IMPROVING ENGLISH VOCABULARY BY USING QUARTED GAMES

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ABSTRACT

It is not easy to teach vocabulary to young learners because it needs good technique and media to motivate them. Media is used by the teachers in teaching and learning process. One of the appropriate media that can be functioned to improve the students’ vocabulary is English Quartet games. This study aims at improving the students’ vocabulary skill by using English Quartet Cards games. In this study, classroom action research design was used to obtain the information related to the research problems. The result of this study showed that teaching vocabulary by using English Quartet Cards games can improve the students’ vocabulary skill. Based on the result of pre-test and post-test, it can be concluded that the fourth grade students of SD Bunaya Kabanjahe achieve better achievement in vocabulary after the treatment. It can be seen from the mean of pre-test and post-test. The mean score of the pre-test was 67.93. Meanwhile, the mean score of post-test was 87. It means that there was an improvement on the students’ vocabulary skill.

Keywords: (improving, Vocabulary, English Quartet Cards)

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English has become a very powerful language in the world. As an international language, most communities in the world use English. Different from other countries in South East Asia; such as Malaysia, Singapore or Philippines, where they put English as their second language, Indonesia puts English as its first foreign language. Anyone who wants to get respectable position in community and in a working place must master this language. As the most important foreign language, English has been taught at formal schools from Elementary School (SD) up to the twelfth grade of Senior High School (SMA) and some semesters in the university.
As a developing country, Indonesia really needs English because Indonesia government is trying to improve all aspects which are usually faced by all countries. One of these aspects is education, which is essential. As an English teacher to be the writer focuses her attention to the teaching English as the language of the world.

In Indonesia, English is learnt and taught to junior high school, Senior high school even at university. English means that something important for the student to be taught at school based on situation and condition of the object area. But there are some problems that faced by the students. It is realized that most students get bad mark. So, it proves that English is really difficult for the students. There are four skills in learning English they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is very important because speaking and human being cannot be separated from each other. Speaking is used to express their ideas and to communicate to people in civilized world. That is vocabulary is important. But the students of SD or graduated of it still get hard. The problems are:

First, the students feel ashamed and afraid to speak English because they have not many vocabulary, so they never practice and use target language and they always use mother tongue in the classroom. Second, for the teacher, they did not use variety of teaching such as visual aids. The teacher has to motivate the students to learn English in the class, and create the method of teaching. So the students will feel relaxed, and freely in using English in the classroom. The teacher must make afford to understand the material well. In learning English, The students are expected to reach four skills. Among those, vocabulary is the most difficult to master.

Teaching vocabulary can be done through dialogues, picture, games, etc. The teacher should choose a suitable ways such as: using games. If the teacher uses it, the students will have a lot of opportunity to practice pronunciation and communication or in other words it means that the students will get knowledge or input from picture media.

Besides the teacher, there are still many other factors that can influence the teaching - learning process, such as students themselves, time allotment, the use of visual aids, teaching technique and teaching materials. The success of the teaching – learning process depends on how effectively and efficiently those components are integrated and implemented.

In this study, the writer would focus on teaching English vocabulary considering that vocabulary constitutes the knowledge of meaning, which is one of the components of language. Therefore, it becomes an essential means in conducting communication.

Teaching vocabulary to Elementary school students is not an easy task for teachers. They need to choose appropriate techniques conducted in classes. The teachers should be more communicative in conducting the class. The first step in teaching more communicatively is to look at the activities the teachers use in their classroom to see the sort of interaction they allow students a chance to determine what they think about adapting or supplementing it. A lot of conventional materials can be used on those materials, which have been decided for use in
small classes or the large class situation.

Based on the principle above, a teacher should be selective in choosing a teaching technique. In the writer’s opinion, using Quartet Card Game is one of the techniques that can be used. The writer is inspired by a Quartet Card Game that he used to play when he was a kid. This game combines pictures and a game. There is a similarity between Quartet Card Game with Happy Families game that can also be used as a teaching technique. By using Quartet Card Game, it is hoped that the teacher will be able to motivate the students to learn and pay attention to the material the teacher presents. It can also avoid student’s feeling of boredom. The writer’s considerations are supported by the statements suggested by Finocchiaro (1974: 163) who says that the students understand and retain better when they have been shown or have touched some objects associated with it. Brown, et. al (1973: 1) also state that using a variety of media will increase the probability that students will learn more, retain better what they learn, and improve their performance of the skills they are expected to develop. The students are given something new and different from what they usually get in class. They are not only the objects of the teaching – learning process, but also the subjects. Quartet Card Game can be used as one of many teaching techniques in which students are given a chance to learn English more fun and they will be more motivated.

The Characteristics of the Students at the Kindergarten School

The most important step toward working successfully with children is by understanding them. Bush (1954:189) as cited by Peterson (1964:90) reports the result of an investigation which indicated that in general, the teachers who know most about their pupils and are aware of and sympathize with their individual needs and interests have effective relationship with a larger number of the students than the teachers whose major concern is knowledge of subject matter.

Since this study concerns with the teaching of English at the Elementary School, the writer needs to point out the characteristics of the students at the age of 8 to 10 in their language development (1990:4) The following are some general characteristics of the children of that group according to Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 2-4)

1) They are competent users of mother tongue.
2) They can tell the difference between facts and fictions.

A conclusion can be drawn in order to reach the success of the language learning is that an English teacher at a Elementary school needs to have both the knowledge about the pupils and the knowledge about English as the subject matter.

In teaching a lesson, perhaps, a teacher has already used a game, for example Quartet Card Game to make the vocabulary review run in a different way. Yet, he might see that he still could not get the students’ attention into the right mood, he may conduct some activities that can get their attention. The teacher should be able to recognize what goes before him. Therefore he can be easily to switch the strategy in order to solve the problem that might appear.
Secondly, a language teacher can not only perform as a source of information to his students. He teaches the lessons and asks the students to do some exercises or practice a conversation without caring his students’ needs. Yet, he has to pay attention on their needs and even tries to channel them into learning experiences. Ashley (1970:20) says,” Each child feels the need to think things out, to talk, to explore, to be helpful, to feel accepted and important. It’s our job to make use of these drives, exploiting them so that the pupil uses and practices language, improving his skills while he satisfies to do his job.”

From the statements above, it can be concluded that as a teacher of English especially in Elementary School after considering the characteristics and needs of students, he should always make great efforts in order to be an effective teacher. The effective teacher is really required to help the students to master English. If he can conduct and manage the class effectively, the purpose of learning process can be achieved maximally.

Learning English

Learning English as the first foreign language is something new for Elementary students and it can’t be denied that it is not easy. The reason can be summarized as follows:
1). English is a foreign language in Indonesia. It means the language learning takes place in a country where the language to be learned is not the native language of the society or is not spoken. This situation may affect their opportunity to use the language because their first language is used around them.
2). Indonesian and English are two languages that mostly different in their phonology, vocabulary, or grammar. It means that learning English is completely new for the students.
3). Students have not reached a high level of maturing in learning their first language. They just acquire the language being used in their society.

Vocabulary

Learning language can not be separated from learning vocabulary. Whenever we want to communicate with other people using a language, we need to use a stock of words (vocabulary) that should be mastered related to the topic spoken. Vocabulary is not just words. When we talk about our vocabulary, we mean the words we know and our ability to use them. To know what vocabulary is, the writer would like to present some definitions of vocabulary stated by several people. Webster (1972:2046) states that vocabulary is:
1) a list of words, and sometimes phrases, usually arranged in alphabetical order and defined; a dictionary, glossary or lexicon
2) all the words of a language
3) all the words used by a particular person, class, profession, etc.:sometimes, all the words recognized and understood by a particular person, although not necessarily used by him (in full, passive vocabulary)
4) They love to play and learn best when they enjoy themselves. But they also take themselves seriously and like to think that what they are doing is real work
5) They are enthusiastic and positive about learning
6) They rely on the spoken words as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning
7) They are able to work with other and learning from other
8) Their own understanding comes through eyes, hands and ears. The physical world is dominant all times
9) They have very short attention and concentration

Vocabulary also means the stock or supply of words that a person uses or understands even if he doesn’t use them in oral or written communication or in reading. In addition, Finocchiaro (1974:73) explains that the students’ vocabulary can be divided into two kinds, namely active and passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary refers to the words in which the students can understand and pronounce the words correctly and use them constructively in speaking or in writing. On the other, hand passive vocabulary refers to the words in which the students can recognize and understand while they are reading or listening to someone speaking, but they do not use the words in speaking or in writing.

From those definitions, the writer concludes that vocabulary is a list of words in a language used actively by a particular person (in speaking or writing) and passively understood by a particular person (in reading or listening to someone). The writer thinks that mastery of vocabulary is very important, because vocabulary is one of the components of the language beside sound system, grammar and culture. It can not be postponed until the grammar is mastered. The writer believed, as it is supported by Nagaraj (1996:183), that the teaching of vocabulary should not be delayed until the grammar is mastered.

**Teaching Vocabulary in Elementary School**

Students of Elementary schools are expected to have the skills of the language in simple English. Teachers have aim at giving introduction to the language, which means, teaching processes have to be utilized the existing context of situation. Teachers have to do this because teaching English to children is different from teaching it to adults, especially in teaching vocabulary. According to Wallace (1982:29-30), there are principles on which teaching vocabulary is to be based. They are:

1) Aims
   The aims have to be clear for the teacher: how many of the things listed does the teacher expect the learner to be able to achieve the vocabulary? What kind of words?
2) Quantity
   The teacher may have to decide on the number of vocabulary items to be learned. How many new words in a lesson can the learners learn? If there are too many words, the learner may become confused, discouraged.
3) Need
   In teaching vocabulary, the teacher has to choose the words really needed by his students in communication. The students should be put in a situation where they have to communicate and get the words they need.
4) Frequent Exposure and Repetition
   Frequent exposure and repetition here means that the teacher should give much
practice on repetition so that his students master the target words well. He also should give opportunity to students to use the words in writing or speaking.

5) Meaningful Presentation
   In teaching vocabulary, the teacher should present target words in such a way that their meanings are perfectly clear and unambiguous.

6) Situation of Presentation
   The teacher should tell students that they have to use words appropriately. The use of words depends on the situation in which they are speaking and depends on the person to whom they are speaking.

Vocabulary that the teacher introduces to the class is taken from the textbook he is using, but he can also add other vocabulary that is relevant to the students. The chosen vocabulary should consider several guidelines as suggested by Haycraft (1978:44-47) as follows:

1). Commonest words
   They are the words which are commonly used or the words that the students need. By teaching common words, the students will often find them and it will be easy for them to understand and to memorize

2). Students’ need
   The words that are needed by the students are usually worth to be taught to the students. If the students need to know them they will be motivated to learn, because motivation will ensure them to use the words in communication.

In order to create a personal sense of need for a foreign word, we have to put the students in a situation which forces them to use the English words. For example, by asking them to do a dialogue in groups of or three using the words taught. Allen suggested some steps to overcome the problems which appear during the teaching-learning process:

1) Grouping the words to be taught
   To attract the students’ interest and needs after taking a look at a textbook lesson, the teacher is suggested to make his own list of words in alphabetical order. By making this list, teacher will find out the words that might be easy or difficult for the students.

2) Teaching the pronunciation of the words and have the students pronounce the words

3) Using technique showing the meaning of the words The technique can be:
   a) Using picture
   b) Giving explanation in simple English, using vocabulary that the students already know
   c) Giving explanation in students own language
   d) Drilling the words after the students have got the meaning

4) Using appropriate commands

5) Using Quartet games for vocabulary teaching
   Using Quartet games existed in the classroom or school surrounding can be used as the media in teaching vocabulary and they will provide the students with direct sensory enrichment to the images. Real objects are also simple and cheap since the teacher can find it everywhere.
6) Creating communication experiences or the classroom besides for explaining the words
7) Using pictures that students draw

As a teacher, one thing that should be noted in vocabulary teaching is that he/she has to be sure to teach the words in contexts. Just as what Nasr says that it is very important to remember that a word meaning depends upon how it is used. This is the basic reason by vocabulary should be studied in context. (1975:74) Since the subjects of the teaching are children, in using a context we have to consider the following suggestion given by Nasr that is if the aim is to teach words, the grammatical structures must be familiar and limited. This, of course, is true for beginners. (1975:59)

In other words, new vocabulary items should always be introduced in familiar or known structures. Besides, Finocchiaro suggests that the new vocabulary items should be presented in situations clarify to their meanings (Finocchiaro, 1974:18)

From the statements above, the writer believes that teachers can use English as much as possible in the everyday organization and running the class since classroom language is one of the most realistic communicative situations in which the children use the language in context. It is not difficult for teacher to give instructions for the usual classroom routines in English such as:

- Open your Book
- Close your Book
- Please Stand Up
- Please Sit down

Teacher can also use gestures as well so that the children will soon become used to them. If the teacher has been working on requests or asking some pictures using some specific phrases or sentences such as:

- Do you have a ball?
- Yes, I do / No, I don’t.
- What is this?
- This is a car.

then the teacher should insist that the students using that phrases or sentences in English. One way of encouraging the use of English is to write the most commonly used phrases in the blackboard where students can see them clearly. If a student uses his or her mother tongue, teacher should not respond it, but the teacher can insist the student to repeat in English by pointing to the appropriate phrase in the blackboard. In this way besides the children’s vocabulary is increased, a certain grammatical structure will be emphasized unconsciously in their mind because the repetition of the pattern will give them a sense of assurance and achievement (Nasr, 1975:362)

Games as Learning Framework

There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. The writer believed that it is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games.
Games play an important role in teaching and learning process. They can often help the students understand something presented better than telling them verbally.

Many experienced textbook and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. W. R. Lee holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms (1979:2). He also says that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching program.

A similar opinion is expressed by Richard-Amato, who believes games to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching. There are many advantages of using games. "Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely" (Richard-Amato 1988:147). They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings.

Games also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson. Furthermore, to quote Richard-Amato, they, "add diversion to the regular classroom activities," break the ice, "[but also] they are used to introduce new ideas" (1988:147). In the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better.

S. M. Silvers says many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as "a teaching device," yet they often perceive games as mere time-fillers, "a break from the monotony of drilling" or frivolous activities. He also claims that many teachers often overlook the fact that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and students use the language they have been exposed to and have practiced earlier (1982:29). Further support comes from Zdybiewska, who believes games to be a good way of practicing language, for they provide a model of what learners will use the language for in real life in the future (1994:6).

There are many factors to consider while discussing games, one of which is appropriate. Teachers should be very careful about choosing games if they want to make them profitable for the learning process. If games are to bring desired results, they must correspond to either the student's level, or age, or to the material that is to be introduced or practiced. Not all games are appropriate for all students irrespective of their age (Siek-Piskozub 1994:37). Different age groups require various topics, materials, and modes of games. For example, children benefit most from games which require moving around, imitating a model, competing between groups and the like (Siek-Piskozub 1994:38).

Furthermore, structural games that practice or reinforce a certain grammatical aspect of language have to relate to students' abilities and prior knowledge. Games become difficult when the task or the topic is unsuitable or outside the student's experience.

Based on the statements above, the writer made a conclusion that by using games, the teacher can provide relaxed atmosphere to their students. Games can lower anxiety, entertain the students and encourage students to learn language without being aware.
The Quartet Card Game

The writer would like to propose the idea of the Quartet Card Game. Quartet Card Game is a card collecting game. Students have to collect cards from other players by asking for them. As long as the students ask successfully he / she can carry on asking. The object is to collect sets of cards, usually sets of four cards of the same rank. The activity is similar like the Happy Family game. The activities may function as a vocabulary review, a review of the previous lesson sand they can be applied at the beginning, and or at the end of the lesson.

The Need for Quartet Card Game

When preparing the lesson, the teacher starts by planning the items he wants to include the teaching of new vocabularies for example, or reading of a text or a new grammar point. But once he has prepared the main components of his lesson, and made sure it is learning rich, , varied and interesting, he still needs some ingredients to make it smooth, integrated unit. For examples is a quick warm up for the beginning to get the right mood for learning or an idea for a brief vocabulary review before starting a new text.

The Activity

The Quartet Card Game is an interesting and useful activities that can be used whether for practicing listening, speaking, writing and reading skills, spelling dictation or as a vocabulary review. The process of the activity is described below:

1). The activity is intended to practice the listening and speaking skill, especially the pronunciation and vocabulary revision.

2). The procedure: Quartet Card Game is a collecting game for a small number of players (minimum 3 players). One of the players shuffles the pack of cards and deals cards to each player. On the cards are pictures of members of families with their names below, each family has four members. The object of the game is for players to collect families. To do this, they take turns to ask other players for particular cards, and if the player asked has the card, he or she must give it up to the person who asked for it the player who has collected the most families at the end of the game is the winner.

3). Variation: the player who has the card being asked must read or make a sentence using the word in his card.

4). Note: Teacher can prepare the card first for the students or asked students to make the cards by themselves.

Learning Value

The Quartet Card Game can be used in the beginning as a review of the previous lesson, at the middle of lesson as a main part of teaching, or at the end of lesson as a practice for the material given. With this activity, students will enjoy English learning and the most important thing of all is they actually use the language without being aware of it.
Timing

The Quartet Card Game can be played in about fifteen to twenty-five minutes, but it can be even shorter or longer, especially if the students have to make their own cards and color the cards themselves.

Preparation

Teacher of course has to leaf through the book and decide the words he or she wants to teach to the students. The teacher then can find the appropriate pictures to be used in the Quartet Cards. If the students make their own cards, teacher should prepare some carton cards, scissors and of course color pencils if necessary.

Integrating the activity into the lesson

The teacher should try to link the Quartet Card Game with what has gone before or what is coming after, in topic, mood or language. In order to explain the organization of an activity, the teacher should make a lesson plan first so that he or he can decide in which part of the lesson he or she is going to use the Quartet Card Game.

Discussion

Based on the findings presented above, it was identified that the appropriate model of vocabulary by using quartet games requires the teacher to follow a particular procedure in order to produce a good result of the teaching and learning process especially in improving the students' ability in vocabulary.

The teaching of English vocabulary by using quartet games media could improve the students' ability in vocabulary. The students were guided to follow several steps in order that they knew what they had to do for their vocabulary. First, they were asked to gather words as many as possible based on the picture applied in the action. Second, they were trained to find ideas of their vocabulary before they knew how to describe about the object.

Third, the teacher also gave a media of real object which was written in the form of simple past. Forth, the use of chronological order extremely helped the students to describe their subject much better than before the media of using real object in writing narrative paragraph was applied for them.

Before the technique of using quartet games were applied, the students made many mistakes in terms of content, language use, and mechanics. They did not know yet what they had to do at the beginning of their activity for describing thing. There was no introduction for beginning their paragraph. They wrote their paragraph without understanding what and where they had to start their paragraph. Their paragraphs were not organized well and the ideas were difficult to understand.
Referring to the findings, the researcher considers that the use of the quartet games media in vocabulary had made the students much progress. Based on the result research has known that there is some progress of the teaching and learning process in vocabulary through quartet games. The case is indicated from obtaining the average was 77.12 and the students’ achievement in vocabulary. We can see that application in the chart below:

**Tabel 4.2. The Description of Frequency Result of English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 89</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Insufficient/bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Very bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modified form Arikunto (2006:65)

**Table 4.3. The Chart in Rea Object of vocabulary**

![Chart showing frequency distribution](chart.png)
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Using Quartet Games had made the students’ vocabulary improved. In order to be successful, several procedures in teaching and learning activities should be followed. First, the teacher gives a real object to each group of four to five of the students to be observed more clearly. Second, the teacher teaches grammar to the students about the simple sentences and plural nouns by asking the students to make some sentences orally on the bases of real object. Third, the teacher asks the students to find ideas of the Quartet Games.

The teaching vocabulary using Quartet Games has some strengths. First, the real object provides the opportunity for the students to share ideas in improving their vocabulary ability and to show their individual ability. Second, the real object help the students improve their ability in vocabulary. Third, real object can encourage the students to be actively involved in vocabulary mastery. Fourth, the Quartet Games also suit to the students' real lives and their interests.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, some suggestions are provided for the English teachers, the students, and future researchers.

1. Due to the fact that the use of picture series can improve the students' vocabulary, it is recommended that the teachers who have similar problems apply the Quartet Games media in the teaching of vocabulary.

2. It is recommended that the students use Quartet Games as a learning strategy to practice their vocabulary which can be done in their extra curricular activities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY