

The Effects of VAK Techniques in EFL Classroom



Keywords: VAK techniques, learners, EFL classroom, motivation.

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to scrutinize the usage of VAK techniques used in EFL classroom, considering their effects on students' learning process. In order to reach this aim, three main research questions were raised at the beginning: 1. Which is the most applied VAK technique in EFL classroom?, 2. Does the use of the VAK techniques impact students' motivation?, 3. Which VAK technique is the most favorable for students? This research was conducted using quantitative research method, whereas the data collection instrument was a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. These questions were focused on the VAK teaching techniques used nowadays in EFL classrooms, trying to identify which technique is the most favorable one for learners. Participants of the study were 160 learners selected from two primary schools located in Prizren: "Emin Duraku" and "Mati Logoreci". Findings have shown that generally the most applied VAK technique in most of the EFL classrooms nowadays is the visual one, since teachers include mostly verbal elements during the class such as taking notes, writing sentences, reading instructions. In addition, this study showed that the usage of VAK techniques during the learning process increases students' motivation and encourages them to be more involved in the learning process. Since teachers pay less attention on kinesthetic and auditory teaching techniques, learners have presented their demands on increasing the number of the activities that allow them to learn through listening and movement. Related to students' preference, the study has shown that games, short movies, and songs are the most favorable VAK activities for learners. If teachers include VAK techniques while teaching, the number of learners that are going to be engaged will be higher. It happens because through VAK techniques learners with different learning styles will find something that fit them the most.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is the process of teacher intervening and instructing to learners specific needs. The main focus in the teaching process is to use methods that response to students' demands. Throughout the years, teachers have used several different methods by adapting them to the time and types of learners. Unfortunately, most of the used methods were teacher-centered, lowering the participation of students in the learning process. However, the advancement of technology and the increase on the number of teaching tools in schools made teachers to include some new modern teaching methods. Certainly, these new methods were found useful and helpful for both teachers and students.

Just as the teaching methods, the way students learn and acquire the new information has changed. Generally, based on the learning styles students are divided into Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learners. As Hussain (2017) stated "Learning style is the manner or fashion how someone acquires, attains, retains and uses imagination to attain skills or information"(p. 33). Visual learners prefer to acquire the information using visual aids such as maps, charts, diagrams, handouts. They are able to visualize easily the information by looking, writing down, or listing. On the other hand, auditory learners use hearing as a sensory receiver for the information. They prefer dialogues, discussions and plays above the written information. Pritchard concluded that auditory learners try to recall the information while using eye movements (2009). Differently from visual and auditory learners, kinesthetic learners prefer physical events when trying to acquire the new information. They like to move, touch and manipulate things. Sreenidhi and Helena (2017)

claimed that “kinesthetic learners will often remember things by going back in their minds and visualizing their own body's movements” (p. 20).

Considering these learning styles and the way how these learners acquire the new information, in this case the target language, this research focuses on the techniques used related to the VAK learning styles. In order to identify which VAK technique is the most applied nowadays, learners have asked to select activities that they frequently do in the classroom. Beside that, they have given responses which reflect the effect of the usage of VAK techniques on their learning process.

In the second section of the research, the works of different critics related to my study will be cited. In the sequel, the methodology used will be presented by mentioning participants. Finally, the results will be shown through pie, column, and bar charts and will be discussed from my perspective based on the given responses by learners.

1.1 Research Questions

In order to reach the aim of my study, identifying the most applied contemporary VAK techniques and their effects on students, three research questions have been raised at the beginning:

1. Which VAK technique is the most applied in classroom?
2. Does the use of VAK techniques impact students' motivation?
3. Which is the most favorable VAK technique from the students?

1.2 Limitations of the study

Due to the pandemic and the cease of the educational process, the research had to occur only in limited possible ways through online platforms. In such situation gathering data by going physically to schools and observing was impossible.

If the situation had been different, experimental research would probably be one of the possible options to use in this research. While selecting the controlled and manipulated groups, differences on the usage of VAK techniques and their effects on learners' learning could be observed. Another drawback faced in this research was the difficulty to reach and contact the participants. However, teachers played an important and helpful role in this case. The topic of the research itself on the other hand, included the term “VAK techniques” which was not familiar to the learners. So, all the questions used are designed to get the responses indirectly throughout the examples.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to identify the most applied and favorable VAK techniques used nowadays in EFL classrooms, by highlighting their effects on students' learning process.

Through the research also students' preferences and more or less their satisfaction toward the used methods will be shown.

1.4 Hypothesis

In both elementary schools, "Mati Logoreci" and "EminDuraku", teachers mostly focus on the teaching techniques that respond to the visual learners using visual aids such as pictures, handouts, notes, diagrams, graphs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Related to the VAK techniques many research have been conducted by different scholars. Most of the conducted research was focused on the effects of these techniques on students learning. However, studies that were focused on preferred techniques by learners from different parts of the world and different ages have never been missed.

Thus, Halim et al. (2007) conducted a research related to the effects of VAK techniques on students' learning process. The research consisted of 2 phases. The first phase was the process of designing and developing the learning software and the second was implementation and evaluation. They have used developed software called "BizzApps" which was created for 3 types of learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. For the visual learner style they have included images, texts, and videos. On the other hand, for auditory learners they have included elements of voice, and finally for kinesthetic learners movements of students. BizzApps learning software showed that students' achievements can be changed if the teaching style fits to their learning style. It means that when using VAK techniques, learners will be motivated about learning since they will find something that fits those best. Based on the findings of the research students with different learning styles have the ability to acquire topics taught easily if they were taught according to their learning styles.

Despite the effects of the VAK techniques on students' learning, a study conducted by Fu (2009) with primary school learners and teachers was related to the application of VAK techniques in the EFL classroom. The research consisted of 3-item questionnaire which had 2 versions. One of them have been designed to investigate teaching and learning styles. The research included 253 EFL pupils and 21 EFL teachers of these pupils at the same primary school in China. Based on results, more than a half of the learners characterized themselves as visual learners and claimed that the most applied technique in their classroom is visual one including the usage of images, graphs during the English class. Auditory learners and techniques used in classroom followed the visuals.

While these studies were based on the surveys as the data collection instrument, the research conducted by Baldo & Norma & Gómez (n. d.) covered the quasi-experimental design

including two groups in the research: Group A and Group B. The study was conducted to 36 adult students from both genders including also the teachers.

When comparing two groups the results showed that Group B where teacher includes VAK techniques showed higher scores and shared the same cognitive style likewise the teacher. Findings have shown that VAK method does have its weight in language learning since it makes courses more vital and assorted.

Whereas, the study conducted by Kharb&Samanta& Jindal & Singh (2013) mostly focused on the effects of the usage of VAK techniques, have identified the most preferred teaching methodology. The research included 100 first year medical students who were enrolled at Sharda University, India. Through VAK questionnaires firstly different types of learners have been identified, and then they were asked about their most preferred teaching methodologies like lectures, tutorials, demonstrations, and practical. As a conclusion, the most preferred teaching methodology was practical and tutorial was the least preferred.

Similar to the conducted research on the effects of the VAK techniques, Hamizan& Zaid (2014) conducted a research using the BLOSSOMS video program which was implemented into teaching and learning process. They have followed 4 steps in order to come up with a conclusion: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Participants were 15 students undertaking a Diploma of Islamic Studies at the local university. They have asked to watch a video created by the Faculty of Education team at “Universiti Teknologi” Malaysia. Video included a “guest teacher”, and was designed to be watch in form of short segments with durations of five-minutes. When video was over in-class teacher could turn back to another segment. At the end of the research, respondents were given to complete the questionnaire about the perception of the activities in the video. Based on the responses, the activities in the video had a positive impact on enhancing students’ motivation.

Another study characterized with the usage of quasi-experimental design was conducted by Tavakoly & Kiany & Mohammad (2018).The aim of the study was to show the effects of VAK learning techniques on Causative Construction Development. Participants were 120 upper-intermediate female students taking English language courses in three different school in Tehran. The research consisted of 3 phases: pretest, posttest and delayed posttest, also participants were divided into two groups. These two groups then were divided into three subgroups of 30 participants, including 10 participants from each of the Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learning styles. Findings have shown that there was a statistically significant increase in IM mean scores from pretest to posttest.

Based on analyzed works of different scholars and critics related to the study, VAK techniques have a significant effect on learning process regardless the age of learners, country where they live, or their English proficiency. On the other hand, the analyzed data on preferred and useful VAK techniques in EFL classrooms have shown that they may change depending on learners learning styles or the methodology that teachers use.

3. METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the systematic and analytical process of analyzing the used methods during the research. Based on that, in this section the approach and methods used in this research will be presented and discussed. Beside the approach, the procedure of data collection will be covered. Finally, the participants will be mentioned.

3.1. *Research method*

In this research, quantitative research method was used. This means that the result of the study will be presented and analyzed statistically. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. While the first 6 questions were designed as multiple choices, last 2 questions required from students to select several activities and to evaluate them based on their preferences starting from 1, which was the minimum, up to 5 maximum. The questions were focused on the VAK techniques given by examples, where students in some cases had to complete the sentences based on their own experiences such as “During the English class I usually...” by selecting answers from given options. The 6th question specifically contained a picture of a worksheet, where learners beside the question had the opportunity to acquire the given example through the visual aid. The reason why the quantitative research method was used is related to the purpose of the study. The aim in this case was to find out the results that statistically show the contemporary situation rather than just describing the situation.

3.2. *Data collection procedure*

Due to the permanent situation created because of the pandemic, the data collection procedure had to occur through online platforms. The questionnaire that served as data collection instrument in the study was designed through Google Form sent to learners with the permission and help of the teachers and principals.

The results have been presented through different forms of graphs such as pie, column, and bar charts depending on the type of the question. Learners had to submit the questionnaires within a week. Their responses based on the school that they belong, will be compared in order to reflect the differences and similarities on the usage of VAK techniques in two different public schools in Prizren.

3.3 *Participants*

Participants of the study were 8th grade learners from two elementary schools in Prizren: “Emin Duraku” and “Mati Logoreci”. With the permission of principles and help of the teachers questionnaires were sent to the groups of learners. The study included 160 participants; 80 learners from “Emin Duraku” and another half from “Mati Logoreci”. Participants were learners between the ages 13-14, and have successfully completed the questionnaires.

4. RESULTS

In this section, the results of the study will be reflected through different graph forms. First 6 questions will be presented through pie charts, whereas the 7th question’s results will be presented through bar charts since the question itself required from learners to select several activities that they would like to include more during the English class. The last question’s results will be shown through column charts, where the most preferred VAK technique will be reflected.

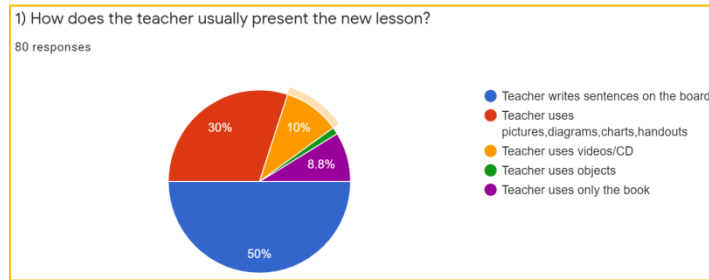


Figure 1. “Emin Duraku” Elementary School

In the elementary school “Emin Duraku”, 50% of learners agreed that the way teacher presents the new lesson stands mostly for writing sentences on the board. On the other hand, less than 1% of the learners responded that objects are used when the new lesson is presented.

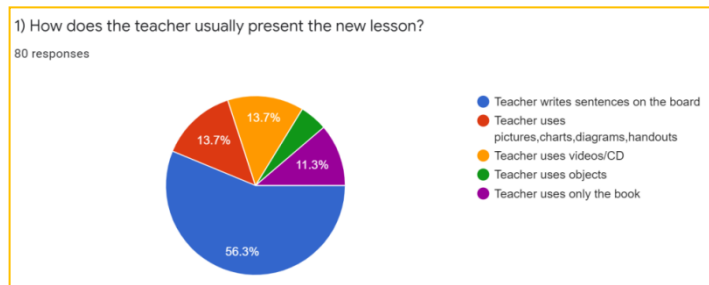


Figure 2. “Mati Logoreci” Elementary School

In the elementary school “Mati Logoreci” about 56.3% of the learners agreed that teacher presents the lesson while writing sentences on the board. The usage of videos and visual aids shared the same percentage of results as 13.7%.

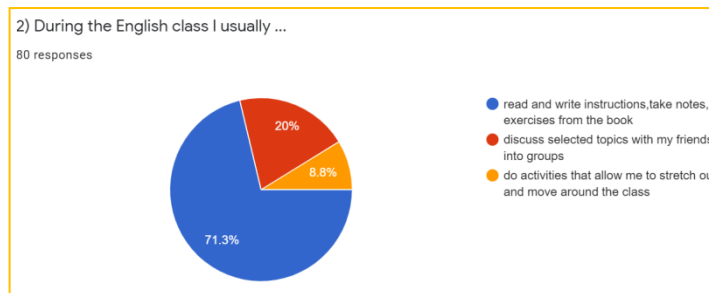


Figure 3. “Emin Duraku” Elementary School

In the elementary school “Emin Duraku” 71.3% of learners claimed that they spend more time on reading and writing instructions, taking notes, and doing exercises during the class .Whereas, kinesthetic activities that allow them to stretch out and move covers a very small percentage like 8.8%.

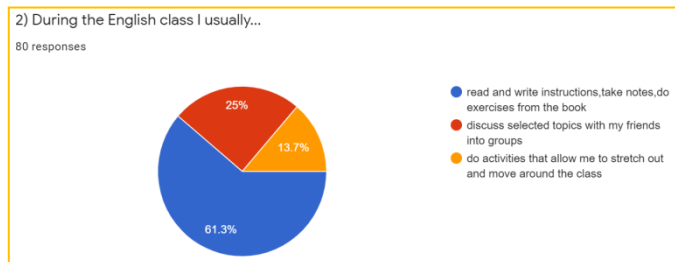


Figure 4. “Mati Logoreci”

In the elementary school “Mati Logoreci” 61.3% of the learners claimed that they deal with visual activities, whereas auditory activities are selected by 25% of the learners. Kinesthetic activities are the least used activities from learners with 13.7%

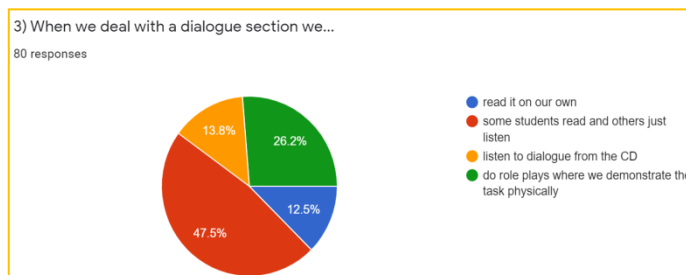


Figure 5. “Emin Duraku” Elementary School

Almost half of the learners like 47.5% from “EminDuraku” elementary school claimed that when dealing with a dialogue task some learners read and others just listen, while role plays where selected from 26.2% of the learners.13.8% of the learners responded that they use CD to listen to the dialogue.

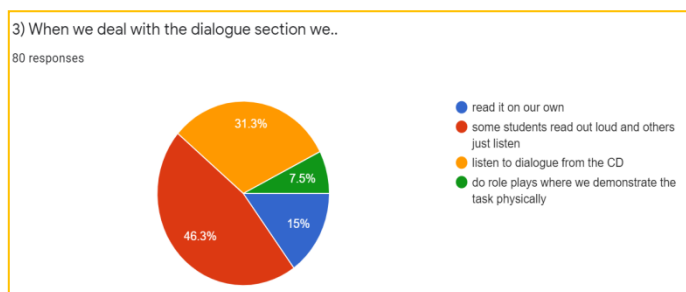


Figure 6. “Mati Logoreci” Elementary School

About 46.3% of learners from “Mati Logoreci” elementary school selected the same option of one reading and others listening. The role play option was selected by a little percentage of learners like 7.5%. A significant number of the learners from the total number of 31.3% , claimed that they use CD as audio aid to listen the task. Role plays are selected from a low percentage of learners like 15%, but the less selected option was demonstrating the task through role plays with 7.5%.

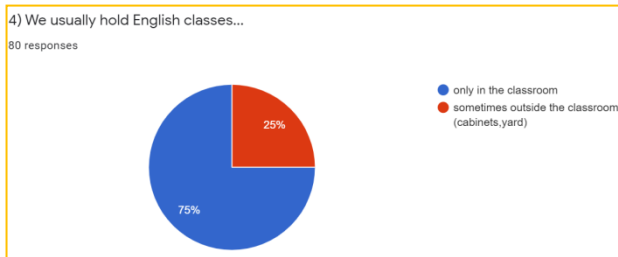


Figure 7. “Emin Duraku”

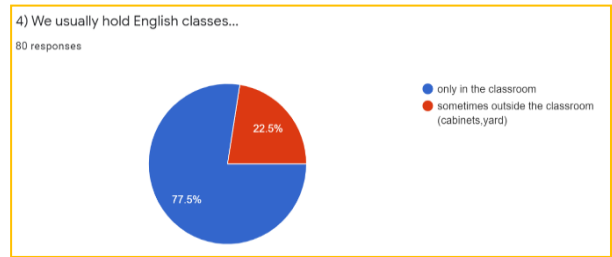


Figure 8. “Mati Logoreci”

Figure 7 shows that when learners from “EminDuraku “ elementary school have asked about the environment of the learning process, about ¾ of them have selected the option of the classroom only. Another ¼ claimed that they hold English classes sometimes outside the classroom like in cabinets, yard. Whereas, results about the same question have not changed when asked to learners from “Mati Logoreci”. About 77.5% of them have responded to the question as “classroom only”, while 22.5% selected the option where different environments have been mentioned.

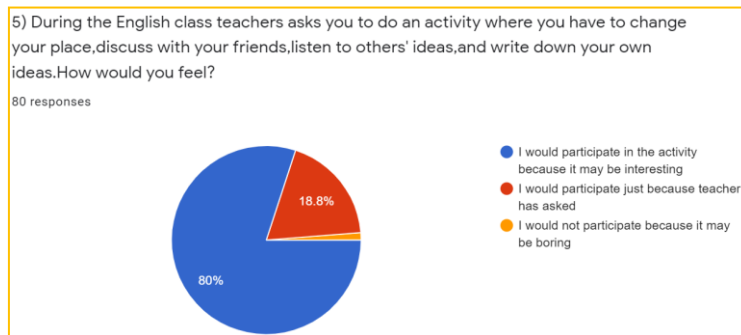


Figure 9. “Emin Duraku”

Figure 9 shows that 80% of “Emin Duraku” learners would show willingness to participate in the VAK activity 18.8% of them claimed that they will participate in the activity just because teacher has asked .The percentage of the learners who would not like to participate is less than 2%.

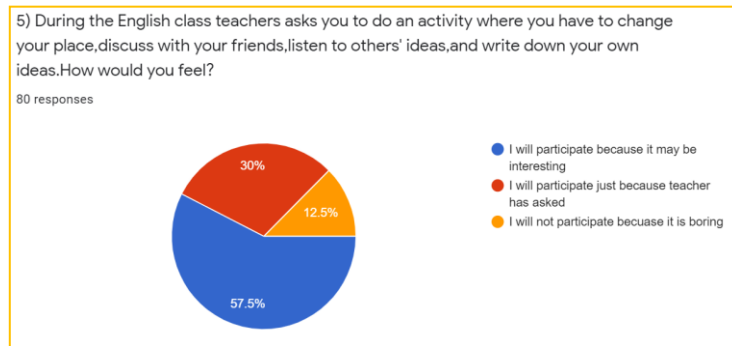


Figure 10. “Mati Logoreci”

Figure 10 shows that about 57.5% of the learners from “MatiLogoreci” elementary school would like to participate in the VAK techniques.30% of them would participate just because teacher asks, and 12.5% would not participate at all.

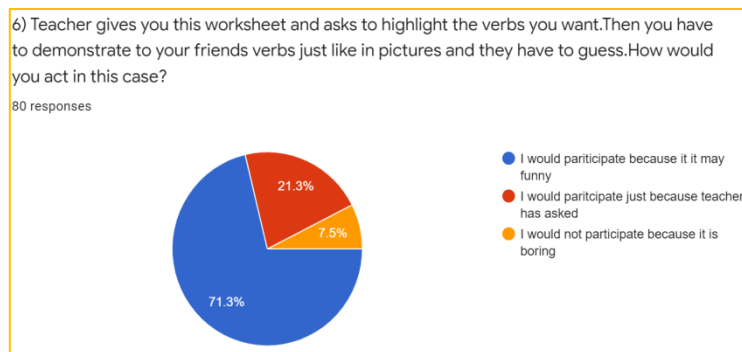


Figure 11. “Emin Duraku”

Figure 11 reflects the results about the learners interest on taking part in the given VAK activity 71.3% of the learners from “Emin Duraku” elementary school claimed that they will participate in the activity where they have to demonstrate the verbs from the worksheet 21.3% of the learners barely would take part, whereas 7.5% of them would not participate at all.

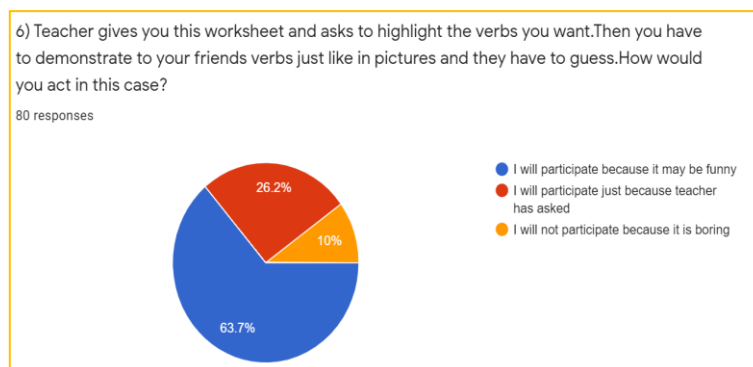


Figure 12. “Mati Logoreci”

Figure 12 reflects the results about the same question, this time taken from “MatiLogoreci” learners. A significant number of learners like 63.7% show willingness to participate in the VAK activity, whereas only 10% of them find the given activity boring.

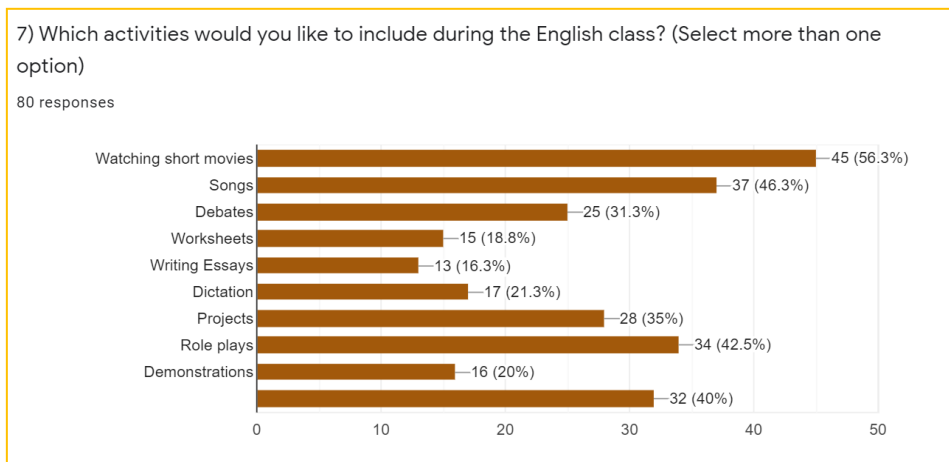


Figure 13. “Emin Duraku”

In the figure 13, through bar chart, the results of the question about the selected activities from “Emin Duraku” learners have been shown. Out of 80 participants, 45 of them which cover about 56.3% have selected watching movies as the activity that they would like to include more during the English class. The activity which is the closest to the top one with 46.3% is listening to songs. As the kinesthetic activity, role plays follow the auditory ones with 42.5%. The activity that learners would not like to include more during the English class is writing essays with 16.3%.

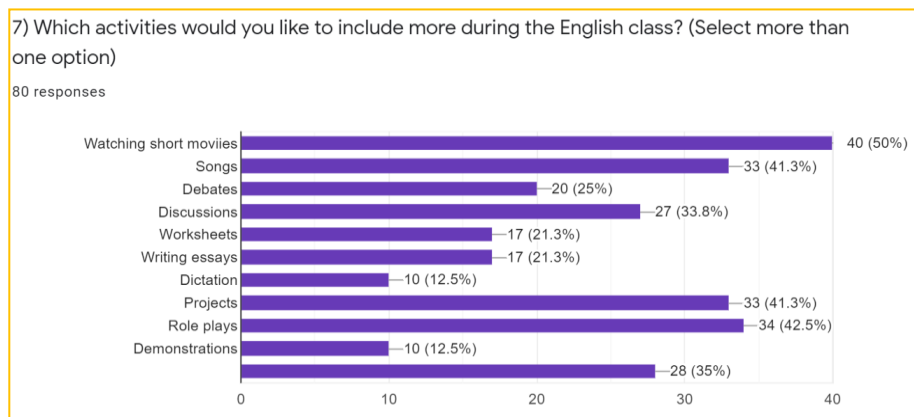


Figure 14. “Mati Logoreci”

Similarly, 50% of the learners from “Mati Logoreci” have selected movies as the activity that should be more included in the classroom. It is followed by role plays with 42.5%. Dictation and demonstrations share the same low percentage with only 12.5%.

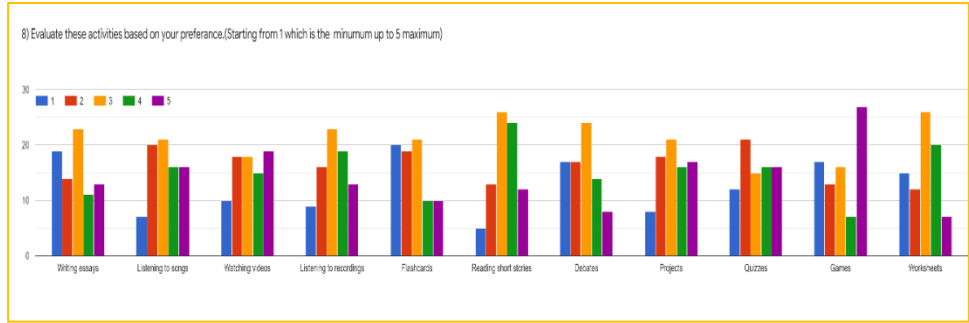


Figure 15. “Emin Duraku”

The results about the most preferred VAK techniques in the EFL classrooms are shown through column charts in the two last figures. Learners had to evaluate the given activities from 1-5 based on their preference. Figure 15 reflects the responses got from “Emin Duraku” learners. The most evaluated VAK activities for these learners are games. In addition learners, watching videos, listening to songs and projects follow games. The least preferred VAK activity in the classroom is reading short stories.

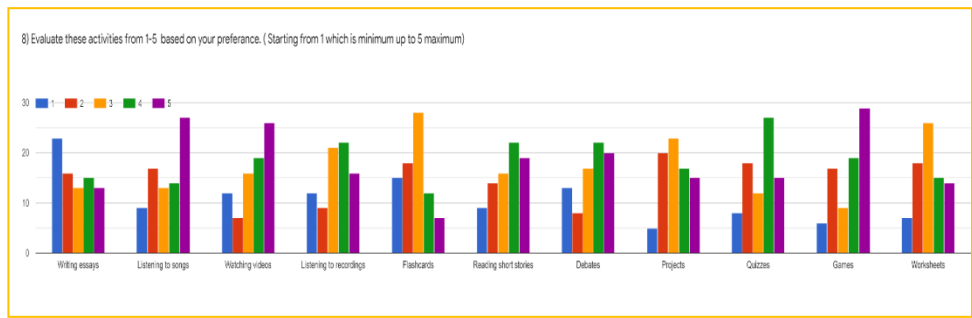


Figure 16. “Mati Logoreci”

Figure 16 also through column chart reflects the preferred VAK techniques from “MatiLogoreci” learners this time. Games and listening to songs are two activities that were evaluated almost by the same number of the learners. Watching videos is ranked as the third most preferred VAK activity in the classroom. Differently from the “Emin Duraku “learners, the least preferred VAK activity for “Mati Logoreci“learners are projects.

5. DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

In the results section, the responses of learners from elementary schools “EminDuraku” and “MatiLogoreci” are shown through different types of the graphs attached with the percentage rates. In the discussion part more in depth comparison and analysis of the findings will be done.

At the beginning of the research three main research questions were raised. The questionnaire was designed in a way to gather data which will serve as response to the initial research questions. Firstly, when learners from both elementary schools were asked about the

current way teacher presents the new lesson, the responses shared almost the same percentage in these two schools. Based on the findings, nowadays teachers use blackboard as a tool to present the new material. This method may be used as a visual aid for learners who prefer to get the new information through looking, hence visual learners. The question about the current way of learning and teaching process in the EFL classroom also has not shown any difference when comparing two schools. Nowadays, learners usually read and write, take notes, and do exercises from the course book. Whereas, activities for kinesthetic learners such as moving and touching during the class were the last ones to be ranked in the list. These findings support the hypothesis set at the beginning of the research about the most applied VAK technique in EFL classrooms nowadays. Nevertheless, the study conducted by Fu (2009) about the usage of VAK techniques in Chinese schools supports the findings of this research, since the most applied VAK technique there was the visual one only.

Following two questions in the questionnaire were specified for kinesthetic and auditory teaching techniques. When learners were asked about the way how they deal with the task when they have to listen to, about half of the respondents of both schools claimed that usually one of their classmates read and others just listen. What created a significant difference in the percentage about this question was the use of role plays and CD/recorder. Learners from “Emin Duraku” have selected role plays as the second most used activity when dealing with the dialogue tasks. On the other hand, a significant number of learners from “Mati Logoreci” have selected CD/recorder as a tool for this auditory activity. For the kinesthetic activity usefulness nowadays, the question about the learning environment has been raised.

Last two questions from the questionnaire were designed in a way to check the learners’ perspective about the use of VAK techniques. These were indirect questions asked as an example. Two situations have been given to learners and they had to select the one that they will probably do. A huge number of the learners from “Emin Duraku” have selected the option about participating in the activities. They have shown their willingness to participate because they found these kind of activities funny and interesting. Even though the percentage to these questions was lower in the “Mati Logoreci” elementary schools, more than half of the learners responded positively. The findings have shown that the usage of VAK activities in the classroom impact on learners’ learning process, by motivating them and increasing their participation in the activities done in classroom. As Ghaedi and Jam (2014) stated “Motivation is probably one of the most important factors that educators can consider in order to enhance learning” (p.2).

Last two questions were designed in a way where learners had to select several activities given by the researcher, and then had to rate them based on their preference. The activity that learners from both schools have selected as one who should be included more during the English class was watching short movies. While learners from “Emin Duraku” elementary school have selected songs and role plays as the activities that they want to include more, learners from “MatiLogoreci” elementary school have included projects as well. When rating the given activities based on their preference, learners from both schools preferred to vote games as the one that they

like the most. Watching videos, songs, and quizzes are the following preferred activities from “Emin Duraku” learners. Similarly, learners from “Mati Logoreci” have selected almost the same activities by including short stories and debates as well.

Findings have shown that generally learners like to play games which allow them to move, speak, listen rather than just sit and observe in the classroom. The reason why learners have preferred games was because “games are a great way to introduce or fortify a concept in a fun manner” (Gerschler, 2012, p.15). Watching videos and songs as the highly rated activities show the need of auditory learners to include activities that respond to their learning style too.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and the data analyzed, nowadays some VAK techniques are used as part of the teaching and learning methodology in the EFL classrooms. Since the aim of the research was to identify the most applied VAK technique, it is possible to say that visual activities and methods dominate over auditory and kinesthetic ones. Most of the selected responses from the learners included activities that belong to the visual group such as taking notes, doing exercises from the book, writing sentences on the board. Techniques that respond to the auditory learning style follow the visual ones. So, the second of the most applied VAK technique in the EFL classroom consists of auditory activities and methods such as listening tasks from CD/recorder, reading out loud and listening. Contemporary, the least VAK technique used is the kinesthetic one. Usually kinesthetic activities require more planning, time, motivation and effort. Most of the teachers nowadays still prefer to stay with the traditional methods were teacher speaks and writes and learners listen only.

However, when such situation given based on their responses learners will show willingness to participate. Since VAK activities include visuals, pictures, diagrams, handouts, recordings, movement, games learners find them interesting and funny. As a response to the second research of the study, VAK techniques impact positively learners’ learning process by motivating them to participate in the activities through which they can get the new information. VAK techniques make learners to feel that they are part of the learning process itself, and allow them to be creative. Beside the learning process, throughout the VAK techniques learners can create the product as a final stage of learning. This product created by learners will show the result of the learners’ comprehension about the taught lesson.

When learners were asked to select activities that they would like to include more during the English class, and then to evaluate some given VAK activities, most of them have selected games, songs, videos, and projects. This shows that nowadays learners prefer new methods of learning based on their personal learning style. While most of the activities used until now in foreign language classrooms have responded mostly to the needs of visual learners, the feedback got from learners show that usage of one technique only may not be enough when teaching the whole class.

The more VAK techniques and activities teachers use during the class, the more interactive the lesson will become. This happens because when types of activities are wider, learners will have the opportunity to deal with the one that fit him/her the most. As Penger and Tekavcic concluded the lifelong learning skills of learners are highly related to the teachers' response to individuals' learning style and their preferences (2009).

6.1. Recommendation

Generally, when analyzing the conducted data it is possible to highlight the usefulness and effectiveness of VAK techniques in EFL classrooms. Unfortunately, most of these techniques nowadays are not part of the teaching process. So, teachers should include higher number of the VAK activities in order to keep learners engaged in their learning. Activities like games, videos, songs are missing in most of the EFL classrooms, which creates insufficiency when fulfilling learners' needs. Related to the research, it is recommended to include participants from different grades, and also involving a higher number of schools in order to check the consistency.

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APPENDIX

Questions included in the questionnaire.

The image shows a Google Forms questionnaire titled "Questionnaire" with the subtitle "Contemporary VAK techniques used in EFL classroom". It contains several questions:

- 1. How does the teacher usually present the new lesson? (Teacher writes sentences on the board, Teacher uses pictures, diagrams, charts, handouts, Teacher uses videos/CD, Teacher uses objects, Teacher uses only the book)
- 2. During the English class I usually... (read and write instructions/prepare materials/exercises from the book, discuss selected topics with my friends in groups, activities that allow me to stretch out and move around the class)
- 3. When we deal with a dialogue section we... (read it on our own, some students read and others just listen, listen to dialogue from the CD, do role-play where we demonstrate the task physically)
- 4. We usually find English classes... (only in the classroom, sometimes outside the classroom (at home, yard))
- 5. During the English class teachers asks you to do an activity where you have to change your place/discuss with your friends/listen to others' ideas and write about your own ideas. How would you react? (would participate because it may be interesting, would participate just because teacher has asked, would not participate because it may be boring)
- 6. Teacher gives you this worksheet and asks to highlight the verbs you want. Then you have to demonstrate to your friends verbs just like in pictures and they have to guess. How would you act in this case? (A grid of 24 illustrations with verbs: hide, exchange, skip, do a handstand, play, tease, argue, eat-drink, kiss, greet, fake, die, look, see, know, guess, talk, shout, jump, lie, whisper, ask, dress up, open, explode, carry, ring, paint, win, build)
- 7. Which activities would you like to include during the English class? (Select more than one option) (Watching short movies, songs, sketches, worksheets, using games, cartoons, projects, drawings, conversations, games like tables, hangman, hot seat, puzzles, etc)
- 8. Evaluate these activities from 1 to 5 based on your preference (1 Starting from 1 which is minimum up to 5 maximum) (A grid for rating activities: Writing essays, Listening to songs, Watching videos, Listening to recordings, Flashcards, Reading short stories, Games, Projects)

At the bottom, there is a table for "Comments" and "Suggestions" with five columns for each, and a "Google Forms" logo.

Link of the questionnaire designed for the “Emin Duraku” primary school learners: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1AyYxB2lrESBZU8_zhQ_nK1LrtLNRzWlq78vUI9wuHQ/edit

Link of the questionnaire designed for the “Mati Logoreci” primary school learners: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JpOEw_GgD56cea2rFE1ORM9nb08giB19NAXivn4dlX4/edit