as a current trend social media is known as a collective online communication medium geared to interacting, sharing content, and fostering a collaborative society.

'Caption This!'' is the innovation that can help to attract students' attention and motivate them to engage in the learning process actively through selected social media such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or Facebook. The objective of this innovation is to counter challenges in empowering writing skills besides enriching their vocabulary, improving grammar, and encouraging them to engage in learning actively. A pre-test and a post-test had been conducted on the students from different levels and the outcome has shown that through this activity, students are able to share vocabularies with other students thus improving their writing skills by helping them to learn collaboratively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Writing Skills

Writing is seen as a crucial language skill and a necessary productive activity for second language learners. Students needed not only cognitive approaches to be competent writers, but also vocabulary knowledge and proper writing conventions to enable them to express themselves effectively. Because of the intricacy of writing as well as many other requirements, students often have unfavourable attitudes about it, which is referred to as writing apprehension (Challob et al. 2016). Adding to this, Tahir et al. (2020) has mentioned that a lack of vocabulary is one of the factors contributing to the poor performance in writing among second language learners. In his journal Mastan et al. (2017) has mentioned that according to research conducted in Malaysia most learners are moderate users of writing strategies, where English is learned as a second language. Reasons for this include learners' limited exposure to writing strategy instruction, teachers' unawareness of the wide range of writing strategies, and the nature of the education system, which focuses heavily on exam results rather than learners' development of creative thinking skills.

2.2 Theories related

Addressing the problem in improving students' writing skills, Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) theory by Vygotsky (1978) can be used to find the solution. This theory states that students are able to improve their language skills by coming out of their comfort zone and participating in learning. . Explaining the function of this theory Shooshtar and Mir, (2014) argues that learning is defined as "being drawn into the use of social functions in ways that nurture and scaffold them" through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions. Learning is about sharing, negotiating, and acquiring between students and teachers; thus, the learning environment must be maintained through collaboration and intercommunication among students and teachers.

The effectiveness of social media as a teaching tool can be explained through Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) theory. The research by Alenazy (2019) revealed that the TAM Model (perceived utility, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment) has a favourable and substantial effect on social media for collaborative learning in order to improve writing skills. The theory describes how the Teachers' intentions to utilise mobile learning technologies may be influenced by effectiveness and usefulness of the platform. Whereas MALL theory is characterised as "formal or informal learning facilitated by mobile devices that are theoretically available for use anytime, anyplace" (Burston, 2014; Alemi et al., 2012)). Whereas in her journal Hashim et al. (2018) mentioned that the inclusion and integration of mobile learning with a face-to-face classroom is thought to benefit students by providing a platform for them to practise their verbal and written communication skills in the English language. Therefore, an effort to create a teaching tool that needs to be useful, fun, and easily accessible is a must during this period of pandemic and social media can give a successful platform to allow students to improve their writing skills without feeling the burden of learning it.

2.3 Social Media in Language Learning

Social media in teaching and learning offer learners more engaging and authentic writing opportunities besides helping students respond positively. Based on past research that demonstrates that computer-mediated communication in the target language might lead to increases in both oral and written skills (Wang, 2014). A number of studies have been done on the effectiveness of social media in language teaching and the findings came out positively. According to Saleh (2019) the social media apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, can help reach this goal since they provide a huge space for conversations, interactions, and free learning. Adding to this, Fattah (2015) mentioned that social networks have opened up new opportunities of interaction and collaboration between teachers and learners. Unwittingly students are engaged in writing activity in their daily life through social media where they text messages to their contacts. So, It is undeniable that the use of social media can contribute to improve students' writing skills effectively.

Accordingly, an innovation of 'Caption This!' using selected social media such as WhatsApp and Telegram is expected to be an effective teaching tool to improve writing skills among the students. Since students are using their mobile devices to learn online,

this could be the best solution to encourage them to participate in learning writing skills actively. Captioning the pictures or videos posted by the teachers can be a fun learning activity for students and it can attract their attention to respond to the activity instantly. Students are not only engaged with teachers during the lesson but they can view and share the captions among their peers throughout the day. Thus, help them to learn independently besides learning new vocabulary and improve their writing skills. Following this, a study has been carried out to find the effectiveness of 'Caption This' in improving students' vocabulary and writing skills.

3. METHODOLOGY

The innovation follows a flexible guideline in its implementation, namely the ADDIE model. In this model, there are five crucial phases that can effectively support the innovation as a tool for English vocabulary learning among students. These phases are called Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. According to a revised version of the ADDIE Model by Morrison (2010), these phases are flexible and they are interrelated to one another through a non-linear way. The figure below will illustrate the ADDIE model that is used for this innovation.
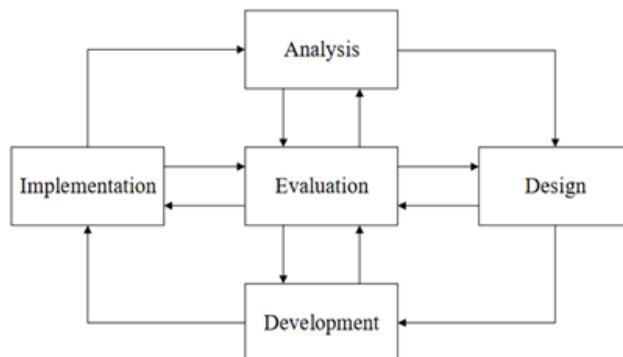

Figure 1. ADDIE Model (Morrison, 2010)

3.1 Phases of 'Caption This!' Development

The first phase is the analysis. During this phase, the researcher defines and identifies the problem. In this case, the researchers have identified that vocabulary acquisition among students are lacking and falling behind due to less exposure and practise of the English language among themselves. Moreover, the normal teaching and learning experiences at schools have been impaired due to the covid-19 pandemic, so a new way of addressing students to engage more in online lessons is equally vital. The method used to define these problems was researchers' observation towards students in class be it in students' verbal responses, written work, and even daily conversation.

Secondly, the design phase. In this phase, the researchers will use the output from the previous phase to devise an innovation to counter the problem. Therefore, 'Caption

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This!' was proposed. This innovation centralises on students writing captions while at the same time, participating in an independent collaborative learning experience through enriched uses of vocabularies.

Next, will be the development phase where the data collected from the previous phases are then used to generate the innovation. 'Caption This!' is a home-based learning activity that can be done through various online learning platforms such as Whatsapp, Telegram and Google Meet. It is a fun and interactive activity that requires students to give captions to a series of given pictures during class. These captions are collected and projected to all students, whether directly or otherwise.

Then comes the implementation phase. In this phase, the innovation was implemented in a real English classroom. A total of 82 students have participated in the study and they are of different schools and schooling levels namely; the upper primary and lower secondary --a pie chart below represents the participants of this innovation. In the first week, students were given a compound picture and were required to write as many words as they possibly can about the picture. The compound picture was related to the students' learning and this activity is considered as the pre-test. After the pre-test, students were led to use 'Caption This!' by the researchers. During this time, these students were instructed to look at a picture and give a caption to it. Students were also free to give as many captions as they want while at the same time, sharing their captions among their peers. This activity continued for another two sets of pictures; employing the same topic of course. As a whole group, depending on their classes, students were collectively exposed to new vocabulary be it the use of the words or their meaning altogether.

Last but not least is the evaluation phase. This phase would involve a few assessments to identify the efficacy of the innovation. After implementing the innovation on students for about three weeks, a post-test was given. The same compound picture was given to students (as a post-test) to evaluate the effectiveness of the innovation towards their vocabulary. Some other forms of the evaluation methods used are questionnaires and observations. Nonetheless, feedback is imperative to ensure that the innovation functionality and success are profound among the students.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The data collection methods chosen were both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data collection methods are pre-test and post-test while the qualitative data collection methods are the observations and questionnaire. A total of 82 students took part in this study.

Table 1: Students' percentage of growth

School	Percentage of growth (%)	Student	School	Percentage of growth (%)	Student
School X	100 - 150	6	Highschool Z	100 - 150	0
	151 - 200	7		151 - 200	19
	201 - 250	3		201 - 250	24
	251 - 300	2		251 - 300	9
	301 - 350	1		301 - 350	1
School Y	100 - 150	1			
	151 - 200	2			
	201 - 250	5			
	251 - 300	1			
	301 - 350	1			

School X showed an average of 151% to 200% of growth while School Y and Highschool Z demonstrated a higher average of 201% to 250% of growth amongst the students. Overall, all students' marks improved after using 'Caption This!'. These improvements of more than 100% showed that 'Caption This!' is suitable to be used to help increase students' vocabulary at both primary and secondary school levels.

Table 2: Learners' perception of Caption This!

Item	Students							
	Strongly Disagree	%	Disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly Agree	%
1. I enjoy writing captions for pictures.	4	4.9	4	4.9	23	28.0	51	62.2
2. It is easy to learn vocabularies using 'Caption This!'.	2	2.4	4	4.9	28	34.1	48	58.5
3. 'Caption This!' helps me learn new vocabularies.	1	1.2	4	4.9	32	39.0	45	54.9
4. 'Caption This!' is an interesting way to learn English.	2	2.4	3	3.7	34	41.5	43	52.4
5. 'Caption This!' motivates me to participate in class during PdPR.	2	2.34	0	0.0	32	39.0	48	58.5
6. I feel less stress using 'Caption This!'.	7	8.5	4	4.9	33	40.2	38	46.3
7. 'Caption This!' encourages me to join future English classes.	2	2.4	5	6.1	22	26.8	53	64.6
8. I can learn from my friends through 'Caption This!'.	1	1.2	3	3.7	29	35.4	49	59.8
9. 'Caption This!' can help me learn other things besides vocabulary. For example, writing.	3	3.7	2	2.4	37	45.1	40	48.8
10. I can write English captions in my daily life.	3	3.7	4	4.9	21	25.6	54	65.9

After the post-test was conducted, all students were given a questionnaire to fill in to find out further about their perception of 'Caption This!' and the results were tabulated. Based on Table 2, it can be seen that students positively accepted the usage of 'Caption This!' in their learning especially during PdPR. It can be seen that students enjoyed using 'Caption This!' (90.2%) while saying it is easy to learn vocabulary (92.6%). A huge majority of students said 'Caption This! helped learn new vocabularies (93.9%) especially from their friends (95.2%). Most of the students agreed that 'Caption This!' is an interesting way to learn English (93.9%) as it motivates them to participate in class during PdPR (97.5%) and encourages them to join future English classes (91.4%). Students also noted that they feel less stress using 'Caption This!' to learn vocabulary (86.5%) besides agreeing that 'Caption This!' can help me learn other things aside from vocabulary (93.9%). Students also mentioned that they are more confident to write English captions in their daily life (91.5%).

Based on the percentage of increase in the post-test, questionnaire results, and researcher's observations, students' vocabulary has increased as a result of using 'Caption This!'. Writing captions for pictures that students themselves took, or pictures given by the researcher provided a stimulus for students to write. This innovation was accessible to all students who have access to a smartphone as they are able to download a photo editing software to put the captions for the photos be it an Android phone or an Apple phone. As students are learning from home currently, the researchers tapped into students using their smartphones for learning. This innovation had provided the students with a learning opportunity out of the normal 'chalk and talk' or answering questions in a module, activity book, or textbook. Plus, 'Caption This!' is accessible to all teachers regardless of location and mode of teaching. The innovation can also be done by synchronous and asynchronous learning where it can improve students' learning (Ayuni Akhriar et al, 2017). Last but not least, it is an interesting, less stressful and collaborative method of learning which is better, and also in line with 21st-century learning (Anggareni & Wulanjani, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

As a conclusion, 'Caption This!' is an innovation with the purpose of helping students to acquire vocabulary while at the same time, enhancing what was already acquired. This innovation was also devised with the idea of addressing students to be more engaging in online English lessons amidst the covid-19 pandemic. The captions that students provide and share during the activity can help their peers to be exposed with new vocabularies and maybe, other language components as well. As the results shown in this paper, it can be said that students have mostly improved and expanded their uses and practises of vocabulary. However, some challenges have emerged throughout the implementation of this innovation and they are the safety and privacy concerns, and of course, students' peer pressure. The researchers believe that with the correct communication, collaboration and consent among teachers, parents, school administration and students, these problems can be solved without hassle. The researchers also believe that given a fun, conducive and interactive learning environment, students can easily foster understanding and skills in the target language component. Finally, future research of this innovation could include different language component targets, its application on physical classes, and lastly, the different methods of manipulating or using captions in language learning.

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