HOT POTATOES: AN INTERACTIVE APPLICATION TO ENHANCE AN EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY PRACTICE

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Abstract:

In the digital era, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) becomes an essential tool for more and more people in educational world. Many applications based on ICT can be found and used as a learning medium. Therefore, ICT is required by English lecturers in their teaching and learning process. So that, they will achieve the goal. The lecturers will not worry to teach and give some exercises about vocabulary for students if they use online application. In fact, teaching English vocabulary to the students is not easy. Many students feel bored to memorize new words themselves and drill about vocabulary. They just wait for their lecturers to explain some new words to them. Some students even feel that it is too difficult and boring to do vocabulary practices. In light of the issue, the researcher presents a research aim to investigate an application as a technique for enhancing an effective vocabulary practice for students. It deals with the named "Hot Potatoes". The research design was quasi experimental with a one group-pretest-posttest. The study was conducted on the first grade students STKIP PGRI BLITAR. The study was done in an intact class of twenty five students. The quizzes are in the form of multiple choices, short answers, crosswords, match questions, etc. Furthermore, the students could do independently so they will not be pressured to answer some questions. The quiz is designed like a game which gives reward to the user as a result and will lead students indirectly to drill themselves, to get some new words and mastery in vocabulary. As a result, the Hot Potatoes application can be used as one alternative to enhance students' vocabulary practice in an enjoyable and effective way.

Keywords: Hot Potatoes: an Interactive Application, an Effective Vocabulary Practice

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, vocabulary is one of the language components that should be acquired by students. Because if students have many vocabulary items, they will have a better opportunity to master the language. In the digital era, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) becomes an essential tool for more and more people in educational world. Many Applications based on ICT can be found and used as learning medium. Therefore, ICT is required by English lecturer in their teaching and learning process. In fact teaching English vocabulary to students is not easy. Many students felt bored to memorize new words by themselves and drill about vocabulary. They just wait their lecturers to explain some new words to them even some students felt difficult and bored to practice. In light of the issue, the lecturers will not worry to teach and give some exercises about vocabulary for students if they use application web page. The researcher presents a research aim to invent an application as a technique for enhancing an effective vocabulary practice for students. It deals with the named "**Hot Potatoes**" (JCloze). This application is suitable for creating cloze and fill in the blank exercises. Unlimited correct answers can be specified for each gap, and the student can ask for a hint and see a letter of the correct answer. A specific clue can also be included for each gap. Automatic scoring is also included. The program allows gapping of selected word or the automatically gapping of every the word in a text.

(Winke, 2001), Hot Potatoes is a suite of quiz/drill-authoring software created at the University of Victoria, Canada. Hot Potatoes activities and the amount of interaction can be mentioned that the 'interaction' is limited to interaction between the user and the pre-scripted feedback prepared by the creator of the activity. According to Catartica (2008), Hot Potatoes is an application to create interactive quizzes which are in the web page form/ internet. The application that enables to create different type of exercises to help students for enhancing of language and creation skills. This activity has the aim to enhance students' enthusiasm towards a specific topic and to teach new words vocabulary.

Based on (Half-Baked Software Inc., 2009), Hot Potatoes is made up of six different exercise creating tools/applications which can be used to develop interactive activities. We can create quizzes in form of multiple-choice quizzes and text-entry (short-answer) exercises (JQuiz), gap-fill exercises (JCloze), crosswords (JCross), jumbled-sentence/jumbled-word (drag-and-drop) exercises (JMix), ordering/matching (drag-and-drop) exercises (JMatch), and combining different exercises (The masher).

Hot Potatoes program is easily to access by learners at any place through connection with internet with any standard web browser. Hot Potatoes uses of both HTML and java script, however, learners and instructor do not need to be familiar with this language to make the web-based exercises. The Hot Potatoes application's exercise template to create exercise on web pages which can be uploaded to server where students have access to them. Hot Potatoes has the capability of producing six different kinds of web based exercises which can stand alone or be connected to other exercisesor or activities to create a sequence of tasks. Hot Potatoes is a good program because the students can correct and/or edit their own assignment based on the clued and feedback are given in the target language. Furthermore, by using Hot Potatoes software, lecturers can specify the e-mail address to which scores are to be sent.

Based on the interview and the observation above, the researcher wants to get evidence whether the hot potatoes (JCloze) was effective or not to enhance vocabulary practice for students. Besides, all of students want fun in the class room, and the researcher believe that teaching the learning process with funny games can help the students understanding and interest in vocabulary.

METHOD

The study has a experimental design. The researcher used pre-experimental design with one group- pretest-posttest (Borg,W.R.,Gall, M,D.1989:, p. 670) with focused to enhance an effective vocabulary practice for students. This research is conducted at STKIP PGRI Blitar. This research was conducted at the first grade students in STKIP PGRI BLITAR and in an intact class of thirty nine students. In applying this design, the experimental class is the class which gets treatments by applying Hot Potatoes (JCloze) and the control class which gets treatments by using conventional techniques. The purpose of control class is to prove whether the increased scores or achievement/development possibly got by the lecturer in the experimental class are caused by the application of the treatment in the class.Then, the experimental class and the control class received the same pre – test and post – test.

The test was done before the treatment was called pre – test and after the treatment called post – test. The criteria whether Hot Potatoes can enhance the students' vocabulary practice in the score of post – test between the experimental and the control class. Pre-experimental research involved administering pre – test to the dependent variable, applying the experimental treatment X to the experimental class, and administering post – test.

The group of sample was as the control and experimental groups.The Null Hypothesis (HO) was in this study that there is no any significant difference on the students' vocabulary practice before and after being taught by using Hot Potatoes (JCloze). The Alternative Hypothesis (HA) of this study was that is a significant difference on the students' vocabulary practice before and after being taught by using hot potatoes (JCloze) in the first grade at STKIP PGRI Blitar. The primary data in this research were students' vocabulary scores. To obtain the require scores of the students' achievement in mastering vocabulary, the researcher used two kinds of test. They were pre-test and post-test. The scoring guide for the post test was formulated as follows:

$$Score = (number\ of\ correct\ items \times 3) + 10$$

The data analysis in this research used t-test. Gay *et al* (2011, p. 436) argue that t-test is used to determine whether two means are significantly different at a selected probability level. The procedure analysis of data used both descriptive and inferential statistics. In this research, the researcher analyzed the value of t-test by using paired sample t-test through SPSS 16.0.

FINDING

To know the significance students' score vocabulary practice researcher conducted a pretest and posttest consisted of 39 students in the first grade students at STKIP PGRI Blitar. After that the researcher got the data of students' vocabulary practice, the researcher analyzed the data by using paired sample t-test through SPSS 16.0 to find out the significant difference scores of students' vocabulary achievement by using hot potatoes (JCloze). The percentage of the student pre-test and post-test score can be seen in following tables:

Table 1. Distribution of the Students' Pre-test Scores

Interval	Frequency	Categorization	Percentage
35 – 44	3	Very poor	**7.69 %**
45 – 54	3	Poor	**7.69 %**
55 – 64	2	Fair	**5.12 %**
65 – 74	6	Good	**15.38 %**
75 – 84	11	Very good	**11 %**
85 – 94	**14**	**Excellent**	**14 %**

Table 2. Distribution of the Students' Post-test Scores

Interval	Frequency	Categorization	Percentage
66 – 71	1	Very poor	2.56 %
72 – 77	1	Poor	2.56 %
78 – 83	4	Fair	10.25%
84 – 89	16	Good	41.02 %
90 – 95	13	Very good	33.33 %
96 – 100	4	Excellent	10.25 %

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre-test	76.00	39	16.454	**2.635**
Post-test	**88.49**	**39**	**6.403**	**1.025**

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences							Sig.
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper		38	
Pair 1 Pre-test – Post-test	-12.487	16.728	2.679	-17.910	-7.064	-4.662		.000

From the output data through SPSS 16.0 above, the result of t-value is 4.662 and the degree of freedom is (df) = 38, significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) 0.000. While the (df) = 38, it is consulted to t-table with significant level 5% (0.05) and the result is 1.686. Hypotheses testing stated, if the value of t-count is higher than t–table (t-count > t-table) in (df) = 38 with significant level 0.05 and significance value< 0.05, the null hypothesis (HO) is rejected. It means that Hot Potatoes (JCloze) can enhance an effective vocabulary practice in the first grade students at STKIP PGRI Blitar. The hypothesis testing can be got if there is any significant difference of the students' vocabulary scores before and after being taught by using Hot Potatoes (JCloze). Otherwise, if the value of t-count is smaller than t–table (t-count < t-table) in df = 38 with significant level 0.05 and significance value < 0.05, the null hypothesis (HO) is accepted. It means that hot potatoes (JCloze) is not effective to be applied in teaching vocabulary.

From the table above shows that, t-count is higher than t-table (4.662 > 1.686) and the significance value is lower than significant level (0.000 < 0.05). It can be concluded that HO is rejected. It means that there is a significant difference on the students' vocabulary score before and after being taught by using Hot Potatoes (J Cloze) in the first grade at STKIP PGRI Blitar.

DISCUSSION

From the result above, it's still lack if there is any theorie that help and make the result more acceptable. Soleimani & Raeesi (2015) thought that Hot Potatoes is quite and practical. While, according to Alimah & Putri Maya (2015) stated that Hot Potatoes cloze test gives positive effects towards students' grammar achievement. It had been proven by the result of data analysis in this research that there is a significant difference on the students' grammar achievement in simple present tense before and after being taught by using Hot Potatoes cloze test. Brown (2001, p.146) claimed that currently, most widely standardized tests are computer-based. Sooner or later, most language students will need to perform such a test, designed to gauge the test-taker level's as the respond are made. During the early time right or wrong answers are electronically analyzed in order to present later items, from a bank of possible items that will be neither too easy nor too difficult and present an optimal challenge. It means that with the progress of this era, the teacher should be smart and creative to adapt this era, because along with the progress of this era there are many brand new technologies. It also demands the teacher or subject group don't be blind with the progress of technology.   Based on the previous studies above, the researcher was motivated to conduct a research related to the use of Hot Potatoes (JCloze) too. However, the researcher used a different kind of game because the researcher used a web page.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In summary, Hot Potatoes (JCloze) can be used as an alternative to enhance an effective vocabulary practice for students in enjoyable and effective way. The result showed that the students' score in vocabulary practice before being taught by using Hot Potatoes (JCloze) (the pre-test scores) was 76.00. While, the mean students score after being taught by using Hot Potatoes (JCloze) (the post-test score) was 88.49. The value of t-count was 4.662 and the significance value was 0.000. While, in significant level 5%, the calculation of t-count was higher than t-table (4.662 > 1,686) and the significance value was lower than the significant level (0.000 < 0.05) of data. Therefore, it could be concluded that there was a difference in the students' vocabulary mastery before and after they practice through Hot Potatoes (JCloze) application.   Moreover, Hot Potatoes website based software provides lecturers a flexible application to made exercises so that the students can work while they get feedback from the software directly. Hot Potatoes (JCloze) application is also a representation for lectures to create and design materials for their students' needs. Therefore, it justified that Hot Potatoes (JCloze) is more effective in learning vocabulary than conventional learning and it is suggested to be used lecturers in teaching vocabulary or other lessons especially at STKIP PGRI Blitar.

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