INVESTIGATION INTO THE MOTIVATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LEARNING VOCABULARY USING GAMES IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LESSON

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ABSTRACT: Vietnamese students usually feel bored in vocabulary lessons and they think of learning a list of new words with meanings in their language without any real context practice. Working this way, after a short period of time, students may find out that this does not satisfy them. With the aim to investigate into the students' motivation, a study was conducted focusing on finding out the motivation of the 10th form students at Phan Dang Luu High School when learning vocabulary in the pre-stages of a skills lesson with the use of language games. A simple questionnaire survey was used to get the information. The main findings showed that the students' motivation was not very high. More attention needs to be paid to the choice and organization of games in order to help increase their motivation in learning vocabulary when using games. The findings would be useful to the teachers of English concerned.

Keywords: use of games, teaching and learning vocabulary, learning motivation, English vocabulary learning

TÌM HIỂU VỀ ĐỘNG CƠ HỌC TẬP CỦA HỌC SINH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG TRONG VIỆC HỌC TỪ VỰNG TIẾNG ANH VỚI CÁC TRÒ CHƠI NGÔN NGỮ

TÓM TẮT: Học sinh Việt Nam thường cảm thấy nhàm chán trong các bài học từ vựng và nghĩ đến việc học một danh sách các từ mới có nghĩa trong ngôn ngữ của mình mà không cần thực hành ngữ cảnh thực tế. Làm việc theo cách này, sau một thời gian ngắn, học sinh có thể nhận ra rằng điều này không làm họ hài lòng. Với

mục đích tìm hiểu động cơ học tập của học sinh, một nghiên cứu được thực hiện tập trung tìm hiểu động cơ học tập từ vựng của học sinh lớp 10 trường THPT Phan Đăng Lưu ở giai đoạn đầu của giờ học kỹ năng thông qua trò chơi ngôn ngữ. Một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát đơn giản đã được sử dụng để tìm hiểu thông tin. Kết quả chính cho thấy hứng thú học tập của học sinh chưa cao. Cần chú ý hơn nữa đến việc lựa chọn và tổ chức trò chơi nhằm giúp các em tăng động cơ học từ vựng khi sử dụng trò chơi. Những phát hiện này sẽ hữu ích cho các giáo viên tiếng Anh quan tâm.

Từ khóa: sử dụng trò chơi, dạy và học từ vựng, động cơ học tập, học từ vựng tiếng Anh

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English has become an international language and it plays an important role as an international means of communication and trade of human society. Therefore, teaching and learning English have become more and more popular in many countries. It is also acknowledged that vocabulary is an important part of language learning in general, and in English learning in particular.

However, if learners do not understand a sizable portion of vocabulary in the language that they are reading or hearing, then this language is not comprehensible and therefore can not be useful for acquisition. Many argue that vocabulary is one of the most important components in learning a foreign language.

Even though most Vietnamese students realize the importance of vocabulary when learning a foreign language, they learn vocabulary passively. They depend much on teachers' pronunciation and explanation. Some students may require teachers to give meaning and grammatical function for words that they are not familiar. They just wait for teachers who control the lesson to provide new forms of words when they write those words in their notebook or complete their exercises.

The students' motivation is really important in learning. The more they are interested and involved in the learning task, the better the learning outcomes. With the above aims, the study was to find out the answer to the following question: How were the 10th form students at Phan Dang Luu High School motivated in learning vocabulary with the use of language games? What are some effective ways to help increase their motivation in learning vocabulary when using games?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Using games in teaching and learning vocabulary

2.1.1. Definition of games

According to Salen & Zimmerman (2003), "a game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." However, not all the games result in a quantifiable outcome. When we conduct a game, it may lead to some other unexpected outcomes and sometimes, it is difficult to specify all the results that the game is likely to create.

Costikyan (1994) pointed out that "a game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in the pursuit of a goal". Yet, it is not always that game is considered as art; it is different from art as art is more concerned with the expression while game is more involved activities, conflict or opposition.

Wittgenstein (2002) demonstrated that the elements of games, such as play, rules, and competition, all fail to adequately define what the games are. In his opinion, "game could not be contained by any single definition, but that games must be looked at as a series of definitions that share a "family resemblance" to another."

In short, there are many different opinions about the definition of game in fact, but all the games share the same components which are goals, rules, challenge and interaction. They involved mental or physical stimulation and often both help develop practical skills. Games are distinct from work, which is usually carried out for remuneration, and from art, which is more concerned with the expression of ideas. However, there is only a thin line of difference between them and many games are considered to be work or art.

2.1.2. The importance of game in education

There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. Learning should be fun. All students learn faster and retain more when they are engaged, involved and having fun. Carefully selected games can have a positive impact in students' learning. According to McFarlane (2003), "games which develop the tasks within

them so that there is a clear progression overall are valued more highly, as are games where the level of challenge can be adapted for students of different ability level". By this way, games help develop the team work, debating ability and ideal exchanging between members in team or between different teams. Moreover, playing games helps create the funny and friendly atmosphere within the class.

Ersor (2000) also affirmed that "Language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating. Constant effort is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target language. Well-chosen games are invaluable as they give students a break and at the same time allow students to practice language skills." Games are highly motivating as they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Moreover, they employ meaningful and useful language in real context. They also encourage and increase cooperation. Also, games can be used to give in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen and Khuat Thi Thu Nga (2003) indicate that students tend to learn and retain new vocabulary better, when it is applied in a relaxed environment like playing vocabulary games. Lightbown and Spada (1999) also stress the importance of motivation and

emphasize that the principal way that teachers can influence learners' motivation is by making the classroom a supportive environment in which students are stimulated, (and) engaged in (the)activities. Muna A. Al-Shawi (2014) points out that using games to practice vocabulary improves learners' ability to memorize the words effectively. Games provide comprehensible input while learners interact in the group and allowing students to clarify the meanings of the words.

2.2. Motivation in a language lesson

2.2.1. Definition of motivation

According to the Wikipedia, "Motivation is the active or energization of goal-oriented behaviour". Motivation may be rooted in the basic need to minimize physical pain and maximize pleasure, or it may include specific needs such as eating and resting, or a desired object, hobby, goal, state of being, ideal, or it may be attribute to less-apparent reasons such as altruism, selfishness, morality, or avoiding mortality.

According to Nguyen Ngoc Thao (2001), motivation is called reason or

aim to boost the action to get success. We also offer the following "dictionary definition" drawn from a number of different sources: "Motivation is the extent to which you make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit." (Brown: 1994)

A simple definition of motivation is the ability to change behavior. It is a drive that compels one to act because human behavior is directed toward some goal. Motivation is "intrinsic" (internal); it comes from within based on personal interest, desires, and need for fulfillment. However, extrinsic (external) factors such as rewards, praise, and promotion also influence motivation.

A person's motivation can also be defined as "a combination of desire and energy directed at achieving a goal." Therefore, influencing someone's motivation means getting them to want to do what you know must be done.

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) define motivation in terms of students' interest in and enthusiasm for the materials and activities used in class, their persistence with the learning task as indicated by levels of concentration and enjoyment. Learning is only effective if students enjoy activities and work hard.

From what have been mentioned, Crookes and Schmidt's definition is chosen to use in this research because of the two reasons. First, it is directly related to the process of teaching and learning a language which emphasizes the important roles of students. Theoretically, when students are interested in the activities and are persistent with the learning tasks, they will get better results in learning. Second, it is similar to what would be studied in the research project that the researcher wants to examine the students' interest, satisfaction and concentration on eliciting activities in class, so the working definition in the thesis is: motivation is *students' interest, satisfaction, attention or levels of concentration, their effort and persistence with the learning task as well as the challenge of the activities conducted by teachers.* The definition is very important because it will guide the researcher to design a questionnaire survey to get the information about the students' learning motivation in the research.

2.2.2. The importance of motivation

Most motivation theorists assume that motivation is involved in the performance of all learned responses, that is, a learned behavior will not occur unless it is energized. The major question

among psychologists, in general, is whether motivation is a primary or secondary influence on behavior. That is, are changes in behavior better explained by principles of environmental/ecological influences, perception, memory, cognitive development, emotion, explanatory style, or personality or are concepts unique to motivation more pertinent.

The importance of motivation is important for most people in everyday situations. Universities and organizations and schools always make sure that their students and employees are always motivated to carry out their work to the best of their ability.

Nguyen Quoc Hung (2004) indicates the learning attitude that mostly, the bad effect of a class period doesn't depend on the technique and enthusiasm on class of the teacher but mainly the learning attitude of students.

Motivation is perhaps the most crucial element of a child's education. According to Brown (1994), an academically motivated student is a child that "wants to learn, likes learning-related activities, and believes school is important". Thus, a motivated student and a smart student are not categorically equivalent. While the correlation between intelligence and achievement is higher than the correlation between achievement and any other factor, the relationship is not perfect.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Description of the subjects of the study

The number of subjects in my study ranged from 100 to 145 in 3 classes 10C1, 10C2 and 10C3. The students are in the ten-form at Phan Dang Luu High School, having an average age of 16.

These classes are mixed-ability classes, so there are still weak students in English. They have been learning English for 5 or 6 years but most of them are not very good at English. Some of them do not focus much on learning. In English lessons, they often do other exercises because they think that English is too difficult to learn and the activities in class are so boring. Most of them have a medium level of English proficiency.

3.2. Description of data instruments

Basing on Crookes and Schmidt (1991)'s definition of motivation in terms of students' interest and enthusiasm for activities used in class, their persistence with the learning task as indicated by levels of concentration and

enjoyment. A simple questionnaire was designed for the students consisting of 7 questions, which sought information about the students' motivation when using games in learning vocabulary.

The first question collected information about how the students got involved in the learning tasks. The second and fourth questions sought information about the level of students' concentration and attention on the learning task. The third and fifth questions gathered information about how students were enjoying the activities. The sixth question aimed at getting information about the challenge of the games used. The last question collected information about the

interaction between students in English lesson when games are used.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Regarding to the students' involvement, as can be seen from chart 1, half of the students (50%) were very much involved in learning task when games were used. They were willing to join the games in groups and they tried their best to be the winners. Other 38% were quite involved and 10% were not very involved. However, there were still some students (2%) appearing not to be interested in the activities held. The data show that more students need to get more involved in the learning task in order to perform the language better.
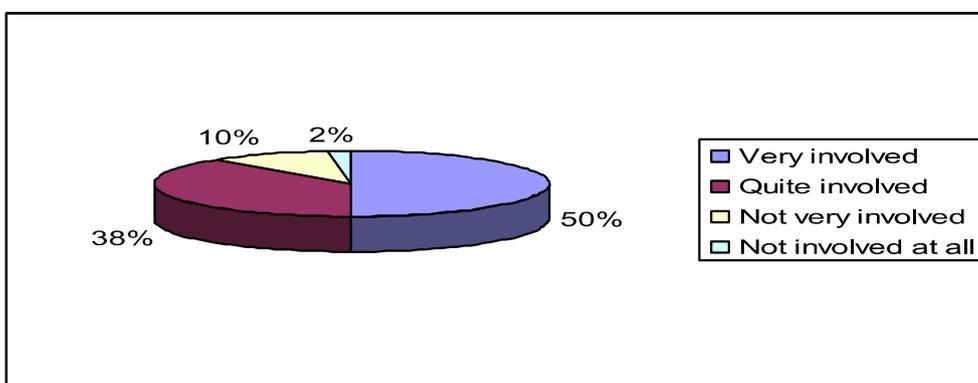

Chart 1: *Students'* involvement in learning vocabulary when games are used

The result from question 2 shown in chart 2 is rather similar to the answer in question 1. The students who were involved in learning task concentrated a lot on the activities held (48%). Nevertheless, the students not involved in learning task

had low concentration (2%). Language learning is hard work. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games need to encourage as many learners as possible to sustain their interest and work.
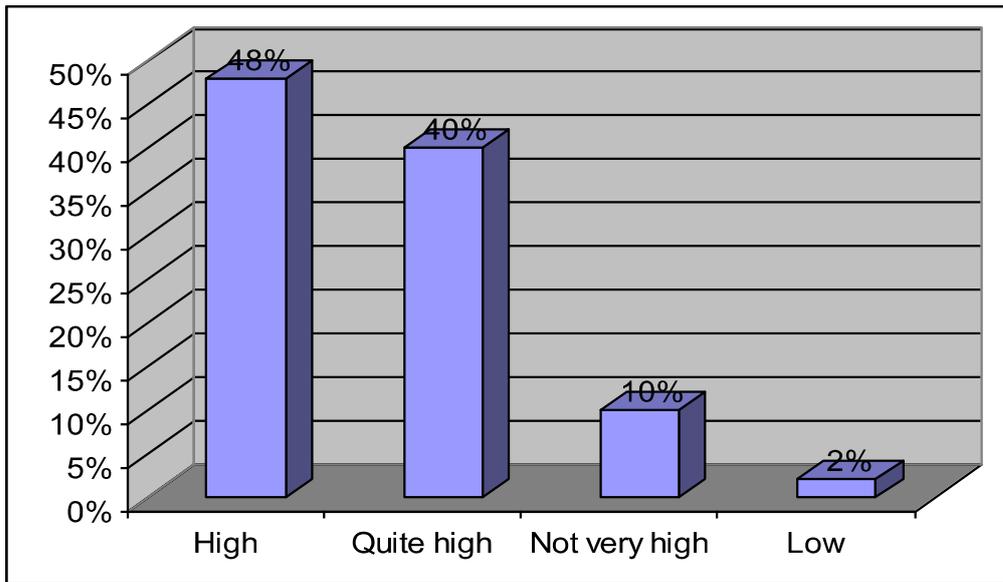
Chart 2: *Students'* concentration on learning vocabulary when games are used

With regard to the students' attention during the task, as shown in chart 3, 60% of the students paid persistent attention to the lesson when games were used. As mentioned above, almost all the students found that learning and teaching vocabulary were not very interesting, that's the reason why students could not concentrate on the learning task during the lesson. However, with the use of games, only 2% said that they paid low attention to the task. Obviously, the use of games has improved the attitude of students to the vocabulary learning.
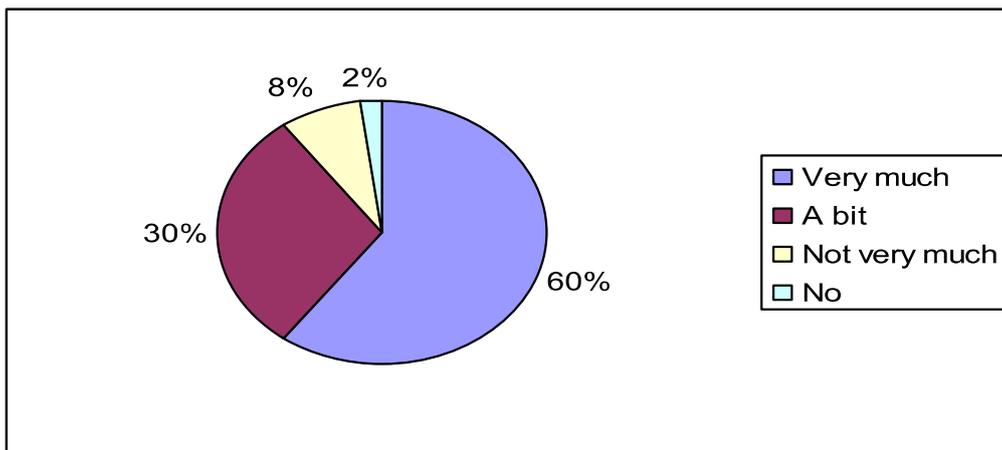

Chart 3: *Students'* attention during the lesson

In terms of the students' enjoyment, as shown in chart 4, about half of the students said they liked the games used very much (50%). The games helped them remember the

vocabulary more quickly. Only 10% did not enjoy the games used much. The reason may be because English is not their favorite subject or because they did not like to join the work.
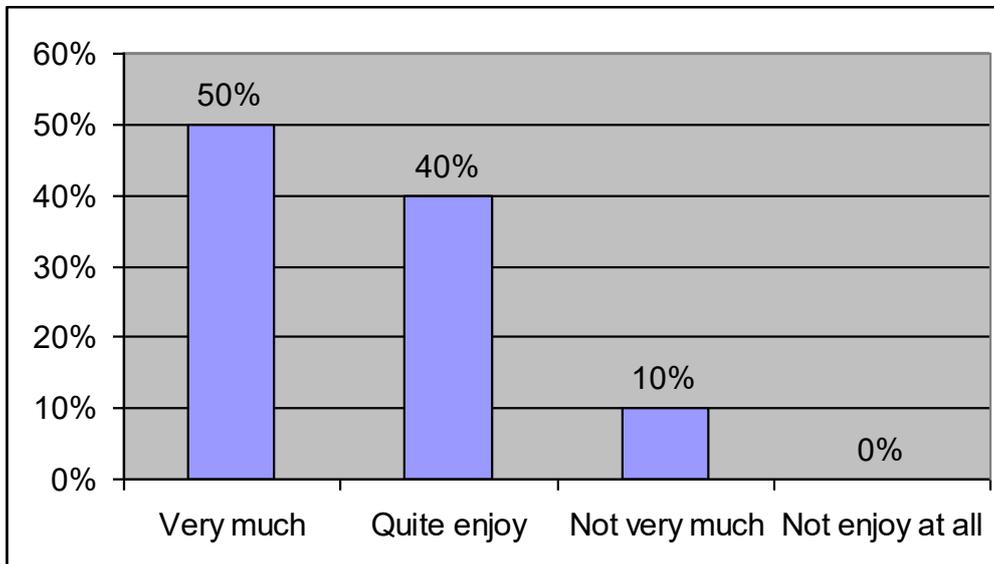

Chart 4: *Students'* enjoyment in the activities in which games are used

However, obviously, more than half of the students found the activities very interesting. This was reflected through the answer to question 5. Even students who did not enjoy the games very much found them interesting. None of them thought that games were not interesting. In comparison, the students were much more active and eager with the lesson.
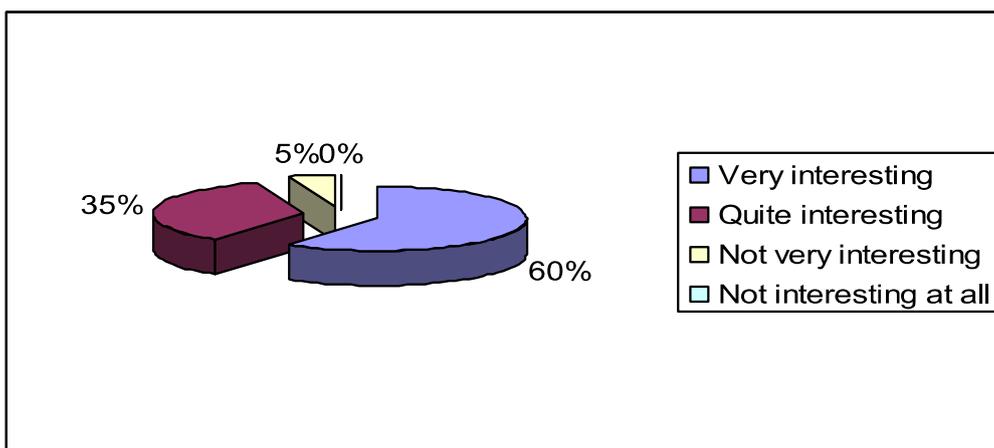

Chart 5: *Students'* appreciation about the interest of games used

With regard to the students' appreciation of the games' challenge, it can be seen from chart 6, nearly 50% of the students thought that games used were

very challenging. Only 5% found them not very challenging. It is clear that the challenge of games used play a very important role in increasing the motivation of students. If the games used were not challenging, the application would be a waste of time and effort. Nevertheless, students found that games used were appropriate and challenging means that they were willing to take part in these activities. From the positive results of question 5 and 6, we can easily recognize that students have been much more motivated when learning vocabulary.

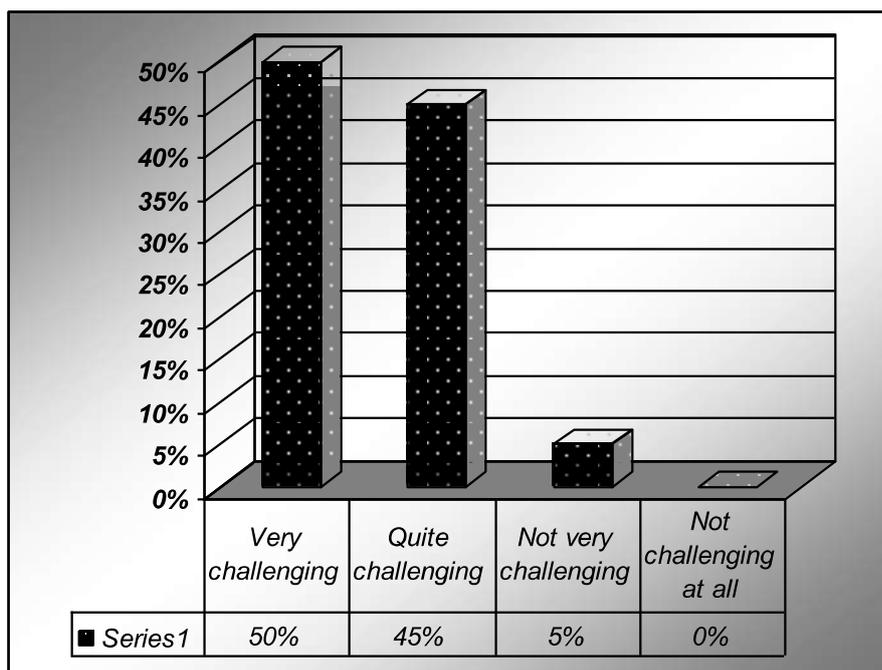|	Very challenging	Quite challenging	Not very challenging	Not challenging at all
■ Series1	50%	45%	5%	0%

Chart 6: *Students' appreciation of the games' challenge*

Regarding the students' interaction when games are used, as we can see from the chart 7, 60% of the students being asked had a good interaction with their partners, other 30% said they were interacting much. Only 8% found that the games used did not help very much in interaction between them. To take part in the games, all students in groups had to discuss, co-ordinate and debate; that means they have developed the interaction between members and their pair-work and group-work ability. The more the students participate in the game, the better result they will get.
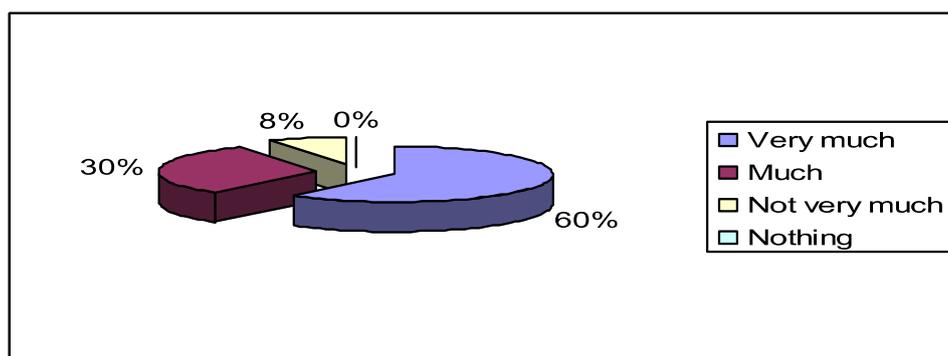
Chart 7: *Students' interaction when games are used*

It should be noted that almost all the games used were team-games. The effectiveness of pair-work and group-work of most Vietnamese students is not very high. Therefore, with the application of games, it can improve this situation. Students have to get familiar with those activities.

In short, the use of games in the pre stage of a language skills lesson has involved the students in the lessons to a certain level. The students' concentration, persistence, enjoyment and interaction in the research was not as high as expected. Perhaps, much attention should be paid to the choice of games and the ways the teachers organize the activities.

5. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Recommendation

There is a wide variety of games that can be used for educational aims. However, choosing and preparing games for teaching and learning English vocabulary is a creative process that needs so much consideration for teachers. The following are general guidelines to help increase the level of the students' motivation:

Firstly, the choice of games is an important process. A game must be more than just fun. It means that they must be designed to serve typical aims and teacher should exploit them thoroughly. Games used should also keep all of the students involved and interested. They should be an effective way to keep "friendly" competition between students. Through this competition, students will be more involved in the lesson and be closer to each other. Moreover, games should give students a chance to learn, practice, or view specific language material. This feature is consistent to the first one. If games cannot meet this demand, they do not mean anything; it is merely a way of recreation. Games should also lend themselves well to revision exercises helping students recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way. There are a great number of language games. So,

teachers have a variety of choices. However, in deciding which game to use in a particular class and which games will be most appropriate and most successful with their students, teachers must take into account the students' characteristics (Carrier :1990).

Secondly, in teaching and learning English, games should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do. They ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign language. Therefore, they can be used at all stages of the lesson. But teacher must be sure that games provided are suitable and carefully organized. Then, before playing a game, teachers should pay attention to the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic and the classroom setting. All of these factors determine the effectiveness of games used.

Thirdly, before playing games, teacher should explain the task and roles of students in the games. If the teacher does not do this, students will feel embarrassed because they do not know how the games go and what procedure they have to

5.2. Conclusion

Motivation is perhaps the most crucial element of a child's education; therefore, creating motivation in

follow. So, clear explanation is the first important factor which determines the success of the games used.

Fourthly, while games are being used to serve the learning task, teachers should have some methods to encourage the participation of all students, foster them and cheer with them. Small gifts can be used for this goal. In reality, using games in classroom sometimes fails due to the lack of cooperation among members of class. Games require all students' involvement and they promote friendly competition; therefore, it is very important that students have a cooperative attitude.

Fifthly, teachers should not use one game again and again because students will feel bored. Teachers should prepare many different games to use them suitably.

Lastly, when using games, teachers should have a good control of the students and must be fair in evaluation of the students' activities. The students usually speak in their mother tongue to discuss instead of the language they are learning (English). Consequently, teachers should make sure that their students are using English during the process of activities by paying more attention to their monitoring jobs.

teaching and learning is extremely important. The application of games can help to serve this aim because they are highly motivating and entertaining. On the basis of these information, the

researcher has conducted the study using a questionnaire to find out the learning motivation of the 10th form students at Phan Dang Luu School when teachers used games in English vocabulary learning. The study revealed that the students' concentration, persistence, enjoyment and interaction in the research was not very high. From what has been studied, the researcher gave some suggestions to help increase the students' level of motivation in terms of the choice of games and the ways the teachers organize the activities.

Whenever a game is to be conducted, the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and the classroom settings are factors that should be taken into account. The researcher hopes that the study will be beneficial a lot to the teachers in the teaching and learning English vocabulary with language games.

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