HOT POTATOES AS A MEDIA OF STUDENTS' VOCABULARY EXERCISE AT SMKN 2 PALANGKA RAYA

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the students' perception of using Hot Potatoes software as the media of vocabulary exercise at SMKN 2 Palangka Raya, Indonesia. It was qualitative research with five participating students as the participants from grade X OTKP 3. An in-depth semi-structured interview was applied as the data collection technique. The theme-based analysis was used in this study. The finding shows that the students give a positive response to the use of Hot Potatoes. Students' perceptions while learning using Hot Potatoes are; first, Hot Potatoes is more practical for a vocabulary test. Second, the game can attract the students' attention to the test. Third, it helps the students to be more motivated in the classroom. This study implies that the use of Hot Potatoes at the tenth grade students in SMKN 2 Palangka Raya can be an alternative for teachers to teach vocabulary and provide fun learning activities for the students.

Keywords: Hot-Potatoes, media, vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, vocabulary is one of the most important components. It is considered the most important one for students in learning English as a foreign language. Vocabulary mastery must be acquired by students to get other competencies, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In other words, vocabulary mastery takes an important role in mastering the four basic skills of English. In assessing vocabulary, the students learn words. Words are the basic elements of a language. Therefore, without knowing vocabulary words one is not able to communicate with others. Conderman et. al (2013) stated that vocabulary, or word knowledge, is critical for school success as it is considered to be an essential language skill. If students do not know the meaning of the words, they experience great difficulty with comprehension and fluency. This is by Wilkins (1972) who claimed that without vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed. Conderman et. al (2013) also add that poor vocabulary knowledge negatively affects the students´ ability to participate in classroom conversations.

Polakova and Klimova (2020) said that the other reason for learning new words is that vocabulary impacts knowledge acquisition, therefore, students who know more words have more abstract language to categorize new concepts. In contrast, students with poor vocabulary often lose ideas because they have a lack of labels under which to file newly learned concepts. Regarding the importance of vocabulary knowledge, students are required to master the new words to be able to achieve knowledge and to express themselves. For some reason, many students do not possess extensive vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the teachers are required to assess their students´ achievements and consequently use the collecting data to understand the students´ specific needs. Stahl and Bravo (2010) also stated the use of vocabulary assessment as they consider it as an effective way of vocabulary learning. There are numerous types of assessment to assess the students´ vocabulary knowledge and growth, however, this article

provides an example of vocabulary assessment through web authoring software called 'Hot Potatoes'.

Hot Potatoes is a popular authoring tool that can create exercises for students in online or offline mode. Teachers can create exercises for learners gives them chance to repeatedly practice the target language. Hot Potatoes contains some attractive programs that can make various exercises such as filling the gap texts, answering multiple choices, arranging jumbled sentences into a good story, and matching pictures to the correct sentences. It becomes the strength of Hot Potatoes that can create various kinds of exercises that are set up using basic available templates (Bakti, 2014).

Kopinska (2013) believes that Technologies are rapidly gaining the attention and interest of teachers and learners in EFL classrooms worldwide. According to Catartica (2008), Hot Potatoes is an application to create interactive quizzes which are in the web page form/ internet. The application enables the creation of different types 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. Susana (2017) states that Hot Potatoes can be used as an alternative to enhance an effective vocabulary practice for students enjoyably and effectively.

National Reading Panel (2000) in the US suggests teachers use and integrate technology for teaching vocabulary. Various online learning tools can be used including the game of education and online graphics which can be used by the teachers in the vocabulary instruction to make the learning process more interesting and effective (Sharma & Unger, 2016). As one of the online educational software, Hot Potatoes is designed to help students learn in fun and effective ways. Hot Potatoes can be organized as an instruction tool to assess the students' vocabulary skills and support the teachers to give direct instruction.

Hot potatoes provide immediate feedback that can help students to learn independently. The students know their answers are correct or incorrect from the immediate feedback. The immediate feedback is given in each number in the form of a grade and marks which answers are incorrect (Vargas, et al., 2014: 317). It is different from paper-based exercises in which feedback is from the teacher. The students must wait for the feedback from the teacher and the students may repeat errors which leads to a decrease in the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Immediate feedback is more effective since the students can get the corrective response quickly. It can motivate them to learn from their mistakes then they will try to increase their score test by test. Based on the research that was conducted by Samuels & Yi (2003), immediate feedback can give a positive effect to the students. It is proved to increase the students' motivation and the motivation can lead to the improvement in the reading comprehension score. It means that motivation is closely related to students' desire to get better achievement. It also brings us to the point that Hot Potatoes activities can be connected to learner autonomy. Exercises that are made in the Hot Potatoes program allow students to learn through correct answers based on the feedback provided. When the students do the exercises from Hot Potatoes, they get their immediate feedback. Undoubtedly, the students can learn from their mistakes then correct themselves.

There are five basic programs in Hot Potatoes (JQuiz, JCloze, JCross, JMix, JMatch) (Half-Baked Software Inc., 2009). In addition, there is one more program called The Masher that can compile all kinds of exercises. Subari (2008) explains the six programs in Hot Potatoes. Here are the explanations.

Table 1. The Six Modules to Make Exercises in Hot Potatoes

No	Programs	The function of each program
1.	JQuiz	Making four kinds of exercises. They are multiple-choice, short answers, Hybrid (combination between multiple-choice and short-answer model), and Multi-Select.
2.	JMix	Making jumbled sentences.
3.	JCross	Making crossword puzzle exercises.
4.	JMatch	This program is for creating matching exercises.
5.	JCloze	It is used to make fill-in-the-blanks exercises in the form of essay.
6.	The Masher	This program will compile all the Hot Potatoes exercises into one unit.

This software can give the students visualization by adding pictures so it can help the students to activate their background of knowledge about the topic of vocabulary material. Mayer (2009: 3) said that learning from words and pictures which is called multimedia learning, gives a better understanding to the students rather than explanation just using words. The students learn more efficiently and rapidly when they use pictures as visuals along with words. Those pictures have represented the meaning of the words or texts. In conclusion, Hot Potatoes is hoped to make the vocabulary lesson more attractive than the traditional approach. The teacher empowers themselves to create materials and design the exercises that are suitable for the student's needs. The exercises are simple operated and easy-used, so the students don't get any difficulties in doing the exercises (Rachmawati, 2015). Setiawan (2016: 240) adds Hot Potatoes is simple to use since students understand how the program works and they are able to operate it in learning.

However, Hot Potatoes has some weaknesses such as in spelling check and in the font format. In Hot Potatoes, the teacher must really be careful with their spelling since there is no automatic spelling check. Babicka & Nevaril (2008) said that the Hot Potatoes users must use manual ways in doing spelling checks. They have to select the part of a text that they want to check and choose "Edit" and then click "Spell Check" on the toolbar. They also said that the font format cannot be changed the same way as if we copy and paste from the "Word". The users must change manually by themselves and change the font type for the whole text.

RESEARCH METHODS

In investigating the students' perspective on using Hot Potatoes software as the media of vocabulary test, this study used a descriptive qualitative method. There was no numeric data processed; only non-numeric data such as sentences, statements, or documents were used. In other words, the objects of this research were basically in the form of qualitative entities such as perceptive, social phenomena, and problems that deal with students' perspectives (Creswell, 2012). In the current study, it is the perspectives on using Hot Potatoes as the vocabulary test.

Five students of the tenth grade a vocational high school (SMKN 2 Palangka Raya) became the research participants. The selection of the participants was based on their involvement, engagement, and participation in classroom activities. The ones chosen as the participants in this study were those who were also outspoken which means they could express their minds, ideas, and opinions clearly.

Table 2. Research Participants

No.	Names of Participants	Criteria
1.	Dimah Miraudah (DM)	Highly motivated, actively involved in classroom activities, enthusiastic
2.	Aisah (A)	Active in class, show high motivation, enthusiastic, well engaged
3.	Arinda Kurniawan (AK)	Active in class, show high motivation, enthusiastic
4.	Thasya Ramadhini (TR)	Active in class, show high interest, informative in giving feedback
5.	Tasya Sahlan Aghani (TS)	Actively involved in classroom activities

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview was meant to give an opportunity to the researchers to dig the information deeper through follow-up questions based on the responses of the participants. The questions in the interview were developed based on the research question or the objectives of this study. In detail, the questions in the interview were mainly about their experiences in using Hot Potatoes, how much they were interested in, how Hot Potatoes improved their vocabulary, etc. The interview was done intentionally in Indonesian so that the participants did not find any hindrances in expressing their ideas. In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed information about the participants' perspective and behavior during and/or after using the Hot Potatoes or explore problems in depth in regard to their experience Hot Potatoes (Boyce & Neale 2006).

The data collection started with the identification of information needed to answer the research questions. During the teaching-learning process, the researcher identified the students who were actively involved showed serious engagement in the learning process and responded actively to the questions. There were

more than ten students who met these criteria but only ten of them were chosen due to the availability of the participants. All the interviews were recorded and saved in MP3 files which then were transcribed. The interview transcription was then analyzed based on emerging themes.

The researchers analyzed the data from the interviews by using five steps from Creswell (2012) which include collecting data, preparing data, reading through data, coding data, coding for the themes, and coding for description to be used in the report. To analyze the collected data, all the interviews were transcribed and shown to the interviewee to double-check if what was written was he meant. This was also intended to give an opportunity if he wanted to change his mind. This member checking is significant to ensure the validity of the data. These data transcriptions were then read carefully and grouped into categories and themes and analyzed deeply.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Results
The Result is presented based on the research questions proposed earlier. Two themes were identified from the interview; students' responses to the use of Hot Potatoes in facilitating the learning process and practicality of Hot Potatoes as a vocabulary test. The second research question deals with in what way Hot Potatoes enhance students' motivation towards vocabulary learning.

Hot Potatoes Facilitate in Vocabulary Learning Process

Two themes related to the finding were identified. The first theme deals with the responses of the participants to the use of Hot Potatoes as media for a vocabulary test. The data presented in this theme were from three participants who expressed their opinions that Hot Potatoes was good to test their vocabulary and helped them understand vocabulary better. The other theme deals with the practicality of Hot Potatoes as the media of a vocabulary test. Three participants shared their experiences that

Hot Potatoes was fun and interesting and could improve their vocabulary.

Students' Responses to the use of Hot Potatoes
The result showed that the students believed that Hot Potatoes is effective for doing vocabulary tests. They thought Hot Potatoes is one of the media that makes the learning process more fun and enjoyable. The students give a positive response to the question given by the researcher during the interview. The students had a similar opinion about the use of hot potatoes in the vocabulary test. Using Hot Potatoes was difficult at first because the students can not understand how to use the program, but it went well when the students can operate the program. Also, the students prefer to use Hot Potatoes than traditional instruction, because there are supporting media that can make them understand the test such as pictures . The students believed that the supporting media in Hot Potatoes help them understand the test.

TR, one of the students said:

> Using Hot Potatoes is hard at first, but when the teacher explain how to operate it, I was interested in learning vocabulary using Hot Potatoes than using the other media.

A, also said that using Hot potatoes was fun and help them to understand the vocabulary easily.
> I'm interested to learn vocabulary by using Hot Potatoes because it is fun and easy to understand, I like this program.

Other participants, DM, added that using Hot Potatoes was interesting and helpful because the students can understand the words using pictures in the Hot Potatoes.

> Yes, it was interesting in using Hot Potatoes and helpful. And we can get understand new words and know new vocabularies.

Based on the students' assumption, Hot Potatoes supports the teaching and learning

process, especially for vocabulary test as it has many pictures that support students' understanding. Besides, it makes the students more enjoyable during the test.

The Practicality of Hot Potatoes for Vocabulary Test

The students agreed on the practicality of Hot Potatoes compared to the traditional instruction in the vocabulary test. Not only easy to understand but the test can also improve students' vocabulary through Hot Potatoes. There are five kinds of programs that the students can use such as JMatch, JMix, JCloze, JCross, and JQuiz. The students can learn vocabulary through this program. The students could enjoy the test and felt no burden to do it. The students stated that Hot Potatoes gave them fun in learning and were enthusiastic during the test. In this case, TS pointed out:

> I think it does facilitate to improve my vocabulary because Hot Potatoes is easy to understand the words through the various programs in Hot Potatoes. I like JMatch because it is really fun to match the words to the pictures.

TS thought that JMatch is her favorite program in Hot Potatoes because it was really fun to do the test through this program, she can match the pictures with the words in the box. However, AK explained that JCross is more challenging because he should finish the test by filling the crossword puzzle.

> Yes, because by using that program we can learn many vocabularies that have never been learned before. My favorite program in Hot Potatoes is JCross because it challenging to do. I have to finish the test by filling the crossword puzzle. It was challenging and really fun.

The data from the participants clarified the effectiveness of Hot Potatoes in improving the students' vocabulary and also the practicality of this program to teach vocabulary.

Hot Potatoes Increase Students' Motivation Towards Vocabulary Learning

The finding showed that two themes were increased students' motivation. The first deals with how Hot Potatoes makes the students more enthusiastic in the vocabulary test and the second deals with how Hot Potatoes helps the students to be more motivated and active in the classroom

Making The Students More Enthusiastic in Vocabulary Test

Hot Potatoes has six kinds of exercises, so the students become excited and enthusiastic in doing the test. The students enjoyed the test and fun learning while doing the vocabulary test. Some factors are making them enthusiastic about finishing the test, including the pictures and sound in the application. It makes them experience a different sense of testing and challenges them to understand the meaning of the pictures or videos. The pictures in Hot Potatoes have a positive impact on the students' enthusiasm. As mentioned by TR:

> Hot Potatoes As media of vocabulary learning is really interested me, I can enjoy the test because there are many kinds of exercise I can choose from Hot Potatoes, also there is no limited time in doing the test.

Also, TS mentioned that:

> I feel so excited when the teacher taught me how to do the test with Hot Potatoes. I also can practice the test using a handphone and computer.

The data showed that the use of Hot Potatoes as a testing medium of vocabulary has exhibited the fact that the students became more enthusiastic not only during the test but also in the teaching and learning process. It might be due to their expectation that they would use Hot Potatoes. This explains that Hot Potatoes has succeeded in making the students more enthusiastic and excited.

Helping The Students to be More Motivated in The Classroom

Hot Potatoes makes students more active in the classroom. It is proven by the students who were bored in learning; by using Hot Potatoes, they found a different style in learning which makes them have more fun in doing the vocabulary test.

Using Hot Potatoes also engage the students to widen their participation in the class because after doing the test, they can evaluate themselves by seeing the direcr feedback when their answers were wrong. After using Hot Potatoes, the students are enthusiastic about asking the teacher and making self-correction of their results of the test. It is as pointed out by A:

I become more motivated in the class because in Hot Potatoes there is direct feedback, so I can learn more from it.

TS also gave opinion:

I feel so happy because the is direct feedback in Hot Potatoes. I can correct my answer if it's wrong

In addition, AK explained:

I thought of using Hot Potatoes in the vocabulary test made me more motivated because its fun and easy to operate.

Using Hot Potatoes as a medium made the student more motivated in the classroom. Participants pointed out that with Hot Potatoes in the classroom, they could got direct feedback from the Hot Potatoes so they can correct the answer by their self.

Discussion

This section deals with the discussion of the findings and provides answers to research question. The research question deals in investigating the students' perspective on using Hot Potatoes software as the media of vocabulary test. The research showed that the positive response came from the students' perception about their feeling when doing the exercise using Hot Potatoes.

The finding of this study also supports the research of Nikbakht and Boshrabadi (2015) which suggest the use of technology in English language classrooms by teachers,

especially for vocabulary instruction. Misrita et al (2020) also said that using technology in the classroom make students feel happy during learning and increase student participation in the learning process. In line with Cahyadi (2013) entitled Improving Students' Vocabulary using Hot Potatoes in Nonformal Education. The result showed that the Hot Potatoes program was effective to improve students' vocabulary in nonformal education. In this study, the researcher identified that the participants preferred to use Hot Potatoes rather than be involved in the traditional instructions normally given by the teacher. This study also proved that Hot Potatoes helped them to learn vocabulary and to make them enthusiastic during the test. Students felt that Hot Potatoes made them more enthusiastic and focused on doing the vocabulary test. Hot Potatoes helped them to be more attentive during the test which allowed students to stay focused on the questions in.

The results of this study show that Hot Potatoes motivates students to get involved and encourages interaction in the classroom for both students and teachers. Furthermore, teachers must also strike a balance between testing students on new content to maintain their attention and maximizing the effectiveness of Hot Potatoes as a learning tool.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to investigate students' perspectives on using Hot Potatoes in vocabulary tests. Based on the result and discussion it shows that the use of Hot Potatoes produces positive views and attitudes towards vocabulary testing during learning. The students all agree with the benefits of Hot Potatoes greatly affected their vocabulary. Students felt that by using Hot Potatoes, they are more interested and focused on vocabulary testing. In this study, the students also considered the effectiveness of Hot Potatoes through the various programs, it makes the students more interesting and challenging because pictures in the program support their understanding. Through pictures, students can

easily understand the content of the questions given. Students also think this method is very helpful for them to understand their abilities in the vocabulary test. The use of Hot Potatoes in the learning process gives some benefits as teaching media such as the various kinds of exercises with clues, direct feedback, and the evaluation really help students in comprehending the materials easily. As the accessibility of the program is so simple to use, some students do not get confused about how to operate it in learning.

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