

Word Games: Their Application In Teaching Vocabulary At Junior High Schools In Semarang City

Maria Yosephine, NurHidayat, Dias AndrisSusanto

University of PGRI Semarang

Corresponding Author: Maria Yosephine

Abstract: *This is a descriptive study on the teaching vocabulary using word games that made by teachers of junior high schools in Semarang City. Games are often associated with fun. While it is true that games are usually fun, one must not lose sight of their pedagogical value, particularly in second language teaching (Wright, Betteridge and Buckby 2002:1). The objective is that finding out the way descriptively teachers applying word games in teaching a particular basic competence in the classroom. The participants of study were English teachers and learners which were occupied in two schools namely SMP N 37 Semarang and SMP N 39 Semarang. The instrument were thoroughly direct qualitative observation and focus group discussion/FGD. The results are following; 1) there is a very specific template of word games, 2) every teacher made five word games which are involved various skills, 3) the word games are classified into three grades; class seventh, eighth, ninth, 4) teachers implement the word games by team teaching in the classroom, 5) there are the feedbacks towards the strengths and weaknesses of the word games applied. The recommendations that can the writers say are; 1) teacher should read and comprehend the template word games before implementing it in the classroom, 2) teacher needs to provide things that support the way running the word games, 3) teacher should justify the word games with the material on the syllabus before using it.*

Key words: *word games, teaching vocabulary*

Date of Submission: 12-11-2018

Date of acceptance: 26-11-2018

I. Introduction

Teaching English in JuniorHighSchool concerns on the literacy mastery within many fields of study. Students are expected to be able to comprehend any information whether spoken or written from any resources. They learn English on the purpose to recognize some various texts that they find in the daily context. Having this problem, the teaching and learning English in Indonesia right now has the new compass is that not focusing on the forcing students to be able speak and write actively but rather than equip them steady to gain much information towards their future career. Students need to have learned the material and be supported in the social norms of applying it, but for students to transfer what they learn, they also need to practice the skill of abstracting what they know and applying it (Alexander & Murphy, 1999).

Consequently, some teachers think that language games are a waste of time and prefer not to use them in classroom since games sometimes have been considered for its one element that is fun. In fact, games can provide EFL and ESL student's more than that (AngkanaDeesri, 2002). Student can speak and write if they have treasure of vocabulary while learning English in the classroom. In my opinion, teaching vocabulary nowadays in Semarang City needs improvement in transferring English vocabulary. This case can be seen from the pre-survey that writers do before conducting the research. We find most of teachers in the group of MGMP/English teachers' association of Semarang, they do not implement a particular game in teaching vocabulary.

Games are sometimes used in classrooms to develop and reinforce concepts (e.g., colors, shapes, numbers, word definitions), to add diversion to the regular classroom activities, and even to break the ice. One of the techniques that can be used to teach vocabulary is word games originally created by teachers that students would work on over a longer period of time. Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely. In addition, they are often highly motivating, relevant, interesting and comprehensible (Richard-Amato, 1995:147).

Games promote transfer because they require student participation and active involvement with the material within a rich context (Cruickshank & Telfer, 2001). Games are the method the way we attract students in joining and following our teaching process in the classroom. Through games, we can guide students involving actively with our subject material on the time being. In fact, still a few teachers use a kind of game in supporting their teaching since they think that using games make them need trivial preparations. Even if vocabulary is claimed as the supporting sub topic because it is not stated direct in the syllabus.

Word games in this context is a product which is made by the teachers after we have a workshop in designing word games for about three months. The role of word games in teaching and learning vocabulary for junior high school cannot be denied. However in order to achieve the most from vocabulary games, it is important that suitable word games are chosen related to the context of syllabus whenever a game is to be conducted, the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and classroom settings are factors that should be taken into account.

The research question based on the empirical data, the writers can describe the problem namely; how teachers apply the word games to teach vocabulary ?

II. Review of Frameworks

Decarrico (2001) states that words should not be learnt separately or by memorization without understanding; moreover, learning new words is a cumulative process, with words enriched and established as they are met again. Vocabulary is one of the language components which cannot be ignored in language teaching. Teachers should be aware with the important of digging up vocabulary for especially students of junior high school. Students cannot understand, comprehend, even speak and write if they do not get any vocabulary in their mind. It is fact that, mostly students think that they need grammar unless vocabulary in their English mastery. In learning a foreign language, Vocabulary plays an important role. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together (ThanhHuyen&Thi Thu Nga, 2003).

Sari (2006) among the many ways of making learning more effective, games are thought as useful tools for such comprehension. Word Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. Word game is one of the games that is needed to arise and motivate students to follow our teaching English in the classroom. In a very certain condition, word games are the solutions in controlling students' mood.

Phillips (1993) states "the best way to learn vocabulary is when the meaning of the word is illustrated for example by a picture or real object". Ghada sari lists several main advantages when games are used in the classroom, including: Word Games have proven to have advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways: a) Word games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. b) Word games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. c) Vocabulary games bring real world contexts into the English classroom and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way. d) Word games are highly motivating and they give students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings. Games add diversion to the regular classroom activities," break the ice", but they are also used to introduce new ideas.

In addition to promoting diverse interactions among students, games provide a way to reach and engage students who may have a variety of learning styles. Individual investigations of learning styles support this perception (Franklin, Peat, & Lewis, 2003).

III. Method of research

Research design of this study was a descriptive qualitative. The participants were about teachers and students at junior high schools in Semarang city. The number of schools were 7 schools separated by those 7 teachers and 280 students. Instruments that we used are direct observation through direct participant and focus group discussion. In collecting the data, the writers used some steps that follows; 1) observed the teaching and learning process in the classroom, 2) took notes the gaps occurred in the classroom interaction, 3) identified the word games which are used by teachers related to the syllabus, 4) identified the strengths and the weaknesses of the application of word games.

To analyze the data, writers used descriptively reporting the result of the observation done continued by focus group discussion/FGD to get the triangulation sight towards the implementation of word games in teaching vocabulary in the classroom. Games provide structure for interactions, reward students for collaborating and problem solving (Schwartzman, 1997), and promote cooperative learning, "individual accountability, positive interdependence, and the need for group processing and feedback," (Millis & Cottell, 1998, p.149).

To implement games in English class, teachers should consider numerous factors. One is choosing appropriate games to a group of learners which depend on number of students in class, level of age, level of language proficiency, duration and the content, and difficulties of language. In addition, teachers should further consider how to implement games to class. (Adopted from AmonratChirandon, ChonladaLaohawiriyanon ,AnchanaRakthong , 2010).

IV. Result of Research

Language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating for learners' concentration especially junior high School. Constant effort is required to understand, produce, and manipulate the target language. Of course the criteria for selecting word games should be considered carefully since it is not the case that all words can be taught through word games. There are many factors to consider while discussing games, one of which is the appropriacy. Teachers should be very careful about choosing games if they want to make them profitable for the learning process (Uberman, 1998:21).

The result of direct observation are; 1) there should be a very specific template in applying word games in order to run away the teaching English using it, 2) to make the games easy, teachers should make the games by themselves, 3) the word games are classified to grade seventh, eighth, ninth, 4) the application of word games better taught by team teaching, 5) there is a reflective teaching; the strengths and the weaknesses of application word games.

The result of focus group discussion are; the member of focus group discussion were; researchers, the chief of English teachers association, the teachers' samples and the expert of language teaching. In this agenda, we can describe the points as; 1) the teachers are able to create the fun and interesting word games, 2) students are happy following the material given by teacher, 3) this games need a team teaching even though it is not a must, 4) the word games are taught should be connected with the syllabus on the time being, 5) need a creative and higher order thinking to apply this games.

However, care should be taken to select those words which convey key concepts, are of high utility, and relevant to the bulk of the content being learned, and have meaning in the lives of the students.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

The use of word games also addresses specific learner needs based on the grade they live in. This would mean that, for intermediate and advanced learners, traditional techniques for teaching vocabulary might be given a lower priority. Yet the use of word games is an area often neglected in the teaching of vocabulary. Another important aspects is that restricting the number of words students are expected to learn will help them learn words meanings at a deeper level of understanding, which can be considered an important principle of sustained vocabulary growth during the period of process. In addition to memory and performance benefits, games and interactive learning methods have important social benefits for students. These activities allow students to practice using the vocabulary of the discipline, which social constructivists purport to be central to learning (Kelly & Green, 1998; Vygotsky, 1962).

The recommendations are 1) teacher should read and comprehend the template word games before implementing it in the classroom, 2) teacher needs to provide things that support the way running the word games, 3) teacher should justify the word games with the material on the syllabus before using it.

Biography of writers

Maria Yosephin Widarti Lestari is a senior lecturer at English Education Department of PGRI Semarang University. She loves doing research on English skill mastery and linguistics. She is strong in grammar and morphology teaching. Some books of morphosyntax and wordgames are published to support her teaching.

NurHidayatis is an English lecturer at English Education Department of PGRI Semarang. He chooses literature for his area concerns and has some researches on it. Many times he is invited to be invited speaker in some universities.

Dias AndrisSusanto is an English lecturer at English education department of University PGRI Semarang. He is an active journal writer and book writer. He loves publishing his subject interest in discourse analysis, pragmatics, English discourse markers, sociolinguistics, semantics, systemic functional linguistics, and pedagogical sciences. His book that are already published are; speaking 1, speaking 2, speaking 3, word games in teaching vocabulary, building vocabulary through word games, and English discourse markers in sociocultural perspectives. Others, he is also the invited speaker for seminar and workshop in the context of curriculum development in high school.

References

- [1]. Deesri A.2002. Games in the ESL and EFL Class.The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 9, September 2002.Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Deesri-Games>.
- [2]. Huyen N, NgaK.2003.Learning Vocabulary through Games. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [3]. Nation ISp. 2001. Learning Vocabulary in another Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Tuan LT. 2012.Vocabulary Recollection through Games. Theory And Practice in Language Studies,2(2): 257-264.
- [4]. Aley M. 2010. Educational Games as a Vehicle to Teaching Vocabulary, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5]. Alexander, P. A., & Murphy, P. K. (1999). Nurturing the seeds of transfer: A domain-specific perspective. International Journal of Educational Research, 31, 561-576.

- [6]. Allen, V.F. (1983). *Techniques in teaching vocabulary*. Oxford University Press. Al-Mamary, N.N. (1998). Using Songs to Promote Vocabulary Learning in Grade 1, [http:// www.moe.gov](http://www.moe.gov).
- [7]. Bok, D. (2005). Are colleges failing? Higher ed needs new lesson plans. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved July 25th, 2011 from www.boston.com/news/
- [8]. DeCarrico, J. 2001. Vocabulary learning and teaching. In *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd edition), edited by M. Celcia-Murcia. 285-299.
- [9]. Franklin, S., Peat, M., & Lewis, A. (2003). Non-traditional interventions to stimulate discussion: The use of games and puzzles. *Journal of Biological Education*, 37(2), 79-83.
- [10]. Huyen, N. T., &Nga, T. (2003) The effectiveness of learning vocabulary through games. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(4), Retrieved June 1, 2007, from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/dec_03_sub.Vn.
- [11]. Kelly, G. J., & Green, J.(1998). The social nature of knowing: Toward a sociocultural perspective on conceptual change and knowledge construction. In B. Guzzetti& C. Hind (Eds.). *Perspectives on Conceptual Change: Multiple ways to understand knowing and learning in a complex world* (pp. 145- 181)..
- [12]. Nation, I.S.P. (2000) Learning vocabulary in lexical sets: dangers and guidelines. *TESOL Journal* 9, 2: 6-10. Nemerow, L. G. (1996). Do classroom games improve motivation and learning? *Teaching and Change*, 3(4), 356366.
- [13]. Nicholson, D. & Williams, G. (1975) *Word games for the teaching of reading*. London, Pitman Education Library. Richard-Amato, P. A. 1988. *Making it happen: Interaction in the Second Language classroom: From Theory to Practice*. New York: Longman.
- [14]. Uberman, A. 1998. The use of games: for vocabulary presentation and revision. *English Teaching Forum* 36 (1): 20. <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol36/no1/p20.htm> (accessed march 27, 2011)
- [15]. Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Wierus, B. and Wierus, A. 1994. *Zagrajazem a nami. Czesc I. Jezykiobce w szkole*. May-June: pp. 218-222.
- [16]. Wright, A., Betteridge, D., &Buckby M. (1984). *Games for language learning*. West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Maria Yosephine. "Word Games: Their Application In Teaching Vocabulary At Junior High Schools In Semarang City." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)* , vol. 8, no. 6, 2018, pp. 06-09.