IMPROVING STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING CLIMBING UP THE LADDER GAME

AN ARTICLE

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This research was conducted to know how climbing the ladder game improved students’ vocabulary in descriptive text. It was conducted to solve students’ problems in meaning and spelling vocabularies along with students’ reading comprehension. It is a classroom action research on the seventh grade students in SMP N 8 Pontianak. The subjects of the research are students of GRADE VII D, numbering thirty five students. The research was done in three cycle. The datas were collected through observation checklist, field note, and written test in form of multiple choices test. The results indicate that climbing up the ladder game improved students’ vocabulary in recognizing the meaning of words and in spelling the meaning of words. Students’ improvement were proven by their mean scores which improved from 66.67 in the first cycle to 81 in the second cycle and 82.28 in thw third cycle. Therefore, the students achieved KKMscore in the second and third cycle which means students improved their vocabulary.

Key words: vocabulary, climbing up the ladder game, descriptive text

Vocabulary become one of the important aspects in learning English. It helps the students to get the other competence of language such as speaking, listening, writing and reading. In SMP Negeri 8 Pontianak, vocabulary was taught through the other skills like speaking, reading, writing, and listening. At seventh grade, teacher teaches the vocabulary from the exercise given like writing and reading task. During the teaching and learning process, the teacher found some problems faced by the students. One of them is the lack in recognizing the meaning and spelling the words that had been learned. Based on those problems, the writer helped to solve those students’ problems in learning English vocabulary by providing the suitable technique to be implemented in the class. The writer decided to implement the climb up the ladder game which has not been used by the teacher. Climbing up the ladder game helped the students to recognize the meaning of the words by the clues which are given in this game.

Vocabulary is one element that link the four skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading. As stated by Decarrico (2001:5) that words should not be learnt separately or memorization without understanding, therefore at school students learnt vocabulary through others skill like reading. In learning reading comprehension, particularly reading descriptive text students need to know the vocabulary if they want to comprehend a text. As stated by Davis (2010:16) that vocabulary knowledge related to and affects comprehension. The relations between word knowledge and comprehension are unequivocal.

In the other hand, teaching vocabulary through games also can help students not only to memorize the words, but also to practice how to use the words in language, as stated by Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006:2) that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language. Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2005:172) also said that games provide excellent practice practice for improving pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and the four language skills.

In junior high school, students are taught several text type. One of the text
type is descriptive text. A descriptive text is a simple text type which describe a particular person, place or thing. As stated by Anderson (1998:28), the purpose of a descriptive text is to tell about subject by describing its features without including personal opinion. The organization of a descriptive text is consisted of an opening statements (identification) and a series paragraphs about the subject (description).

Beside the text organizations, the descriptive also includes some language feature such as verbs in the present tense, adjectives to describe the features of the subject and topic sentence to begin and organize various aspects of description (Anderson, 1998). The vocabularies often used in descriptive text are the words which are related to the described things, such as physical appearances, functions, and behavior or location if it is a place.

Learning vocabulary is important because students are able to speak, write and listen nicely. Students have to know the meaning first. Cameron (2003:75) that to know a word if they can recognize its meaning when they see it. It means that in learning vocabulary we have to know the meaning of it in order we can use in sentence context. Climbing up the ladder game helped students to improve the vocabulary in two aspects which are meaning and spelling, as stated by Timothy (2008:5) stated that word ladders are great for building students’ decoding, phonics, spelling and vocabulary skill. Climbing up the ladder game is word game. Webb (2007:2) said that games are a great way to pick up new vocabulary and play with vocabulary that is familiar. In this research climbing up the ladder game improved students vocabulary through the clues. There are two kinds of clues, they are spelling clue and meaning clue. The researcher arranged the clue to be answered by the students. While the students improved their vocabulary skill, their reading skill particularly in comprehending the descriptive text improved as well.

METHOD

The method of this research is classroom action research. Classroom action research occurs within a specific classroom situation. It is usually conducted by the teacher as classroom participants, and aims to develop the situations. It means that classroom action research is purposed to improve the new skills in solving the real problems by using direct actions. According to Ferrance (2000: p.1) classroom action research is undertaken in school setting. It is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the research. It is collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools or looking for ways to improve instructions and increase students’ achievement. In conducting the classroom action research, the writer used collaborative action research. The writer and the teacher elaborated and work together to study a problem.

An action research is usually conducted in certain cycle. The cycle is divided into four stages. They explained as follows: (1) Planning: The teacher and collaborator planned a teaching learning activity to overcome the problems found in the previous teaching learning activity. The collaborator prepared the lesson plan of the descriptive text, teaching learning materials and also the instrument to collect the data included field note, observation check list and written text. (2) Acting: The teacher conducted the research in the classroom where the problem was found. The teacher taught the lesson plan that had been prepared. In this stage, the teacher applied the climbing up the ladder game to improve students’ vocabulary. The collaborator acted as the observer to observe the students ability in vocabulary. (3) Observing: While the teacher explained and gave the instruction to the students,
the collaborators fill the field note and observation checklist in order to gather the data. (4) Reflecting: The teacher and the collaborator discussed about the result of observation. The collaborator gave comment and suggestion. Based on the comment and suggestion, the teacher and the collaborator planned the next action to make some changes and improvements in the next meeting.

The subject of this research was the seventh grade students of SMP N 8 Pontianak that consist of 35 students in academic year 2015/2016.

In solving the problem of this research, the research data were collected by suitable technique and relevant tools. The writer used two method in the data collection. They were observation technique and written test. Field note and observation checklist are used as the tools of observation technique. In the other hand, the multiple choices test is used as a tool of written test technique. In supporting the observation data, the writer collected the students mean score of the written text to show students improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension.

To calculate students’ mean score, the researcher measured it using the following this formulas:

\[ M = \frac{\sum f_x}{N} \] ..........................(1)

Note:  
\( M \) = the mean score of the students
\( \sum f_x \) = The total score of students
\( N \) = The total of students in the classroom

(Heaton, 1988)

\[ T = \frac{m}{n} \times 100\% \] .......................... (2)

Note:  
\( T \) = the percentage of students who had passed the standard minimum score
\( m \) = the total of students who had passed the standard minimum score
\( n \) = the total of all students

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research Findings**

The problem of this research is students’ lack of vocabulary. In order to help the students’ problem in teaching learning process, the writer initiated to use climbing up the ladder game in teaching reading descriptive text. While climbing up the ladder game was applying in the classroom, the students showed the result of the research as implemented in the explanation below. Solving the clues of spelling improved students’ vocabulary in spelling the words. In the first to the last cycle teacher and the collaborator helped students in improving their vocabulary. In order to improve students’ vocabulary particularly in spelling the words, teacher and collaborator decided to use climbing up the ladder game in teaching vocabulary. Teacher and collaborator provided the clues of spelling in climbing up the ladder game in order the students could get the hint how to write a word correctly. In the exploration stage of the first cycle, students were asked to find the difficult words in the descriptive text given through reading the text. Then, they played the climbing up the ladder game. The teacher gave the spelling clues for students by providing some letters in the rung which belong to the words. Those spelling clues in climbing up the ladder game could help students in memorizing the way to write those words. As the reflection of the first cycle, the teacher and the collaborator decided to add clues for spelling in the second and last cycle because it is hard for students to guess the word spelling with one clue of spelling in every rung. Hence, in the next cycles students were given two clues of spelling for every rung.

This strategy was not only implemented in the exploration stage but also in the elaboration stage. However in the elaboration stage, the students solved the clues in their group. In the first cycle, students did not do the game
properly and most of them made mistake in writing the word. It was because the classroom condition was not conducive while they were playing the game. In this, although students played the game in group they still should solve the clues by themselves without their friends help, then it makes some group could not finish the ladder. Then, seeing this condition the teacher and collaborator decided to change strategy of the elaboration part. So, in the next cycle the students still solved the clues of spelling in group, however they could discuss it with their friends. The teacher also set the group where the capability of the students in every group was balance. In the last cycle the teacher kept applying this strategy but the teacher also gave the maximum time for the students to finish the ladder in group.

After doing the ladder in group, the teacher check whether the students have their improvement in spelling the words. The teacher gave the students a test as a confirmation. The result of this test was used as the data of written test. The teacher and collaborator decided the jumble letter test for testing students’ spelling. This test was done by the students individually.

As in improving students’ word spelling, climbing up the ladder game also helped the students in recognizing the meaning of the words by its clue. Besides providing clues for word spelling, teacher and collaborator also provide clues for helping the students in recognizing the meaning of words. In recognizing the meaning of words, students could see both spelling and meaning clues.

In the exploration stage, in order to help the students in recognizing the meaning of words. The students were asked to read a descriptive text and find the difficult words. Then, the students played climbing up the ladder game by the teacher guidance. In this part, the teacher decided to implemented that strategy to acquainted climbing up the ladder game to the students. This strategy was implemented from the first to the last cycle. However, in the last cycle the teacher and the collaborator added the activity of this strategy by discussing together about the difficult words which had been found.

In the elaboration part, students started to played the game in group without the teacher guidance. In the group they tried to find the difficult words and discussed it together. Afterwards, they played the game by solving the clues one by one alternately. But according to the problem that had been mention before, the teacher and the collaborator decided to change the strategy. The teacher and collaborator decided that the students solved the clues together with their group in order they could help one another and discuss it together. Through this strategy, the teacher and the collaborator could see the students’ improvement. For the spelling clues, the teacher and collaborator decided two give various clues of meaning. It could be picture or synonym of the words. The various clues given to make students easier in recognizing the words.

After playing climbing up the ladder game in elaboration part and seeing the students improvement behaviour in exploration and elaboration part. The teacher gave the students test as the confirmation for their improvement in recognizing the meaning of words. It was chosen the multiple choices test to check their vocabularies consist of 10 questions. The words were chosen based on the descriptive text that they had been read before.

In addition of improving students vocabulary in spelling the words and recognizing the meaning of words, climbing up the ladder game could also improve students’ reading comprehension. The improvement of students vocabulary influenced students reading skill in descriptive text, as the vocabulary that students play in climbing the ladder game were from descriptive text, which given by the students. In the other hand, reading descriptive text is one of the activity
which was implemented before the students playing the climbing up the ladder game. And as the confirmation, the teacher also gave the students a test including reading test to see the students improvement.

Reading activity was the the one of activity which the teacher choose before they played climbing up the ladder game, as the teaching vocabulary is integrated with teaching reading. So, reading activity was implemented in the first to the last cycle. Finding the difficult words while the students rading the descriptive text could help students in comprehending the text easily. If students know the meaning of the difficult words, it become earies for students in comprehending the text. in checking students reading comprehension, the teacher included the reading aspect in the multiple choice test as teaching vocabulary was integrated with reading skill.

In the first cycle, about 14 could answer correctly 2 question from 3 question, and 21 could answer correctly all the reading question. This result had shown that reading descriptive text and finding the difficult word could help to improve students reading skill. Yet, teacher and collaborator still had the reflection for this cycle.

In the second cycle, teacher and the collaborator decided that after the students found the difficult word, teacher and the students not only discussed about the difficult word but also the text itself. It is aimed to confirm whether the students comprehend the text. Then, the teacher and the collaborator found that there were 7 who could answer correctly 2 questions from 3 questions given and, 28 could answer all the question given. This result improved from the previous cycle.

In the last cycle, teacher and the collaborator decided to use the same strategy as the previous cycle. Teacher and the collaborator found that 2 could answer 2 from 3 questions given and 33 could answer all the reading questions given. As in meaning and spelling aspect of vocabulary, students’ reading comprehension also improved as well as those two aspects. Through knowing the vocabulary in descriptive text students could comprehend the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Cycle 1</th>
<th>Cycle 2</th>
<th>Cycle 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The meaning of words</td>
<td>51.42%</td>
<td>71.42%</td>
<td>94.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spelling of words</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>65.71%</td>
<td>91.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>94.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diagram 1: The Diagram of Students’ improvements in Meaning of Words, Spelling of Words, and Reading Comprehension

Discussion

This classroom action research was conducted in three cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning stage, acting stage, observing stage, and reflecting stage. The teacher kept monitoring and evaluating what have done in the entire process of every cycle to improve the result in the last cycle. The acting was conducted in one meeting (2x40 minutes) that performed during the teaching and learning process. While doing the teaching and learning process, the writer acted as the collaborator to observe what was happening in the classroom to take some notes. From the research finding, it can be seen the students’ vocabulary increased from the first cycle to the third cycle. There are some significant improvements on the students’ vocabulary in meaning and spelling of words and also the teaching and learning process itself.

In the first cycle, almost half of the students have the difficulties in finding and memorizing the meaning of the words. The result of the students’ score in the first cycle was unsatisfactory. The teacher decided to improve her teaching performance in attracting the students’ motivation. She also changed the rule and strategy in playing the game. In order the students could keep focus with their learning.

In the second cycle the students were asked to do the ladder game with their group as soon as they can. The students were only given ten minutes to finish the ladder. It can be seen that more students could focus in working the ladder, although some others were still not focus and disturb their friends. Because of this situation the teacher and collaborator decided to give punishment for the students. But in this cycle, the teacher and collaborator could see the progress of the students.

In the third cycle, the teacher applied based on the reflection in of the second cycle. The teacher gave the students 10 minutes to finish the ladder, but there were some rules which must be followed by the students. The rules were students should be focus on their group and if they move or disturb the other group, teacher will cut down their times for every movements and disturbance. By this new rule, the students looked more focus than the previous meeting. In this cycle the teacher could see the students progress not only from the students achievements but also the students behavior.

Only one student who did not pass the test and they can be focus on this
game and discussion although only ten minutes. Students also enjoy and enthusiast when they were playing the game. They not only could read the descriptive text, but they also know and remember the meaning of the words in the text. After observing the process and interpreting the data, both of the teacher and the writer decided to stop the action because the data showed the indicators were fulfilled.

After three action stages, the researcher started to computed students’ individual score. The research finding that students mean score in the first cycle is 66, 28, increased to 81 in the second cycle, and increased to 82, 28 in the third cycle. This was qualified as average to good. The improvement of students from cycle to cycle proved that climbing up the ladder game could improve students vocabulary as Rasisnky (2008:5) said the that word ladders are great for building students’ decoding, phonics, spelling and vocabulary skill. From cycle one to the third cycle teacher and collaborator help students in their vocabulary skill by conducting the appropriate clues for students in order students can recognize the word to fill the rung, teacher also provide some picture in some rungs to help the students. The clues which are conducted by the students were the ways students could improve their vocabulary skill in the meaning and spelling. Besides helping students in their vocabulary skill the clues also make the game challenging. We can add interest and challenge to the teaching and learning of the form word by altering the arrangement of a word-for example scramble the letters (Nation, 1974:19).

In conclusion, the research finding of the classroom action research was satisfying. The students’ vocabulary in descriptive text is improved significantly by implementing the climbing up the ladder game. The students showed their interest in finding the meaning and spelling of the words in descriptive text. The prediction of the action hypothesis was accepted.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Referring to the research findings and discussion, the writer concluded that the students’ achievement improved from cycle to cycle. Climbing up the ladder game had improved students vocabulary in reading descriptive text. They were improved through the strategies which are used by the teacher. By means of solving clues of spelling and meaning of climbing up the ladder game students improved their lack of vocabulary in aspect of spelling and meaning. Students’ improvement of vocabulary affected students reading comprehension as well, through the result of students test, it can be seen that students score in answering question of descriptive text improved from cycle to cycle.

Suggestions

Based on the research finding and discussion, there are some suggestions that the writer would like to propose, they are: (1) It is suggested to the English teacher to apply climbing up the ladder game with classroom action research, because it was proved that applying this game could improve students’ vocabulary in term of meaning and spelling, (2) The use of climbing up the ladder game in teaching vocabulary should be related to the topic and the teaching materials, (3) In applying the ladder game, the teacher should be consider about the appropriate clues in order the students can easily understand the clues. Picture also can be used as clue, (4) It is suggested, if the use climbing up the ladder game integrated with teaching a kind of text, it should be related to the text taught, (5) It is suggested, if the use climbing up the ladder game integrated with teaching a kind of text, it should be related to the text taught.
REFERENCES


