

ENHANCING VOCABULARY SKILLS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS USING CROSSWORD PUZZLE MOBILE GAME

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is a very important skill in learning English. Therefore, effective vocabulary learning is needed to support the development of English. Mobile games are one of the media that can be implemented in vocabulary learning. Mobile games are used because they are fun and can attract students' attention in learning. The use of crossword puzzle games in vocabulary learning is the focus of this study. The crossword game used is based on a mobile game, namely "Words of Wonders: Crossword to Connect Vocabulary". The data is taken from various sources using library research methods. The paper found that the majority students who are taught by using Crossword Puzzle game is more engaging in learning and showing the increase in their score. Furthermore, the use of Crossword Puzzle game is a proper way in teaching vocabulary and can be used as a supplementary material in order to make students are more engage in the learning.

Keywords: *Vocabulary, Young learner, Crossword.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most promising skills to be master nowadays is English skills. According to Illyosovna in 2020, English cannot be overlooked because it is one of the most common languages in the world. Furthermore, mastering English will open the opportunity in the work field since English is an international language. People who master English will have the privilege of getting more opportunities because they have a better communication aspect.

Teaching English at an early age brings many benefits for the development of the language. The study conducted by Marinova-Todd, Marshall, and Snow (2000) show that adolescence is the stage when language is more efficient to be learned because they have acquired their mother tongue and can learn the second language. In line with that, Read (2003) states that there are four reasons for learning English earlier such as: (1) the value of increased time, (2) The possibility of better pronunciation and fluency, (3) The possibility of greater global awareness and intercultural competence, (4) The value of bilingualism (mental flexibility).

Vocabulary is one of the skills needed to master the language. Harmer (1991) states that vocabulary is “the vital organ and flesh” of a language. It means that vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of every language. For the young learner, vocabulary skills is impacting the development of reading skills. As stated by Wasik and Hindman (2018), the ability in recognizing and understanding words in the early stage of learning is dictated by vocabulary skills. Moreover, the implication of vocabulary mastery is more than just their ability in understanding text. The difficulty in reading influences their development in school (Morgan, Farkas, & Wu, 2011). Based on that influence, it is better to provide young learners with exposure to vocabulary in learning for the benefit of their development.

Teaching vocabulary especially for young learners is not easy considering that young learners are easy to get distracted. It is a role of a teacher to provide their students with innovative and fun learning to attract the students. Young learners usually love to play in a fun environment, so the method should facilitate those aspects. The use of some media such as video, song, or games can be considered in conducting learning for young learners.

The paper is focusing on the effect of using a crossword puzzle mobile game in developing vocabulary skills. Furthermore, the implementation of the mobile game is also analyzed in this research. The reason for choosing a mobile game is to make it easier to access. The use of the mobile game as a learning media in vocabulary learning is mainly to attract students in conducting fun and innovative learning since many games are good for education purposes nowadays.

Teaching Young Learners

A young learner can be classified from the age of six to twelve years old. The young learner is divided into two-level, as stated by Scott (2009, in Hartina, Salija & Amin, 2019), level one is the students in the age of 5-7 and level two is started from 8-9 years old. On the other side, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) divide young learners into lower class (1-3 grade) and upper class (4-6 grade). However, age is not an indicator of maturity. According to Phillips (1993), culture, sex, environment, and parents are the factors influencing maturity.

Young learner has several characteristics that distinguish them from others. Slattery (2001) states that a young learner is a curious, imaginative, and playful learner. Moreover, young learners are active learners, using five senses in learning, prefer visual rather than abstract things, and love physical activity (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). The young learner will be interested in learning if the learning situation is fun and can catch their attention because the young learner tends to love to play. As stated by Phillips (1999), Young learners are holistic learners. It means that young learner is more comfortable in practical learning rather than learning it abstractly. The teacher has a crucial role in providing the students with cheerful and meaningful learning to make them fascinated to learn.

Teaching English for Young Learner

There is an ideal condition that makes language learning is more effective. Curtain and Dahlberg (2000) state that effective language learning is built by a relevant topic and context for the learner. The context here is more important than the abstract theory that might be confusing for some learners. According to Musthafa (2010), there are three 5 recommendations for teaching children. First is learning through direct experiences, children tend to be more intuitive if they as a learner face the experience directly. For example, instead of telling about the animal in English, it is better to let them learn by visiting the Zoo to give them a true experience of the animal. The second is providing children with physical activities. Physical activities can be involved to encourage the children to learn. Next is by using here and now context. For example, we can teach them about knowing the name of things in the classroom in English by providing the context of what can be experienced and happen at that moment. It will give the children motivation to learn by showing that English is useful. Fourth is knowing that children learn holistically. The children develop their knowledge by organizing many experiences. Last is mind the duration of learning. Children have less duration of time to get focused so it will be better if the learning is divided into several sessions.

The inclusion of culture within the learning is also needed in English learning. This insertion of culture helps students to describe their culture in English (McKay, 2002). The addition of culture in learning will also make students aware of the culture from another country. As stated by Karmsch and Sullivan (1996), the

introduction of other countries' cultures will form what is called the “sphere of interculturality” in the scope of the classroom and possibly make the learning about cultural differences is getting better.

Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the most important components in learning English. In teaching vocabulary, several ways can be implemented. As stated by Slaterry and Wilis (2003), first is by creating a fun situation, second is never blame the students if they make a mistake, third is by using gestures, actions, or images in learning, and last is by asking the students to use the vocabulary in speaking to make them get used to the vocabulary. In this case, the implementation of a crossword puzzle game will help them to engage the students. Furthermore, in developing their vocabulary, children need to get exposure to words on and on to increase their vocabulary mastery (Cameron, 2005). The exposure can be obtained from many sources such as a book, video, song, other people, and even when they are playing a video game in English.

Many strategies can be implemented in teaching vocabulary. As stated by Liyaningsih (2015), there are 5 strategies in teaching vocabulary such as: using translation, memorization, using games, using song, and direct command. Game is one of the strategies that are available in teaching vocabulary. Game is expected to be a fun way to attract students in vocabulary mastery.

Using Game in Vocabulary Learning

In this paper, the focus is on using a mobile game to increase vocabulary mastery for young learners. Malone (1981) defines three characteristics of video games that motivate students to learn, such as, challenge, curiosity, and fantasy. Having a meaningful goal in a certain level of difficulty is included in the challenging environment. Curiosity brings an astonishing to the students in their expectation of the learning. Last is a fantasy that deals with the excitement of the students in the fantasy environment and stimulates fun learning. A proper and suitable game can be an effective media for vocabulary learning. Several mobile games can be used for teaching purposes. One of the crossword puzzle games called

“Words of Wonders: Crossword to Connect Vocabulary” is one of the mobile games that are available for mobile devices.

In implementing the game in the learning, besides the use of the game, the role of a teacher is also a crucial thing. As stated by Reinhardt and Skyes (2012) “even with the most comprehensive all-encompassing game-mediated L2 learning environment, a human instructor should play a key role”. The game is more effective if it is used as supplementary media in conducting the learning. The game will not be effective if the teacher can’t use it well. The teacher needs to prepare the activity that is supporting the use of the game to achieve better learning.

Hadfield (2004) states that crossword puzzles can be an effective tool in teaching about terminology, definitions, spelling, and matching a particular concept with relational names. About learning vocabulary, McCarten (2007) states that in learning vocabulary, memorization is the key element of learning. Moreover, to master the vocabulary, students need to see, say and write the word.

METHOD

To gather the data, library research will be used in the study. Mardalis (1999 in Mirzaqon and Purwoko, 2017) states that library research is a study used in collecting information and data with the help of various materials in the library such as documents, books, magazines, historical stories, etc.

According to Mirshad (2014), there are 4 activities in the library research as follows: (1) take notes of all of the findings in the research discussion from the literature and other sources. (2) Combine all of the findings, both theory, and new findings. (3) Analyze all of the findings, including the deficiency and weakness of each source and the relation of each source. (4) Give a critical idea about research and collaborate new findings into the research problem.

In this study, the main sources of the data are from the journal article found on the internet related to the research topic.

DISCUSSION

The study mainly discusses the use of crossword puzzle games in enhancing vocabulary skills. The game is in a form of a mobile game named “Words of

Wonders: Crossword to Connect Vocabulary”. The game combines a crossword puzzle with many landmarks around the world. After the player finished a certain level, the achievement is a picture of particular landmarks, for example, Sphinx, pyramid, etc. Multiplayer is another feature that is interesting in this game. By doing the multiplayer game, it will be more challenging for students. The teacher can conduct the learning by asking students to finish a particular level then discuss the words found by students and give examples of how to use the words. The teacher can also use other media to support the learning such as video, pictures, etc.

According to Anwar and Efransyah (2018), the implementation of a crossword puzzle game in learning English can increase seventh-grade students’ vocabulary skills. Moreover, besides the increase in the score, it is also directly proportional to the positive response from the students in the learning. The same result was also found in the research conducted by Muzdalifah (2018) that analyzes the use of crossword puzzle games in enhancing computer science students’ vocabulary skills. The result showed that the vocabulary mastery of the students is increased by using crossword puzzle games. Moreover, the students felt more interest in their learning.

In the implementation of a crossword puzzle mobile game in the classroom, the students are provided with the topic that will be discussed. The teacher will deliver the material related to vocabulary. The vocabulary material is focused on a certain topic and will be introduced by the teacher to the students. After the question and answer session, the teacher will ask the students to form a group. The mobile phone will be used in this session mainly because the application used is in the mobile platform. Previously, the teacher ask students to download “Words of Wonders: Crossword to Connect Vocabulary” as the media for practice. The teacher then let all of the group finish a certain level in the game, then ask them to note some vocabulary obtained. After that, the students can use a dictionary to find the meaning of the words and report it in a front of the class.

CONCLUSION

To sum it up, based on the previous study, crossword puzzle-based games can be used in vocabulary learning. The use of the game indicates a positive impact

on learning. There are several crossword puzzle mobile games on the internet with different types of features included. One thing that needs to be noted is the use of the game in learning is only as supplementary media. The game is the exposure that is effective for the students because it provides fun learning. At the end of the day, the role of the teacher is the most crucial thing in developing students' skills.

Considering the impact of using Crossword Puzzle game in teaching vocabulary, the teacher must implement the learning media as a supplementary learning in order to engaging the interest of students. Moreover, the score of students will be increased by this learning media.

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