Introduction

Studying a second language has become popular at a young age. Some schools even start teaching a second language as young as kindergarten in order to prepare students to be citizens in an increasingly global society. Often, students struggle to learn a second language because there are many steps to learning the language. First, students must learn and memorize the new vocabulary. Once students master the vocabulary, they have to learn how to use the vocabulary in grammatical structures correctly. After they learn the grammar portions, students must then practice manipulating the vocabulary and grammar in various situations. If students fail, however, to master the vocabulary, it is very difficult to take their language learning to the next level.

In order to learn vocabulary in another language, students frequently make flashcards with either a picture or the English word on one side and the word in the other language on the other side. Students make traditional paper flashcards in many classes as a study technique. However, as children are growing up in a world with technology, their study techniques need to change to incorporate that technology. There are many ways that students can study another language online, including using online flashcards. The iPod Touch also has educational applications that have flashcards that students can practice for their classes. My action research answered the question: Does using a flashcard application on an iTouch motivate 8th grade students and improve Spanish vocabulary acquisition more than traditional paper flashcards?

*Rationale*

My eighth grade students studying Spanish I needed to learn a large number of vocabulary words in each unit. Since they were taking a high school level course, the class moved very quickly and they had very little time to learn the vocabulary words so they could move on to the grammatical structures in each unit. The students made flashcards, sometimes in class and sometimes for homework, for each unit. However, when I assigned flashcards for homework, often students did not complete them. Also, students tended to lose their flashcards or leave them in their locker, another class, or at home. Since students made flashcards for many of their classes, they did not always use them or were unmotivated to use them as a study technique over and over. I knew that flashcards were a great study technique, but I also knew that if students were not using them, they were a waste of time. Faced with this challenge, my philosophy, following the praxis paradigm, was to do something about it to change the situation. In order to cater to the interest of students who love using technology, my action research had students using flashcards on an iPod Touch.

I expected to see that students were more motivated and therefore would have higher quiz scores when using an iPod Touch flashcard application than when using their traditional paper flashcards. Since students were so used to using technology outside of school, I thought they would be more motivated to use it in school, as well. It was crucial to see the results from this study as knowing how to keep students motivated and increase student learning are important factors for student success. I needed to know which method was more beneficial to my students and then decided how to teach future units based on the results of this action research. Most importantly, the study benefited students as I tried to motivate them and increase their level of achievement and determine how to do that in the future.