Chapter 23

Using Voterhoot in Improving Vocabulary Among ESL Young Learners

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary learning is essential to improve young learners’ writing skill. However, it is often perceived as dull and difficult due to the teachers’ monotonous teaching technique. Previous studies showed that young learners can master vocabulary better through the use of games. Interactive multimedia games have seemed to gain attention. It uses moving images, animation, video, audio and video games to deliver output, making it fun and interactive to the users. Instead of using digital computer-based systems, this innovation uses Microsoft PowerPoint alone to create an interactive multimedia game called Vocabulary Master to teach vocabulary. It is also combined with the use of Kahoot, a game-based learning platform to assess the young learners’ vocabulary. Therefore, this action research aimed to identify the use of VoterHoot in improving vocabulary among English as Second Language (ESL) young learners. The samples consist of 50 Year 4 pupils with low level of English language proficiency selected from five primary schools located in SJKC Chung Hua Klang, Selangor, SK Batu Puteh Kinabatangan, Sabah, SK Kampung Serdeng, Sarawak, SK Serembang, Spah, Sarawak and SJKC Bandar Springhill, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia. Data was collected quantitatively using pre-test, post-test and questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire was tabulated while the pre-test and post-test results were analysed using inferential statistics. It was found in the result that the pupils enjoyed the vocabulary lesson and are able to remember and use the vocabulary. In conclusion, the intervention of using the combination of Vocabulary Master and Kahoot is found to be effective in improving vocabulary among ESL young learners of low English language proficiency to a certain extent.

Key Words: vocabulary; games; ESL young learners
1. INTRODUCTION

One of the main essences in Malaysian’s National Education Philosophy (NEP) is to develop an individual holistically and in an integrated manner. Therefore, in line with the NEP, one of the highlights in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 under the student aspiration is students are encouraged to learn second or third language. Generally, there are four main language skills that need to be mastered in order for one to manipulate a language expertly. The four main language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Over the years, there are several strategies and techniques introduced to teach languages. Nonetheless, vocabulary teaching has been on the rise of popularity after majority of second language theorists and practitioners had admitted the importance of vocabulary teaching. Baki Ozen (2012) emphasized that vocabulary is important because it carries the meaning. In short, it is believed that the more words we know, the more fluently we can communicate (Schmitt 2000, Richards & Renayandy, 2002). Essentially, vocabulary is a set of familiar words within a person’s language. When learners acquire vast vocabulary, rationally learners should be able to use and manipulate the language fluently. Previously, vocabulary is not considered as an important aspect in language learning as instructors usually teach vocabulary in isolation. As a result, students may know the dictionary meaning of a word but they could not use it in sentences as they do not know how it collocates with other words (Baki Ozen, 2012). Therefore, it is crystal clear that vocabulary knowledge plays a significant role in learning a new language.

However, there is an ongoing debate on the best way of teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is often perceived as dull and difficult due to the teachers’ monotonous teaching technique. In today’s world of technology, electronic gadgets have started to replace printed books. Children are hooked to the animated videos or games in their electronic gadgets, causing them to lose interest in the lifeless characters and words in the printed books. As a result, learning cannot take place effectively in the classroom when there is no technology used in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, along with the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), educators need to re-think on how to prepare the next generation to take advantage of the new era. According to Marr (2019), “For our children to be prepared to engage in a world alongside smart machines, they will need to be educate differently than in the past”. Hence, this action research proposes the use of interactive multimedia game and online game-based learning platform in teaching and assessing vocabulary learning. VoterHoot is an intervention in teaching vocabulary knowledge as opposed to the dull and monotonous traditional teaching strategy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

VoterHoot is created based on Kolb’s Experiential Learning theory which is one of the most popular educational theories (Kolb, 1984). According to Kolb (1984) as cited in Sharlanova (2004), “Learning is a process, in which knowledge is created through
transformation of experience.” The Kolb’s experiential learning theory involves studying in four phases (Sharlanova, 2004).

Figure 1: Kolb’s Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle
(Source: Parthasarathy, 2018)

At the concrete experience phase, the learners form a new experience of learning vocabulary using VoterHoot for the first time. After the experience, the young learners reflect on their experiences using VoterHoot and try to understand the differences between VoterHoot and their prior experience of learning vocabulary in a traditional classroom. After reflecting or observing on the matter deeply, the learners come up with new ideas. The fun and interacting VoterHoot could have changed their perception that learning vocabulary is dull and difficult. They may then form a new idea that vocabulary is so much fun and easy. After forming new ideas, the learners would actively participate in vocabulary lesson and no longer withdraw themselves. However, Kolb believed that not all learners will pass through all these four phases of the cycle and have effective connections between each of these phases (Sharlanova, 2004). Thus, effective learning cannot occur when a learner cannot execute all four phases of the cycle. Kolb then set out four distinct learning styles which are based on a four-stage learning cycle (McLeod, 2017).
In VoterHoot, our target are the ESL young learners. Their preferred learning style is accommodating, that is they show active participation when something is seemed to be appealing to them. VoterHoot, which uses their favourite interactive games to teach vocabulary, can attract the ESL young learners’ attention and help them form concrete fun learning experience thus promotes active learning among them. This can help to eliminate their perception that learning vocabulary is dull and difficult.

Besides, the design of VoterHoot is also based on Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner proposes eight primary forms of intelligence which are linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal and naturalistic (Becker 2005). Gardner believed that learning can become more effective if we develop the instruction for all these intelligences. In VoterHoot, all the eight multiple intelligences proposed by Gardner are used. In terms of linguistic multiple intelligence, the ESL young learners are tested on their vocabulary knowledge when playing the games and quizzes in VoterHoot. In terms of musical, VoterHood also includes music and sound to enhance the play and to create excitement effect and enjoyment for the ESL young learners. The think-outside-the-box game in Vocabulary Master, which requires the pupils to do logical reasoning in order to win the game, is developed for logical-mathematical multiple intelligence. Besides, VoterHoot is highly visual. It uses rich and colourful pictures and backgrounds that caters for spatial multiple intelligence. Although VoterHoot does not require the ESL young learners to physically move from one place to another, it still caters to the body-kinesthetic multiple intelligence by requiring the ESL young learners to place themselves virtually in the game by just clicking on their mouse. VoterHoot also caters for interpersonal and intrapersonal multiple intelligence. The trick or treat game and the think-outside-the-box game include multiple players and they require the ESL young learners to plan their strategies to win the games.

| Feeling (Concrete Experience - CE) | Accommodating (CE/AE) | Diverging (CE/RO) |
| Thinking (Abstract Conceptualization - AC) | Converging (AC/AE) | Assimilating (AC/RO) |

Figure 2: Kolb’s Learning Styles (Source: Parthasarathy, 2018)
3. METHOD

Research Design
This study is an action research. The Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988) research model was used. It consists of four steps which are plan, action, observation and reflection (Koay 2016).

Respondents
A total of 50 Year 4 low English language proficiency pupils were selected from primary schools located in SJKC Chung Hua Klang, Selangor (10 pupils); SK Batu Puteh Kinabatangan, Sabah (10 pupils); SK Kampung Serdeng, Sarawak (12 pupils); SK Serembang, Spaoh, Sarawak (8 pupils) and SJKC Bandar Springhill, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan (10 pupils). All the respondents were 10 years old.

Procedure
This study was conducted in three weeks. A traditional lesson was conducted on the first week where vocabulary was taught to all the 50 pupils using chalk and talk method and with the aid of picture cards. A post-test was conducted thereafter. Then, the pupils answered questionnaire. On the third week, the intervention was carried out to the same pupils. After the intervention was conducted, pupils sat for the post-test. Lastly, they answered the questionnaire to give information on their opinion on the intervention conducted in this research.

Data Analysis
The pre-test and post-test results were analysed using inferential statistics while the questionnaires were analysed thematically. All respondents were coded A1, A2 and so on for School A. For School B, respondents were coded as B1, B2 and so on. Respondents from School C were coded as C1, C2 and so on. All respondents were coded D1, D2 and so on for school D. For school E, respondents were coded as E1, E2 and so on.

4. RESULT

The data collected suggested that using VoterHoot in teaching vocabulary is very helpful for the pupils. Results collected from the pre-test, post-test and questionnaires showed that there is an improvement in pupils’ vocabulary when teachers used VoterHoot. In the traditional lesson where the teachers introduced vocabulary through picture cards, pupils seemed to be passive. Some of them did not show any interest to learn new vocabulary. They talked to their friends rather than listening to the teacher. However, after Voterhoot had been implemented in the class, they looked very excited. They were able to develop self-confidence. They were not shy and became more active. It was also seen that the pupils had become motivated to learn. Everyone was paying full attention as soon as the music in VoterHoot started playing in the class. All the pupils paid attention when reading the descriptions of the occupations and none of the them were doing any other works.
They were happy and excited, at the same time, feeling nervous when competing in the games with their friends.

Results showed that there was an increase seen in the difference between the mean score from the pre and post-tests. This proved that VoterHoot is effective in helping the pupils to understand and remember the vocabulary. This finding is parallel to the past study done by Ali Mohsen (2016) who had proven that interactivity in language input is crucial in facilitating second language acquisition. This innovation had provided the pupils with an interactive and attractive medium to learn English vocabulary through multimedia technology. However, from the post-test conducted, it was found that the pupils were able to recognise the vocabulary but they could not spell them right. Teachers should take this matter into consideration because spelling is also a crucial part in learning vocabulary.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the intervention of using VoterHoot to teach vocabulary is found to be effective in improving vocabulary among the ESL young learners to a certain extent. The use of VoterHoot can be a 21st century teaching tool for teachers to teach in the era of technology to encourage the pupils’ participation and enhance their proficiency level. It is hoped that this innovation can assist the pupils to increase their vocabulary knowledge and make learning fun for them. With the advancement of technology nowadays, this innovation can also be used outside of the classroom where it can be shared through Google Classroom for the pupils to explore at their own pace at home. In Malaysia, since the phase 2 of the 1BestariNet service had expired and schools had replaced Frog VLE with Google Classroom, VoterHoot can be shared with pupils from any levels through Google Classroom to allow pupils to learn happily anywhere and at any time. VoterHoot is also of great flexibility so there is no need to worry about its suitability for pupils of different levels. The content is editable thus it can be used to teach anything at any levels. In the next cycle, teacher can choose to use VoterHoot to teach skills other than vocabulary alone.

REFERENCE


