

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CROSSWORD PUZZLES GAME TOWARDS IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

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## ABSTRACT

The paper entitles "*The Effectiveness of Crossword Puzzle Game towards Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery*". The aims of this research are to find out the effectiveness of crossword puzzles game in improving students' vocabulary mastery and also to know the students' response by using crossword puzzles game at the second grade of SMP Muara Madani. The research method is a pre-experimental using 23 students as sample from 100 students of population. To obtain the data, the writer used pre-test, post-test and questionnaire. The sample are given the pre-test before the treatment is given to them. The post-test and the questionnaire are given in order to find out the improvement of the sample after the treatment using crossword puzzles game. The data result of the test is analysed by using t-test. The finding of this research shows that crossword puzzle game is effective for improving students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the t-observed is higher than t-table ( $3.07 > 2.069$ ) at  $p = 0.5$ . That means  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected. Other than that, from the questionnaire data result crossword puzzles game also get the positive response from the participant. Thus, crossword puzzle game can improve the students not only their vocabulary mastery, but also can help students in learning vocabulary, suitable to be applied in the classroom, make the students happy and also can make the students excited while the students learning English vocabulary mastery.

**Key Words:** Crossword puzzle game and vocabulary

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is like a main constituent in language skill and allocates much of the basis for students' in language skills. That is the reason why vocabulary is important to express the meaning, especially in using receptive (listening and Reading), and productive (speaking and writing) skills.

Based on Meara (1980) cited in Alqahtani (2015), "On the other hand, vocabulary has been acknowledged as second language students' greatest single source of problems." It is also supported by Richards & Renandya (2002) that the minimal vocabulary and planning in obtain the recent vocabulary, often make the students' language skills lesson and might be discouraged of taking advantage from language learning occasion around them, such as lend an ear to radio, lend an ear to native speaker, exercise the language in other contexts, reading, or watching television. It can be said that lacking vocabulary mastery in English language will make the students find some difficulties in mastering English skills, if their vocabulary does not develop and they do not use the right strategies.

Based on the writer's experience, the problem that has occurred in the teaching learning process is vocabulary mastery. Sometimes students cannot acquire the simple point of the text

that they read, write and hear. Most of them get confused and can not answer the question from the books that they have. It can happen because the students did not know the meaning of the text. They have a limited vocabulary. The internal factors come from inside of the students themselves such as motivation, interest, intelligence, etc. Then the external factors come from the students' outside that can give the impact to students in the teaching and learning process, such as the background of the students, learning materials, teachers' performance and others.

Considering the situation, the writer has the solution to solve the problems and increase students' vocabulary mastery. Then, they will be able to master vocabulary. The solution is teaching and learning processes by using a game. The game that the writer will use is a crossword puzzle. This game will make student become competitive, active, feel fun, relax and enjoyable. This game also can make the teacher more creative to process learning materials.

Based on the explanation above, the writer would like to conduct a research with entitled: **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CROSSWORD PUZZLES GAME TOWARDS IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY AT THE SECOND GRADE OF MUARA MADANI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

## **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is the basic knowledge that the students have to know, because it is an important thing in learning a second language. Then, vocabulary is like a tool that can be used by students to improve their communication skills in front of people. It is supported by Seal (1991), words (in this case the vocabulary) are considered as building blocks in the second language knowledge that can be built.

Based on that, there are a lot of definitions of vocabulary that are supported by the experts. Hatch and Brown (1995) explained that vocabulary is like an instrument that someone will use in communicating with others. In line with Hatch and Brown (1995), Furqon (2013), explained that everything about words comes into the vocabulary, therefore mastering vocabulary well can help someone in communicating with others.

From all definitions above can be found that experts have different opinions about vocabulary, but it has a connection to each other. Thus, vocabulary is a basic component of language that consist of a lot of words that can be tools to help the students to reach their skills ability in second language and communicate fluently in another language.

## **Kind of Vocabulary**

After knowing about the definition of vocabulary, now there are kinds of vocabulary that must be known to make the teaching and learning process run well. Kinds of vocabulary is necessary to understand, in order to get an easier way to teach the students effectively and fit with the students' needs.

Madya (1980: 13-14) explained that there are 2 kinds of vocabulary. They are productive vocabulary and unproductive vocabulary. Productive vocabulary is the word that someone will use in speaking and writing. In the other hand, unproductive vocabulary is the word that someone understands when they hear or read it. Usually unproductive vocabulary is not uses in daily life.

It means that productive vocabulary is the way someone can express the ideas and themselves. Whereas unproductive is connecting someone with knowledge that they already know and understand. Beside that vocabulary has classification. Halliday (1985) as cited in Hatch and Brown, (1995: 252) explains that vocabulary is divided into seven basic classifications. Basic vocabulary related with words which has small possibility adopt from other languages.

### **Teaching of Vocabulary**

There are some principles that teachers have to follow while teaching and learning. The principles are:

1. The Purpose of Learning

The first step before the teachers do the teaching and learning process in the classroom, they have to prepare the learning materials that they will give to the students in the classroom.

2. The Target to be Achieved

After the teachers prepared and specified the purpose. The teachers have to make a target about how many vocabulary that students have to memorize and the teachers also have to decide what kind of vocabulary that the students have to memorize.

3. The Students Need

As a teacher, they have to know what the students need while teaching and learning in the classroom. It is important because it determines the goals that can be learned by the students. Teachers have to ensure if the words are not too easy or too hard for the students and specify the important words that the students have to know.

4. The Repetition and Explanation

Pinter (2006) explained that, “children learn new language forms in meaningful contexts, so listening to the teacher is essential both for modelling pronunciation and for providing opportunities for understanding new input from context.”

The teachers do the repetition of words that they teach in the classroom to avoid the wrong word pronunciation. In this process, teachers also should explain about the meaning of each word to avoid the ambiguity in every word. Because, in English vocabulary there are lots of words which have the same pronunciation with different meanings.

From the principles above, teachers have to be able choose the words that will be given to students. Then, teachers have to know what student’s needs, because each students indicate different needs and interests.

### **Game**

Game is the activity that makes the player enjoy and happy with several rules. Zamroni, Suryaman & Jalaludin (2013) explained that, game is a complex activity and a system that involves the player in an artificial conflict with several rules that have been set.

By using games teachers can invite the students in the learning process without any doubt for the students, because the element in game will give the motivations to students in learning and confidence. It is supported by Kapp (2012), the element of the game is like giving the permission to the students to make a mistake. Then, it can push the students to think out of the box and foster a sense of control to create diverse learning experiences.

It means that the students should not be afraid to make some mistake or express their different opinions. Because, in playing the game teachers invited the students to think critically. Thus, the students will open their mind on their own without feeling forced.

### **Kind of Word Games**

Using game as a technique to teach vocabulary in the learning process will give the motivation to the students. One of the games that can be used to teach vocabulary is word games. On the basis of Alemi (2010),

“Word games can make the students think critically to observe themselves and think about their friends. This game also will give knowledge about how teachers can evaluate the teaching and learning process. Via word games, teachers also can ensure advancement which has been made to show how the future efforts can be directed.”

Thus word games can give a lot of advantages in the vocabulary teaching and learning process. The explanation above fits with the writers’ research, because the writer would like to use one of a kind of word game. The reasons are to make the students want to speak up and make the writer know how to evaluate in the learning and teaching process. Besides that, there are several kinds of word games below:

#### **1. Hangman**

The cooperative game that can be used to help the students in improving and memorizing the vocabulary is the hangman game (Stacy (2010), cited in Rahayu & Farid (2017)). It means this game can help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery. This game can be played by two or more people. One player will choose the secret word and another player will guess it.

#### **2. Scrabble**

Scrabble is a word game that can be played by two or more players. It can help the students’ vocabulary, reading, grammar and spelling skills perfectly SoMantri & Nurhayati (2017). In this game the player will arrange the letters on the board to make it become a word. Each word has a different point, the player who gets the big point in this game will be a winner. This game will make the player concentrate and memorize the vocabulary that they have.

#### **3. Anagram**

Arranging the letters of words or phrases to become a new word is the characteristic of Anagram games. This game is a type of word game. This game will make the players concentration and find the new word just only change the letters of the word.

### **Crossword Puzzle Games**

Crossword puzzle game is a kind of word game. This game is commonly found in daily life. Crossword is more attractive than other games. According to Dhand (2008: 55) that cited in Lestari & Yulia (2018), crossword puzzles consist of the squares that can be filled by the words and numbers or a letter and a number for each square.

Based on Weisskirch (2006), that cited in Orawiwatnakul (2013) Crossword game can be used for reviewing course materials. The learners will get crossword before examination and another crossword out of the examination. Then according to Franklin et al, (2003), in another research, it is already found that crossword games can increased students’ vocabulary mastery.

It is fit with the writers’ research because as the opinion above crossword puzzle game is suitable to evaluate students’ teaching and learning process. It will be easy for writer to know

the problems that students' face while learning. On other hand, crossword puzzle games certainly give several benefits in the teaching and learning process. Then in another hand, crossword puzzles also can build students motivation while learning vocabulary in the class.

On the basis of Dhand (2008:55) cited in Dashela, Supardi, & Wardah (2017) explained that crossword puzzle game has several advantages, they are:

1. The technique of crossword puzzle is a good way to teach and enrich vocabulary because the definition or synonyms of the words are right there to provide reinforcement.
2. Crossword puzzles can also be used to encourage the use of a dictionary or thesaurus or to learn terminology used in a particular subject. They can be used as a quiz or review at the end of a unit/chapter or a lesson.
3. Crossword puzzles can be easily made by the teacher and presented to students.

The benefits that Dhand already explained above, represent the goals that the writer wants to reach in using crossword puzzle games for improving students' vocabulary mastery. Because, the writer wants to teach and evaluate the learners in a good way while they learn vocabulary and it is fit with the point number one, two, and three.

### **Teaching Vocabulary through Crossword Puzzle Game**

After knowing the crossword puzzles game and descriptive text that will be propped crossword puzzles game up. There are several steps that the writer will do while teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles.

1. The teacher will give the learners a descriptive text and crossword puzzles
2. The teacher will explain about what students must do, start from the descriptive text, crossword puzzle, and the rules of the game
3. The learners will analysis the descriptive text which has been given
4. The learners fill the blank squares in the crossword puzzle by following the instructions.
5. The learners who can answer the crossword as fast as they can and correctly will be a winner and get a gift.
6. After the students finish the crossword puzzles game, the teacher will ask the learners to discuss the vocabulary that they get.
7. After that, the teacher explains about the asking and giving attention, checking understanding, giving appreciation, asking and giving opinion as the learning materials in the class. The teacher will ask the students to make the simple sentences, according to the theme or vocabulary of the crossword puzzles game.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research using pre-experimental and quantitative method for collecting data. On this research the writer used one group as the experimental group. Pre-experimental design only need one group without control group (Creswell, 2014). Based on (Sumandi, 2010: 100), there are three steps of one group pre-test and post-test design: 1) Giving the pre0-test in order to measure students' ability ( $Y_1$ ), 2) Applying the treatment by using crossword puzzles game to students (X), 3) giving the post-test in order to know the effectiveness of the game.

There are two hypothesis, namely null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). The null hypothesis will always predicts that there is no significant difference in the students' score before and after the treatment. Other than that, the alternative hypothesis will

give the contrast predicts if there will be a significant difference in the students' score before and after the treatment.

In this research there will be a population and sample which will be examined by the writer. The population of the research is the second grade of SMP Muara Madani which is consists of 4 classes, each of them approximately has 25 students. Thus, the total of population is 100 students.

One of the classes will be taken from the population by the writer as a sample in the research. The sample falls into 8C that consists of 23 students. This group will be an experimental group and receive the treatment by using crossword puzzle games.

### **The Variables**

Variability is an important thing in research because variable also can help the students to learn something in order to get the information that the writer needs for the research. According to Sugiyono (2014: 38) the research variables are any kinds of forms that are determined by researchers to learn something in order to get the information about research.

The design of this research is pre-experimental design without a control group. Experimental research will be carried out on two variables they are independent variable and dependent variable. Independent variable is the condition that affects another variable and it is called the X variable. On other hand, dependent variables are the conditions that are affected by the experiment and it is called the Y variable.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the result of computation, the writer had to interpret the result of the data covers: the pre-test followed by 23 students, the average scores was 56.41 with the highest score was 87.5 and the lowest scores was 32.5. Same as the pre-test, post-test followed by 23 students with the average score is 64.23. The highest score was 100 while the lowest scores was 32.5.

The degree of freedom (df) was at 23. The table critical value of t-table from df = 23 for significance of two tailed = 2.69 at  $p = 0.05$ . The significant scores before and after the treatment could be shown by the result of the t-test which value of t-test is higher than t-table ( $3.07 > 2.69$ ). It means Crossword Puzzles Game is effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery to the second grade of the Muara Madani Junior High School.

from 23 students in the class there were 26% of students strongly agree and 70% of students agree. But beside that, there were 4% of students who disagreed with the statement. It is meant, the students who like learning English are bigger than the students who do not like to learn English.

The second point of the questionnaire is to know students' interest in learning vocabulary. Based on the data that the writer has obtained there were 26% of students strongly agree, 70% of students agree with the statement and 4% of students disagree, it meant the student did not really like to learn English vocabulary.

In the third point, it aimed to know if the students had a lot of vocabulary or not. In this statement there were 9% of students strongly agree and 70% of students agree. Nevertheless, 13% of students disagree and 9% of students strongly disagree with this

statement. It can be concluded that some students have very poor vocabulary, it can be seen from the students who strongly disagree with the statement in the third point.

The fourth questionnaire showed that there were 9% of students strongly agree and 57% of students agree, if learning English vocabulary is easy. Even though 22% of students disagree and 13% of students strongly disagree with the statement. It meant that vocabulary is not easy for some students in second grade of SMP Muara Madani, especially in 8-C.

There were 17% of students who knew the crossword puzzle game so well, 74% of students just knew about it and 9% of students did not know about what crossword puzzle game is. It meant that only several students who did not know how to play or the rules of crossword puzzle game.

Then, in the sixth statement there were 22% of students strongly agree, if the crossword puzzle game can help them in learning vocabulary, 74% of students agree with the statement, and 4% of students disagree with it. It showed that crossword puzzles can help students in learning vocabulary. It can be seen from the number of students who agree with the sixth statement of the questionnaire

In the seventh statement, the aim of this questionnaire is to know students' opinion whether the crossword puzzles game is suitable to be applied in the classroom or not. Then, from the 100% students who answered this questionnaire there were 43% of students strongly agree, 52% of students agree, and 4% of students disagree with the statement in the questionnaire. It means that crossword puzzles game are suitable to be applied in the classroom.

The next statement is to know whether students' vocabulary improved or not. This statement can be answered by the students after getting the treatment in order to know if the vocabulary is increased or not. There were 35% of students greatly increased, 57% quiet increased, and 9% stayed still with the old vocabulary they have. Thus, it can be concluded that the treatment given by the writer can improve students' vocabulary mastery.

After that, there were 30% of students very happy while learning vocabulary using a crossword puzzle game, 43% of students quite happy and 26% of students disagree with the other students. It meant students were happy learning vocabulary using crossword puzzles.

Then in the last questionnaire, there were 39% of students' very excited playing crossword puzzle game, 48% students' excited and 13% were not too excited. It showed that learning vocabulary using crosswords gives a positive impact to students, it can be seen from the number of students who agree and strongly agree with the last statement.

Related to the questionnaire data result, the writer found a positive response from the students in learning vocabulary using crossword puzzles game. The writer concluded that crossword puzzles can make students excited in learning vocabulary and it was suitable to be applied in the classroom for teaching and learning vocabulary. In other words it can make students enjoy and study more effectively.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings that elucidated in the previous chapter. It showed that the  $t$ -observed is higher than  $t$ -table. That means  $H_a$  is accepted, thus the crossword puzzle game is effective towards improving students' vocabulary mastery at the second grade of Muara Madani Junior High School. Then, the implementation of the crossword puzzle game got positive responses from the students (experimental class). It can be seen from the questionnaire data result that the writer gets.

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