

# Students' Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Teaching Techniques at the Helen Doron School of English

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STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOCABULARY TEACHING TECHNIQUES AT  
THE HELEN DORON SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

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SUPERVISOR: Dr Irena Vodopija-Krstanović

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## **Abstract**

English language teaching (ELT) today is in the post-method era. After trying to find the best language teaching method for years, it has been realized that the teaching of English should not adhere to a single method or be prescribed, rather, ELT should reflect students' needs and aim at developing their communicative competence. Therefore, ELT incorporates the development of language skills, grammar, and vocabulary, among other. In line with this view, this study focuses on investigating one aspect of ELT and analyses students' attitudes towards vocabulary teaching techniques used at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka. Specifically, the aim is to analyse students' preferences for vocabulary teaching techniques and their perceived usefulness. The results were obtained through a questionnaire that consisted of three parts – background information, Likert scale items, and open-ended questions. While the students liked all the techniques used and found them useful, the results indicate that using games is both seen as the most useful and most preferred vocabulary teaching technique at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka. The least favourite teaching technique is using songs and the least useful is using facial expressions. These findings could have implications on teaching vocabulary at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka and other schools.

Key words: ELT, students' attitudes, Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka, vocabulary teaching techniques, young learners

## 1. Introduction

Until recently, the field of foreign language vocabulary learning and teaching was fairly neglected by linguistic experts and scientific research (Richards and Rodgers, 2002). In fact, it was considered to be the skill that was developed as a by-product of acquiring foreign language grammar (Grammar-Translation Method) or as a by-product of passive reception of a foreign language that would result in appropriate automatic answer (Audiolingual Method). However, with raising awareness of the importance of learners' active construction of their language knowledge, these approaches have undergone severe criticism.

Instead, today ELT finds itself in the post-method era. This means that it has been realized that teaching of English should not be prescribed, but in the focus of attention should be the development of students' communicative competence. By combining features of different language teaching methods that adhere to the students' needs, ELT provides the opportunity for students to develop their language skills, grammar, and vocabulary, among other.

The aim of the present study is to analyse the techniques that are used to teach vocabulary to students enrolled in the course Teen Talent 1 at the Helen Doron School of English. As stated by Yamashita (2022), "Vocabulary supports virtually all aspects of language performance." The vocabulary teaching techniques used throughout the course are the following: didactic games, songs, facial expressions, gestures, picture flashcards, word flashcards, and props. The study is based on three research questions which investigate the vocabulary techniques that are perceived as most useful, the most preferred vocabulary teaching techniques and the least preferred vocabulary teaching techniques among attendants of the course Teen Talent 1. It is hoped that the findings could provide interesting insights into vocabulary teaching in the EFL classroom.

The motivation for this study arose from my personal language learning experience and my teaching experience at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka. Learning new vocabulary in primary and secondary school was always extremely difficult for me. This was probably due to the fact that my English teachers usually insisted on memorizing long lists of words accompanied by their synonyms and antonyms. In the ELT Methodology course, I learned about various different vocabulary teaching techniques. Shortly after that, I started working at the Helen Doron

School of English and I immediately noticed that the young learners there had a vast vocabulary range for their age, and that they learned new words in a quite spontaneous manner. This environment inspired me to investigate which of the vocabulary teaching techniques used at Helen Doron School of English are perceived to be the most useful ones, and which are the most and least preferred by the students.

## 2. Vocabulary and English Language Teaching

Throughout the history of English language teaching (ELT), there have been numerous approaches to language learning. During this period, however, the position and importance of vocabulary learning varied immensely and at times it received centre stage attention, while at others it was neglected (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). What seems to be widely acknowledged today is that “[v]ocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first, second, or foreign.” (Celce-Murcia, 2001: 285). This position is supported by numerous studies that have been conducted in the field (Wei, 2007, Torki, 2011, Milton & Alexiou, 2012, Alqahtani, 2015, Sa’ d and Rajabi, 2018, Karimovna and Dinara, 2019).

Although there is consensus about the importance of learning vocabulary, there does not appear to be a generally accepted theory of the process of vocabulary learning (Pavičić Takač, 2008). Pavičić Takač argues that this is precisely the case because, on one hand, “psycholinguists have a particular interest in vocabulary development and exploration of the formal models of vocabulary acquisition, and ignore the L2 vocabulary literature because it is model-free” and, on the other hand, “applied linguists are mainly concerned with the descriptive aspects of vocabulary and do not draw on existing psycholinguistic models of bilingual lexicon even when this implies an immediate pedagogical significance” (2008:4). However, it is generally agreed among first and second language educators and researchers that, in order to become a mature language user, one must master the vocabulary of the target language (Siyanova and Webb, 2016).

As for vocabulary and ELT methodology, along with the trends and changes in language teaching and learning that have been taking places, approaches to vocabulary teaching have been modified throughout the course of years (Schmitt, 2000). Specifically, the role of vocabulary in ELT and the principles, strategies and techniques for teaching have changed from one method to the other.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the 1920s, English was taught according to the principles of the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Emphasis was placed on reading, writing, memorizing, translating and the explicit teaching of grammar. New vocabulary was selected with the sole purpose of illustrating grammatical rules (Rivers, 1981). Students would receive bilingual vocabulary lists to memorize and were taught grammatical rules explicitly. Then, they were supposed to use that knowledge for translating various texts. In other words, students



were expected to read classics, but were not instructed in how to use target language in real-life situations (Moreno, 2003).

Due to the inadequacy of the Grammar-Translation Method to prepare students to use the language in real-life communicative situations, it received severe criticism. In this climate, Berlitz introduced The Direct Method. This method had a key rule: translation is to be avoided regardless of the situation because the underlying belief is that the second language is acquired in the same way as the first one (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Thus, a great emphasis is put on everyday communication. Concrete vocabulary items are presented through objects, pictures, and actions while the abstract ones are taught by associations of ideas (Richards and Rodgers, 2002). Vocabulary is used in full sentences rather than by memorizing word lists.

In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Reading Method was born in the United States. The Reading Method, also known as Situational Language Teaching in Great Britain, for the first time in ELT recognizes the crucial role of mastering vocabulary for second language learners (Moreno, 2003). As West pointed out: “The primary thing in learning a language is the acquisition of a vocabulary, and practice in using it (which is the same thing as ‘acquiring’). The problem is what vocabulary; and none of these ‘modern textbooks in common use in English schools’ have attempted to solve the problem.” (1930: 514). West’s solution to the problem of choosing the appropriate vocabulary items was to consult the word-frequency lists, and, in that way, made vocabulary learning more relevant by focusing on the most commonly used words and phrases.

The Audio-Lingual Method emerged in the 1940s and was greatly inspired by Skinner’s behaviouristic theory. In this method, learning a second language is seen as a process of habit formation that is obtained by rewarding the right answer, and vocabulary is kept to a minimum (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). In other words, the method drills students to use sentence patterns and they were expected to master particular language structures and reproduce rather simple, yet correct sentences. That is why only a limited number of simple vocabulary items were introduced to students. In that way, the role of vocabulary was downgraded to merely filling empty slots in the target language structures (Moreno, 2003).

With the Communicative language teaching approach, the focus shifted from the command of structures to developing general communicative proficiency (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). In the weaker version of the approach, the importance of creating the opportunities for second language

use is emphasized, while in the strong version of the approach it is suggested that the language is acquired exclusively through communication (Wu, 2009). The role of teaching vocabulary is recognized as a significant component of the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, where it is often taught by using authentic materials (newspaper articles, interviews, everyday conversation). In that way, the students encounter real-life communicative situations, which enhances vocabulary retention (Wu, 2009).

Throughout the history of ELT, there have been numerous methods and approaches to language instruction, and by implication to teaching and learning vocabulary. This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of the roles of vocabulary teaching in ELT methodologies. The chapter that follows moves on to consider the key principles of teaching vocabulary.

## 2.2 Principles of teaching vocabulary

Before considering the principles of teaching vocabulary, it might be useful to first briefly explain what knowing a word involves and what is understood by vocabulary in ELT. Knowing a word generally means knowing its meaning; however, there is more to a word than just its meaning (Harmer, 2015). When learning new words, learners need to be fully aware of the correct pronunciation of words and their spelling. According to some studies (Jenpattarakul, 2012, Darcy, 2018), correct pronunciation facilitates the storing of new words and their retrieval in the given communicative situation. Additionally, the pronunciation is of utmost importance in avoiding misunderstandings in oral communication. That is why it is imperative that the teacher is a good role model who presents new words with correct pronunciation. Word spelling seems to aid vocabulary retention, as well. Ehri and Rosenthal (2007) state in their study that spellings of words are preserved in our memory and affect phonemic and syllabic segmentation of words, as well as strengthen the memory for pseudowords, and influence the detection of oral rhyming words. That is why it is important to present both the meaning and the form of a word in close conjunction so those two aspects of a word could be stored together in learner's memory (Thornbury, 2002). Knowing a word also includes knowing specific grammar notions that apply to that word, for instance, verbs that have irregular form of the past simple tense. Furthermore, it includes learning collocations of the new word (Rogers, 2018). For instance, when introducing words like homework and effort, we may note that we 'do our homework' and we 'make an effort'. Additionally, when

learning new words, it is also important to pay attention to other aspects of meaning: denotation, connotation, appropriateness, and semantic relationships. The denotation of words is their direct connection to the real world, i.e., their core meaning, and learners usually do not have difficulties with understanding it. For example, the word ‘dog’ denotes a kind of animal. However, the connotation of a word is a component of meaning that describes the speakers’ attitudes towards the given word. For instance, the word ‘dog’ is understood as a friendly and loyal animal by most British speakers, while the equivalent in Arabic is associated with dirt and inferiority by most Arabic speakers (Ur, 2012:61). The appropriateness is an aspect of meaning that is even more subtle than the connotation and it refers to the awareness of the appropriate use of certain words in different context. For example, the verb ‘weep’ is a synonym of ‘cry’, but it is more formal, and it tends to be used in writing more than in speech (Ur, 2012:61). Semantic relationships indicate the connections between different words and can facilitate the storing of the new words. Thus, when encountering new words, we can aid our learning with writing the item’s synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, co-hyponyms, superordinates, and translation equivalents in our mother tongue. Finally, each new word can be broken down into its constituents, which are then used to create new words or different forms of the same word. This process is called word formation. By drawing learners’ attention to common prefixes, suffixes, and their meanings, i.e., word formation, teachers facilitate the students’ learning of new words. For instance, if the learners know the meaning of the prefix un-, they will understand the word uncomfortable more easily (Ur, 2012:62).

Also, it is worth mentioning here that there are different levels of students’ knowledge of a word: if the students have never seen or heard the word before that is the unknown level; acquainted level is when the students have only a vague idea of what is the meaning of the word; and, the established level of students’ knowledge of a word is when the students use the word accurately in their own speech or writing (The Partnership for reading, 2003: 43).

There are different guidelines and principles to teaching vocabulary; however, given the word constraint, this section will focus on two sets of principles.

Nation (2008:1) highlights six principles of teaching vocabulary:

1. Keep the teaching simple and clear. Don’t give complicated explanations.
2. Relate the present teaching to past knowledge by showing a pattern or analogies.
3. Use both oral and written presentation - write it on the blackboard as well as explaining.

4. Give most attention to words that are already partly known.
5. Tell the learners if it is a high frequency word that is worth noting for future attention.
6. Don't bring in other unknown or poorly known related words like near synonyms, opposites, or members of the same lexical set.

Essentially, this means that, other than providing the students with simple and clear explanation of the new vocabulary items, choosing appropriate words to teach is of the utmost importance. The appropriateness of the words is determined by their frequency in oral and written communication. Additionally, teachers should always put new words in relation to the previous knowledge of their students. By doing so, the students' vocabulary is built in a meaningful way and the retention of the new words is facilitated (Nation, 2008). Consequently, teachers should avoid presenting new words that are completely unknown to students and that are not used frequently. Another important principle is to use both written and oral presentation when introducing new words. This is useful because it offers two different kinds of input – visual and auditory and two different aspects of a word – its form and its meaning. In that way, students benefit from the different exposures to the new words, and they are enabled to make a mental connection between the word's form and its meaning (Thornbury, 2002).

According to David Nunan (2015: 112-114), there are four key principles of teaching vocabulary:

1. Introduce New Vocabulary in Context
2. Focus on the Most Useful Vocabulary First
3. Teach Learners Strategies for Vocabulary Acquisition so that They Can Continually Add to Their Repertoire
4. Pay Attention to Repetition and Spacing.

The first key principle “Introduce New Vocabulary in Context” emphasizes the importance of providing meaningful context for new vocabulary items. In other words, if we want to ensure vocabulary retention of a new word, we need to put the word in as many contextualized sentences as possible. Moreover, by presenting common phrases or conversational routines that are frequently used, we can create the conditions for learning several words at the same time (Nunan, 2015).

The second key principle “Focus on the Most Useful Vocabulary” deals with the choice of vocabulary that will be taught. Nation (2003) suggests that while deciding which vocabulary items to teach it would be very useful to use a word list of the 1000 most common words as a reference tool because those words cover around 75% of the running words in academic texts and newspapers, over 80% of the running words in novels, and about 85% of the running words in conversations.

In the third key principle “Teach Learners Strategies for Vocabulary Acquisition so They Can Continually Add to Their Repertoire” Nunan (2015) points out the fact that English is a vocabulary rich language. Therefore, it is impossible to teach our students all the words and phrases that they will need throughout the course of their lives, and they will need to continuously add new words to their language repertoire. That is why it is particularly important that we equip our students with effective vocabulary learning strategies that will aid their learning of new vocabulary items even after they leave classroom.

The fourth principle indicated by Nunan (2015) is “Pay Attention to Repetition and Spacing.” An unwritten rule says that in order to learn new vocabulary items, learners need between ten to twenty repetitions of those new vocabulary items in different contexts (Nunan, 2015). It is also important that different features of the vocabulary items (such as pronunciation, spelling, specific grammar notions) are presented during each of those repetitions. Another important concept for learning new items is spacing. Spacing involves taking breaks between the repetitions of the new items. In other words, Nunan (2015) suggests that instead of devoting the whole lesson to the learning of the new words, it would be more useful to dedicate a quarter of four lessons to it.

This section has reviewed the two sets of principles of teaching vocabulary. In the next chapter, the main vocabulary teaching strategies will be listed and described.

### 2.3 Vocabulary teaching techniques

Hatch and Brown (2000: 401) define teaching strategies as “everything teachers do or should do in order to help their learners learn”. Some researchers in the field prefer using the term teaching techniques in order to describe the activities that teachers do to aid their students’ learning process (Carter and McCarty, 2013). Merry (1980), for example, distinguishes between teacher and student actions and uses the term teaching techniques for describing what teachers do in order to facilitate their students’ learning, and teaching strategies as the term defining conscious processes in which students partake in order to enhance their learning. Nowadays, it is accepted that there is an overlap in meanings between the two terms and they are often used interchangeably (Ur, 2012). For the sake of this paper, the term vocabulary teaching techniques will be used as the term describing what teachers do to aid their students’ learning of the new vocabulary items.

According to Ur (2012:63), there are several different vocabulary teaching techniques, which include offering concise definition, providing detailed description of the new item, listing examples, illustrating, demonstrating, providing rich enough context, listing synonyms and antonyms of the new item, translating, and listing common collocations. Offering concise definition is similar to word descriptions in dictionaries, for instance, “a dog is an animal which...” (Ur, 2012:63). Teachers should be careful not to offer a too complex definition of a new vocabulary item, i.e., the definitions should be age appropriate. Detailed description of a new vocabulary item includes presenting its distinctive features, for example “a dog is an animal that barks” (if no other known animal barks). In that way, the learning of a new vocabulary item is facilitated, and it may be more easily retrieved.

By listing examples of the words’ hyponyms or hypernyms, teachers allow students to put the new vocabulary item in relationships to other words. For instance, when presenting the term ‘dog’, different breeds can be listed as hyponyms and terms such as ‘animal’ or ‘mammal’ as hypernyms.

Illustration refers to the graphic representation of new vocabulary items. This technique is especially useful with younger learners and learners who prefer visual input. For instance, when introducing the term ‘dog’, teachers can show students a picture of a real dog. By doing this, the learners’ brains are stimulated both by visual and auditive input, which may result in better language learning.

Demonstration includes various gestures, miming, and acting. Again, this technique is mostly used with younger learners in order to simplify the learning of new vocabulary items. For example, when teaching different emotions, such as ‘happy, sad, angry’, it is very useful to act them out while saying “I am sad, happy, angry...”.

By offering different contexts in which new vocabulary item occurs, teachers immediately demonstrate their active use. Additionally, the learners can create their own examples of the new item and thus create their own perception and understanding of it.

Synonyms and antonyms are useful in teaching vocabulary because building associations between words aids their successful learning. Words are interconnected in numerous ways and these connections reflect underlying relationships in the learner’s mind (Celce-Murcia, 2001:288).

Using translation can sometimes be helpful if the new vocabulary item has a direct cognate in the mother tongue and if the literal meaning, i.e., the denotation of the item, is being taught. For instance, the denotation of the term ‘dog’ is ‘pas’ in Croatian. However, the vocabulary item ‘dog’ can be used in idiomatic expression, such as “I don’t have a dog in this fight” which means “to have or not have an interest in a conflict”<sup>1</sup>. If the sentence was translated directly into Croatian as “nemam psa u ovoj borbi”, it would not make any sense. That is why teachers must be careful when using the translation technique.

Another vocabulary teaching technique is listing common collocations of the items. Not only does this technique aid the retention of the new vocabulary items, but it also highly develops learners’ fluency and, as mentioned earlier in the paper, it facilitates learning more than one vocabulary item at the same time (Nunan, 2015).

This chapter has demonstrated some vocabulary teaching techniques. It is now necessary to explain the course of teaching vocabulary to young learners.

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<sup>1</sup> “Have A/No Dog in a Fight (Phrase) Definition and Synonyms: Macmillan Dictionary.” *HAVE A/NO DOG IN A FIGHT (Phrase) Definition and Synonyms | Macmillan Dictionary*, Macmillan Education Limited 2009–2023, [www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/have-a-no-dog-in-a-fight](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/have-a-no-dog-in-a-fight).

## 2.4 Teaching vocabulary to young learners

In order to describe the principles of teaching vocabulary to young learners, the term young learners should be defined first. As Kirkgöz (2019: 172) notes: “the term young learners covers a range of learners who share commonly accepted characteristics such as having short attention spans and learning holistically, but differ in terms of their physical, psychological, social, emotional, conceptual and cognitive development.” Because the age of enrolling into different educational institutions may vary in different educational systems, Ellis (2014) suggests that learners should be divided into groups with the common denominator being the educational institution they belong to. Thus, these are the groups of learners: pre-schooler children age 2 to 5 belong to the group named very young learners or early starters, primary school pupils age 6 to 10/11 are commonly known as young learners, secondary school children age 11-14 are known as young learners or early teens, and children age 15-17 are known as young adults (Kirkgöz, 2019). In this paper, I will refer to the young learners that are primary school pupils and that are within the age range of 11-13 years.

As explained earlier, several different aspects of development occur during this period, among which is the restructuring of several body systems that influence social information-processing, as well as changes in the prefrontal cortex, which serves as a controller of cognition and action (Steinberg, 2005). In the early stages of adolescence, language plays a powerful role as an instrument of knowing, i.e.,” language moulds and enhances information processing” (Bruner, 1964:13). As far as foreign language teaching is concerned, this may imply that teachers need to pay special attention to the instruction material and techniques that they will apply, i.e., the choice of what is being taught and the manner in which it is being taught, because it may influence the way in which students process information in their foreign language. In general, young learners, from ten and above, can already distinguish between fiction and fact; they tend to express strongly their preferences and dislikes; they care a lot about what is fair and right; they start slowly understanding the adult world around them; they pose a lot of questions; they make decisions about their own learning process; and they make sense of abstract concepts and symbols (Harmer, 2015).

Returning briefly to the subject of the principles of teaching vocabulary, it is important to note that they apply to teaching vocabulary to young learners, as well. However, care must be taken not to overload learners and to space out activities because of their short attention span (Kirkgöz, 2019).



Also, young learners' tendency towards holistic learning highlights the necessity for introducing new vocabulary items in as many real-life situations as possible. Beside the aforementioned principles of teaching vocabulary, Kirkgöz (2019) indicates that using pictures, objects and actions while teaching new vocabulary items seems to help young learners memorise vocabulary as the meaning is being stored in more forms, i.e., visual, linguistic, and, in some cases, auditory.

This section has explained what the term 'young learners' refers to and provided insights into the different techniques that can be used to teach young learners. The chapter that follows moves on to consider previous research in the field of teaching vocabulary to young learners.

### **3. Research on teaching vocabulary to young learners**

Several studies have been conducted on teaching vocabulary to younger students. In their study from 2003, Tang and Nesi compared transcripts from English classes in two different secondary schools, one being in Hong Kong and the other one in Guagnzhou. Their analysis demonstrated that different approaches to teaching vocabulary quite strongly influence the vocabulary mastering. The teacher in Hong Kong adopted a rather flexible approach including a wide variety of activities, materials, and topics, which resulted in students' producing lower-frequency words and overall broader lexical variations. The teacher in Guagnzhou strictly followed her lesson plans when teaching vocabulary and did not engage in spontaneous interactions with her students. Even though both teachers applied several different vocabulary teaching techniques, the Hong Kong classroom offered more opportunities for incidental learning and thus it could be seen as more fruitful for successful vocabulary learning.

Yanqing Sun and Qi Dong investigated children's vocabulary learning in a multimedia context and the ways in which productive learning can be facilitated (2004: 131). Their study dealt with two ways of learning support: sentence-level translation (SLT) and target warming-up (TW). The participants were seven-year-old Chinese students of EFL. Even though the findings indicated that for young beginners learning new vocabulary items only from an animation-based context without any learning support seems to be inefficient, both SLT and TW result effective as learning support in a multimedia context.

In her study from 2015, Kamila Chilkievicz investigated the preferences of 11–12-year-olds use of direct language strategies, based on Rebecca Oxford's language learning strategy framework. She found that there was a high percentage of students who preferred visual learning aids, as well as exercises involving authentic material and a strict communicative aim. Additionally, she found that students are generally willing to use English even if they feel that they do not possess the relevant knowledge (Chilkievicz, 2015:203). Based on her findings, she drew several pedagogical implications, such as: teachers should use computer graphics, maps, charts, cartoons, and texts accompanied with many pictures; teachers should use a lot of different colours and shapes that will aid vocabulary retention, as well as encourage students to ask questions and to speak as much as possible; they should provide feedback at the end of the speaking activities so as not to demoralize students while speaking (Chilkievicz, 2015:204).

Another study concerned with teaching vocabulary to younger students was carried out by Muhsuan Chou in 2012. She investigated how including games, songs, and stories into ELT influenced motivation and mastery of vocabulary in 8–11-year-old students. Based on the data collected from the field notes and the self-assessment questionnaires, she found that almost all of the students enjoyed learning English through games, songs and theme-based songs in class, and that they agreed that this way of teaching helped them memorise English vocabulary more efficiently (2012: 294). These findings are in accordance with Paul's (2003) statement that children will be more willing to take risk and make mistakes in a foreign language, without feeling frustrated, while playing games.

Sa'd and Rajabi (2018) examined which vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) Iranian learners of English perceived as effective and which ones as ineffective. They were also interested in exploring Iranian English language teachers' Vocabulary Teaching Strategies (VTSs). The participants of the study were 145 intermediate learners of EFL, and the data were collected from questionnaires, interviews, and class observations. The findings indicated that the most effective VLSs were reported to be reciting, repeating and listening to words, using words in communication, and memorising while the most effective VTSs were explanation, repetition and dictation. Also, the findings indicated scarce use of VLTs by Iranian EFL learners thus suggesting the need for training the students on how to use VLS.

Based on the aforementioned studies, it may be concluded that, when teaching vocabulary to young learners, it is important to include a variety of teaching techniques that will be in accordance with the students' needs. Including the beneficial factors of today's digital era into vocabulary teaching seems to strengthen students' motivation and vocabulary retention. Teachers should also create a safe and supportive environment in their EFL classroom in order to minimize the possibility of inhibitory anxiety levels among students and maximize practising of the foreign language.

#### 4. Helen Doron Early English

Helen Doron Education Group was founded in 1985 by a trained linguist and educator Helen Doron with the aim of teaching English as a Foreign Language. The birth of the method was a result of Doron's severe criticism of traditional second-language training, which she sees as "doomed to failure" (2010: 41) due to several reasons. First, it is not possible for the students to master all aspects of language (reading, speaking, writing, grammar, phonics) at the same time; second, students generally do not get enough individual speaking time nor receive enough direct feedback. Third, inhibition will lead to failure. Fourth, pronunciation is endangered and traditional approach to teaching second language focuses mainly on correction (Doron, 2010: 41).

In creating the methodology, Helen Doron was primarily inspired by Glenn Doman's statements about brain development and Shinichi Suzuki's approach to teaching music to very young children. Glenn Doman founded the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential in 1955. Initially, the Institute was concerned with finding the way in which disabled children would have the best life possible. Based on his studies of early brain development, he concluded that the size and the number of synapses increase rapidly in a child's brain until the age of 6 (Norton and Doman, 1982:254). Later, Doman developed a series of programmes, including early reading, early mathematics and encyclopaedic knowledge, in order to stimulate the early brain development (Doron, 2010: 25). He believes that it is important to expose children to various different stimuli in order for them to reach their maximum potential. Based on these findings, Doron soon understood that early exposure to language must be a part of such stimuli and that an early encounter with the language and the degree of its acquisition will directly influence the child's success and preparedness when confronted with various life challenges. As she states in her book *The Music of Language* (2010: 36):

A person's intellectual capability is shaped not just from their genetic makeup, but from the extremely early brain stimulation that leads to the creation of neural pathways. As more neural pathways are added, the potential for storing and retrieving information is increased.

Another great inspiration for developing Helen Doron Early English (HDEE) method was the Suzuki Method, which concerns teaching music to children. Shinichi Suzuki believed that children would be able to learn how to produce music in the same way in which they learn their mother-tongue. In other words, children should be exposed to music and encouraged, firstly, to repeat what

they hear and see in a stress-free environment, and only later be taught how to read notes. Suzuki states that teaching children to read notes first would be the same as teaching them to read first in their mother-tongue rather than to speak and understand the meaning of words (Doron, 2010: 27). When designing the HDEE method, Doron adopted certain features of the Suzuki method, such as positive reinforcement and continuous background hearing and states that “the infant is absorbing the audio data, much as a sponge soaks up water” (2010: 39).

After compiling all the necessary findings, Doron (2010) decided to structure her method around four main principles:

- 1) repeated background home hearing,
- 2) positive reinforcement,
- 3) making learning fun, and
- 4) building success.

Repeated background home hearing of the audio materials refers to the children’s daily listening of the audio materials out of the classroom, for instance, when they are playing, taking a bath, eating, or engaging in any other activity of the sort. As it is clear from the name itself, the focus is on background hearing, therefore the children do not have to actively listen to the audio materials. According to Doron (2010), this is of utmost importance for the successful learning of English because the children hear the melody of the language and the pronunciation of words, simultaneously picking up grammatical aspects of words while they are inadvertently being stored in long-term memory, becoming hard-wired due to peripheral attention. When they come to class, children connect words to their meanings, which are presented in various entertaining and memorable ways. Additionally, this principle follows the processes involved in first language acquisition. Children first hear the language and only start using it afterwards, as they do with their mother-tongue.

Positive reinforcement is another core principle of the HDEE methodology. According to Doron (2010), positive reinforcement is the key to successful language acquisition, and it is obtained by creating a safe, pleasant, comfortable environment in which a teacher praises and encourages every moment of a child's success, however big or small. The feeling of being

successful motivates every child to participate more actively in class, to try harder and experiment more with language and, ultimately, to learn more (Doron, 2010).

In order to make learning fun, numerous games, songs, and other interesting activities are included in a lesson. Moreover, classrooms at the Helen Doron School of English are bright and colourful, so as to create a stimulating and pleasant environment in which students will perceive their experience as play, not as a straightforward learning process. Every lesson is carefully planned based on methodically designed materials that encourage students' spontaneous learning (Doron, 2010). They include stimulation for all five senses – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, and tactile. The multi-sensory stimulation helps the brain to attribute various features to words and thus make them more easily retrieved (Doron, 2010).

Building success is crucial for creating and boosting intrinsic motivation for learning, which is why a child that attends the Helen Doron School of English needs to feel successful at every moment (Doron, 2010). In other words, if students feel successful in what they are doing, they will be intrinsically motivated to develop their knowledge and skills even more. At the Helen Doron School of English, the students are divided into small groups (a maximum of eight participants) to ensure the best possible conditions for language learning. The creation of collective memory happens from the very beginning – the students learn together; they support each other and fulfil each other's knowledge gaps (Doron, 2010). In that way, the teacher encourages good social relations between the students, so the students do not only learn English, but they also hone their social skills.

At the very core of HDEE methodology stands the children's desire to learn and that is why it is important to encourage their natural delight for learning by stimulating their brains in various ways and, consequently, boost their brain development for the purpose of learning (Doron, 2010: 25).

a. Vocabulary teaching techniques for young learners

As previously mentioned, the HDEE method relies on students' interest and desire to learn English. That is why most vocabulary teaching techniques at the Helen Doron School of English differ from the ones used at public schools. Smaller groups (a maximum of eight students in one group) allow teachers to present new vocabulary in a more precise, yet fun and interactive way. Thus, the new vocabulary items are presented in isolation and then put in context so the students at the HD School acquire new items by using them in various different ways. The most used techniques for teaching vocabulary to young learners at the Helen Doron School of English are the following: flashcards, songs, didactic games, props, movement and facial expressions (Doron et al., 2019).

There are two types of flashcards for presenting new vocabulary – ones that graphically represent the new vocabulary item (for instance, if the new vocabulary item is 'flower' there will be a picture of a flower on the flashcard) and ones that represent the spelling of the new vocabulary item in large bold lettering. Both types of flashcards can be used in the same lesson to ensure the mental processing and storing of new vocabulary items. The graphic flashcards can be particularly useful if there is some tricky vocabulary to be learned, such as the vocabulary item "island" which has an irregular pronunciation. Once the students connect the image of the new vocabulary item with its meaning, the item's spelling may be introduced.

The songs used for teaching vocabulary at the Helen Doron School of English are all originals written, composed and sung by either Ella or Benaya Doron for the purposes of the courses. The lyrics are educational, reflecting the content of specific units, and the melodies correspond to musical genres popular among this age group (Helen et al., 2019). The songs usually contain few vocabulary items that are new to students, while the rest are known to them. Thanks to such a setup, the songs provide enough context for students to guess the meaning of the new vocabulary items from the surrounding context. Another important feature is that the new words recur in the song, which helps the students retain them. Additionally, each song contains at least one idiom so as to aid students' developing of general fluency.

Several different didactic games are also used when teaching vocabulary. *Unscramble* is a popular game among students in which the students are divided into two groups. Each group is given a set of words (new vocabulary items) that are correctly spelled, while the teacher holds

cards with the scrambled versions of the same words. The teacher shows the scrambled card and whichever group brings the unscrambled word first wins a point. *Happy Families* is a card game used to aid the grouping of new vocabulary items in order to help the retention. New lexical items are divided into families, each family having four members. The students need to collect all four members of the same family in order to win a point. They ask each other for the missing cards. This way, new vocabulary items are stored in different groups, so they are more easily retrieved later. Puzzles can also be used in different ways, for instance, when the students need to pair the words to their synonyms or antonyms.

Props in HDEE methodology refer to the devices that assist the storage of new vocabulary items into long-term memory. For instance, if the new vocabulary items refer to telling time in English, making a big analogue clock out of cardboard, with moveable hour- and minute-hands, will certainly aid the learning. A variety of props can be made to stimulate visual, auditive or tactile senses.

Movement activities are mostly used for portraying the meaning of verbs and prepositions. For instance, when teaching “at the door”, it is very useful to stand outside the door, knock on the door and say that someone is at the door. If we want to teach the verb *ski*, it is useful to mime skiing and encourage the students to do so in order to connect the meaning of the verb with a certain motion.

Facial expressions are commonly used for depicting the meaning of feelings. For example, if the new vocabulary items are ‘excited’ or ‘petrified’, showing the meaning of those words with facial expressions will help the students understand the new vocabulary items and retrieve them more easily later on.

To conclude this section, the literature identifies several vocabulary teaching techniques used to present new vocabulary items at the Helen Doron School of English that in some aspects may differ from the ones generally used in public schools for this age group, specifically because they may have been designed and custom made for classes at the Helen Doron School of English.



## 5. The study

### a. Aim and research questions

The aim of the present study is to analyse young learners' attitudes towards the techniques that are used to teach vocabulary in the course Teen Talent at the Helen Doron School of English. The study is based on three research questions:

1. Which vocabulary teaching techniques do the students perceive to be the most effective for learning vocabulary?
2. Which vocabulary teaching techniques do the students prefer the most?
3. Which vocabulary teaching techniques do the students prefer the least?

### b. Theoretical framework

The framework for analysis is based on the HDEE methodology used to teach the course Teen Talent, which is designed for students from ten years of age until fifteen years of age. It corresponds to the CEFR A2 vocabulary and grammar level (Doron et al., 2019). As such, it offers students the skills needed to pass the Cambridge Exam and obtain the official certificate for their A2 level of English if they decide to do so.

The course Teen Talent includes 72 lessons that extend over two school years (Doron et al., 2019). Thus, the first year of the course is called Teen Talent 1 and the second year Teen Talent 2. The target vocabulary comprises of 3000 words and phrases (Doron et al., 2019). Across 120-minute lessons weekly, the students follow the story of “a relatable group of teenage heroes” that are filled with suspense, interesting facts, and humorous situations while “bringing out important values that stimulate higher-level discussions” (Doron, 2022:1).

The vocabulary teaching techniques used throughout this course are the ones described previously in the study: picture flashcards, word flashcards, songs, didactic games, props, gestures (movement) and facial expressions.

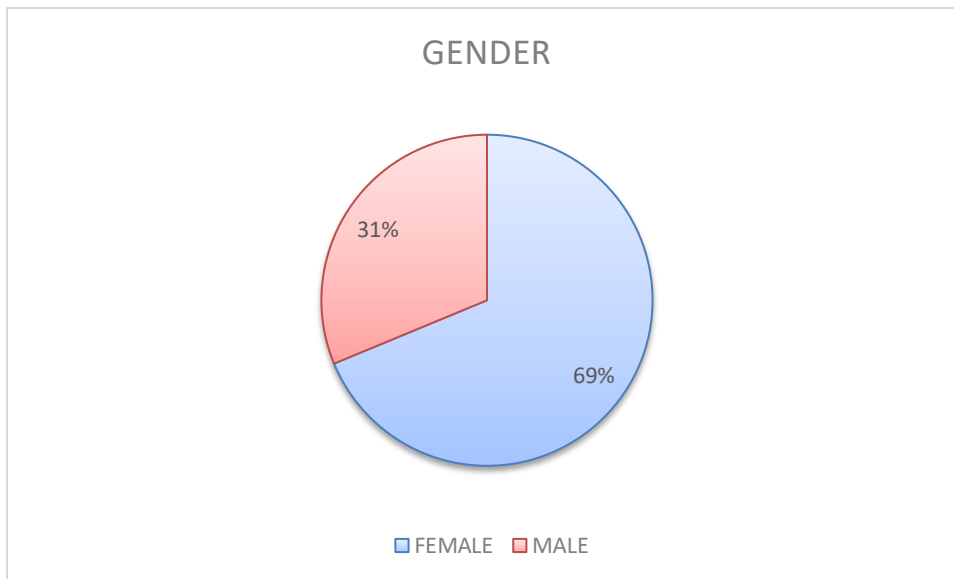
### c. Context and participants

The present study was conducted at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka. The participants were sixteen students in the Teen Talent 1 English course. All participants were between the ages of 11 and 13 with most students aged 11 (N=14, 88%), followed by one student aged 12 (6%) and

one student aged 13 (6%). Concerning the grades, 14 students were in the fifth grade, 1 student was in the sixth grade, and one student was in the seventh grade of elementary school.

The majority of participants were female (N=11 69%) followed by 5 male (31%), as shown in Figure 1.

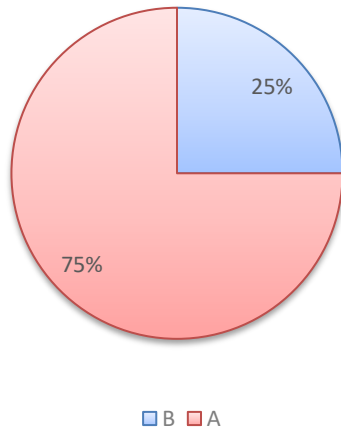
*Figure 1. Distribution of participants' gender*



When it comes to the grades in English, the majority of the students have a 5 (excellent, A) (N=12, 75%), while the others have a 4 (very good, B) (N=4, 25%) (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Students' grade point average in English*

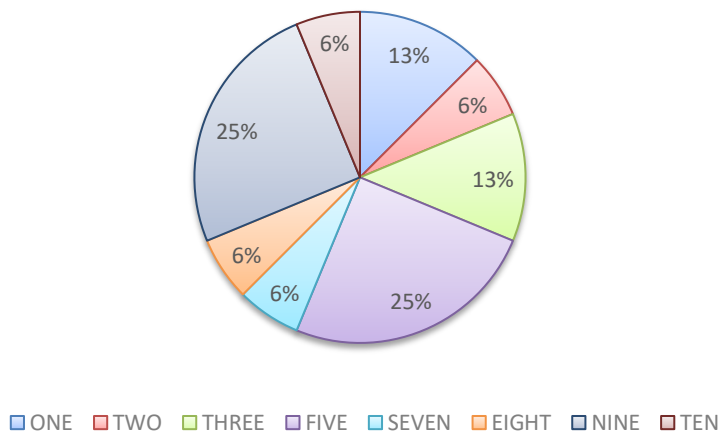
### GRADE POINT AVERAGE IN ENGLISH



As for the number of years the students attended the Helen Doron School of English, the majority of the students (N=11, 68.75%) attended the Helen Doron School of English for 5 or more years with 25% (N=4) of the students attending for five years, 6% (N=1) attending for seven years, 6% (N=1) attending for eight years, 25% (N=4) of the students attending for nine years, and 6% (N=1) attending for ten years.

*Figure 3. Years of attending the Helen Doron School of English*

### YEARS IN HELEN DORON SCHOOL OF ENGLISH



#### d. Methodology

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire written in Croatian, comprising three parts. The first part consists of demographic questions about the participants' background, specifically, their age, gender, class in elementary school, grade point average in English in elementary school, and the number of years they attended the Helen Doron School of English.

The second part contained 21 statements about vocabulary teaching techniques and the students' attitudes towards them. The students were asked to rate the statements on a Likert from 1 - completely disagree to 5 - completely agree. The first seven statements were related to the first research question - which vocabulary teaching techniques are perceived as the most effective ones (for instance, "I think that I learn the new words best when my teacher uses picture flashcards"). The following techniques were specified: word flashcards, picture flashcards, games, facial expression, gestures, songs, and props. The next seven statements were designed with the scope of finding out the answer to the second research question - which vocabulary teaching techniques the students at the Helen Doron School of English prefer the most (for instance, "I like it best when our teacher uses picture flashcards to teach new words."). The last set of statements were concerned with the answer to the third research question - which vocabulary teaching techniques the students at the Helen Doron School of English prefer the least (for instance, "I don't like when my teacher uses flashcards to teach new words").

The third part of the questionnaire comprised six open-ended questions in which the participants were invited to provide information about their experience learning new words both in elementary school and the Helen Doron School of English. They were asked: "What is your favourite way of learning new words?", "Why is that your favourite way of learning new words?", "What is your least favourite way of learning new words?", "Why is that your least favourite way of learning new words?", "How do you learn new words best?", and "Why is that the best way to learn new words?".

Consent was obtained from all the parents or guardians for their children to take part in this study.

The data was analysed by calculating the mean scores and standard deviation for each teaching technique in each set of questions. By doing this, it was possible to deduce which teaching

technique the students perceive to be the most useful, which teaching technique is preferred and which teaching technique is the least preferred.

## 6. Findings

The results of the present study are divided into four parts with the first part reporting the mean scores and standard deviations of the first set of statements (I think I learn best when my teacher uses...), the second part reporting the mean scores and standard deviations of the second set of statements (I like it best when my teacher uses...), the third part reporting the mean scores and standard deviations of the third set of statements (I don't like it when my teacher uses...), and the fourth part reporting the answers of the open-ended questions.

### a. The most useful vocabulary teaching techniques

As shown in Figure 4, the results of the first set of statements indicate that the students think that they learn new vocabulary best by playing various didactic games ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), while using facial expressions is seen as the least useful one ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). Using gestures and picture flashcards share the same mean score ( $M = 3.75$ ), but the standard deviation for using gestures ( $SD = 0.93$ ) is lower than for picture flashcards ( $SD = 1.34$ ). Next in line is the use of props with the mean score of 3.44 and standard deviation of 1.41. After the props, using word flashcards follows with the mean score of 3.38 and standard deviation of 1.09. The use of songs is at the penultimate place with the mean score of 3.0625 ( $SD = 1.39$ ).

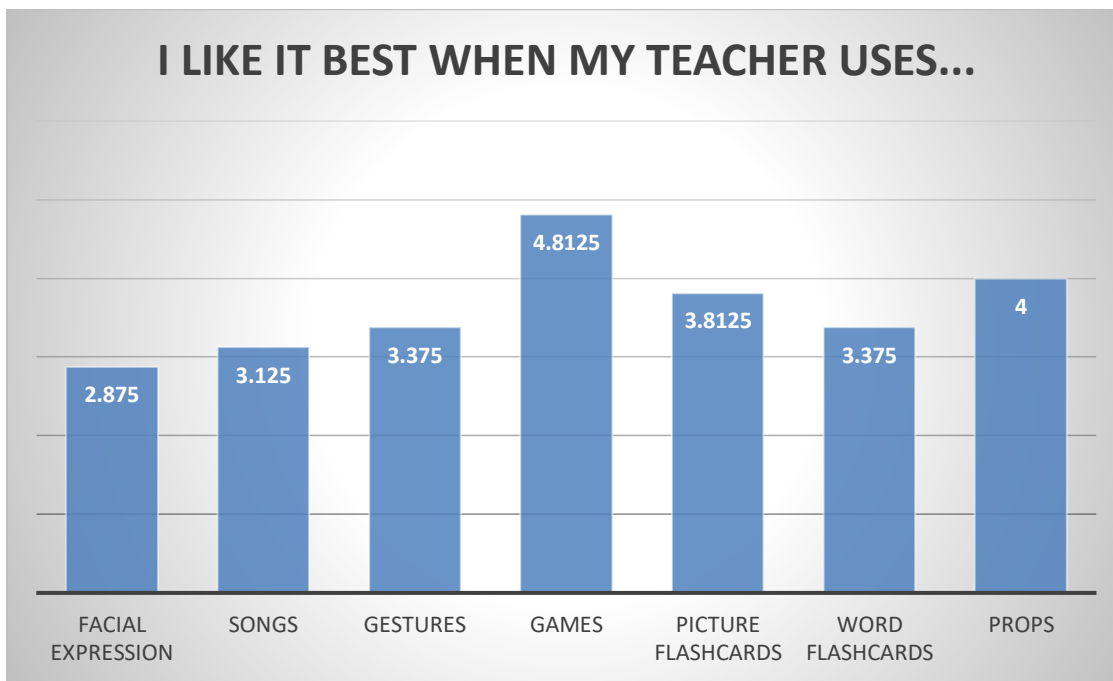
Figure 4. Usefulness of vocabulary teaching techniques.



b. The preferred vocabulary teaching techniques

It appears that the most preferred vocabulary teaching technique is using didactic games ( $M = 4.81$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ), while the least preferred one is using facial expressions to demonstrate the meaning of new words ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) as represented in Figure 5. Using props appears to be the second favorite teaching technique with the mean score of 4 and standard deviation of 1.32. Next in line is the use of picture flashcards ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). Word flashcards and gestures share the same place according to their mean score (3.38); however, the standard deviation of word flashcards ( $SD = 1.09$ ) is a bit lower than the standard deviation of the gestures ( $SD = 1.2$ ). Using songs is at the penultimate place with the mean score of 3.13 and standard deviation of 1.26.

Figure 5. The most preferred vocabulary teaching techniques

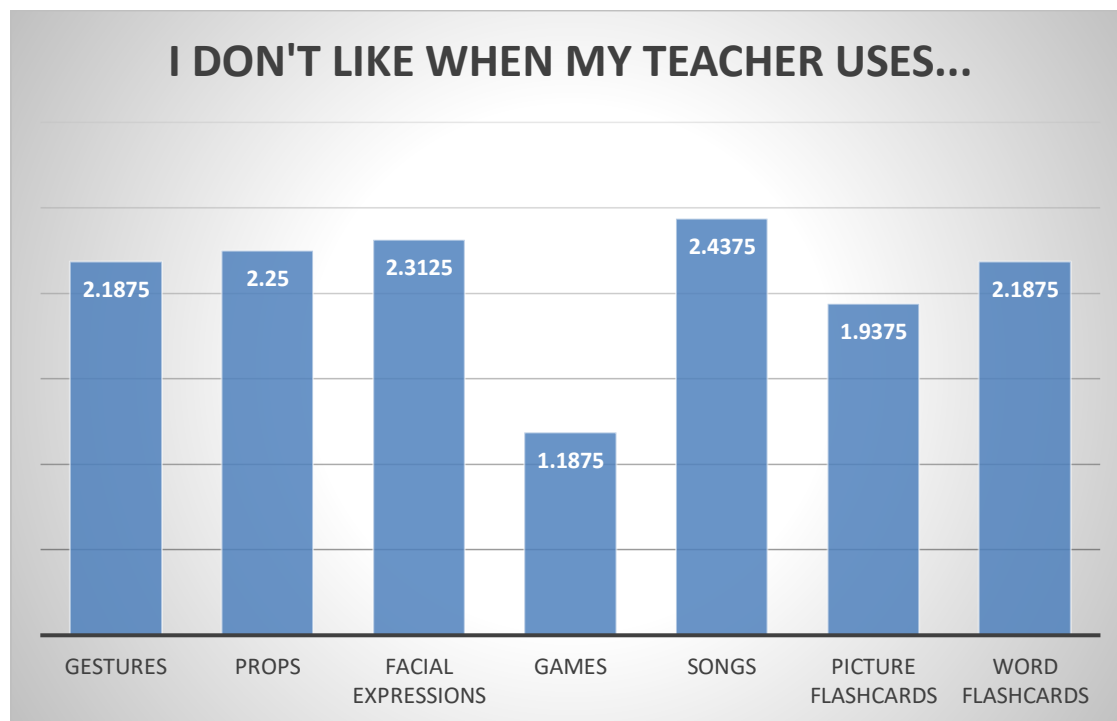


c. The least favorite teaching techniques

The last set of statements were designed to examine which vocabulary teaching technique is seen as the least favorite one (see Figure 6). The results indicate that the least favorite technique is the use of songs ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ), while the favorite one remains the use of didactic games ( $M = 1.19$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) as in the previous set of statements. The second least favorite technique seems to be the use of facial expressions ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). This time the use of props is in third place with the mean score of 2.25 and standard deviation of 1.39. Word flashcards and gestures share the same place again with the mean score of 2.19, and the standard deviation of

word flashcards (SD = 1.05) is again a bit lower than the standard deviation of gestures (SD = 1.17). Picture flashcards are in the penultimate place of the least favorite vocabulary teaching techniques with the mean score of 1.94 and standard deviation of 0.998.

Figure 6. The least preferred vocabulary teaching techniques.



d. Open-ended questions

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of six open-ended questions. The first open-ended question asked the students what their favorite way of learning new words is. Most of the students (87.5%) (N=14) stated that playing games was their favourite way of learning new vocabulary. As for the reasons for this choice in the second open-ended question, the participants stated that games helped them remember vocabulary and it was fun to learn new words through games.

*Because I memorize new words better when I'm playing. (S1)*

*Because it's easy and fun. (S2)*

*Because I learn and have fun at the same time. (S3)*

*Because later I remember the games we played and, consequently, the words we used. (S5)*



*Because it is very fun when we play games and because it is fun, I will remember the game and the words that I did not understand before the game. (S6)*

The third open-ended question inquired which is the students' least favorite way of learning new words. Even though responses varied, the most frequent answer was using songs (18.75%). There seems to be a general dislike towards songs as a means of teaching vocabulary.

*Because songs are the worst. (S1)*

*Because the songs are boring. (S2)*

*Because the songs are terrible. (S3)*

The fifth open-ended question intended to explore which way is perceived as the most useful for learning new words. The majority of participants (62.5%, N=10) listed games as the most useful way of learning new words. The reasons for this choice were given in the sixth open-ended question where participants stated that they can learn better whilst having fun.

*Because I learn something, and I have a lot of fun. (S1)*

*Because I memorize better while playing a game. (S2)*

*Because I have fun. (S3)*

*Because it is not boring. (S4)*

*Because it is easy and fun. (S5)*

## 7. Discussion

In this section the results will be discussed in relation to the research questions and the literature on ELT and vocabulary teaching. As previously mentioned, young learners at this age already make decisions about their learning process and they tend to express unambiguously what they like and do not like (Harmer, 2015). Likewise in this study the participants displayed their attitudes towards vocabulary teaching techniques that are applied by their teacher throughout the course.

The first research question dealt with the students' perceptions of the most useful vocabulary teaching techniques used in their lessons at the Helen Doron School of English. The results indicate that the use of didactic games to teach vocabulary is perceived as the most useful teaching technique ( $M = 4.63$ ). The low standard deviation of this statement ( $SD = 0.72$ ) indicates the fact that the data points are close to the mean score, i.e., most of the participants attributed higher values to this statement. The majority (68.75%) of the participants ( $N=11$ ) listed use of games as the most useful way of learning new vocabulary. The main reasons they like learning through games is because it is "easy and fun", which make learning enjoyable and helps the remember the words better. Most of the participants, who deem didactic games to be the most useful vocabulary teaching technique, attribute their choice to having fun while playing and learning. This is precisely one of the pillars of the HDEE method – making learning fun in order to create a positive, entertaining environment in which the students spontaneously acquire larger number of new words with seemingly no effort. This result is also, to an extent, in accordance with Chou's study (2012) in which she found that almost all of her participants saw learning through games and theme-based songs in class as very useful for their retention of new vocabulary. It is also in line with Paul's (2003) account that, while playing games, children are more likely to take risk and engage more easily in a conversation in a foreign language.

The second place is shared between picture flashcards and gestures ( $M = 3.75$ ). Teaching with picture flashcards and gestures enables the teacher to provide the students with two types of input – visual and auditory. Picture flashcards provide the students with a clear graphic representation of the new word, while the teacher provides its pronunciation, whereas gestures, i.e., the teacher's miming of the words, help students infer the meaning without being given a direct, clear graphic representation of a word. The limitations of both techniques are that the

meaning of words can be presented through gestures or visuals. It may be concluded that these techniques are found useful because they offer the bi-modal input that facilitates storing and retention of new vocabulary (Ur, 2012). Additionally, these two techniques are in line with Nation's (2008: 1) principle of teaching vocabulary, which states: "Keep the teaching simple and clear. Don't give complicated explanations."

The second research question was aimed at determining which vocabulary teaching techniques are preferred among students. Once again, the use of didactic games seems to be the preferred vocabulary teaching technique with a high mean score of 4.81 and a low standard deviation of 0.54, indicating that the majority are unanimous in their opinion of this technique. This was corroborated in the third part of the questionnaire, containing open-ended questions as the vast majority (87.5%) (N=14) of the students stated that playing games was their favourite way of learning new vocabulary. They reported various reasons for this: "Because I tend to memorize new words best while I'm playing.", "Because I have fun.", "I think that the fastest way of learning new words is by playing games.", "Because we learn and have fun.", "Because it's easy to memorize new words while playing games." This is hardly surprising as games are at the core of the HDEE method as they are used to create a stimulating and pleasant environment, free from inhibitory levels of anxiety, in which the student see their learning as playing and having fun rather than a teacher-directed straightforward learning process (Doron, 2010). According to the results, using props for teaching new vocabulary is the second favourite teaching technique (M = 4). Props are devices used to demonstrate the meaning of new words. This result is in accordance with the study conducted by Chilkiewicz (2015) in which she concluded that teachers should use a lot of different colours and shapes that will aid vocabulary retention. This stance is also supported by Kirkgöz (2019) who claims that using objects while teaching new words seems to help young learners memorise them better.

The third research question was designed to find out which teaching techniques are the least preferred ones among the students. Surprisingly, it appears that the songs, although specifically written and composed for the purposes of the courses taught at Helen Doron School of English, are perceived as the least favourite vocabulary teaching technique (M = 2.44, SD = 1.26). In comparison to the other teaching techniques, this is a rather low score. The reasons for this may be varied. Possibly the songs are too childish and the melody may not be appealing. Also,

these songs are not authentic as they are written to accompany each lesson. In fact, only 18.75% of the students mentioned songs in the open-ended part of the questionnaire which elicited their opinion about the worst way to learn new words. They criticized the songs and stated why they disliked them: “Because songs are the worst.”, “Because the songs are boring.”, “Because the songs are terrible.” This could be due to the fact that, even though young learners share some common characteristics, their physical, psychological, social, emotional, conceptual and cognitive development vary from one individual to the other (Kirkgöz, 2019). That is why it would be rather difficult to write a song that would be liked by every single student. This result disputes, to an extent, the results of Chou’s study (2012) in which she reported that almost all of her participants enjoyed learning through songs. It would be interesting to hear and compare the songs that were used in Chou’s study and that are used in Helen Doron School of English. The second least preferred teaching technique seems to be the use of facial expressions to demonstrate the meaning of the words. This could be due to the fact that this way of teaching new words is more appropriate for younger learners (Ur, 2012). One of the participants explained the shortcomings of this technique and stated that it was impossible to learn new words by using facial expressions to demonstrate meaning. Indeed, not many words can be explained through facial expressions, and the students could get the meaning wrong. Some other less enjoyed vocabulary teaching techniques listed by the participants in the open-ended questions include visual representation using word lists, flashcards and writing on the board. They explained their reasons as follows: “Word lists. Because it is boring.”, “Word flashcards. Because it is not fun and it is difficult to learn new words like that.”, “Word flashcards. Because it is more difficult to remember those words when I am forced to learn them.” and “Writing new words on the board. Because I cannot memorize words like that.” It appears that the mere presentation of word forms and pronunciation in writing and through visuals are not seen as very useful teaching techniques. Perhaps it would be more useful to write the new words on the board and then act out the meaning because the learners then get to connect the words’ form to their meanings. As Chilkiewicz (2015) stated in her study, teachers should use computer graphics, maps, charts, cartoons, and texts accompanied with many pictures to stimulate the learning of new vocabulary items. Therefore, it is likely that multi modal input would be more appropriate and motivating to the students.

In summary, the thesis has argued that the use of didactic games to teach vocabulary is both perceived as the most effective and most preferred teaching technique for students enrolled

in the course Teen Talent 1 at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka. As previously stated, young learners are characterized by short attention span and process of learning holistically (Kirkgöz, 2019) which is possibly why the use of games is considered extremely useful in teaching new vocabulary – the learners use new vocabulary voluntarily in a spontaneous way, depending on the rules of the game, whilst having fun. On the other hand, the use of songs in teaching vocabulary seems to be their least favourite way of teaching strategy. The results may suggest that, although the songs are made exclusively for the course, they may not correspond to students' preferences, and they may lack authenticity which would make them more appealing. As for the other vocabulary teaching strategies, they are generally perceived to be useful and are liked among the students, especially picture flashcards, gestures and props. However, the use of facial expressions to demonstrate the meaning of new words appears to be better suited for younger learners.

## **8. Limitations**

The most significant limitation of this study is the number of participants. First, the number of students in a Helen Doron course ranges 4 to 8. Second, of the 22 students enrolled in the course Teen Talent 1 at the Helen Doron Learning Centre Rijeka, only 16 decided to participate in the study. It was not possible to gauge the number of students who would participate in the study before the consent forms were signed. Given the small sample, it would be beneficial to extend the research to include other Helen Doron Learning Centres to get more reliable results.

Another limitation could be the lack of research done in the field of vocabulary teaching techniques in Helen Doron Schools of English for this specific age group. Such studies could help shed light on vocabulary teaching techniques for this age group, and thus contribute to improving vocabulary teaching at Helen Doron Schools of English.

## **9. Conclusion and implications**

Considering everything covered in this study, it may be concluded that young learners tend to learn best in a positive and entertaining environment that allows them to construct their own knowledge in the way that suits them best. This conclusion is in line with the features of the communicative approach to teaching foreign language (Larsen-Freeman, 2011).

The results may imply that using games to teach new vocabulary is very useful and liked among young learners. During this stage of their development, language assumes a significant role as the shaper of information processing (Bruner, 1964). That is why it is important to present new vocabulary in the appropriate way to engage learners and provide them with positive input. Games, in this regard, appear to provide teachers with the opportunity to do so. Other useful vocabulary teaching techniques are the use of picture flashcards, gestures, and props to demonstrate the meaning of new words. These techniques offer stimulation for multiple senses which provide the learners with various opportunities to learn the meaning of new words. Also, the results indicate that using facial expressions to demonstrate the meaning of new vocabulary items seems to be more appropriate for younger learners. Another implication may be directed towards the use of songs to teach new vocabulary. The results suggest that the songs used throughout the course Teen Talent 1 are not very popular amongst the students. Therefore, this may imply that the songs should

be modernized, i.e., adjusted according to the preferences of this age group. However, it is rather difficult to compose a song that would be acceptable by the majority of the students.

To conclude, taking into account the methodology behind ELT, today we are in the post-method era meaning that there is no one correct way of teaching EFL that works for all learners, but in the center of attention is the pedagogy of particularity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). However, Helen Doron School of English follows a specific type of dominant methodology in all its schools, regardless of the context. This means that it may be useful to examine teaching techniques used at Helen Doron School of English with respect to the students and context and adapt them accordingly. It might also be worth considering expanding the repertoire of vocabulary teaching strategies to tap into modern technology and adapt them to current needs. For example, vocabulary learning apps could be incorporated (Mueller & Hays, 2022). Also, computer technology could be used to facilitate vocabulary teaching, and learning (Nakata 2020). Specifically, teaching should be adjusted to the needs of particular students in the institutional context. By doing so, it is possible to create “an optimal environment necessary for learning to take place” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 4).

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## Appendix

### STAVOVI UČENIKA PREMA TEHNIKAMA POUČAVANJA VOKABULARA

#### U HELEN DORON ŠKOLI ENGLSKOG JEZIKA

Dragi učenici,

Provodim jedno vrlo kratko istraživanje za potrebe mojeg diplomskoga rada. Molim te da ispuniš ovaj upitnik kojim želim saznati tvoje mišljenje o tehnikama poučavanja vokabulara (novih riječi ili fraza) koje se koriste na nastavi engleskog jezika u Helen Doron School of English. U ovom upitniku nema točnih i netočnih odgovora i ovo nije test znanja. Upitnik je u potpunosti je anonim stoga slobodno iskreno izrazi svoje mišljenje.

Unaprijed hvala na sudjelovanju!

Kristina Gajski

- (1) Spol (zaokruži): m / ž
- (2) Dob: \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) U koji razred ideš u osnovnoj školi? \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Koju ocjenu imaš iz predmeta Engleski jezik u svojoj osnovnoj školi? \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) Koliko godina polaziš Helen Doron School of English? \_\_\_\_\_

Zaokruži odgovor koji najbolje opisuje tvoje mišljenje o aktivnostima koje učiteljica engleskog u Helen Doron školi koristi kada učiš nove riječi.

Nema točnog / netočnog odgovora. **1** znači da se **ne slažeš**, a **5** da se u potpunosti slažeš.

1. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima su slikovno prikazane te nove riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima su napisane te riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada se one pojave u pjesmama koje slušamo.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kroz igre (primjerice Unscramble, Happy Families, Dominoes, Puzzles).	1	2	3	4	5
5. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada nam učiteljica gestama pokaže značenje.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada učiteljica grimasama pokaže značenje.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Smatram da najbolje zapamtim nove riječi kada nam učiteljica objasni značenje koristeći različite „igračke“ koji prikazuju te riječi (primjerice veliki analogni sat kada se uči iskazivanje vremena na engleskom).	1	2	3	4	5

8. Najviše volim kada učiteljica radi grimase kako bi nam dočarala značenje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Najviše volim kada učimo nove riječi iz pjesama koje su dio našeg tečaja.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Najviše volim kada učiteljica gestama pokazuje značenje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Najviše volim igrati igre (primjerice Unscramble, Happy Families, Dominoes, Puzzles) kada moramo učiti nove riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Najviše volim kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima je slika novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Najviše volim kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima su napisane nove riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Najviše volim kada učiteljica koristi različite „igračke“ za poučavanje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Ne sviđa mi se kada nam učiteljica gestama prikazuje značenje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Ne sviđa mi se kada učiteljica koristi različite „igračke“ kako bi nam pokazala značenje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Ne sviđa mi se kada učiteljica radi grimase kako bi nam dočarala značenje novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Ne sviđa mi se kada učimo nove riječi igrajući igre (primjerice Unscramble, Happy Families, Dominoes, Puzzles).	1	2	3	4	5
19. Ne sviđa mi se učiti nove riječi tako da slušamo pjesme koje su dio našeg tečaja.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Ne sviđa mi se kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima je slika novih riječi.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Ne sviđa mi se kada učiteljica koristi flashcards-e na kojima su napisane nove riječi.	1	2	3	4	5

Molim te kratko odgovori na sljedeća pitanja koja se odnose na učenje novih riječi na nastavi engleskog u osnovnoj školi i u Helen Doron School of English.

1. Koji ti je nadraži način za učenje novih riječi?

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2. Zašto ti je to najdraži način učenja stranih riječi?

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3. Koji ti je najgori način za učenje novih riječi?

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4. Zašto najmanje voliš učiti riječi na takav način?

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5. Što ti se čini, kako najbolje naučiš nove riječi?

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6. Što misliš zašto tako najbolje naučiš nove riječi?

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