

Attitudes of Pupils to TV Show Based Vocabulary Teaching in EFL Classes

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Abstract: This paper argues how current popular TV Shows can increase motivation and help the pupils learn vocabulary in a fast and an effective way. They can serve as great time savers and more memorable activities for the benefit of them. The use of vocabulary in a meaningful context adds up to its invaluable outcome in terms of student participation and attitudes towards the lessons. Moreover, an ELT teacher may construct his/her own teaching material out of these shows and plans the vocabulary teaching lessons according to the needs of the pupils. It is also believed that all of the pupils would like to have and enjoy these shows as their vocabulary lessons regardless of their gender. Seven sample lessons taken from a comedy show called "My Name is Earl" are used in the study to illustrate the case. The study was applied to 50 students in International School of Sarajevo.

Introduction

The use of technology, specifically multimedia, for foreign language instruction has expanded rapidly in the world especially during the last few decades. Studies of the effect of technology-enhanced instruction on achievement and studies of student attitudes regarding learning with technology have also increasingly been reported. Moreover, a student's attitude and motivation has frequently been reported to be the most critical factor for success within computer-assisted language learning environments (Brandl, 2002; Desmarais, 2002; Doherty, 2002; Gilbert, 2001; Murday & Ushida, 2002; Warschauer, 1996a, 1996b). Motivation, according to Winne and Marx (1989), is both a condition for, and a result of, effective instruction. Hence, it is plausible to speculate that students' motivation plays an important role in successful CALL implementation and that, if used effectively, the CALL environment can enhance students' motivation to learn a second language (L2). Thus, especially in the recent years, language teachers have made use of different videos to enhance teaching vocabulary in their classroom settings. Traditionally, two main uses of video have been distinguished: instructional video, specifically created to teach foreign languages, and authentic video materials, such as films, TV series, commercials, etc., originally created for native speakers of the language. The great value of these video comes from its combination of sounds, images, and sometimes text (as subtitles), together with the socio-cultural information about habits, traditions, culture, etc. All this makes it a very comprehensible tool for teaching vocabulary to foreign language students.

Based on these, this study investigated the role of TV Shows on student L2 vocabulary learning and how this, in turn, affected students' attitudes. The present study reports data from an investigation of the attitudes of students' own vocabulary learning, based on the TV show called *My Name is Earl*. It also sought to determine whether students have positive or negative attitudes towards the use of TV Shows while studying vocabulary. A comparison was also made between the scores of the male and female participants.

L2 Vocabulary Acquisition

There is considerable evidence that L1 learners acquire a large amount of their vocabulary through guessing from context (Sternberg, 1987). The frequency at which the L1 learner encounters words, and the variety of contexts in which words are encountered, ensure that the learner will eventually come across most new words in a context where the word is guessable. It is suggested however that foreign language students do not undergo the same rich and varied exposure to vocabulary (Singleton, 1999). As a result, although EFL students quickly learn many of the high frequency words that occur in teaching materials, they experience a breakdown in their ability to guess from context when faced with the much lower frequency words found in unsimplified texts. This is because the low-frequency words found in unsimplified texts make up too large a proportion of those texts. In other words, since there are not enough familiar words in the text for the learner to use as clues, guessing unfamiliar words from context becomes extremely difficult or impossible. Moreover, these low frequency words as well as high frequency ones are not easily and comfortably used in meaningful contexts by the EFL students. Thus, most of the students have difficulty in using their vocabulary knowledge in real life. One of the most effective ways to overcome this problem is to find appropriate authentic materials to provide sample cases to illustrate the usage of these words/phrases.

The Study

Each individual has his/her own beliefs about the materials introduced and these perceptions play a great role in their learning process. According to Krashen (1987), "comprehensible input" and the affective state are the true causes of language acquisition. On this hypothesis, production exercises would be relevant to language acquisition only insofar as they lower affective barriers or provide additional comprehensible input. In our study, the words/phrases in glossary parts have been chosen based on the teacher's observations about the students and frequent use and difficulty level of the target vocabulary has been taken into consideration. In the study, the vocabulary lessons are based on the TV show called "My Name is Earl (Season 1)" and they have been used once a

		<i>GENDER: MALE / FEMALE</i>				
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	These lessons are my favorite vocabulary lessons	5	4	3	2	1
2	These lessons are interesting and I enjoy them	5	4	3	2	1
3	I learn a lot of vocabulary through these lessons	5	4	3	2	1
4	I remember words/phrases more easily compared to classical gap fill type of vocabulary lessons later	5	4	3	2	1
5	These lessons help me get higher marks in the vocabulary quizzes	5	4	3	2	1
6	I learn how/where to use target vocabulary in meaningful contexts through these lessons	5	4	3	2	1
7	I have a chance to review the target vocabulary by watching the related episode again at home	5	4	3	2	1
8	The shows help me with my speaking	5	4	3	2	1
9	The shows help me with my writing	5	4	3	2	1
10	The shows help me with my listening	5	4	3	2	1
11	I have never found these exercises useful	5	4	3	2	1
12	I feel more involved to the lessons through these shows	5	4	3	2	1
13	These lessons increase my attention and concentration time during lessons	5	4	3	2	1
14	These lessons help me improve my accent	5	4	3	2	1
15	These lessons are less painful for the students	5	4	3	2	1
16	I come to the lessons with great motivation thanks to these lessons	5	4	3	2	1
17	I have a chance to watch my favorite TV shows at school	5	4	3	2	1
18	I feel more confident when I use the vocabulary I learn through these shows	5	4	3	2	1
19	I find these exercises waste of time	5	4	3	2	1
20	I wish we had more vocabulary lessons based on TV shows	5	4	3	2	1

Table 1 Pupils' Questionnaire: Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Lessons Based on TV Shows

week for 7 weeks in a row from March 8 to April 23 2010. During the lessons, firstly the glossary parts with between 15 to 20 words are studied/reviewed. Then, the students are asked to take a look at the gap fill questions. The pupils are supposed to fill in the gaps while watching the TV show with subtitles. After the seventh episode, questionnaires with 20 questions were delivered personally to respondents. The questionnaire contained five graded Likert Scale questions, which measured the interest, effectiveness and usefulness of the course elements. The approach used for developing the instrument was practical: questions were formulated in order to evaluate student attitudes and feelings towards these lessons (see Table 1).

A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed and all were received during the same class period, resulting in response rate of 100 percent. Respondents' anonymity was ensured by asking them not to identify themselves in any way other than circling their gender. The sample for this study was selected conveniently from three different classes of International School of Sarajevo, BIH. The sample included teenagers aged from 14 to 15 only. Gender was represented by 50 percent males and 50 percent females.

Findings

All the results are statistically analyzed in our study. Firstly, we take 3 as our medium point as we use a five graded Likert Scale. When we look at table 2, it shows us how different the averages are from our average point,

which is 3 according to our scale. The study suggests that the higher our *t value* and the lower our *p value* (the authors have based their study on *0.05 p value*), the more difference we have. The values lower than 0.05 are considered to be significantly different from 3; on the other hand, the ones over 0.05 are considered to be same with 3. In other words, the respondents think positively on the values with a *p value* of lower than 0.05; however, they are indecisive

One-Sample Statistics				
Q no	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
q20	4,6	0,639	17,71	0
q1	4,38	0,635	15,36	0
q2	4,44	0,675	15,09	0
q14	4,5	0,735	14,42	0
q3	4,22	0,616	14,01	0
q15	4,42	0,758	13,24	0
q6	4,28	0,784	11,55	0
q18	4,14	0,729	11,06	0
q16	4,24	0,797	11,00	0
q4	4,14	0,756	10,66	0
q19r	4,48	1,015	10,31	0
q5	4,14	0,783	10,30	0
q8	4,42	0,992	10,13	0
q10	4,34	0,939	10,09	0
q9	4	0,833	8,49	0
q17	4,18	1,024	8,15	0
q13	4,14	0,990	8,14	0
q12	3,94	0,913	7,28	0
q11r	4,2	1,212	7,00	0
q7	3,9	0,953	6,68	0
q11	1,8	1,212	-7,00	0
q19	1,52	1,015	-10,31	0

Table 2 The Pupils' General Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Lessons

about the questions whose values are over 0.05. In our study, all of the *p values* in this case are 0, which means that all of the students think positively on these vocabulary lessons based on TV shows. Especially, they want most to have more vocabulary lessons based on TV Shows and then secondly, they agree that these lessons are their favorite vocabulary lessons and these lessons are interesting and they enjoy them a lot. On the other hand, in spite of thinking still positively on having a chance to review the target vocabulary by watching the related episode at home, they seem to be least decisive about this item.

Q no	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
q16	male	25	4,56	0,651	3,074	0,003
	female	25	3,92	0,812	3,074	0,004
q8	male	25	4,72	0,458	2,224	0,031
	female	25	4,12	1,269	2,224	0,034
q20	male	25	4,76	0,523	1,812	0,076
	female	25	4,44	0,712	1,812	0,077
q14	male	25	4,68	0,557	1,768	0,083
	female	25	4,32	0,852	1,768	0,084
q15	male	25	4,6	0,645	1,711	0,094
	female	25	4,24	0,831	1,711	0,094
q5	male	25	4,32	0,690	1,655	0,105
	female	25	3,96	0,841	1,655	0,105
q10	male	25	4,52	0,586	1,367	0,178
	female	25	4,16	1,179	1,367	0,180
q2	male	25	4,52	0,770	0,836	0,407
	female	25	4,36	0,569	0,836	0,407
q3	male	25	4,28	0,614	0,685	0,496
	female	25	4,16	0,624	0,685	0,496
q9	male	25	4,08	0,702	0,675	0,503
	female	25	3,92	0,954	0,675	0,503
q13	male	25	4,16	1,143	0,141	0,888
	female	25	4,12	0,833	0,141	0,888
q7	male	25	3,88	0,971	-0,147	0,883
	female	25	3,92	0,954	-0,147	0,883
q18	male	25	4,12	0,726	-0,192	0,848
	female	25	4,16	0,746	-0,192	0,848
q19	male	25	1,48	0,963	-0,276	0,783
	female	25	1,56	1,083	-0,276	0,784
q12	male	25	3,88	1,054	-0,461	0,647
	female	25	4	0,764	-0,461	0,647
q1	male	25	4,32	0,627	-0,664	0,509
	female	25	4,44	0,651	-0,664	0,509
q11	male	25	1,68	1,108	-0,696	0,489
	female	25	1,92	1,320	-0,696	0,489
q4	male	25	4,04	0,841	-0,934	0,355
	female	25	4,24	0,663	-0,934	0,355
q6	male	25	4,16	0,746	-1,085	0,283
	female	25	4,4	0,816	-1,085	0,283
q17	male	25	4	1,190	-1,250	0,217
	female	25	4,36	0,810	-1,250	0,218

Table 3 The Comparison Between The Answers of Male and Female Pupils

As for Table 3, it is used to find out if there is significance in the attitudes of males and females towards the vocabulary lessons. Again, we should keep in mind that, we have based our study on *0.05 p value*. As suggested in statistical analysis researches, the higher the *t value* and the lower the *p value*, the more difference we have between the respondents' attitudes. According to the study, in 18 of the items there are no significant differences but in only question 16 and 8, males and females think significantly different. That is to say, in all other cases, there is no big difference in the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes between the male and female pupils, both of the groups have similar attitudes towards the lessons, they think more or less the same; however, the males think that they come to the lessons with greater motivation thanks to these lessons compared to the females. Moreover, again the male pupils believe more than the female ones do that these lessons help them with their speaking skills.

Suggestions for Further Research

All in all, both girls and boys have positive attitudes towards all of the questions and the lessons in return. In item 16 and 8, the boys seem to think more positively compared to the girls and find the lessons more enjoyable and fun but it may be because of many reasons including the main characters' being men and these men's being better natured than the female characters. These all are topics for further research with TV shows whose main characters are good females. Then, we can have a better and healthier analysis on this gender difference issue...etc. Moreover, all of the participants are 14-15 year old teenagers in our case and the research could be applied to younger children, late teenagers and even adults to see their attitudes and compare them with the findings of this research. As stated earlier, in this study the same comedy show has been used in the classroom in this study; however, different kinds of TV Shows should also be used and compared and contrasted to have a better understanding of the situation.

Limitations of the Research

The participants chosen are all from the author's present classes. Therefore, their response to the author's questions may not be 100% reliable. The reliability may not be guaranteed because they are the author's students and they may have certain worries when replying the questions. And they may have their own preferences and they have different levels of learning English, from B2 to C2. And still they may like or dislike answering some of the questions, thus the answers may be not completely accurate. And what is more, the author's knowledge of computer may not be sufficient. In addition, the questions may not cover all the essential aspects of these vocabulary lessons.

Conclusion

By and large, student evaluation of TV show based courses showed that the participants had a highly positive attitude towards implementations especially with respect to enjoying these lessons and asking for more of this kind of vocabulary lessons. Eliciting ideas on course improvements showed that students would like to watch TV shows during the classes as much as possible for different reasons mentioned. Some significant benefits for students related to the use of TV shows in classrooms include increased motivation, improvement in student involvement and great help with basic skills, as well as more student-centered learning and motivation to coming to the lessons, and more active processing with better recall. It is observed that students appear to gain confidence assessing their own learning too.

All things considered, foreign language words are learned better when directly associated with appropriate nonverbal referents; this efficient association can only be found in real life or in authentic video. In the type of activities advocated in this paper, authentic video as TV shows is not there to overload learners with unknown language (as the detractors of the use of authentic input could claim); thanks to a series of activities that surround a previously selected clip from beginning to end, the viewing is controlled and directly addressed to the teacher's goals for a particular lesson.

Therefore, just as vocabulary teaching and learning should not be divorced from the classroom setting, vocabulary teaching and learning should not be separated from the use of authentic video in class because students learn the vocabulary best in meaningful contexts and the TV shows are of great significance in this manner that they contain lots of real life cases and speech patterns...etc. for the benefit of the EFL learners. Therefore, the positive effects of the shows should not be ignored but stressed and encouraged through different approaches and techniques. The encouraging impact of the TV show based course has been estimated as highly positive in regard to student attitudes both towards the course and vocabulary learning and as expected, this study confirmed many presumptions including the one about gender differences. Finally, it has been seen that the pupils would like to have more and more TV shows and they feel the positive atmosphere of these lessons not only during but also before and after the lessons.

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