

“Improving the Seventh Grade Students' Vocabulary Achievement at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 Academic Year”

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Abstract

This research was intended to improve the seventh grade students' vocabulary achievement through English songs at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. A Classroom Action Research was used by the researcher in this research to overcome the problems faced by the students in learning English due to the lack of vocabulary. The subjects of the research were chosen by using purposive method. The students of class VII-A were taken because they had the lowest mean score of the previous English midterm test. The data collection methods of this research were vocabulary achievement test, observation in the form of checklist, documentation, and interview. This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of two meetings and a vocabulary test. The target minimum score of this research is based on the English minimum requirement score at the school, that is 72. The average results of observations in Cycle 1 showed that 65.8% of the students were categorized as active students during the teaching learning process of vocabulary through English songs and it increased to 82% in Cycle 2. Moreover, the result of vocabulary achievement test proved that there were 23 students of 38 students (60.5%) could achieve the target minimum score of this research in Cycle 1, and it increased to 81.6% or 31 students in Cycle 2. Based on the research finding above, it was found that the use of English songs could improve the seventh grade students' vocabulary achievement.

Keywords: English Songs, Vocabulary Achievement, Classroom Action Research.

Introduction

People should be good at socializing with others around them. One of the ways is realizing about the importance of communication both in spoken and written forms to build a good relationship. The requirement of communication is language. Tarigan (1993:9) states that language has an important function for human beings, particularly in communicative function. Without using a language, people cannot understand what other people say and they will get difficulties in delivering their ideas and expressing their feelings to others.

There are lots of languages that exist in the world as every country has its own national language that is used by the fellow citizens. From the various languages that are used by all people around the world, there are some languages that are used as international languages that can be used to communicate by all people around the world although they come from different countries. One of the international languages is English.

English is one of the foreign languages in Indonesia which has different spelling, pronunciation, and intonation if it is compared with the Indonesian language. One of the problems that has to be faced by English teachers, students, or other English learners is how to deal with vocabulary (Hwa, 2009:V). Teaching vocabulary is a complex task for

the teacher. The teacher does not only teach the meaning of words, but also the spelling, the pronunciation and the use of the words as well.

Vocabulary is a basic component in learning a language. The main section in learning English is having and understanding vocabulary. Vocabulary is an important aspect of language learning and no language exists without any words (Fardhani, 2003:1). It means that vocabulary is one of language components that plays a key role in all language skills. Besides, Thornbury (2002:13) states that you can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything without words. It means that vocabulary is the basic element of every language skill as we cannot do anything without vocabulary, as we can say almost anything without vocabulary. Lacking of vocabulary can cause some problems in mastering language skills. If language students do not have good and enough vocabulary, the students will get difficulties in learning and mastering English not only the other language components, but also the language skills.

Based on the ideas above, the researcher did a preliminary study of this research were held on April 1st 2015 at SMP Negeri 11 Jember by interviewing the English teacher and observing the research subjects after the researcher had collected the seventh grade students' English midterm test scores from the school documents to

determine which class had the lowest mean score of the English subject among the six classes of the seventh grade students at SMP Negeri 11 Jember. The result was the students of class VII-A got the lowest mean score compared with the other classes. There were only 11 students (28.9%) of 38 students who got score at least 72. Besides, the mean score of the students' midterm test was only 65.45. After finding the lowest achiever class that is class VII-A, the researcher conducted interview and observation with the English teacher of class VII-A at SMP Negeri 11 Jember. The purpose of the interview and observation were to get more information about the students' difficulties in learning English, especially vocabulary and its problems in class.

As informed by the English teacher in the interview, most of her students in the seventh grade faced some difficulties in learning English due to lack of vocabulary, especially in the way of spelling, memorizing and understanding the meaning of the English words. The English teacher said that she usually teaches vocabulary integrated by other language skills such as reading and writing skill. The teacher told the researcher that the students in class VII-A were less active in class. Based on the observation results, it was found that most of the students did not pay enough attention, only a few of them could follow the teacher's instruction well.

From the observation done by the researcher when the class was going on, some of the students were too noisy and they are so lazy to bring dictionaries in English class. Although the English teacher had told them to bring dictionaries in every English class, they did not do it well. It means that they have less motivation in attending and learning the English subject. In reading class, the students forgot some words that they had learned before. They seemed bored and were not interested in the lesson again when they did not know the words provided in the text. Not to mention that, the way how the teacher delivered the material made the students bored, so they were not interested and passive in English class. The teacher did not use any media or certain technique to deliver the material and she took the material only from the students' book.

Based on the students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary, the researcher tried to improve the students' vocabulary achievement with action research design. This Classroom Action Research design had the purpose to help the students solve their problem in class and gained better score, especially in vocabulary achievement by using English songs. Karim and Hasbullah (1986:6.25) state that songs can motivate students in learning language, especially for weak and passive students. They practice intensively in the specified pattern without getting bored. By singing songs, the students have to repeat the lyrics several times, so they can get some new vocabularies and they will learn new vocabularies by having fun together. In this research, English songs belonged to audio media because the students could listen to the songs played in the class.

Teaching vocabulary is the basic task for language teachers to make their students learn the other language components and skills. Unfortunately, it is not simple tasks

for most language teachers. Teachers should be more creative in delivering the teaching material to the students in class. So that, the teacher can use media that is appropriate with the characteristics of the students. The use of media is needed in teaching English. Arsyad (1997:79) says that one of the characteristics of instructional media is media which contain and bring message or information to students as receivers. Songs are the media chosen in conducting this research. By using songs in class, the teacher can express the meaning of the song, so that the students can learn vocabulary through the songs.

In addition, Kasiani (2010:102) states that songs as media can be classified into three types:

a. Visual media

Visual media refer to things that can be seen and be touched by the students, for examples: pictures, real things, maps, etc.

b. Audio media

Audio media refer to things that can be listened by the students, examples: tape recorder, radio, cassette recorder, MP3, etc.

c. Audio visual media

Audio visual media refer to things that can be seen and listened by the students, for examples: film, TV, slide with tape, video, etc.

In this research, English songs referred to audio media. The researcher played the songs to the whole class to introduce the songs for the first time to the students. The students hopefully could listen to the song and then they could sing together with their friends and the researcher.

Besides, Karim and Hasbullah (1986:6.25) says that songs can motivate students in learning language, especially for weak and passive students. They practice intensively in the specified pattern without getting bored. By singing songs, the students have to repeat the lyrics several times, so they can get some new vocabularies and they will learn new vocabularies by having fun together. In this research, the researcher tried to improve the students' vocabulary achievement using action research design through English songs.

The students' vocabulary achievement was got after implementing the actions. Achievement tests are generally associated with measuring what a student has already learned at school (Lodico at al., 2006:69). It means that achievement is everything that students have already learned in school. Vocabulary achievement in this research was dealing with the students' scores of vocabulary test after they were taught new words using English songs.

It is important to be able to classify words based on their function in communication, so we can use the right words in the right place when we want to communicate with others. Hatch and Brown (1995:218) states that the word classification based on their functional categories are called parts of speech, which include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. In addition to these major classes, there are pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Vocabulary used in this study focused on nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Some previous researchers had applied English songs as media in teaching learning process by using Classroom Action Research design. One of them was Indriagni (2009) who reported that the use of English popular songs could improve the students' listening comprehension achievement of the ninth year students at SMPN 1 Giri, Banyuwangi. The result of the research showed that students' listening comprehension achievement increased from 57.5% to 77.8% after implementing the two cycles. Another research was conducted by Wening (2014) who reported that songs could improve the students' tense achievement on the seventh grade of SMPN 1 Jember as well as their active participation. The result of this research showed that students' tense achievement improved from 51.35% to 89.18%. Besides, the students' active participation increased from 75.67% to 81.08% after implementing the second cycle.

The researcher needed those two previous researches not only to know whether the use of songs were appropriate media or no to teach English in class, but also whether the songs could improve the students participation in class or not. Those two previous researches stated the similar research significance for future researchers. They hoped that the result of their researcher could give information for some future researchers, so they can conduct further researches by using similar research design and media but with different language components or skills. So that, the researcher interested in conducting a research using similar research design, that is CAR and songs as similar media in different ways. The researcher used different research subjects and area of the research. Besides, the researcher tried to improve the other language component, that is vocabulary. It was based on the research subjects' problem in learning and mastering English.

Research Method

The design of this research was a Classroom Action Research. Elfanany (2013:5) states that Classroom Action Research is a research in the form of various activities that aims to improve the quality of teaching learning activities in the classroom. This research had a purpose to improve the seventh grade students' vocabulary achievement by using English songs at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year.

The research area of this research was determined by using purposive method. SMP Negeri 11 Jember was chosen because there was no previous researcher who conducted a research on the same topic at this school, so the headmaster and the English teacher gave permission to conduct this research. In addition, the seventh grade students in this school still had difficulties in learning English due to the lack of vocabulary knowledge. Besides, the English teacher had never applied English songs in teaching vocabulary achievement.

The subject of this research was class VII-A of SMP Negeri 11 Jember. This class was chosen by using purposive method. Arikunto (2002:117) states that purposive method in selecting the research subjects is done

by taking the subjects that are not based on the strata, random or area, but it is based on their specific goals. The students of class VII-A were selected because of their weaknesses in learning English, especially in vocabulary and its participation in English class if it was compared with the other five classes. Both of the students' vocabulary achievement and their participation needed to be improved, so the specific goals of this research were to improve the students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation in class.

There were two kinds of important data in this research: primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the vocabulary achievement test and observation. Meanwhile, the secondary data were collected through interview and documentation.

The researcher used the following formula to calculate the percentage of the students who got score at least 72 in the vocabulary test:

$$\frac{A}{N} \times 100$$

Notes:

A = the total number of the students who got score \geq 72

N = the total number of the students who did the vocabulary test

(Cohen et al., 2007:423)

Meanwhile, the researcher used the following formula to calculate the percentage of the students' participation during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs:

$$\frac{A}{N} \times 100$$

Notes:

A = the total number of the students who were categorized as active students

N = the total number of the students who were in class

(Cohen et al., 2007:423)

Research Results

There were two cycles in this research. In each cycle, there were two meetings for teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs and one meeting for doing vocabulary achievement test.

Cycle 1

The actions of Cycle 1 were conducted on May 18th - May 22nd, 2015. Meanwhile the actions of Cycle 2 were conducted on May 25th - May 29th, 2015.

The lesson topic of the first meeting was about animals so the researcher taught vocabulary through an English song entitled "We're Going to the Zoo". Besides, the lesson topic in the second meeting was about family so the researcher taught vocabulary through an English song entitled "Family Song". The materials taught in both

meetings were about nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs by using English songs.

The vocabulary achievement test of Cycle 1 as the product evaluation was done on the third meeting was administered to measure the students' vocabulary achievement after being taught vocabulary by using English songs. The standard minimum requirement score to pass the vocabulary test is 72 with the time allocation was 60 minutes.

The result of students' vocabulary achievement test in Cycle 1 indicated that there were 23 students (60.5%) who could achieve the minimum requirement score and 15 students (39.5%) who could not achieve the minimum requirement score. It can be concluded that the students' vocabulary achievement had not achieved the target percentage that was at least 70% the students got score at least 72 in the vocabulary test.

In addition, the classroom observations were conducted during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs in Cycle 1 in two meetings and they were carried out by the English teacher. The result of classroom observations showed that there were only 22 students out of 38 students or 57.9% who participated actively in the teaching learning process in Meeting 1. In Meeting 2, as many as 28 students out of 38 students or 73.7% who were active in the process of teaching and learning. Thus, the average percentage of the students' active participation in the first cycle was 65.8%. It can be concluded that the result of observations had not achieved the target percentage that was at least 70% of the students participated actively in the teaching learning process.

So, it was necessary to conduct the Cycle 2 since the target percentage of the vocabulary achievement as the students' vocabulary achievement product and the classroom observations as their active participation had not achieved.

Cycle 2

The actions in Cycle 2 were done in two meetings for teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs and one meeting for vocabulary achievement test. The actions in Cycle 1 were conducted on May 25th until May 29th, 2015.

In first meeting, the lesson topic was about body parts so the researcher taught vocabulary through an English song entitled "Body Parts". Besides, the lesson topic in the second meeting was about Jobs so the researcher taught vocabulary through an English song entitled "People Work".

The vocabulary test in this research was administered to measure the students' vocabulary achievement after being taught vocabulary by using English songs. The result of students' vocabulary achievement test in Cycle 2 indicated that there were 31 students (81.6%) who could achieve the minimum requirement score that was 72. It had already fulfilled the target percentage that was at least 70% of the students could get score 72 or more.

The classroom observations of the students' active participation in Cycle 2 were the same with those done in Cycle 1 whether the time were different. The result of classroom observations showed that there were only 30 students out of 38 students or 78.9% who participated actively in the teaching learning process in Meeting 1. In Meeting 2, as many as 32 students out of 38 students or 84.2% who were active in the process of teaching and learning. Thus, the average percentage of the students' active participation in the second cycle was 82%. It can be concluded that the result of observations had achieved the target percentage that was at least 70% of the students participated actively in the teaching learning process.

In conclusion, the percentage result of the students' vocabulary achievement and the students' active participation had already fulfilled the required target percentage in this research. Therefore, the actions in this research were stopped.

Discussion

This research was a Classroom Action Research focusing on the use of English songs to improve the seventh grade students' vocabulary achievement at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. The researcher conducted the research collaboratively with the English teacher. The researcher did the teaching learning process while the English teacher did the observations.

Based on the cycles conducted, the result of the students' vocabulary achievement had improved. The first cycle showed that 60.5% of 38 students got scores more than 72. Meanwhile, the second cycle indicated that 81.6% of 38 students got scores more than 72. In addition, the students had improved their participation while the teaching learning process of vocabulary achievement by using English songs were implemented. In Cycle 1, the average result of the students who were active was 65.8%. Meanwhile in Cycle 2, the average result of the students who were active was 82%.

Based on the result of this research, the use of English songs as media in English teaching and learning process of vocabulary could improve the students' vocabulary achievement and participation. It was proven by more than 70% students could get the standard minimum requirement score, that is 72 for the vocabulary achievement test. Besides, more than 70% students were active in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs.

In addition, the success of this research related to some experts' opinions saying that songs can motivate students in learning language, especially for weak and passive students. They practice intensively in the specified pattern without getting bored (Karim and Hasbullah, 1986:6.25). Besides, Kasihani, (2010:113) states that there are two goals of song; songs are created just to be enjoyed and songs are created for the purpose of learning, for example to teach vocabulary, phrases, or sentence patterns. In addition, (Maley, 1985 in Rivers, 1987:93-95) says that songs are memorability, rhythmicality, non-triviality, universality,

playfulness, reactional language, motivation, and interaction.

Morover, this research results are also in line with the results of some previous researches conducted by Wildani (2012) who reported that the use of English songs at SMPN 1 Jambesari Darussolah Bondowoso could improve the class VII-B students' vocabulary achievement through two cycles. The result of the research showed that the mean score of the students' vocabulary achievement increased from 65.6 in Cycle 1 to 72.5 in Cycle 2. Besides, Agustina (2010) through a Classroom Action Research at SDN Baratan 1 Jember applied children songs to improve the students' vocabulary achievement reported that the use of children songs could improve the vocabulary achievement as well as the students' active participation after doing it in two cycles. The result of this research showed that students' vocabulary achievement improved from 64.8% to 76.5%. Besides, the students' active participation increased from 61.8% to 77.9% after implementing the second cycle.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Finally, it can be summarized that the results of this classroom action research in two cycles proved the hypotheses as follows:

1. The use of English songs could improve the seventh grade students' vocabulary achievement at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year.
2. The use of English songs could improve the seventh grade students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using English songs at SMP Negeri 11 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year.

Based on the research results, these suggestions were given to the following people:

1. The English teacher

The English teacher is suggested to enrich the students' learning experiences by using various media to make the teaching learning process more interesting. One of media that can be used to teach vocabulary in the classroom is English songs. It is due to the fact that English songs could improve the students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation in this research result.

2. The students

The students as the research subjects are suggested to be more active when the teacher tries to apply English songs as media in class. They can use English songs outside the class to help them gain more new words based on their favorite songs. Besides, English songs can make them easier to memorize words, to spell the words, and to understand the word meanings after they try to find the meanings of the song lyrics by themselves.

3. The Future Researchers

The future researchers are suggested to use these research results as information and input to conduct further researches dealing with similar research design and media but in different problem such as by using different research designs such as improving the students' speaking skill or pronunciation by using English songs.

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