

Improving the Eighth Grade Students' Vocabulary Achievement by Using Crossword Puzzles at MTsN Arjasa Jember

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: (1) to improve the eighth grade students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzles at MTsN Arjasa Jember, and (2) to improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement by using Crossword Puzzles at MTsN Arjasa Jember. Crossword Puzzles used in this research were the Crossword Puzzles by using the clues in the form of phrases and sentences. The research design used in this research was a Classroom Action Research. The research area was chosen by using purposive method. The subjects of the research were determined by using purposive method. The students of class VIII-A were chosen to be the subjects of this research. The data collection methods of this research were vocabulary achievement test, observation, documentation, and interview. This research was conducted in two Cycles. The results of observations in Cycle 1 revealed the fact that as many as 61.92% of the students were categorized as active students during the teaching learning process of vocabulary and it increased up to 77.93% in Cycle 2. Further, The result of vocabulary achievement test indicated that as many as 20 students (66.7%) out of 30 students could achieve the target minimum score that was ≥ 75 in Cycle 1 and it increased up to 77.93% (24 students out of 30 students) in Cycle 2. Based on the results of this research, it was known that the use of Crossword Puzzles in teaching vocabulary could improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement.

Keywords: *Crossword Puzzles, Vocabulary Achievement, Classroom Action Research.*

Introduction

In Indonesia, English is considered to be the most important foreign language. It has been taught and learnt from elementary level until university level. The target of teaching English for junior high school is that the students can develop their communicative competence in both spoken and written form to achieve the functional literacy level [1]. In order to communicate effectively, the students are expected to master four language skills and three language components. Those skills are listening, speaking, writing, and reading, and three language components that cover vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Vocabulary is one of three language components that are important in learning English as a foreign language. Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed [2]. It means that, it is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary because the language itself consists of vocabulary.

A preliminary study of this research was carried out on August 7th 2014. The researcher did interview and observation with the English teacher of the eighth grade students at MTsN Arjasa Jember and did a classroom observation during the teaching learning process of

English. Based on the interview done with the English teacher, it was found that most of the students faced some difficulties in learning vocabulary, especially in the way of memorizing words, spelling the words, and understanding the meanings of the words. Besides, from the data of the students' previous scores of vocabulary obtained from the English teacher, it was found that there were many students who failed in attaining the standard minimum score of English that was 75. The students of class VIII-A got the lowest mean score compared with the other four classes. There were only 17 students (57%) out of 30 students who got score 75 and higher. From the observation did by the researcher, it was found that many students were passive during the teaching learning process of English. They seemed bored and not interested in the lesson, especially in class VIII-A.

To overcome the problems faced by the students, different and attractive ways in English teaching and learning, especially vocabulary were needed. In this research, the researcher decided to apply game as a technique in teaching vocabulary to the students. The use of game is effective in helping the students to improve their vocabulary building skills [3]. It means that by implementing games in the teaching learning process of vocabulary, it will improve the students' mastery of

vocabulary since it is interesting for the students.

There are many kinds of game which can be used in teaching vocabulary and one of them is crossword puzzles [4]. From an educational point of view, it is clear that solving crossword puzzles help to maintain and improve vocabulary, spelling skills, and knowledge [5]. These two statements affirm that crossword puzzles are one kind of game which can be used in teaching and learning vocabulary. By solving some clues in the crossword puzzles, the students can learn many new vocabularies both from the words used in the clues of crossword puzzles and the words asked in the clues of the crossword puzzles. The students will not easily get bored in the teaching learning process since they can compete with their friends in doing the exercise of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles.

Some previous researchers used crossword puzzles in English vocabulary teaching and learning. One of them was a classroom action research which the findings proved that teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles could improve the vocabulary achievement of the eighth year students at SMPN 2 Tegalsari, Banyuwangi [6]. Another research was also found that the use of crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary could improve the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of MA Al Bidayah Candi Bandung, Salatiga [7].

Based on the background and the research findings above, the researcher was interested in conducting a research entitled "Improving the Eighth Grade Students' Vocabulary Achievement by Using Crossword Puzzles at MTsN Arjasa Jember.

Research Method

The design of this research was a classroom action research because the purpose was to improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement by using crossword puzzles at MTsN Arjasa Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. The purpose of an action research is to provide teacher or researcher with a method to solve everyday problems in schools so that they may improve both student learning and teacher effectiveness [8]. This research was a classroom action research with Cyclical model. Each Cycle covered four steps: planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting the action.

The area of this research was determined by using a purposive method. MTsN Arjasa Jember was chosen because the eighth grade students of MTsN Arjasa Jember had difficulties in learning vocabulary. In addition, the headmaster and the English teacher gave permission to conduct this classroom action research. Besides, the English teacher had never applied the crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary and there was no research on the topic had been conducted in that school.

The subject determination method of this research was purposive method. Class VIII-A of MTsN Arjasa Jember was chosen because this class had some difficulties in learning vocabulary. The data of the students' previous scores of vocabulary obtained from the English teacher showed that class VIII-A had the lowest mean score of vocabulary test compared with the other four classes. There were only 17 students (57%) out of 30 students who got score 75 and higher. Besides, they were passive during the teaching learning process of English.

There were two kinds of important data in this research: primary data and supporting data. The methods used in collecting the primary data were through the vocabulary achievement test and observation. Meanwhile, the supporting data were gathered through interview and documentation.

The data analysis in this research derived from the the students' scores of vocabulary test and the results of the observation during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles.

In calculating the percentage of the students' active participation the researcher used the following formula [9]:

$$E = n/N \times 100\%$$

Notes:

E = the percentage of students who are active in the teaching learning process

n = the number of the students who are categorized as active students

= the total number of the students.

N =

Meanwhile, the researcher applied the following formula in calculating the percentage of the students who got score ≥ 75 in the vocabulary achievement test [9]:

$$E = n/N \times 100\%$$

Notes:

E = the percentage of the students who gain score ≥ 75 in vocabulary test

n = the number of the students who get score ≥ 75 in vocabulary test

= the total number of the students.

N =

Research Results and Discussion

This research was conducted in two Cycles and each Cycle consisted of three meetings. Two meetings were used for the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles and one meeting was used for vocabulary achievement test. The researcher conducted the research collaboratively with the English teacher. The researcher did the teaching learning process while the English teacher did the observations.

In this research, the researcher used crossword puzzles as a game and as the instructional material to teach vocabulary to the students in order to improve their vocabulary achievement as well as to make them more involve in the activity. It was based on the theory saying that crossword puzzles are one kind of game that can be used in teaching vocabulary [4]. The researcher used crossword puzzles where the clues were in the form of phrases and sentences by mixing the phrases and the sentences in the clues of crossword puzzles.

In this research, the use of crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary was effective to improve the students' active participation during the teaching learning process of vocabulary. It was proven by the improvement of the students' active participation from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. It increased from 57.14% in meeting 1 of Cycle 1 up to 80% in meeting 2 of Cycle 2. On average, the result of the students' active participation showed an improvement from Cycle 1 that was 61.92% up to 77.93% in Cycle 2. It means that, there was an improvement of the students' active participation from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 as much as 16.02%.

Based on the results above, it could be seen that the students were actively participated during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. It was because they were interested in the material. Since the students were interested in the material, they felt relax and became less intimidated during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. This result was relevant with the theory saying that one of the advantages of using crossword puzzles in the classroom is crossword puzzles are associated with recreational activity and can be less intimidating for the students [10]. Another theory of using crossword puzzles in the classroom stated that crossword puzzles have the advantage of appealing to different learning styles [10]. By implementing crossword puzzles in the teaching learning process of vocabulary, the students seemed enthusiastic and interested in experienced something new and challenging to solve. These situations happened because the researcher used different learning style that was teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles in the classroom.

Further, the use of crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary was also effective to improve the students' vocabulary achievement. The students' vocabulary achievement was improved from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. In Cycle 1, there were 66.7% of the students who got score ≥ 75 in vocabulary achievement test. In Cycle 2, there were 76.7% of the students who got score ≥ 75 in vocabulary achievement test. There was an improvement of the percentage of the students' vocabulary achievement test from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 as much as 10%. It happened because by teaching vocabulary using crossword puzzles to the students, the researcher was able to stimulate the students to learn vocabulary. It made the students memorize words, spell the words, and understand the meanings of words easily. Therefore, the students could

obtain a successful result in the vocabulary achievement test. It was in line with the theory saying that one of the advantages of using crossword puzzles in the classroom is crossword puzzles are kind of valuable and educational game to stimulate students with amazing mental skills, while teaching spelling and vocabulary words [10].

Related to the results of the observations of the students' active participation and the students' vocabulary achievement test, there were some factors that influenced the failure of the action in Cycle 1. First, it was the first time for the students using crossword puzzles in the teaching learning of vocabulary, so they might need more explanation and guidance from the researcher about how to learn vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. Second, there were many students who did not bring dictionary and some of them did not have dictionary, so it made them confused and took time in finding the meanings of words while they were doing the Exercise of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. They seemed confused and had to borrow a dictionary from their classmates to finish the exercise. Third, the researcher used English more often during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles so the students couldn't understand well about the researcher's explanation and the instructions of the Exercises. The last, in Cycle 1 the groups formed by the students were not balance in terms of students' ability. Some high achiever and moderate achiever students were gathered in one group and it made some low achiever students face difficulties in doing the Exercises of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles.

Concerning the weaknesses of the action in this research, the researcher and the English teacher provided some solutions. The researcher gave more explanation about crossword puzzles and how to complete it. The researcher also guided the students more intensely in completing the crossword puzzles so the students could complete the Exercise of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles easily. The next solution was the researcher lent the students some dictionaries of hers and some dictionary from school library so the students could find the meanings of words while they were doing the Exercise of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles in time. Further, the researcher used bilingual method while explaining the material and giving instructions of the Exercises to the students so the students could understand the researcher's explanation better and easily did the Exercises. The last point was the researcher and the English teacher formed the students' groups so the high achiever students, moderate achiever students and also low achiever students could share their knowledge and worked together to solve the Exercise of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. Thus, it was clear that the failure in Cycle 1 was not because of the crossword puzzles itself instead of the students needed more time to understand and use crossword puzzles in learning vocabulary.

In conclusion, crossword puzzles are useful to be used not only as a game but also as the instructional

material in teaching vocabulary in order to improve the students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation in this research. It is based on the results of this research which show that teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles could improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement at MTsN Arjasa Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the data analysis and discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that:

1. The use of crossword puzzles could improve the eighth grade students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary at MTsN Arjasa Jember.
2. The use of crossword puzzles could improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement at MTsN Arjasa Jember.

Due to the results of the research which showed that Crossword Puzzles can improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement, some suggestions are proposed to the following people:

1. The Students
It is suggested to the students as the research subjects to use crossword puzzles as a game in learning vocabulary because it can make them easier to memorize words, to spell the words, and to understand the words meanings after solving the clues in the crossword puzzles so it will increase the students' vocabulary achievement.
2. The English Teacher
Based on the result of this research, it is suggested to the English teacher to consider the use of crossword puzzles as a game to teach vocabulary in the classroom. As the use of crossword puzzles as a game to teach vocabulary can improve the students' vocabulary achievement and also their active participation in this research, the English teacher can apply crossword puzzles in order to give various techniques in teaching vocabulary to the students. Besides, it can also decrease the teacher's difficulty in teaching the students new vocabulary.
3. The future researchers
It is suggested to the future researchers to use these research results as information and input to conduct a further research dealing with similar problem by using different research designs such as an experimental research and a descriptive research or even the same research design but to other level of students of different schools.

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