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Original Research Article

## Improving Students' Vocabulary Achievement through Word Game

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a study on students' vocabulary of grade seven in junior high school using word game. This study is conducted based on the preliminary study which indicated that the students faced difficulties in learning English because of the lack of vocabulary. The subjects were 38 students who consisted of 28 male, and 10 female students at seven grade of one of junior high schools in Gresik. The purpose of this study is to improve students' vocabulary achievement through word game. The data were collected by interview, observation, questionnaires and test. The data were analyzed by using triangulation. The research design of this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR) which consists of four steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The results of this study shows that word game could help students to memorize the vocabulary items easily, motivate students, and make them more interested in learning vocabulary.

**Keywords:** vocabulary achievement; word game; junior high school; English

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### 1. Introduction

English is one of subjects that should be taken in junior high school level. In mastering the English subject, the learners need to learn all skills in English such as: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Allen (1983) states that to master over a language, the learners must learn thousands of words. It means that the learners should have many vocabularies to support their ability in mastering English.

Vocabulary is one of the most important language components in learning English (Nation, 2001). Learning vocabulary can help students in studying English and support them in mastering the other language components. Thornbury (2002) holds that language comprehension and production will be hampered because of lack of vocabulary. To increase the students' interest and motivation in learning vocabulary, the teachers are expected to create various teaching strategy and need the correctness of teaching methods. The great teaching strategy is very important to make teaching and learning process in the class work fluently and to make condition in the class more conducive. One of great strategies in

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teaching language is by using game (Ersöz, 2000; (Kim, 1995); Thornburry, 2002). Game helps the teacher to maximize each students' learning potential (Sugar, S., & Sugar, 2002). Sanchez, Morfin, & Campos (2007) points out that games give the students an opportunity to use their language in a less formal situation.

Game is also appropriate to be used in teaching vocabulary. Applying game in classroom can be one of effective strategies in teaching vocabulary (Huyen & Nga, 2003; Linse, 2005). Harmer (2001) states that game can make learners to be more enthusiastic in learning vocabulary. Bonet (1992) also explains that by a variety of odd words, puzzle and games can make learners motivate in learning vocabulary. The variety of teaching strategy in teaching learning process will help students feel better and help the teacher produces conducive situation in teaching learning. To create conducive situation is not easy. It happens in one of junior high schools in Gresik.

In that school, there are some problems in teaching learning process especially in B-class at grade seven. Students' English ability especially vocabulary is also very low. It is shown by the averages of students' score in assignment are below the standard and more than 10 students must join in remedial class to improve their score. They feel difficulty in translating words in Indonesia and they complain about it. Besides, English teacher still uses conventional method; the teacher only explains the material and asks the students to give attention to her during the teaching learning process. Then, the teacher asks them to finish the exercise in their book without supporting activities.

Based on all the problems above, the researcher wants to use an action research study by using word game to solve all problems that occurred in that class. The objective of this study is to explain how word game improves students' vocabulary achievement at the seventh grade in junior high school.

## **2. Methods**

The research design in this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR). The goal of this research was to improve the student's vocabulary in the classroom. The treatment which was used in this research was word game. The subjects were 38 students who consist of 28 male, and 10 female students at seven grade of one of junior high schools in Gresik.

There were four steps in this study: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In planning, the researcher prepared all things that were needed in doing the study start from preliminary study until the end of the study. The researcher also managed the time and determined about how many meetings that he needed in doing that study. In Acting, the researcher was charged to do the treatment. The treatment here meant the researcher applied the strategy that he wanted to use in solving the problem which occurred in the class. The researcher mixed between technology and conventional strategy. The researcher used word game which is combined by media such as Hot potatoes and Picture dictionary. In this study the researcher asked the teacher to do it to make the situation more natural. In doing observation the researcher did it by himself when the English teacher gave the treatment to the students. In reflecting, the researcher analyzed all the data and compared all of them to get the findings from this study.

Before doing all of the action research steps, the researcher visited the school to know situation of the class, teaching learning condition in the class and teaching learning facilities in the class. After that, the researcher did socialization to the English teacher and the students about the strategy which would be used by the English teacher. The researcher also joined in the class for two weeks before the researcher did the study to make the situation more natural.

In this study, the researcher collected the data by using some instruments such as: interview, observation, questionnaires and test. The interview is given to the students and English teacher to know the students' and teachers' problems in the class, English teacher's strategy in teaching English and the students' needs before the researcher gave the treatment. The observations was done by researcher started from the first time of the treatment. The researcher observed the English teacher when he applied the strategy and the situation in the class when teaching learning process was running. The researcher did observation until the last meeting of doing the treatment. After doing observation the researcher gave the questionnaires to them to know their responses about the strategy. Finally, the researcher gave the test to the students. The exercises in the test were combination of exercises which were made by the English teacher, the researcher and taken

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from the books. The exercise was done twice: pre-test and post-test. The researcher conducted a pre-test because the researcher wanted to get the authentic data. It was held to know the students' achievement in vocabulary before implementing the treatment.

Pre-test was given to the students before they got the treatment, while the post-test was given after all the treatment was done. The purposes of all activities above were to know the development of the student's achievement in vocabulary by using word game during in the teaching learning process.

To analyze the data, the researcher used triangulation. It meant that the researcher compares and crosscheck between the result of interview, questioner observation and test with the criteria of success in this study. The first criterion of this study was the students' scores were reaching the passing grade and the second criterion was the students were motivated in joining English class. The passing grade of that school was 75. It meant that the minimum of students' scores were 75. The study would be called improving students' vocabulary when the students' score increased. If the result did not complete the criteria of success the researcher must continue this study to the second cycle

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

From the interview, the researcher found that the main problem in the class was students' motivation in joining the English class. Many students did not bring English dictionary and did not give attention to the English teacher when he explained the material. The students' English ability especially vocabulary was also very low. It was shown by the averages of students' score in assignment were below the passing grade. Besides, more than 10 students must join in remedial class to improve their score. They faced difficulty in translating words in Indonesia and they complained about the meaning of English words. It was influenced by the students' vocabulary mastery and teacher strategy in teaching English. The teacher needed a new teaching strategy to improve students' motivation and achievement in English.

In this study, the researcher did 2 cycles. In the first cycle consisted of two meetings. Each meeting was allocated 80 minutes including pre activity, middle activity, and post activity. During teaching learning process, the researcher accompanied the English teacher. The researcher did it to observe the situation during in the class. In this cycle the English teacher applied the word game in the post activity.

After giving the treatment the researcher did the post-test to know the students' improvement. The exercises contained of the combination of the exercises which was taken from the English books for students at grade seven that appropriate with the curriculum. The result of pre-test and the first cycle and the second cycle can be seen on the Table. 1.

**Table 1. The result of pre-test, the first cycle and the second cycle**

NO	Students' Name	Students' Score		
		Pre-Test	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1	A. A. A	30	48	76
2	A. D. M	40	50	76
3	A. Y	40	52	78
4	A. N. H	40	54	76
5	A. W. S.	70	76	88
6	A. D. S	58	68	84
7	A. D. R. P	66	76	88
8	A. F. S	66	74	86
9	A. S	58	70	90
10	D. F	70	80	96
11	D. F. S	30	56	78
12	F. A. P	66	78	90
13	I. P	30	49	80
14	I. A	30	46	78
15	I. L. F	40	60	82
16	I. F	66	62	80
17	J. R	40	56	78
18	J. I. A	58	68	84
19	L. A	66	70	86
20	M. G. R	70	80	92
21	M. N. R	66	74	88
22	M. R	70	78	86
23	M. R. R	58	64	78
24	M. D. A	60	70	84
25	M. F. A	60	72	84
26	M. A. S	60	68	80
27	M. A. A	58	68	78

NO	Students' Name	Students' Score		
		Pre-Test	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
28	M. D. S	58	66	78
29	M. S	66	80	92
30	N. A. I	58	70	88
31	P	70	78	90
32	P. A	72	78	96
33	P. B. P	60	74	86
34	S. N. R	72	80	96
35	S. N. A	72	84	96
36	T. A	60	78	90
37	T. R	72	80	96
38	F. I. D	60	78	88
Total		2186	2613	3238
Average		<b>57,6</b>	<b>68,8</b>	<b>85,2</b>

The result above showed that the students' average of pre-test scores were 57,6; the first cycle were 68,8 and the second cycle were 85,2. The result showed that the students' scores in the pre-test and the first cycle were below the passing grade. It meant that the first criteria of success had not been achieved so that the researcher needed to do the second cycle.

Before doing the second cycle the researcher analyzed the implementation of word game. From observation during the treatment of the first cycle, the researcher found that in the implementation of word game only did in 15 minutes before the times up. It meant that the students did not enjoy because the time was too short. Besides, not all students could understand the instruction that was given by the teacher because they were in hurry.

In the second cycle the researcher did the treatment in two meetings. In this cycle, the researcher modified the time to make the action more effective. The researcher applied word game three times in a meeting (in pre, middle and post teaching). After the researcher did the treatment, he gave post-test again with the same form and total number as pre-test but different content.

The result of post-test showed that the students' average in second cycle were 85, 2. The students' score increased and all students could reach the passing grade. The average

students' score also increase and higher than 75. It meant that the first criteria of success had been achieved.

The second criterion of success was the students were motivated in joining the English class. To achieve the second criterion of success the researcher used observation and questionnaires. From the observation, the researcher found that in the first meeting, the English teacher was awkward in implementing the word games but in the next meetings the English teacher was good in applying it. The students felt happy and enthusiasm when the English teacher applied the word game. After applying word game until the end, the researcher gave the questionnaires to the students. The result of the questionnaires can be seen on Table.2.

**Table. 2. The Result of student's Questionnaires**

Questions	Students' Answer	
	Yes	No
Do you like word game that is applied by your English teacher?	38	0
Does that game make you happy in joining the English class?	35	3
Does that game make you enjoy the teaching learning process?	35	3
Do you think that game motivate you in learning English?	37	1
Does that game help you to memorize English vocabulary?	36	2
Does that game help you to understand English easier?	36	2

The questionnaires showed that the most of the students were more interesting when the English teacher applying word game in English class. They felt happy and enthusiastic in joining the class. They also felt that word game can help them in memorizing English words and make them easier in learning English. From all the explanation above can be concluded that the second criteria of success had been achieved.

All the data above showed that all criteria of improvement were fulfilled. It meant that implementation of word game are able to improve students' vocabulary achievement. Besides, it motivated them in joining the English class and helped them to understand it easier.

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The main concern of this study is to know how word game improves students' vocabulary achievement in grade seven. The explanation above showed that word game was very appropriate in teaching vocabulary. It can make students felt happy and interested in learning vocabulary. It was in accordance with Huyen and Nga statement and other researchers. Besides, they could motivate and made students enjoy in learning vocabulary and trained them to study in group. So that they increased students' achievement in English, helped them in memorizing vocabulary easier and created the competition and cooperation in teaching learning English.

In this study, word game was more effective if it was done three times in one meeting. The first application of word game can be done in pre teaching. It is to motivate the students in learning vocabulary and bring them to the topic. The second application of word game is done in the activity of middle teaching to make them fresher. The last application is in the last activities in post-teaching to create competition and remind them about the topic that was thought by their teachers in the class.

In applying word game, the teacher must consider about the level of the students, the topic and total of the students in the class. If total of the students are more than 20 students, the teacher must ask the students to make some groups because the time is limited. If the teacher uses word game as a strategy in teaching elementary or kindergarten, the teacher must give more time in guessing the words.

The advantages of using word game are making students happy in learning English, motivating students in learning English and helping students in memorizing English words. It also gives them feeling competition and develop the cooperation (in group). Moreover, word game can be applied in small or big class, and can be combined with other games.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The finding of this study shows that using word game can improve students' vocabulary mastery and it can be effective strategy in teaching English. It helped students to memorize vocabulary easier, made them enjoy and motivated them in teaching learning process. It also created competition and cooperation in teaching learning process. It also becomes a good strategy for the teacher to teach vocabulary but the teacher who wanted to teach vocabulary used word game had to consider the time and the level of the students. The finding of this study may also help the reader to develop English materials related to pedagogical games.



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