IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY USING WORD GAMES

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Abstract: This research aims to investigate: 1) whether word games can improve students' vocabulary mastery and its far improvement; 2) classroom climate when word games are being implemented in vocabulary class. This research was conducted in two cycles at the fifth grade students of SD Negeri 01 Gondangmanis from April to June 2013. The data are collected through observation, document analysis, interview, and tests. The qualitative data are analyzed by using constant comparative method that consists of five stages namely assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting outcomes. Meanwhile, the quantitative data are analyzed by using descriptive statistic analysis which compares the mean score of pre-test and post-test. The research findings show that the implementation of word games can improve students' vocabulary mastery and build positive *classroom climate during teaching learning process.*

Keywords: vocabulary mastery, classroom climate, word games

INTRODUCTION

Learning English in early stage of age is more effective than age of consent. Brumfit (1997: vii) gives the reasons why children are better than adults in learning language, the explanations as follow: (1) children's brain is more adaptable before puberty than after, and children acquire language unconsciously; (2) children have better motivation than adults; (3) children's language learning is more closely integrated with real communication; (4) children devote vast quantities of time to language learning.

In elementary school, English as a local content subject then the focus of teaching and learning English is on vocabulary. Vocabulary plays important role in learning vocabulary. Cameron adds that at primary level, developing vocabulary is central of learning foreign language (2001: 72). Furthermore, Fotovatnia and Namjoo state that four language skills, speaking, listening, reading, writing all together can be connected by vocabulary (2013: 189). It is clear that vocabulary is central of learning foreign language in elementary school before obtaining four language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing in order to understand the language.

Vocabulary mastery is having great knowledge at sets of foreign language words

for conveying meaning. It has some aspects, but for young learners, the aspects that should be prioritized are pronunciation, meaning, spelling, and grammar before they learn collocation, word formation, length and complexity as the basic in learning vocabulary.

The subject matter related to vocabulary is limited only on one of part of speech that is noun. It is based on topic of learning material that studied in fifth grade students of elementary school in the second semester which focused on the introduction of nouns such as proper noun, common noun, abstract noun, and concrete noun.

After conducting pre-research in fifth grade students of SD Negeri 01 Gondangmanis, the problems that arose in the class divided into two major problems. First, problems related to students' vocabulary mastery included: 1) the students had difficulty in memorizing the meaning of the words; 2) the students had difficulty in spelling the words. In general way, students confused to memorize the proper spelling because the writing system of English word is different from the pronunciation; 3) the students had difficulty in pronouncing the word. Mostly, they tended to pronounce word based on writing and they were still influenced by their mother tongue; 4) the students had difficulty in using the words to make simple sentence.

Second, the problems related to classroom climate during teaching learning process. The problems included: (1) most of students did non-academic activities. During teaching learning process, students precisely chatted with his friend, put outside their own toy from drawer then they were playing until the teacher gave them warning many times. Students even running around when the teacher asked then to do exercise; (2)

most students did not have the confidence in answering teacher's questions. Just the same student answered the question loudly while others answered with a whisper or even pretended to do the exercise. Students were designated by the teacher to write the answer on the board always stop in front bench to ensure the answer with other friend.

Those problems actually derived from various factors. From teachers' side, it was found that teacher tended to use conventional method or teaching technique. The teacher said that lack of school facilities also made her less varying ways of teaching. Meanwhile, from the students' side, they have opinion that English is difficult; it affects students' motivation in learning English. What is more, students are afraid to make mistakes in answering questions orally or by writing on the whiteboard because their friends often ridicule them when make mistake. Thus, it causes students to lose their confidence while the teacher could not check students' vocabulary mastery in details especially in their pronunciation.

The problems above can be overcome by implementing the teaching technique which can meet students' motivation in learning English. The appropriate one is games. Games give students' experience in learning and it can be done to give practice in all the skills. Moreover, games create activities useful and meaningful in unconsciously, fun and relax learning situation. The one of games types that can be implemented in vocabulary learning is word games.

According to Wright et.al (1997:113), word games are games with focus of attention in initially on the word rather than the sentence, such as on spelling, meaning, word for sentence making, words

as inferred from the context or word as categorized according to grammatical usage. Word games have many variations, each of word games focus on each aspect vocabulary. This can help the students to optimize their understanding in each aspect of vocabulary. Moreover, variation of word games decrease level of boredom during teaching learning process. Word games can be played in group or individually on competitive basis with challenge to increase students' self-confidence, interest and motivation. If the games are played in group, it encourages students to respect one another during discussion especially in sharing information. The activities in learning English happened in fun and relax situation.

In this research, the researcher implemented three kinds of word games that focus on each aspect of vocabulary. Bingo games for helping students in memorizing the meaning of the word, it was combined with word and picture so students are easier to memorize. To help students in spelling, the researcher implemented Hangman game. This game provided the activities to spell letter by letter to make the word that has meaning; therefore, the students would understand whether they made wrong spelling, the word had different meaning or had no meaning. The last game is A-A B-B game. This game helped students to make a good and simple sentence based on the context. In helping students' pronunciation, the researcher gave a role model how to pronounce the word correctly.

Assuming that words games are suitable for improving students vocabulary mastery, then the writer conducted an action research at class V SD Negeri 01 Gondangmanis by implementing word games. The research aimed at (1)

investigating whether word games can improve students' vocabulary mastery and its far improvement; 2) describing classroom climate when word games are being implemented in vocabulary class.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted from April to June to the 21 students of class V SD Negeri 01 Gondangmanis in the academic year 2012/2013.

This research is using classroom action research as the method of the research. Ur (1996:328), action research is meant primarily to improve teacher-researcher's own teaching based on a cycle investigation, action, and re-investigation which is done by two or more collaborating teacher. In addition Burns (1994) in Burns (1999:30) states that action research is the application of fact finding to practical problem solving in a social situation, with a view to improve the quality of action within it, involving the collaboration and co-operation of researchers, practitioners and laymen. The model of action research that is used in this research developed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart in Burns (1999:32), they explain that action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process, which consists of four essential steps: planning, action, observation and reflection.

The techniques of collecting data used in this research are observation, documents analysis, interview, and tests. In analyzing the data, there two kinds of techniques that used, they are descriptive statistic analysis and constant comparative method. Descriptive statistic analysis is used to analyze the result of the tests while constant comparative method is used to analyze the result of observation, interview and documents analysis. Mc Kernan in

Burns (1999:157) describes the steps: 1) namely assembling the data; 2) coding the data; 3) comparing the data; 4) building interpretations; and 5) reporting outcomes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was conducted in two cycles; four meetings for cycle 1 and three meetings for cycle 2.

In cycle 1, the implementation of words games were conducted in three meetings. The sequence of games based on the procedure of teaching vocabulary suggested by Cross (1991:11-12) which suggests that procedures of teaching vocabulary are sound and meaning, repetition, written form, and illustrative sentence.

In the beginning of each meeting, the researcher gave a role model how to pronounce the word correctly then asked the whole class to repeat until they could pronounce the word correctly. In the first meeting, Bingo game would help students to memorize the meaning of the word easily. In this game, students should answer the question based on the picture that was showed by the teacher; students would write the code of their group's name on the Bingo board on the whiteboard when they could answer the question correctly. The group who could make a straight line they shouted "Bingo".

Hangman game for helping students in spelling the word was conducted in second meeting. In this game, students should spell letter by letter to guess the word based on the picture clues taken by one member of the group. For each incorrect guess, draw one part of the hanged man as the illustration. In the third meeting, A-A B-B game was implemented to help students in making a good simple sentence. Each group take two pictures as the clue to create a sentence then each member of the group should mention one word sequentially to create a complete sentence. In the end, the group should read aloud the sentence that had been made. All the games were conducted competitively. The fourth meeting was used for the first post test.

Each aspect of vocabulary showed the improvement after the first post test, it could be seen from table 1.

Table 1.Mean Score of Vocabulary Aspects in Pre-Test and Post-Test 1

No.	Aspects of Vocabulary	The mean score of Pre-Test	The mean score of Post-Test 1
1.	Pronunciation	0.80	3.38
2.	Meaning	2.76	6.47
3.	Spelling	2.52	6.38
4.	Making sentence	3	3.28

Based on the table 1, it can be seen that the mean score of each aspect of vocabulary improved. The grading scale was ten. It means that pronunciation and making sentence aspect still needed more attention in helping students to master vocabulary. In pronunciation aspect, they could pronounce the words clearly, some students still pronounce based on the writing. But, generally, it can be said that students' pronunciation was much better than before. Moreover, in making sentence with correct grammatical structure, the students often made mistake in putting appropriate auxiliary, but they could organize the words to create a sentence based on the context given.

On the other hand, meaning and spelling aspects increased significantly. In meaning aspect, the students could memorize the meaning of the words that have been studied easily without opening their note to find the meaning. Besides, in spelling aspect, the students could spell the letter to become the word that has meaning much better than before. Some students made little mistake in double consonant, but when they were asked to correct it, they could justify it.

In the end of cycle 1, the classroom climate during teaching learning process showed positive result. The result included: 1) the students' motivation in learning increased. Most of students focused on teaching learning process, gave their attention and they were not doing their own business, although they chatted each other the topic still included the lesson. They participate actively in all activities in classroom such as asking and answering question; 2) most of students were confident in showing their work by writing it on the whiteboard although they were still afraid and hesitate when asked to answer orally; 3) The students often made mutual correction about the answer; the students could work in team. They did not ridicule their friend when their friend made mistake. Moreover, the teacher-students relationship showed positive result. The researcher often motivated them by giving prize when they answered the question. The researcher was monitoring and correcting the students work during discussion session or teaching learning process.

After evaluating the result of cycle 1, the action of the research continued to cycle 2 to solve the problem that still arose especially in students' pronunciation and students' skill in making sentence with correct grammatical structure. There were three meetings in cycle 2, two meetings for implementing the action and one meeting for conducting the second post test. In the first meeting, students' pronunciation skill became focus on learning. The students were given the role model how to pronounce the word. Then, the students were divided into some groups with put the student who was considered capable in pronouncing the word correctly as a leader. They practiced it in group with the researcher as the corrector; then randomly assigned by the researcher to check the students pronunciation more detail individually.

In the second meeting, the students were given explanation more details then they were given more exercise in order to understand well in putting the element of sentence before playing A-A B-B game. During the game, the students were given time to discuss before answering the question. Each member of the group should mention one word sequentially to create a

complete sentence. In the end, the group should read aloud the sentence that had been made to check their pronunciation.

The result of post test 2 showed the students' progress in mastering vocabulary. The mean score of post test 2 (87.15) higher than the mean score of post test 1 (70.15).

Table 1.Mean Score of Vocabulary Aspects in Pre-Test, Post-Test 1, Post-Test 2

No.	Aspects of Vocabulary	The mean score of Pre-Test	The mean score of Post-Test 1	The mean score of Post-Test 2
1.	Pronunciation	0.80	3.38	5.28
2.	Meaning	2.76	6.47	6.52
3.	Spelling	2.52	6.38	7.67
4.	Making sentence	3	3.28	6.80

In the end of cycle 2, the students' vocabulary mastery in all aspects showed the improvement especially in pronunciation aspect and making sentence with correct grammatical structure. Pronunciation aspect showed positive result, students could produce the words with correct and clear pronunciation, they no longer pronounce the words based on the writing, it could be said better than cycle 1. In meaning aspect, students could identify and memorize the meaning of the word correctly without opened their LKS to find the meaning. While spelling aspect, the students could spell the letter became the word which has meaning orally or by writing it. The last was aspect of making sentence; the students could make a good simple sentence based on the words that had learned with correct grammatical structure.

Those finding are in line with the statement from Khan in Brumfit (1997:146) which states that the specific language focus of games could be items of vocabulary or particular structures or function. The language focus could be any one of the major skills of listening, reading or writing, with narrower focus spelling or pronunciation. Furthermore, Paul (2003:70), "Games are the center of child's world.

They can also provide 'a mirror' of how to pronounce and spell the English word in fun atmosphere, so we need to make our lessons game-based". It means that games provide a way in learning vocabulary especially in pronunciation and spelling aspect.

Besides, Wright et al (1997: 1) state that the meanings of the language students listen to, read, speak, and write will more vividly experienced and therefore better remembered. They add that games also help the teacher to create a context in which the language useful and meaningful. It means that games help the students easier to learn in remembering the words and using the words in real life by making a sentence with correct grammatical structure.

Moreover, in the end of cycle 2, the classroom climate showed positive result. The researcher noted that the teaching learning process can run well. The activities in teaching learning process exactly in accordance with the time. The students focused and cooperated in building conducive class in the teaching learning process by giving their attention in the researcher's explanation and following the instruction when playing the game. The students were brave to answer the teacher's question orally and by writing it on the

whiteboard; they also asked to the teacher when they got difficulty in learning. The students were active, supported each other and made mutual correction in discussion session. Besides, the teacher- students relationship were closer, the students have courage to ask the researcher opinion about their work. The researcher also appreciated their work by giving reward so the students have high motivation in learning.

Those finding supported by Wright et al (2006:1), he says that an activity in games can make interaction with others which is entertaining often challenging. In line, Philips (1996:85) adds by doing games the ability to cooperate, to compete without being aggressive and to be a good loser can be created by the students. It means that games facilitate the students to create positive interaction with their friend during teaching learning process. Besides, Wright et al (1997:1) add that games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. It means that games can increase the students' interest that influence their motivation in learning so the students more focus, participate actively in doing all activities in classroom.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The major findings of the research can be categorized in two parts, they are: 1) word games improve students vocabulary mastery; 2) word games build positive classroom climate during teaching learning process.

First, the implementation of word games can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The improvement can be seen from the increase of the students' score in every assessment test given after treatment. Their score gradually increase in every cycle. The mean score of pre test is 30.31, the mean

score of post-test 1 is 70.15 and the mean score of post-test 2 was 87.61. From those improvements, it can be seen that the students can memorize and identify the meaning of the words, spell the letters to become the words that has meaning, pronounce the word become better, clearly; they no longer pronounce the words based on writing and make a sentence with correct grammatical structure.

Second, the implementation of word games build positive classroom climate. The students are courage and confident to ask the problem they got in teaching learning process. The students can work in team by supporting and making mutual correction in discussion session. The students respect each other in sharing the idea. Besides, the students focus on the activities that support the teaching learning process, they do not do improper activities. The students are active in teaching learning process by asking or answering the question's confidently and alternately. They are also cooperative in building class which is conducive.

Having concluded the result of the research, some suggestions are given to the teachers, students, institution, and other researchers. First, the teachers are suggested to implemented word games as the one of effective ways of teaching vocabulary. By implementing word games, the students are more interested and motivated in joining the lesson, so the teaching learning process will more alive. Word games also gave the students chance to practice each aspect of vocabulary in details in joyful situation.

Second, the students are suggested to have a high internal motivation in joining English class because it has a big effect to build students' passion in learning so they can be active and focus on the teaching

learning process. It is also suggested to practice more about vocabulary because vocabulary as the central of learning language learning in elementary school before obtaining four language skills.

Third, it is suggested for the institution to encourage and support the English teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. It can be done by providing facilities needed by both teachers and students so that the teaching learning process will run well.

The last suggestion is addressed to other researcher who will conduct further studies on similar topics. It is hoped that the findings of the study can be used as additional reference. There are still many other teaching methods, techniques and media that could be studied for improving students' vocabulary mastery before obtaining four language skills.

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