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IMPROVING THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT BY USING CROSSWORD PUZZLES AT SMPN 1 GLAGAH BANYUWANGI

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Abstract

This Research was intended to improve the eighth grade students' active participation and their vocabulary achievement by using crossword puzzles at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 Academic Year. The research design was Classroom Action Research (CAR). The research subjects were the students of class VIII C at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi. The data were collected through the vocabulary test and observation. The data were analyzed quantitatively. The result showed that there was an improvement on the percentage of the students who got score 70 or higher. It improved from 69.44% in cycle 1 to 83.33% in cycle 2. Besides, there was also an improvement on the percentage of the students who were actively participated in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. It improved from 65% in cycle 1 to 78.85% in cycle 2. It means that the use of crossword puzzles in the teaching learning process of vocabulary could improve the students' active participation and their vocabulary achievement in 2 cycles. Therefore, it is suggested to the English teacher to use crossword puzzles as media in teaching vocabulary.

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

Introduction

As an international language, English plays a very important role in the world. Its role is very important in some fields, such as education, technology, trade, science, culture, and economy. English is regarded as the language of modernization and technological advancement. Most of technical journals are written in English. Therefore, English is very important to be mastered.

The Basic Course Outline of Institutional Level Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan/KTSP) states that English ability includes four language skills, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A good English learner should have these four skills. These skills include three language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), and they should be integrated well in the teaching learning process. It means that the mastery of the language components is required in order to improve the four language skills.

According to Wilkins (in Thornbury, 2005:13), vocabulary is the most important thing in learning language. He says, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". It means that we do need vocabulary to express our ideas and feelings to others. In addition, Tarigan (1993:14-15) argues that the increase of students' language skills depends on the

increase of their quantity and quality of vocabulary. It is clear that vocabulary is really needed to improve students' language skills. Further, they can use the language in daily life.

Commonly, many students who learn English as a foreign language get difficulties in developing their vocabulary. Most of them think that English is a difficult lesson which is so hard to be studied because it has many rules such as the form of the words, the meaning of the words, and the use of the words in the sentences. To avoid that condition, it really needs creative ways for the English teachers to conduct an interesting English teaching learning process. The teacher may provide interesting media or games in explaining the material. It will encourage the students to spend more attention so that the teaching learning process will run more successfully. Hatch and Brown (1995:422) state that the key in all vocabulary teaching is to keep motivation high while encouraging students to develop strategies that can continue to use once they leave the classroom.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher did an informal interview with the English teacher of class VIII C students at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi, which was held on September 25th, 2013. The researcher found the information that class VIII C students still have difficulties in understanding vocabulary. Some students experienced

difficulty to enlarge and enrich their vocabulary because they may forget the vocabulary materials taught by the teacher easily. They also experienced difficulty to know the meaning of the words. Besides, the students seemed bored and passive while the teacher was explaining the materials. Only some of them paid attention and responded to the teacher's questions and some of them focused on their own activity. They also kept silent when the teacher asked some questions. It happened because the teacher taught monotonously and she did not provide interesting media or game in the teaching learning process. The standard passing grade of the school is 70, but students who can reach it were only 55.56% (20 students out of 36 students).

From the discussion above, the researcher found that the problem was the boring situation in the class. It is often caused by the lack of variation of teaching learning techniques done by the teacher. To solve this problem, the teacher should provide interesting media in order to make the classroom activities more various and interesting.

One of the techniques that may be applied to solve the problems above is by using games in the teaching learning process, especially in teaching vocabulary. Games help and encourage the learners to understand the lesson easily. Wright, *et al.* (1983:1-2) state that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language in four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), for many types of communications. They also state that it helps the teachers to create the contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. It can be concluded that games can help the teacher to teach the students with meaningful practice so that the students can memorize the words longer in their mind. There are many games that can be used in teaching learning process, one of them is crossword puzzles. Karim and Hasbullah (1986:2.34) say that crossword puzzle is an interesting media that make the students find the words with their thought and imagination enjoyably. Crossword puzzle consists of a grid of squares and blanks into which words crossing vertically and horizontally are written according to clues.

The problems of the research in this study were: 1) "Can the use of crossword puzzles improve the eighth grade students' active participation in the vocabulary teaching learning process at SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi?", 2) "Can the use of crossword puzzles improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs at SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi?". The main objective of this research were: 1) "To improve the eighth grade students' active participation in vocabulary teaching learning process at SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi by using crossword puzzles in the 2013/2014 academic year", 2) "To improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs at SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi by using crossword puzzles in the 2013/2014 academic year".

Research Method

The research design was Classroom Action Research (CAR). Elliot (1991:69) states that a classroom action research is the study of a social situation with a view to improve the quality of the action within it. The purpose of this research was to improve class VIII C students' vocabulary achievement by using crossword puzzles at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year.

This classroom action research was conducted at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi. The actions were carried out in 2 cycles. Each cycle covered the activities of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Elliot, 1991:70). The area of this research was determined by using purposive method. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006:100) state that a purposive method is a method in choosing a research area based on a certain purpose or reason. The subjects of this research were the students of class VIII-C in SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year. The number of the students is 36 students. The methods that were used in collecting the data were vocabulary test and observation.

In this classroom action research, vocabulary achievement test was used to measure the students' vocabulary achievement. It was intended to measure the vocabulary achievement of class VIII C students of SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi after being taught by using crossword puzzles. According to Hughes (2003:13) achievement is conducted to measure how successful the individual students have achieved the goal of teaching and learning process. Hughes (2003:26) states there are two criteria to conduct a test namely validity and reliability. A test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what is intended to be measured. In this research, the test established content validity because the test was constructed based on the indicators to be measured, namely: noun, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs learned by the students. The test that had content validity might be reliable. Hughes (2003:34) states that if a test is not valid, it cannot be reliable. This statement implied that a valid test will be reliable as well. A test is considered to be reliable if it gives consistent result when the same test is given in different time. It means that the result of the scores were the same whenever the test were scored and whoever gives the score. The test that was used to measure the students' vocabulary achievement was objective test in the form of multiple choices. The test consisted of 40 items. Each correct item was scored 2.5 points for the right answer and 0 point for the wrong answer. Thus, if we count up, the total of the score was 100.

In this research, observation checklist was used to know the students' active or passive participation in the

teaching and learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. It contained some indicators of students' active participation, namely: 1) students answer the teacher's questions; 2) students are paying attention to the teacher's explanation; 3) students are doing the crossword puzzles; and 4) students are doing the vocabulary exercises in the form of crossword puzzles.

Research Findings

This research had two findings. First, the result showed that the use of crossword puzzles could improve class VIII-C students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year. Second, the result showed that the use of crossword puzzles could improve class VIII-C students' vocabulary achievement at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year.

In this research, the actions were considered successful if 75% of the students achieved the standard score that was 70, and if 75% of the students actively participated in the vocabulary teaching learning process by using crossword puzzles.

In the first cycle, the results of observation 1 showed that there were 21 students out of 35 students or 60% were categorized as active students during the learning process of vocabulary achievement by using crossword puzzles; meanwhile, there were 21 students out of 30 students or 70% in the observation 2 were categorized as active students. In average, there were 65% of the students were active in the learning process. Additionally, the result of the product evaluation in cycle 1 showed that there were 25 students out of 36 students or 69.44% who got score 70 or higher. The students got difficulties in understanding adverbs given. The students also got difficulties in understanding the meaning of some difficult words. Therefore, it made them confused in understanding the clues given. Only some of the students brought their own dictionary because the teacher did not allow them to bring dictionary so that it made them difficult to find the meaning of some words quickly and it also wasted of time. In conclusion, the actions in cycle 1 were not successful yet. Therefore, the actions were continued to cycle 2 by revising some necessary aspects related to the use of crossword puzzles in the teaching learning process of vocabulary.

In cycle 2, the researcher gave the students more explanations about adverbs and giving the clues in the form of pictures which are more familiar with the students to make them easy to understand the types of words, especially about adverbs. Further, the researcher asked the teacher to allow the students to bring their own dictionary so that they could find the difficult words and did the crossword puzzles quickly and effectively. The results of observation in cycle 2 showed that there were 27 students (77.14%) of 35 students in the first meeting who were categorized as active students during the learning process of vocabulary by using

crossword puzzles and there were 29 students (80.56%) of 36 students in the second meeting who were categorized as active students. In average, there were 78.85% of the students were active in learning process in cycle 2. It means that the results of the observation in cycle 2 achieved the target required that was 75% of the students active in learning process. Further, the result of the product evaluation that was vocabulary achievement test in cycle 2 showed that there were 30 students (83.33%) of 36 students who got score 70 or higher. Based on the results of observation and vocabulary achievement test in cycle 2, it could be concluded that teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles could improve the students' vocabulary achievement. Thus, the action research was ended.

The observation checklist showed that the average percentage of the students' participation in cycle 2 was higher than that in cycle 1. In average, it increased from 65% of the students in cycle 1 to 78.85% of the students in cycle 2 who actively participated during the learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of crossword puzzles improved the students' participation in learning process of vocabulary achievement. The percentage of the students who got score 70 or higher in cycle 2 (83.33%) was higher than that in cycle 1 (65%). It means that it achieved the target required, that was 75%. It proved that revising some factors helped the students improve their vocabulary achievement. Therefore, the students' problems could be overcome in cycle 2. In conclusion, it showed that the use of crossword puzzles could improve the students' vocabulary achievement in cycle 2.

The result above proved the theories of the use of games which could help the students in learning language, including in learning vocabulary achievement. As Wright *et al.* (1983:1) say that games can help the teacher to create context in which the language is useful and meaningful. Further, Tarigan (1993:260) said that crossword puzzle is a kind of game that can enrich students' vocabulary by doing this activity happily. Thus, they are playing the games by learning new words. In addition, Karim and Hasbullah (1986:2.36) explain that by doing crossword puzzle the students are trained to think and find the correlations between their knowledge and the clues to fill the boxes appropriately.

Related to the research outcomes above, the use of crossword puzzles could improve class VIII-C students' vocabulary achievement and arouse students' active participation in the teaching learning process at SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the results, it could be concluded that the use of crossword puzzles could improve class VIII-C students' active participation in the classroom during the teaching learning process of vocabulary at SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year. Meanwhile, the use of crossword puzzles could improve the students'

vocabulary achievement of class VIII-C students of SMPN 1 Glagah Banyuwangi in the 2013/2014 academic year. This learning media can be used as a consideration to improve the teaching learning process of vocabulary. Therefore, some suggestions are proposed to the following people.

It is suggested to the English teacher of SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi to also use crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary because crossword puzzles can attract students' interest in learning vocabulary. The teacher can take or create crossword puzzle from book or internet. Therefore, it can help the students to learn new words and remember those words easier. As a result, it can help the students improve their vocabulary achievement.

It is also suggested to the students of SMPN 1 Glagah, Banyuwangi to use crossword puzzles in order to help them to enlarge their vocabulary repertoire. In addition, by doing crossword puzzles, the students can find and understand new words so that it could help them to increase their vocabulary.

Moreover, it is suggested to the future researchers who have the same problems in teaching vocabulary are suggested to use crossword puzzles, because dealing with the research result in this research, it can help the students not only to have better understanding of new words, but also to have better score in vocabulary achievement.

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