

Exploring the Use of Socrative for Post-Reading Activities

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Abstract

This paper investigates the perspectives of Omani Foundation Program (FP) students studying English as a Second Language (ESL) in using Socrative as a post-reading activity. Teaching reading includes three stages: the pre-reading stage, in which the teacher introduces the lesson with an activity to integrate the students' interest, and the while-reading stage, in which the teacher focuses on scanning and skimming skills and asking students about the main ideas and details. Finally, the post-reading stage, in which the teacher's focus is to ensure that students have understood the reading passage and grasped the author's points of view. Socrative is an online tool that can be accessed using any browser that is connected to the internet. It is an interactive way to incorporate technology into the ESL classroom in which students can answer different types of questions using their devices. The study was employed quantitatively on (52) Omani FP ESL students in Dhofar University. The survey used in this paper explored the students' feedback using Socrative as a post-reading activity. The results revealed positive feedback from the students. The researcher recommends that Socrative should be used in teaching reading skills during the three stages. Furthermore, the researcher claims that further research needs to be conducted on using Socrative as a learning tool in the first and second stages of teaching reading skills. Further research is needed to investigate the efficacy of Socrative in teaching other English skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing.

Keywords

Reading skills, Socrative, Omani Students, Technology, ESL classroom

Introduction

Traditional teaching and teacher-led approaches are no longer used in ESL classrooms. Furthermore, these approaches proved that a boring environment is created and thus, this may negatively affect the learning process especially the second language learning process (Hashim, 2018). To overcome this challenge, many teachers are getting equipped with using different techniques to create a more interesting environment that can lead to successful learning to English. One method that has been proven effective is the use of technology inside ESL classrooms. The use of technology in the ESL room has become a necessity in the 21st century as students are becoming increasingly obsessed to using their mobile phones. Moreover, technology is a crucial way to attract students' attention to the lesson (Jaelani, 2019). It is a way to encourage autonomous learning and to incorporate student-led classroom environments (El Shaban, 2017). It is worth mentioning that ESL teachers must vary their teaching techniques in order to attract the attention of a new generation of learners. These learners have become increasingly social media addicts. Therefore, traditional lecturing is no longer efficient. Prensky (2005) claimed that learners in the digital era are more likely to engage with technology and feel bored with traditional teaching. Additionally, Hashim (2018) maintained that teachers have no choice, and they must use technology inside the ESL room as technology has become a way of life.

As a matter of fact, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has become inevitably needed with this kind of generation. One popular online tool that supports MALL is Socrative. Socrative is a web-based platform that can be accessed using any browser connected to the

internet (Mork, 2014). This service is free with a paid version with more features. Socrative offers different sets of questions that a teacher can prepare, such as multiple-choice questions, True/ False questions and complete the sentence questions. Teachers can share their unique room code with their students. Students can access to the teachers` questions using their cell phones and/or computers. The participants in this activity can answer questions anonymously or have their name displayed on the data show of the class. It is worth mentioning that this online tool provides three different modes to choose from: Instant feedback, open navigation, and teacher paced.

- 1- Instant feedback mode allows students to receive immediate feedback after their answers to each question. However, the correct answer is not shown to the students if their answer was wrong.
- 2- The open navigation mode enables students to answer questions in any order and change answers before completing the quiz.
- 3- The teacher-paced mode allows monitoring of the flow of questions and following up on the answers as they arise. A teacher can skip and return to the questions if needed.

After choosing the mode, students can begin answering questions prepared by their teacher. It has been noted in the literature that Socrative has many advantages. El Shaban (2017) mentions (8) reasons to use Socrative in any class. These advantages are summarized as follows:

- 1- To increase students` engagement.
- 2- To give shy learners a chance to participate in the class.
- 3- To encourage critical thinking and collaborative teaching.
- 4- The ease of using this tool.
- 5- To provide instant feedback to learners.
- 6- The feature of anonymity in Socrative would encourage hesitant students to participate.
- 7- Socrative can be used as an assessment tool.
- 8- Break up the boredom of the traditional classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of using Socrative as a post-activity tool in the ESL classroom as well as to collect Omani FP ESL learners` perspectives in using this tool, especially while teaching reading skills.

Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the research statement of the problem, the following hypotheses are considered the hypotheses of the research:

- 1- Socrative is NOT an effective way to teach reading skills, especially in the post-reading stage and students` perspectives to its use are negative.
- 2- Socrative is an effective way to teach reading skills, especially in the post-reading stage and students` perspectives to its use are positive.

Literature Review

Ohashi (2015) conducted research on the effectiveness of Socrative in enhancing the writing skills of EFL students in a university in Japan. She focused on two skills while teaching the writing skills to the students. The first skill was to check students` comprehension of the writing task. The second skill was to help students plan writing tasks during the brainstorming activity. Following a quantitative approach, Ohashi introduced a survey to her (52) students enrolled in a first or a second-year EFL writing course. The students who were aged 18-21 answered

different types of questions, such as open-ended, and close-ended questions, and a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The students' perceptions to Socratic's use in learning the two skills of writing were positive. Additionally, the survey showed that there was enough support for the idea of using Socratic in writing classes. One of the main positive characteristics of using Socratic in teaching writing skills to the students was the anonymity in which participants were free to share their ideas as they were not showing their names on the shared screen. This suggested that anonymity was crucial to the participants in this research as they were afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates. Ohashi claimed in her conclusion that Socratic created a teaching context that encouraged all students, even the shy ones, to participate. Additionally, Ohashi claimed that Socratic can be used in other courses within the department.

In a study conducted on EFL female learners in one of the state universities in Saudi Arabia, Alharbi and Meccawy (2020) introduced Socratic as an online tool for formative assessment. Their study investigated the attitudes of EFL learners toward the use of mobile-based tests in the English language classes. The design of their research was based on a pre-and post-experiment method as well as a Socratic quiz in between the two stages, in which the (47) students from the preparatory year program participated in this research. However, only (35) students have completed the three-stage experiment. The participants were all females in the administrative track taking an ESP course. Alharbi and Meccawy used two open-ended questions in their surveys, which were translated into the participants' native language (Arabic) to ensure understanding. The results of their research showed that the use of Socratic was positive, encouraging, and supportive for language assessment. It is worth mentioning that students in the pre-experiment stage favored the paper-based quizzes as they were more reliant and applicable. However, after applying the Socratic quiz, most students changed their point of view in which most of them claimed that Socratic was a more reliable online tool as it allowed them to get instant feedback, pictures and clues can be added to the quiz to ensure comprehension, answers explanations can be introduced, and total score display can be provided. However, Alharbi and Meccawy claimed that there are minor problems with the use of Socratic as an online assessment tool. These problems, according to them, are internet access, battery life of the students' mobiles and minimizing on-screen time. They maintained that these problems could be avoided if they allowed their students to use pair/group work and enabled mobile phone sharing.

Kolisnyk et al. (2022) also introduced a research paper that studied the effectiveness of using Socratic as a formative assessment tool in an ESP course in the settings of the Ukrainian university. The study aims at investigating students' perspectives on Socratic's use as a formative assessment. Additionally, the research presented the researchers' experience on using Socratic as a formative assessment during Covid -19 era. Using a quantitative and a qualitative data, Kolisnyk et al. applied (137) students as a sample to this research. Their methods comprised a three-phase experiment to collect and interpret their data. The first phase aimed at developing and validating the questionnaire. In the second phase, Kolisnyk et al. collected and analysed the data. The last phase was to interpret the obtained data. The survey contained (18) items on five-point Likert scale (from Strongly Disagree=1 to Strongly Agree=5). The students' perspectives were analyzed in four dimensions. Advantages, usability, engagement, motivation, and experience. The results showed a highly positive reaction of the participants using Socratic as a formative assessment. Finally, Kolisnyk et al. concluded their research by claiming that Socratic can be a generic instrument for implementing formative assessments. Moreover, Kolisnyk et al. maintained that their results matched the results of (Rae & O'Malley, 2017) and (Vettori et al., 2020). One of the most important results that the researchers of this

paper highlighted was the high level of engagement, interest, involvement and motivation that Socrative presented to the participants, especially low-achievers and students who were reluctant to participate. However, a limitation of their study was academic integrity as it rested on self-reporting, and they claimed that further research is needed to explore this issue.

Jaelani (2020) also studied the perspectives of 40 students in the first semester 2018-2019 in a university setting. The study was conducted during an intensive listening skill course. However, Jaelani did not explain how she used Socrative in this skill specifically. A survey of open-ended questions was distributed to the participants as well as “probing questions” (P.21) to study their reactions to the use of Socrative inside the EFL room. Jaelani, based on the survey, claimed that the use of Socrative helped the learning-teaching process. Moreover, Socrative provided an environment that was full of interaction, attention, curiosity, optimism, and passion to learn. One of the interesting results that Jaelani discovered in her paper is Socrative’s use as a gamification tool. This gamification criterion can be created by the teacher’s restrictions and countdowns, which make the class more competitive. One more notice was that Socrative helped in improving students’ understanding of the course. The feedback provided by both teachers and classmates helped the students elaborate their understanding of the course. Finally, Jaelani concluded her paper by claiming that Socrative is an easy tool to use as many students responded positively to this point. In addition, the immediate scoring that Socrative provided to its users helped the students to know their level in the course. It is worth mentioning that Jaelani’s (2020) study matches the previous results maintained in Ohashi (2015) and Paul (2014). However, Jaelani did not explain how she used Socrative in the listening skill because the listening skill needs to play the audio while having the quiz, and Socrative does not provide this facility.

In an interesting study, Cha (2018) used the Student Response System (SRS), Socrative, as a pre-reading method in an EFL reading environment. The purpose of Cha’s study was to answer the following two questions: 1-Is using the SRS in the pre-reading stage effective for reading comprehension among EFL undergraduate students? 2-What are the undergraduate students’ perspectives on using the SRS in the pre-reading stage in EFL reading classes? To answer these two questions, Cha had (81) students and divided them into two groups. The first group (40) of students is the experimental group in which Socrative was used in the pre-reading phase during the reading class. The second group (41) students was the control group in which Socrative was not used and only the book and handouts were used. Moreover, Cha introduced a pre-test to the two groups before the use of Socrative. However, for the experimental group, a post-test was introduced after the use of Socrative in the reading class. For the non-Socrative group, the post-test was also introduced at the same time it was introduced to the Socrative group. Cha found that the results of the Socrative group, the experimental group, were better than the results of the non-Socrative group. In other words, there was a progress in the participants of the Socrative group in their post-test compared with the results of their pre-test. This proves, according to Cha, that Socrative enhanced the progress of the students in their reading skills. In fact, these results match the results obtained by Kim and Hur (2016) and Yoon (2017). For the second research question, Cha conducted a mixed method composed of a survey (made of 12 items) along with an interview held with six random students (3 male, 3 female). All the results showed a positive attitude toward the use of Socrative as a pre-reading activity. Participants were happy with the features that Socrative provides, such as the ease of use, anonymity, and the ability of shy ESL students to participate. Cha (2018) concluded her paper by listing some of the limitations and recommendations of her study. For instance, one of her limitations is that her study cannot be generalized to other students as the sample used by her is too small (40 participants). Regarding recommendations, Cha recommends studying the

effect of Socrative on the other stages of EFL reading classes (while-reading and post-reading phases).

In a concise study, El Shaban (2017) used Socrative on (14) of her students (most of them from East Asia) along with active learning. El Shaban maintained that the use of Socrative along with active learning has common objectives. For example, El Shaban claimed that the use of technology and active learning can transform the traditional classroom environment from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach. They can also lead learners toward autonomous learning. Additionally, the use of technology and active learning can help students to be more engaged and interact inside the EFL classroom. What is more, they can provide the learners with a chance to communicate using productive skills (writing and speaking) and motivate the EFL learners to produce more language inside and outside the classrooms. The study collected her students' perceptions on the use of Socrative. El Shaban (2017) introduced Socrative in her reading skill classes. However, she did not provide any statistics in her study except that she maintained that her findings revealed positive feedback from her participants toward combining both Socrative and active learning. It is worth mentioning that a note that Socrative can provide to its users, according to El Shaban's participants, is instant feedback and anonymity. El Shaban concluded her study by listing the reasons for using Socrative in the EFL classrooms. To name but a few, Socrative allowed students to be highly engaged and interacting. Also, Socrative allowed students to work collaboratively and enhanced critical thinking. Moreover, anonymity with instant feedback is considered an important reason to use Socrative, as mentioned previously. It is obviously clear that El Shaban's findings go in line with many researchers studying the use of SRS inside the EFL classroom, such as Egbert & Neville (2015), Hunsu et al. (2016) and McDonough & Foote (2015).

Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study in which a survey with different types of questions was distributed among the ESL learners.

Subjects

The number of participants in this research was (52). They were all in level 3 in the FP at Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. They were all Omanis and their ages ranged from 18 to 35 years old. They are all Muslims and come from different regions of Oman. All of them had their secondary certificate from the Omani public and private schools. It is worth mentioning all participants English level, in this research varies from elementary to intermediate although they are all in Level 3.

Instrument

The researcher uses Socrative during his reading classes. As it is known, teaching reading skills involves three different stages (Kessler and Hubbard (2017):

The first stage: The pre-reading stage in which the teacher tries to make students predict the topic of the reading passage. This prediction stage may include different techniques. The teacher can use a picture, a video, or the title of the text to integrate the students' interest. In addition, pre-reading questions can be displayed on the data show screen to engage learners in the activity. This activity is performed collaboratively: Pair and/or group work.

The second stage: The while-reading stage includes different types of questions as reading for main ideas and reading for specific details. This stage can include different types of wh-

questions and/or yes or no questions. This activity is performed collaboratively: pair and/ or group work.

The third stage: The post-reading stage includes Socratic activity. The teacher displayed his room code and asked students to work individually on their mobiles. The progress of the learners can be seen by the teacher. Names are not shown on the data show screen so shy and hesitant students can freely participate. Additionally, right, and wrong answers are not displayed on the data show screen. However, students receive instant feedback for each question on whether their answer was correct or wrong. The teacher had the option to shuffle the questions and/or shuffle the answers of multiple choice questions. It is worth mentioning that this stage aims to allow students to deeply understand the main concepts of the reading passage. Also, to ensure that they could infer different ideas regarding the author's points of view.

Data Collection

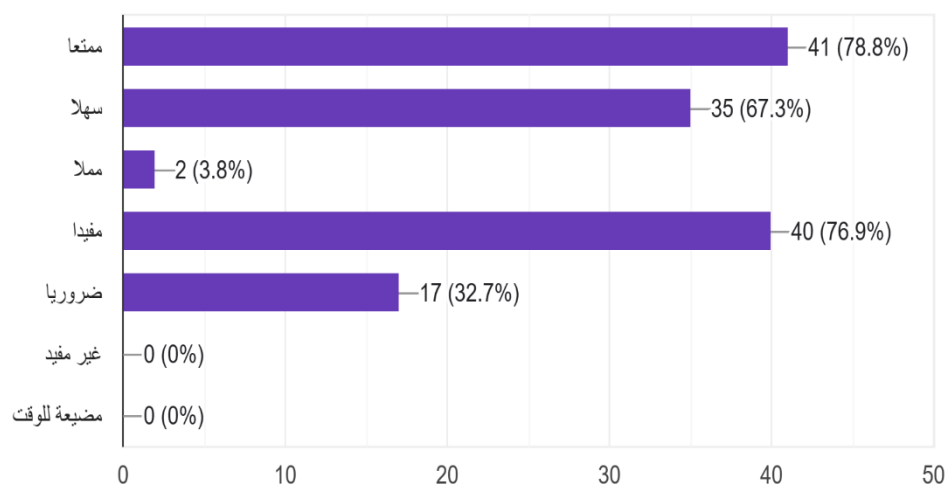
The researcher had their survey distributed online using Google forms. The results were analyzed using bar and/or pie charts. The researcher used Likert scale to compose his statements. The statements were written in Arabic to help students understand each one.

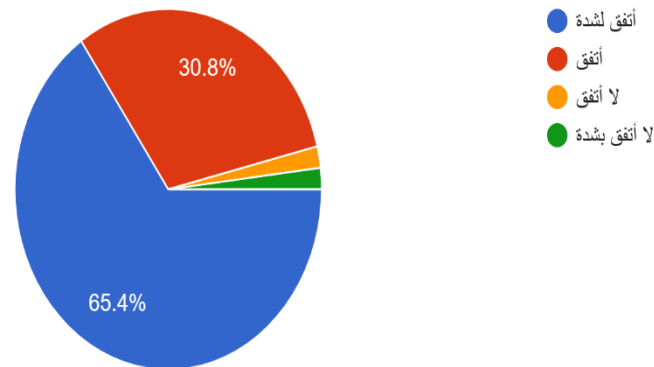
Data analysis and procedure

The researcher analyzed the data critically, taking care of each question. The most distinctive questions shed light on in the results section.

Results

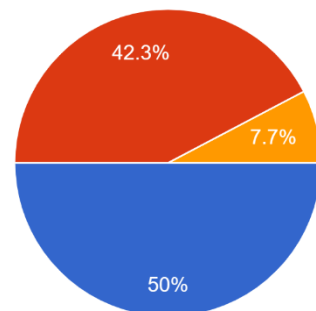
The gender of the participants was male and female. The females' percentage was (75%) whereas the males' percentage was (25%). Almost all the responses were positive. Some questions investigated the usefulness of the use of Socratic. For instance, (78.8%) of the participants found that Socratic was an interesting e-tool, and the classes were enjoyable and useful. (67.3%) of the participants described Socratic as an easy tool to use. (76.9%) of the participants found that the use of Socratic in the reading skill was useful, and (32.7%) of the participants claimed that Socratic is an essential activity in learning the reading skills. None of the participants maintained that the use of Socratic was not useful or a waste of time, (0%). However, only (3.8%) of the participants found that the use of Socratic boring.



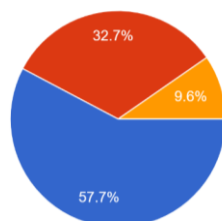


As we can see in figure (2), most of the participants agreed that Socrative allowed them to be actively involved in the class and thus increased their participation during the class, (96.2%). However, only (3.8%) of the participants claimed that Socrative is not helpful at all.

Another interesting point we can notice in Figure (3). Most participants agreed that Socrative helped them feel more comfortable than working in groups or pairs. For instance, (92.3%) of the participants claimed that Socrative relieved them from stress during the reading class as they were freely participating using their cell phones. On the other hand, (7.7%) of the participants did not agree that Socrative was a source of relief.



One interesting point that supports other studies such as El Shaban (2017) and Cha (2018) is the notion of anonymity. Most of the participants (90.4%) maintained that the feature of anonymity in Socrative encouraged them to participate. This also supports the statement discussed in Figure (3) above. However, (9.6%) of the participants claimed that the anonymity feature did not have that much significance.



Discussion

It is obvious that Socrative is an effective e-tool that can help learners develop their skills while learning a language. It can be noticed that the positive feedback gained in this survey supports other studies that concentrated on using Socrative in ESL classrooms, such as Jaelani (2020), Kolisnykwy et al. (2022) , and Alharbi and Meccawy (2020). One interesting point is that Socrative is a helpful tool for ESL teachers, especially in classes that have many students. Feedback is an essential procedure in teaching a language, and as Socrative provides instant feedback to the learners, this can support teachers to give individual feedback to their students. Another advantage for this e-tool is its ability to create a student-centered learning environment, and thus, it fully supports an autonomous environment while learning a language.

Conclusions and recommendations for further studies

The objectives of the study were to investigate whether the use of Socrative as a post-reading activity is effective for teaching reading skills. It has been proved by the feedback of the participants that Socrative is effective and of great benefit to ESL students. This study has shed light on the importance of both autonomous learning and providing feedback in teaching reading skills. Autonomous learning is maintained by allowing students to answer the prepared Socrative quizzes individually. On the other hand, giving feedback is maintained through activating the instant feedback feature available in this e-tool. This study sheds light on reading skills, specifically using Socrative during post-reading activities. However, the pre-reading and while reading stages were not examined. Furthermore, skills such as grammar and writing were not examined. The researcher suggests that further studies should be conducted on English skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing.

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