INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate the attitudes of Sudanese secondary school teachers towards using games in teaching English vocabulary. The researcher has adopted the descriptive and analytical methods via questionnaire as a tool to collect the data of this study. The sample of this study composed of (112) teachers who responded to the questionnaire from the three provinces in Khartoum State. The obtained data from the questionnaire have been analyzed by SSPS program to examine the correctness of the hypothesis of this study. The result from the questionnaire has shown that teacher's responses were negative towards using games in teaching English vocabulary.

Key words: Teachers' attitudes, games, teaching vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition is considered as an integral and fundamental area of language teaching / learning wether the language is first, second, or foreign. Vocabulary learning is viewed as very important to language, because it is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. Recently, many studies have been carried out about effective techniques and strategies that can be used to create appropriate as well as motivating situation to learning. One of these effective strategies is games which are excellent strategy for teaching language. They are not used only for entertainment activities but also for practicing communication. (Jung: 2005:4) "games encourage, entertain, teach and promote fluency and communicative skills". Although some teachers may think that language games are a waste of time, the role of games in teaching and learning language cannot be denied. Many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as a teaching device yet they often perceive games as mere time-fillers, a break from the monotony of drillings or frivolous activities. Taking the above attitudes in consideration, the researcher designed a questionnaire to find out the attitudes and views of secondary school teachers towards using games in teaching vocabulary.

Aims and Scope of the study:

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of Sudanese secondary school teachers towards using games in teaching English vocabulary.

The scope is limited to the secondary school teachers in the three provinces in Khartoum State, whose number is composed of (112) respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Vocabulary is one of the most important language elements that support the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The purpose of vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language context when need arises (Macarthy 1984).

What is a game?

Games are regarded as a very useful and important strategy to stimulate language acquisition. They are defined as a form of play concerning competition, rules and fun. So, teachers should use games in teaching to attract students attention, decrease students stress and give them opportunity to communicate effectively. (Deesri: 2002:1).

Wright-Betteridge-Bucky, et al (1984) use three adjectives to define a game. They refer to a game as entertaining, engaging and challenging activity where play and interaction takes place amongst the learners.

(Jones: 2005:1) States that "competition can make even the dullest lesson exciting for both adults and children".

Games and communication:

By using games teachers should concentrate on communication rather than correctness of language. Games should be an important part in English curriculum not as an amusing activity. They give students good chance for real communication and thus bridge the gap between the classroom and real world (Hadfield: 2002: 4).

Who are games for:

Enjoyment of games is not restricted by age. Some individuals regardless of age may be less fond of games than others. But so much dependence will be on appropriateness of the games and the role of the player. It is generally accepted that young learners and adults are very willing to play games (this party depend on the learners socio-cultural back ground).

Early teen agers tend to be more self-conscious and one must take into account their reticence when selecting games for them. Games which can be played in pairs or groups may be particularly useful in this case. (Wright-Betteridge-Bucky, et.al: 1984:2).

Tips for playing games:

Choose games on basis of their suitability in terms of language they put in practice and also with regard to the students themselves (e.g. their age and interest). The size of the class must also be taken into account. Prepare the game carefully before hand, try to predict the language items that may be needed. Explain to students (in mother tongue if necessary) the purpose and rules for the game. Rixon, (1981).

The teacher should be aware of various types of games and activities and use all the types in appropriate way.

The teacher should use internet resources to have access to up-to-date changes in TL. They can be used as a source of information for games and games-like activity too.

Unless games focus on the essential and necessary academic content, they will have a little or no effect on students' achievement and waste classroom time. (Nolasco-Arthur).

Types in appropriate way. The most desired games in language are communicative games which exploit the language to its possible maximum.

(Hamer: 2004:2). This is strongly advised by demsda cruz, (2008) "To be effective in the language classroom games need to be those which will allow the students to use the target the language frequently and with flexibility". Also (Nolasco Arthur: 1991:76) urge the teachers to put the stress on communicative games: "Many games are highly controlled. Controlled games are useful as pre-communicative activities. They provide plenty of practice, they involve students and they prepare them for freer word, because they are less formal. However, they should not viewed as a substitute for genuinely communicative games which are the ultimate aim". Setting a time limit for activities cannot only save the time but also serves as a motivation for students.

It might be a good idea to keep a booklet of games. Whenever you come across a new game you can write it down there and you can even write down comments beside your descriptions of the games once you have tried them.

Advantages of Games:

The following points show some advantages of games. They promote communicative competence, create a meaningful context for language use, increase learning motivation, they provide useful activities for remembering and revising words and structures, and thus enrich students vocabulary, they can give students a sense of achievement as well as fun, games are learner centred. They can be used as an enjoyable way of testing what students know-unlike many formal tests which try to find out what students don't know. They can be adapted from one language to another depending on what you are teaching at the time. Rixon(1981).

(Johnes:2005:1) states that competition can make even the dullest lesson exciting for both adults and children. (Mclaughlin:2005:6) asserts that classroom games promote language development in a fun and communicative atmosphere.

The variety and intensity that games offer may lower anxiety. Richer-Amato(1988). They encourage shyer learners to take part especially when games are played in small groups. Uberman (1998).

Students do not cooperate with the teacher during the lesson-in such case it is advised by (Hamer: 2004:131) to stop using the enjoyable activities as restoration of discipline tool. "Teachers can make it clear that some of the more enjoyable activities which students like will only be used when the class is functioning properly. Otherwise, they will be forced to fall back on more formal teaching and language study".

Disadvantages of Games:

Not all games are helpful for language learning, of course board games like checkers cannot do much for vocabulary expansion because they do not require the players to speak any language during the game.

Many games that involve physical activity are unsuitable not only because they are too noisy for the classroom but because in excitement of the game, the players feel they must express their emotions in the native language (French, 1983:54).

The over use of games may take away the time students can use to be working individually, having the matter explained properly or simply working with language seriously. It can also create the overall class atmosphere in such a way that it is not real learning, making it more difficult to concentrate on studying for serious purposes, like exams.

The last consequence of over use of games in language teaching to be mentioned is the fact that students might get bored with all the play for the reason.

Too often games are used to plugholes in lessons which could more usefully be filled with language-rich-talk.

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The last consequence of over use of games in language teaching to be mentioned is the fact that students might get bored with all the play for the reason that students especially higher secondary schools or adults, usually do not like to be treated like little children. Too often games are used to plug holes in lessons which could more usefully be filled with language-rich-talk.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

The sample of the study includes (112), secondary school teachers in the three provinces of Khartoum State.

Tools of the study:

The researcher used a questionnaire as a tool to gather the data of this study. The questionnaire was delivered to (112) teachers in the three provinces of Khartoum State. The researcher used the descriptive and analytical methods as well in carrying out this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The researcher has designed a questionnaire to measure the English teachers' views and attitudes towards using games in teaching English vocabulary. The first part of the questionnaire is an opening part looking for information about the targeted teachers in terms of their gender, qualifications and years of teaching. They were requested to indicate their answers by ticking (√) one of the five options: "strongly agree", agree, "undecided, "disagree", "strongly disagree".

The Analysis of the Questionnaire in Relation to the Hypothesis:

H2: English language teachers at secondary schools have negative attitudes towards using games in teaching vocabulary.

The analysis of the questionnaire in relation to the hypothesis.

Table (1): Sex: This table classifies the teachers responses in terms of sex

Sex	Frequencies	Percent
Male	69	61.6%
Female	43	38.4%
Total	112	100.0%

The table above shows that male number which represents 61.6% is greater than female number which represents 38.4% in this study.

Table (2) Qualification: The table below classifies the target teachers in terms of qualification:

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Diploma	4	3.6%
BA	56	50.0%
MA	51	45.5%
PhD	1	0.9%
Total	112	100.0%

Table (3) Below illustrates the targeted teachers according to their years of experience in teaching English:

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Less than 5 years	49	43.8%
5-10 years	25	22.3%
More than 10 years	38	33.9%
Total	112	100.0%

Table (4) Below illustrates the targeted teachers according to their training in teaching English:

Training	Frequencies	Percent
Trained	100	89.3%
Untrained	12	10.7%
Total	112	100.0%

Table (5) Below illustrates the targeted teachers according to their specialization in English:

Specialization	Frequencies	Percent
English	107	95.5%
Others	5	4.5%
Total	112	100.0%

Statement(1): Games play an effective role in teaching vocabulary.

Table (6):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	53	47.3%
Agree	46	41.1%
Un decided	5	4.5%
Disagree	7	6.3%
Strongly disagree	1	0.9%
Total	112	100.0%

The table above shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by 47.3% agree by 41.1% undecided by 4.5% disagree by 6.3% strongly disagree by 0.9%. And the majority (88.4%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that games play an effective role in teaching vocabulary.

Statement(2): Because vocabulary is difficult to learn so games are needed to simplify its learning.

Table (7):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	40	35.7%
Agree	54	48.2%
Undecided	8	7.1%
Disagree	10	8.9%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	112	100.0%

The table above shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (35.7%) agree by (48.2%) undecided by (7.1%) disagree by (8.9%) strongly disagree by (0.0%) and the majority (83.9%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that vocabulary is difficult to learn so games are needed to simplify its learning.

Statement(3): Using games is a new method of teaching vocabulary.

Table (8):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	31	27.7%
Agree	54	48.2%
Undecided	13	11.6%
Disagree	11	9.8%
Strongly disagree	3	2.7%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (27.7%) agree by (48.2%) undecided by (11.6%) disagree y (9.8%) strongly disagree by (2.7%). And the majority (75.9) of respondents support the statement which claims that using games is a new method of teaching vocabulary.

Statement(4): Using games is neglected relatively in teaching vocabulary in Sudanese secondary school.

Table (9):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	39	34.8%
Agree	45	40.2%
Undecided	9	8.0%
Disagree	13	11.6%
Strongly disagree	6	5.4%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (34.8%) agree by (40.2%) undecided by (8.0%) disagree by (11.6%) strongly disagree by (5.4%). And the majority (75%) of the respondents support the statements which claims that using games is neglected relatively in teaching vocabulary in Sudanese secondary school.

Statement(5): Secondary school teachers avoid using games in teaching vocabulary because they affect order and discipline in the class.

Table (10):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	25	22.3%
Agree	42	37.5%
Undecided	16	14.3%
Disagree	25	22.3%
Strongly disagree	4	3.6%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statements as follows: strongly agree by (22.3%) agree by (37.5%) undecided by (14.3%) disagree by (22.3%) strongly disagree by (3.6%). And the majority (59.8%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that secondary school teachers avoid using games in teaching vocabulary because they affect order and discipline in class.

Statement(6): Secondary school teachers do not use games because the classes are crowded.

Table (11):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	38	33.9%
Agree	46	41.1%
Undecided	13	11.6%
Disagree	9	8.0%
Strongly disagree	6	5.4%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (33.9%) agree by (41.1%) undecided by (11.6%) disagree by (8.0%) strongly disagree by (5.4%) And the majority (75%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that secondary school teachers do not use games because the classes are crowded.

Statement(7): Games contribute to communicative oral competence.

Table (12):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	34	30.4%
Agree	61	54.5%
Undecided	9	8.0%
Disagree	5	4.5%
Strongly disagree	3	2.7%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (30.4%) agree by (54.5%) undecided by (8.0%) disagree by (4.5%) strongly disagree by (2.7%). And the majority (84.9%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that games contribute to communicative oral competence.

Statement(8): Using games enrich the students vocabulary.

Table (13):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	36	32.1%
Agree	48	42.9%
Undecided	14	12.5%
Disagree	12	10.7%
Strongly disagree	2	1.8%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (32.1%) agree by (42.9%) undecided by (12.5%) disagree by (10.7%) strongly disagree by (1.8%). And the majority (75%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that using games enrich the students vocabulary.

Statement(9): When using games, the role of the teacher is decreased i.e. it will be students-centered.

Table (14):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	27	24.1%
Agree	59	52.7%
Undecided	9	8.0%
Disagree	15	13.4%
Strongly disagree	2	1.8%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (24.1%) agree by (52.7%) undecided by (8.0%) disagree by (13.4%) strongly disagree by (1.8%). And the majority (76.8%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that when using games, the role of the teacher is decreased i.e. it will be students centered.

Statement(10): Teachers should use games in teaching vocabulary because it is one of the current methods in teaching ELT around the world.

Table (15):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	41	36.6%
Agree	49	43.8%
Undecided	14	12.5%
Disagree	5	4.5%
Strongly disagree	3	2.7%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (36.6%) agree by (43.8%) undecided by (12.5%) disagree by (4.5%) strongly disagree by (2.7%). And the majority (80.4%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that teachers should use games in teaching vocabulary because it is one of the current methods in teaching ELT around the world.

Statement(11): Games should not be regarded as a marginal activity.

Table (16):

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly agree	36	32.1%
Agree	49	43.8%
Undecided	13	11.6%
Disagree	10	8.9%
Strongly disagree	4	3.6%
Total	112	100.0%

The above table shows the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows: strongly agree by (32.1%) agree by (43.8%) undecided by (11.6%) disagree by (8.9%) strongly disagree by (3.6%). And the majority (75.9%) of the respondents support the statement which claims that games should not be regarded as a marginal activity.

Report Discussion

The data collected was analyzed in relation to the hypothesis of the study. The data was collected by the questionnaire which has been distributed to secondary school teachers in the three provinces of Khartoum State. After analyzing and comparing the results with the main hypothesis, the results have shown that secondary school teachers have negative attitudes towards using games in teaching English vocabulary.

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