

APPLYING WORD CHAIN GAME TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

M. Fadhly Farhy Abbas

Lancang Kuning University
fadhly.farhy@yahoo.com

Abstract: This Classroom Action Research (CAR) aimed to improve the students' vocabulary mastery by applying the word chain game as a teaching technique. The students of SMPN 20 Pekanbaru particularly at grade VIII.6 were the participants of the research. There were 39 students who were taught by using word chain game to improve their vocabulary mastery. The Findings shows there was improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery using the word chain game, it can be seen from the students' score and the learning atmosphere. The data reveals, the students score was 81.2. The data also showing interesting, active, and joyful in the learning process. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the word chain game can help the students of SMPN 20 Pekanbaru at grade VIII.6 to improve their vocabulary mastery. This research finding implies that the use of the word chain game can be used in learning English particularly in teaching and learning vocabulary.

Keywords: word chain game, vocabulary, mastery

1. Introduction

English is a lesson that is taught in every level of education, starting from elementary until university level. In teaching and learning process, English is taught in four language skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In order to develop the four language skills, vocabulary is needed because the function and role of vocabulary are to build up the four language skills. Limited vocabulary mastery inhibits the students to develop the language skills.

Above all, all of the students need vocabulary in order to be easy in mastering English. It is impossible for the students to use English language better if their vocabulary mastery is low. As Richard and Renandya (2003:255) state that, "without an extensive vocabulary and strategy for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning of opportunities around them such as listening to the radio, listening to native speakers, using the language in different contexts, reading or watching television". So, by having an extensive vocabulary or improving the vocabulary mastery, the students can use English easily.

In teaching and learning process, particularly in teaching vocabulary, the teachers can use some teaching techniques to make the students easy in getting explanation. The teachers can apply some games or media to make the teaching and learning process more effective. In addition, by applying the appropriate teaching technique, the students are enjoyable in teaching and learning activities. So, the teaching techniques are very important for the students' better improvement in their learning.

However, the English teaching at grade VIII of SMPN 20 Pekanbaru is not effective yet. As the result of interview to the English teacher at SMPN 20 Pekanbaru on September 20, 2013 that, most of the students in the school have less vocabulary. It makes them feel difficult in

learning English; they feel difficult to remember the words, to choose the correct words and understanding the meaning of the words based on the contexts, even though the teacher has used some teaching techniques such as teaching vocabulary by using picture, synonym and antonym, and translation. Moreover, it leads them to become shy and afraid of mistake in saying or uttering the English words.

Based on the problem above, it probably can be solved by using the appropriate teaching technique. As a teaching technique, the researcher chooses a vocabulary game. The kind of game is called word chain. The word chain is a kind of vocabulary game that is played by using the last letter of previous word to be the beginning of the next word. Word chain is a vocabulary game in which the end of the word is the beginning of the next one. Example: love, eat, tea, apple, ear, room, monkey. Moreover, the purpose of the word chain game is to improve the students' ability in mastering vocabulary [4]. Similar opinion mentions "word chain is a kind of game purposing to improve the players' ability in mastering vocabulary or words" [3].

2. The Nature of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the words that the people use and utter in their daily conversation. Further, vocabulary is all the words that a person knows or uses [11]. Moreover, there are some experts' statements dealing with the definition of vocabulary inline with the ideas above. First, according to Kaprowski in Abrar (2007:6) vocabulary is a set of words known to a person or other entity, or that are part of specific language. Words are symbol system of language. He also adds it is true that whenever we think of language and language learning, we usually think of mastery of the words. Second, Martin in Fitriyati (2010:10) states that vocabulary is the total number of words in a language. So, the total of number vocabulary is very important in learning English because vocabulary could affect the mastery of four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Based on the some definitions of vocabulary above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the total number of the words or all of the words that the people use in daily communication. Vocabulary is very necessary in learning English, because, it can help the students to develop the four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.1 Importance of vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a very important role in developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The more vocabularies the students have the easier they develop the language skills. In addition, for those who are learning English as a foreign language, vocabulary is needed. As Richard and Renandya (2003:255) state that, “without an extensive vocabulary and strategy for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning of opportunities around them such as listening to the radio, listening to native speakers, using the language in different contexts, reading or watching television.” So, by enlarging the vocabulary, the students can develop the language skills easily.

Moreover, vocabulary is also important in comprehension, as Altman in Gass and Selinker (2001:373) show in her overview of sentence comprehension. Lexical information is clearly used in helping to determine syntactic relationships. Furthermore, Gass and Selinker (2001:374) state that, “the lexicon is also important in reading, but in the vast bulk of the world’s orthographies the writing system obviates the need for the reader to segment the text into words”. In accordance with the statements above, it can be concluded that, there are some important of vocabulary. It is important to build up the language skills and to get the sentence comprehension.

2.2 Kinds of vocabulary

According to Eckersley (1960:3-5), there are eight kinds of vocabulary. It is stated on the part of speech. They are noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

- Noun: The word that is related to name of things, people, or place. Example; *house, hat, iron, Russia, London*.
- Pronoun: The word that refers to people or things without really naming them and being compelled to repeat the names frequently. Example; *I, you, them*.
- Adjective: The word that qualifies a noun by making its meaning clearer, fuller, or more exact. Example; a *bad* egg, a *blue* dress, the book is *new*.
- Verb: The word that expresses the idea of action or being that affirm that a person or thing is, does or suffers something. Example; boys *played* football, he *is* hungry.
- Adverb: The word that can be added to a verb to make its meaning clearer, fuller or more exact. Example; he ran *quickly*, I saw him *yesterday*.

- Preposition: The word that is used with nouns or pronouns and show the relationship between the noun or pronoun and other word, often expressing abstract relationship of case or of time of place. Example ; The desk was *near* the window.
- Conjunction: The word that is used to join words, phrases or sentences. Example; He worked hard *because* he wanted to succeed.
- Interjection: the word that expresses a sudden feeling or emotion. Example; *hello! Oh! Ah!*

Similarly withe ideas above, all of English words are classified based on the usage. This classification is called part of speech. They are nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections [16].

Furthermore, there are eight classification of part of speech. They are noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverbial phrase (adverb), prepositional phrase (preposition), determiner, and conjunction [9].

Referring to the experts’ statements above, it can be summarized that there are eight kinds of vocabulary. They are stated on the parts of speech. It consists of noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. But, in this statement, Harmer has different opinion from the experts above about the classification of part of speech. He does not add *interjection* as a part of speech. But, he adds *determiner* to the part of speech. It refers to article (definite and indefinite), possessive, demonstrative, and quantifier.

3 The nature of game

Learning a new language should be fun, interactive and exciting. The use of games in a learning environment not only changes the dynamic of the class but also rejuvenates students and helps the brain to learn more effectively. Agoestiyowati (2007:3) states that, “games allow students to: work co-operatively, compete with each other, strategize, think in a different way, compare and share knowledge, learn from others, learn from mistakes, work in a less stressful and more productive environment, and allow people to have fun”.

The game is a form of play governed by rules. Furthermore [9], similar opinions defined games as an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. The main focus of using games in class is to help students learn and have fun. However, in playing games, competition is very important because it can stimulate and encourage students to participate in the activity since naturally they want to beat the other teams [5]. In accordance with the explanation above, it can be summarized that there are many ways to improve students’ language proficiency such as visual aids, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), drama, role-play, and so on. Game is another useful strategy to improve students’ language proficiency. So, not only by applying visual aids, CALL, drama, and role-play, but also by applying game, it can improve the students’ language proficiency. In addition, by applying game the student will be fun and excited in teaching and learning process.

3.1 The word chain game

The word chain game was invented in the late 19th century by Carroll (2007:4), author of *Alice in Wonderland*. He also states that word chain is a kind of game purposing to improve the players' ability in mastering vocabulary or words. Furthermore, Hemscott (2007:4) states that, "it is also an aid to spelling, playing word games help create an interest in words and their spelling". As Decure (1993:31) states that word chain is a game in which the end of one word is the beginning of the next one. In addition, Vetter (2006:4) states that, word chain is a list of words where each word differs from its neighbor by exactly one letter.

In playing word chain game, the participants are able to use the last letter of previous word to create a new word. In this game, the player must write a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word, as in the following example:

Love

Eat

Tea

Apple

Ear and so on.

According to Rini (2008:66), the steps of Word Chain game as follow:

- 1) Determine the category of the word you will play. For example: Fruit.
- 2) Point out one player to say one word about fruit. For example: Banana.
- 3) The next player should say the name of other fruit which begin with the last letter of the previous word. For example: Avocado.
- 4) Then, the third player said Orange and so on.
- 5) The player that could not answer should out of the game.

In addition, Rini (2008:28) illustrates some other steps as follow:

- 1) Choose the word category, for example: Animal.
- 2) First player can use the word Elephant, and then he/she asks one of the other players to say the other name of animal which begin with the last letter of the previous word.
- 3) "T" as the last letter of word "Elephant" will be the first letter of the next name of animal. The next player may be say the word "Tiger". Then, he/she asks the other players to say the other animal name, where the initial name of the animal is "R". "R" is the last letter of the word "Tiger".
- 4) The player will be out of the game if she/he cannot give the right answer. And the game will continue with the new category, Such as fruit, food, profession, etc.

The words chain will be like the following example:

First player : Elephant

Second player : Tiger

Third player : Raccoon

Fourth player : Nymph

Fifth player : Horse

Sixth player : Eel

Seventh player : Lion, etc

Referring to the theories above, it can be concluded that the word chain game is the game that is played by using the last letter of the previous word to create a new word. Example: book, king, gold, doll, lamp, picture, and so on.

3.2 The advantages of game and word chain game

There are some experts' statement dealing with the advantages of game and word chain game.

Game

"games allow students to: work co-operatively, compete with each other, strategize, think in a different way, compare and share knowledge, learn from others, learn from mistakes, work in a less stressful and more productive environment, and allow people to have fun" [2].

Word chain game

word chain is a kind of game purposing to improve the players' ability in mastering vocabulary or words [3]. Similarly, "it is also an aid to spelling, playing word games help create an interest in words and their spelling [5]."

Based on the experts' statement above, it can be concluded that there are many advantages of game and word chain game. The advantages of game are to allow students to: work co-operatively, compete with each other, strategize, think in a different way, compare and share knowledge, learn from others, learn from mistakes, work in a less stressful and more productive environment, and allow people to have fun". And the benefit of word chain game is to improve the players' ability in mastering vocabulary or words.

4. Methodology

The design of this research was Classroom Action Research. The setting of the research was at SMPN 20 Pekanbaru at grade VIII.6. The participants of this research were the students at grade VIII.6 of SMPN 20 Pekanbaru that consists of 39 students (18 male and 21 Female). The instruments used to collect the data were: test, observation sheet, field note, and interview. The data gotten from the result of the test were quantitatively analyzed through the formula of percentage as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage

F = Total of participants answers

N = Total of participants

(Sudijono, 2008: 43)

The data obtained from the instruments such as: observation sheet, field note, and interview were descriptively analyzed.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings showed that the students' vocabulary mastery was significantly improved. It can be seen from the score that the students achieve in the test. It showed that the students' vocabulary mastery for "Noun" was 74.8 %. It was "Good" score category. For "Pronoun" they got 91.7 %. It was "Very Good" score category. For "Adjective" they got 79.4 %. It was categorized into "Good" score category. For "Verb" they got 79.4 %. It was also "Good" score category. In term of "Adverb" the students got 77.4 %. It was "Good" score category. In "Preposition" they got 72.8 %. It was also categorized into "Good" score category. In "Conjunction" they got 77.4 %. It was "Good" score category. And, in term of "Interjection" they got 96.9 %. It was categorized into "Very Good" score category. And, the total score was 81.2.

The students' improvement above was supported by the data obtained from observation sheet, field note, and interview. From those instruments, it can be seen that the students were active, interested, and joyful during the lesson. As a result, applying word chain game in this research not only could improve the students' vocabulary mastery but also could make the students' learning process to become active, interested, and enjoyable.

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings of this research can be concluded that teaching vocabulary through the word chain game could improve the students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the improvement of the students score and the learning atmosphere happened during the learning process.

It is suggested for the teachers to apply the word chain game in the teaching and learning activities to improve their students' vocabulary mastery who have the same problem as this research. It is better for the students to improve their vocabulary mastery by applying the word chain game who have the same problem as this research. It is better for the next researchers to take some references in this research to be used in their research.

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