IMPROVING VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH WORDSEARCH GAME

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Abstract
The present research aims to improve vocabulary mastery using Wordsearch Game. It was classroom action research that covered the steps of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, and it was done in two cycles. The research participants were the students of Learning Group VIII C in SMPN 9 Pontianak with 36 students. The data were collected using observation checklists, field notes and tests. The research found that students remembered all delivered words, and the score from Cycle 1 until Cycle 2 improved significantly.

Keywords: Descriptive, Vocabulary Mastery, Wordsearch Game.

INTRODUCTION
In learning English, vocabulary plays an important role. Vocabulary is one component that supports four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The most essential point of the above statement is that mastering vocabulary for students is the main component to learn a language successfully. Vocabulary is defined as a large number of words that students have to know, memorising the form of the word and understanding the meaning.

Based on English Curriculum 2013 of Junior High School, the students are intended to achieve the standard competencies. One standard competency on the syllabus of Junior High School is to list and describe something like animals, places, persons or things around them. To achieve this standard competence, the students should learn vocabulary first because, without vocabulary, the students will learn nothing. So, the students need to have a large vocabulary to learn language skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. Every language has its own words. They can express what students feel or what students want to show to others. In addition, words are significant to master a foreign language. In the teaching-learning process based on the curriculum, the students learn texts like a descriptive text. To write a descriptive text, the students need to master the nouns and adjectives around them. The adjectives mostly encountered in this text cover the attributes to shapes, numbers, colours, sizes, quantities and qualities of nouns.

In reference to the pre-observation, since the beginning of the semester the students had short vocabulary. They also got difficulties improving their vocabulary particularly nouns and adjectives as well as memorising new words presented in the texts delivered by the teacher. Therefore, the students did not know the meaning of words and how to use them in a text.
The pre-research also indicated that not all of the students participated the English class actively in the classroom. Some students did not pay attention, and the others kept silent because they felt bored, so the students had difficulties focusing. Completing the teaching-learning process, they failed to remember the words. From the view point of teaching strategy, the English teacher asked the students to bring a dictionary to more accessible for the students to find meaning. Then, the students learned the new vocabulary through opening a dictionary.

To have the students participate the class actively, a teacher may deliver the lesson through a game. Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby (2006) claim that games help and encourage the learners to sustain their interest and work. Munikasari, Sudarsono, & Riyanti (2021) reported that the Year-7 students of SMP Negeri 4 Teluk Keramat-Sambas could recollect vocabulary easily and generate the students’ motivation in learning vocabulary through a hangman game. Ikhsanudin, Sudarsono, & Salam (2019) reported that the magic trick activities combined with pair discussion, group discussion, and cross-group discussion could improve the students’ engagement in the teaching-learning process of listening class. They claim that the magic trick contributed an essential variable inviting the students’ intellectual engagement.

The learners experience the language when they learn through games and make them easier to understand and to enjoy the class. The present research applied a game, called Wordsearch Game, as the technique to improve vocabulary in SMPN 9 Pontianak. It is a game where letters of a word lay in a grid and usually have a square shape. To play this game, players search and mark all hidden words inside the grid. The students may arrange the listed words horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid. This game was hypothesized able to help students to memorise some vocabulary. The study was conducted in the format of classroom action research.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The present research was classroom action research. It involved "taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your teaching contexts" (Burns, 2010). The research of this type enables the teachers investigate their teaching, developing ideas and alternatives to solve teaching. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) claim, "It is used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for a solution, or where some change of feature results in a more desirable outcome”. This research aimed to find the solution to the problem in the classroom. The problems were that many students got difficulties improving new vocabulary and memorising new words given by the teacher. The students also had difficulties writing a descriptive text because of a short vocabulary, particularly noun and adjective words. Then, the students did not know the meaning of words and how to use them.

There were four steps in doing action research. They are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Burns, 2010). The model is shown below.
Cyclical action research model based on Kemmis and McTaggart cited in (Burns, 2010)

The research participants were the students of Learning Group VIII C in SMPN 9 Pontianak, the number of students was 36 learners. The data were collected using observation checklist, field notes, observation checklist and a matching test. The test was given at the end of each cycle. They were analyzed using the following formula the mean formula and the result was categorized as follows:

Formula 1: Mean score

\[
A = \frac{X}{N} \times 100\%
\]

Legends:
A: the student's score
X: the correct answer
N: the total number of items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual score</th>
<th>Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-69</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reference to the achievement minimum score for English subject, the students were defined pass the subject if their score was >76.

**RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

In the first cycle, the students were found difficulty getting the meaning of new words encountered in the text. They knew the forms, but did not know the meanings of the words. Thus, they were not familiar with the words in usage. Although they spent a long time to finish their tasks, almost all students did not
reach the achievement minimum score, 76. The average score in this cycle was 65; there were only 7 students who achieved the minimum score. Reflecting this achievement score, the researcher and the teacher concluded that the learning performance in the first cycle was not satisfying.

In the second cycle, the Wordsearch game has been accompanied by pictures and word clues. They made the students remember all words and have the meaning; they could match the words to the pictures correctly, and they could fill all the blank spaces with the words appropriately. Besides, the students could focus their attention during the teaching-learning process; and they could work in cooperation with their classmates in the group discussion settling down the tasks that the teacher assigned.

In the second cycle, the number of the students who passed the minimum score increased from 7 to 22 persons. In conclusion, the students’ achievement in this cycle was deemed satisfying because almost all of the students met and even passed the minimum score of English subjects. Therefore, the researcher and the teacher decided not to do the next cycle. The average score increased from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 as shown below.

Diagram 1 Average Achievement Score of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Discussion

The present research found that the students improved their vocabulary mastery using Wordsearch game. The achievement progress was considered satisfying. Through Wordsearch game, students could recalled the words and know their meaning easily by guessing the pictures and the clue letters on the game. The students could master the words appropriately through the context of the words within the text. Besides, this game enabled the students to perform the activities during the class enthusiastically, to focus on the learning attention, and to enjoy the game through the cooperative work with their classmates. The findings confirm that the Wordsearch game is a good teaching technique that could make students learn in a high level of motivation and interest (see (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). Wordsearch game helped and encouraged the learners to sustain their interest and work. Goumas, Terzopoulos, Tsompanoudi, & Iliopoulou (2020) summarize that beside “the user interface of the application is simple and easy to use”, the Wordsearch game is claimed “[to] help long term
vocabulary recall, while it makes learning fun by creating internal motivation to the students.”

In addition, Wordsearch games could improve the mastery in word spelling and maintained the students’ interest. Sutherland (2009) and Wakania (2018) argue that search games can improve vocabulary and spelling, and it is suitable for long-term brain health to prevent dementia. (Sukstrienwong, 2014) claims that searching for words pushes the readers to read and memorise the words while they are playing letter-by-letter puzzle.

Since the Wordsearch game just presents a few letters and words, it needs additional materials and media such as a picture and some word clues to recall and understand the meaning of words more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Wordsearch game with the grid consisting of letters that form words horizontally and vertically facilitated students to identify words correctly based on the list of words provided. Unfortunately, Wordsearch game does not support the students to learn the word meaning contextually. Therefore, the teacher is required to provide the teaching-learning activities with pictures and word clues. In general, Wordsearch game can master vocabulary due to their positive attitudes and active, enthusiastic, cooperative and competitive learning activities.

As a result, implementing a Wordsearch game could make the students in SMPN 9 Pontianak master vocabulary better. The students can do the task via guessing the picture and word clues on the Wordsearch game. Contextually, they could apply the words appropriately.

REFERENCES


