The American University in Cairo

USING GAMES TO LEARN VOCABULARY IN ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A STUDY OF TEACHER AND STUDENT BELIEFS

A Thesis Submitted by

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To the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language

December 2015

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Masters of Arts

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TO

The soul of my father whose dream was to share this moment with me.

To the soul of my Godfather Dr. ElSaid Badawi who was the reason for what I am now.

AND

to my amazing family who has always been there for me.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, I am indebted and grateful to my advisor and first reader, Dr. Raghda Al-Essawi. Thank you Dr. Raghda for your continuous support, patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. Thank you for being an example not only of a researcher but also of how a scholar should be. I learned many lessons from you in academia and in life. I would like also to express my gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Dalal Aboelseoud, whose detailed suggestions and feedback were very insightful. Your calm pieces of advice still ring in my ears and kept in my mind. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my third reader, Dr. Iman Soliman, whose valuable comments and suggestions enhanced this thesis. Your enthusiasm about the topic at the early stages of my research is what kept me going.

Many thanks to my professors, colleagues and everyone in TAFL program and ALI at AUC. Thank you all for the experience I gained and lessons I learned. Special thanks to Mr. Mohamed Hassan and Mr. Amr Abdel Lattif at the Social Research Center (SRC), at AUC for their unsparing effort in analyzing the data of this thesis. I would like also to thank my colleagues and students at U.C. Berkeley for being very helpful and for being the participants of my research.

Special thanks and appreciation go to my families; my family in Egypt and my family in the U.S. Words cannot express my gratitude to my mother for her support and guidance. My deepest appreciation to my father-in-law and my mother-in-law who made it easy for me along the road and surrounded me with love and care. My heartfelt appreciation and love are extended to my wife, my angel, Elsa Elmahdy, and my daughter, my pearl, Soraya for endless love and support you granted me. God bless you.
Abstract

Vocabulary has been always neglected in most of foreign language classrooms. Many strategies, techniques and activity were suggested to make vocabulary acquisition easier and sustained. Games are one of these tools offered to help in learning and teaching vocabulary. Since beliefs are the core of every discipline that deals with learning and behavior. It is important to understand what teachers and students think of games, in other words what are their beliefs towards games.

This study explored student and teacher beliefs about using games in learning vocabulary in the Arabic as a Foreign Language classroom. The study aimed to answer three research questions. The first investigated students’ beliefs towards the use of games in learning vocabulary in the AFL classroom. The second explored teachers’ beliefs towards the use of games in teaching vocabulary in the AFL classroom. And the third aimed at detecting any variations between students’ and teachers’ beliefs.

The study adopted a mixed-methods applied design. The research involved 97 participants; 88 students from different disciplines learning Arabic and 9 teachers teaching Arabic in the 2015 spring semester at University of California, Berkeley. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through their responses to a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, close-ended questions, and open-ended questions.

Results of this study showed that students and teachers share many general beliefs about using games in learning vocabulary. However, student and teacher beliefs also differed at times. The study discusses the importance of addressing the mismatch of student and teacher beliefs about this pedagogical practice. The research also suggests that there may be a gap between beliefs and actual practice. Findings and pedagogical implications are discussed.
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