

## **USING 'MIME GAME' TO TEACH VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, the author discusses the use of 'mime game' in teaching English vocabulary for young learners. To teach young learners, we must first understand their characteristics and needs. The fact is that young learners love to play. Therefore, learning through playing is the most appropriate way to teach them. One of them is to use the game called as "mime game". Teaching through "mime game" will be begun with classes will be formed into a half circle and then a student will be given a word. Furthermore, the chosen students will be in the middle class while giving expression by using gesture and the other students try to guess the word in question. Young learners are also very fond of moving and imagining. By using "mime game", young learners will get moved by using their own way and imagine to guess a certain word. Basically, young learners will easily remember what they learn when they feel happy, comfortable, love, and enjoy what they do.

**Key words:** Mime Game, Teaching Vocabulary, Young Learners

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Teaching English to young learners has been growing very quickly all over the world, including in Indonesia. The purposes of teaching English to young learners are to improve the quality of human resources and to produce English-qualified students since they are young.

Teaching English to young learners, in this case is the elementary school student, should be different from adult. Young learners learn differently from teenagers and adults. Harmer (2001: 38) claims that young children especially those up to the ages of nine or ten learn differently from older children, adolescents, and adults. Young learners learn more indirectly than directly from everything around them, by hearing, seeing, touching and interacting. They show enthusiasm and curiosity about their surroundings. However, they have short attention span that is why they easily get bored and easily lose interest. Harmer (2001: 38) asserts that young learners often learn indirectly rather than directly; their understanding comes from what they hear and see; they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity about the world around them; however, they have a limited attention span, easily get bored and losing interest after ten minutes or so.

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Young learners are different from adults, so the way to teach them must be different too. Teaching young learners is not same as teaching adults because young learners cannot motivate themselves as stated by Helaly (1971:1), Children learn differently from adults, they are not self-motivated and do not have a direct necessity to learn English. Therefore, a teacher should play an important role in teaching English to young learners to motivate them to learn English and to attract their attention in learning English.

In mastering English skills the basic thing that students have to learn and understand is vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary to young learners is not same as teaching vocabulary to adults. Young learners love colorful things and doing games as stated by Shin (2006:6) that it is better to keep young learners engaged in activities by supplying the activities with lots of brightly colored visuals, toys, puppets, playing games and song.

One way to attract young learners' attention to learn vocabulary is learning through games since the fact shows that most of young learners love to play as asserted by Syafei (2011) that young learners enjoy learning through playing; they learn best when they learn through games. In addition, Hertia and Tiarina (2014) had also conducted the "act out ( a guessing game with mime) activity" in teaching imperative sentence. Therefore, learning English through games is one of the appropriate ways to teach them. Games are the right choice to be applied in teaching English to young learners because naturally children always want to have fun and they cannot be separated from their natural need which is playing games.

Substantively, there are many games that can be used in teaching English to young learners. However, the writer is interested in choosing "Mime Game" as an interesting game in teaching English to young learners. One student will be selected to mime a word and the rest of the students will try to guess what he really means. This game is interesting because children will use their imagination to think and guess what their friend expression means in miming a word. Besides, this game is also interesting because children will take in turn to be the describer or the one who is going to mime a word. The describer will also use their imagination to think and get moved in expressing a certain word by using his own way. Since children are very good in using their imagination and they love to get moved, so that this "Mime Game" will be interesting for them as claimed by Halliwell (1992: 3) that young learners have a ready imagination. Therefore, by learning through playing this game, the students will not find learning English is boring. They will feel excited and will enjoy learning through playing this game. For those reasons, the writer is interested in discussing and implementing mime game in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

Experts have divided the concepts of young learners. Cameron (2001: xi), defines young learners as children between five and twelve years of age. Meanwhile, Scott and Yteberg (1990: 1) subdivide young learners into two groups: they are level one (5-7 years old) and level two (8-10 years old). Based on those experts opinions, it can be concluded that young learners are children whose age is from about five years old up to twelve years old.

Young learners are all unique. Their characteristics are different from adults. That is why they have their own way in learning something. Harmer (2001: 38) proposes the characteristics of young learners as follows. The first characteristic is they respond to the meaning even if they do not understand individual words. In line with Harmer, Halliwell (1992: 3) asserts that young learners are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words. It means that young learners are able to understand what is being said to them even before they understand the individual words.

The second characteristic is that they often learn indirectly rather than directly – that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught. It is also stated by Halliwell (1992: 3) that young learners frequently learn indirectly rather than directly. Moreover, their understanding not only comes just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with. It means children respond the language well through concrete things or visual things rather than abstract things.

Another characteristic is they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity about the world around them. It means children will be motivated to learn if it catches their interest because children have a big curiosity. Besides, they have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher. So that, children love when people pay attention to them and they love to be approved or complimented for what they have done and learnt. In line with Harmer, Syaife'i (2015) asserts that young learners respond well to praising and rewards from the teacher. It insists the teacher to praise students' work and give them rewards to encourage them in learning.

Furthermore, they are keen to talk about themselves. They respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom. It means they love when people talk about themselves and put them as a central attention in the class. Another essential characteristic is they have a limited attention span unless activities are extremely engaging; they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so. In line with Harmer, Brown (2001:88) said that unlike adults' attention span, children's attention span can be shortened when they are involved in activities that they find boring, useless and complicated. Therefore, the teacher should give varied activities as handwriting, songs, games, etc.

Teaching English to young learners is not same as teaching adults. Shin (2006: 6), asserts ten helpful ideas for teaching English to young learners: The first idea is supplementing activities with visuals, realia, and movement. Since young learners tend to have short attention spans, it is better to keep them engaged in activities by supplying the activities with lots of brightly colored visuals, toys, or puppets and also games. The second one is involving students in making visuals and realia. Having children involved in creating the visuals that are related to the lesson helps engage students in the learning process by introducing them to the context as well as to relevant vocabulary items. Students are more likely to feel interested in the lesson and will probably take better care of the materials.

The next idea is moving from activity to activity. Since young learners have short attention spans, varying the types of activities by moving from one activity to others that are related in content and language helps to reinforce students' understanding and keep them interested. The other one is by teaching in themes. A thematic unit, a series of lessons on the same topic or subject, can create broader contexts in which to teach language, recycle language from lesson to lesson, and allow students to focus more on content and communication than on language structure. In addition, use stories and contexts familiar to students. Use of stories and contexts that is related to their environment and culture can help young learners connect English with their background knowledge, which is limited because of their young age and inexperience.

Other important idea is establishing classroom routines in English. Having certain routines and activities in the classroom can help to manage young learners like start the lesson with song or chant. Besides, the teacher might use L1 (first language) as a resource when necessary. Use the first language of the students in the classroom as a resource for forwarding the learning process, only if it is necessary. The next idea is by bringing in helpers from the community. If possible bring in helpers—parents, student teachers from the local university, or older students studying English—to tell a story or help with some fun activities. Collaborate with others who are studying English, studying to be English teachers, or who speak English well in order to expand the English learning community. Having someone new and interesting do a storytelling can get students more excited and create a break in the regular routine.

The other essential idea is by collaborating with other teachers in the school. Collaborate with other teachers will make the learning experience richer for students. Visiting each others' classrooms can be a wonderful way to know how each others' teach in their own class. It can help the teacher to vary their way in teaching and learning process. The last important idea is to communicate with other TEYL professionals. Keeping in contact with other TEYL professionals helps to keep the learners fresh with new ideas, and collaboration can help to construct new ideas and solutions to the common problems that teachers face.

In mastering English skills the basic thing that learners have to learn and understand is vocabulary because vocabulary is a key to learn any language. Vocabulary is very important for the foreign language learners; only with sufficient vocabulary learners can effectively express their ideas both in oral and written form. Finochiaro (1974:38) claims that the vocabulary will make the students practice life and will strengthen belief that English can be used to express the same ideas or feeling they express in their native language.

Teaching vocabulary to children at the age of ten means teaching vocabulary to the fourth grade students of elementary school. There is no basic rule on how many words should be given to the fourth graders of elementary school. Slaterry and Wilis (2003: 4) suggest some ways to teach them. There are (a) make learning English enjoyable and fun, (b) don't worry about mistake, be encouraging; make sure children feel comfortable and not afraid to take part, (c) use a lot of gestures, action, pictures to demonstrate what you mean, (d) talk a lot to them use English, especially about things they can see, (e) play game, sing a

song, and say rhymes and chants together, (f) tell simple stories in English, using pictures and acting with different voices, (g) don't worry when they use their mother tongue. Answer a mother tongue question in English and sometimes recast in English what they say in their mother tongue, (h) Consistently recycle new language but don't be afraid to add new things or to use words they won't to know, (j) plan lesson with varied activities, some quite, some noisy, some sitting, some standing and moving.

From the explanation above, we conclude that in teaching vocabulary to the fourth graders, the teacher should use a lot of gestures, action, pictures to demonstrate things. The teacher should not be worried about mistake, it is better to make sure children feel comfortable and not afraid to take part. The teacher might insert playing game and singing a song together with the students. The teacher should not give the students too many new words in a lesson. Few and simple words would help them to memorize the words quickly and to internalize them.

One way to attract young learners' attention to learn vocabulary is by learning through games. Lewis (2010: 5) claims that games are fun and children like to play them. In addition, Lewis (2010: 5) states playing games is a vital and natural part of growing up and learning. Through games children experiment, discover and interact with their environment. It means that games are natural activity done by young learners as they are growing up because they can discover and communicate with everything around them. Furthermore, Chaves et al (2009: 3) asserts that games teach children about the importance of taking turns, following rules, sharing, winning and losing. It means that game teach children about an activity with rules which they can share anything around them. They also can be a winner or even looser in the games.

There are many games that can be used in teaching vocabulary to young learners. One of an interesting games is mime game. Teaching vocabulary to young learners by using mime game will be begun by one student will be selected to mime a word and the rest of the students will try to guess what he really means. This game is interesting because children will use their imagination to think and guess what their friend expression means in miming a word. Besides, this game is also interesting because children will take in turn to be the describer or the one who is going to mime a word. The describer will also use their imagination to think and get moved in expressing a certain word by using his own way.

The implementation of mime game in teaching vocabulary to young learners will be discussed as follows :

#### **a. Teacher's Preparation**

The teaching and learning activities will be successfull if the teacher has a good preparation before starting the lesson in the classroom. The good preparation will affect the good result for both teacher and students. In using mime game to teach young learners, there are several things that should be done by the teacher. Those are:

##### **1. Selecting Teaching Materials**

The first thing that the teacher should do is selecting the material. To teach young learners by using mime game, the writer is interested in

choosing the topic about “Expressions of feeling”. There will be some vocabularies about adjective words related to young learners’ daily life, such as *sad, happy, angry, and sleepy*. This is related to Shin’s Explanation (2006) to use context that is related to young learners’ environment. So, there will be eight adjective words which will be written in the eight cards.

<i>sad</i>	<i>happy</i>	<i>pensive</i>	<i>scared</i>
<i>surprised</i>	<i>confused</i>	<i>angry</i>	<i>sleepy</i>

## 2. Preparing Media

The second thing that the teacher should do is preparing media. By using media, students are easy to understand the subject and it can help the teacher in teaching and learning process. In mime game, the teacher has to prepare a box, some cards and some colorful pictures containing adjective words. One card will consist of one colorful picture containing adjective words. Then, these cards will be put into the box. The colourful pictures which are used in this game are related to Shin’s explanation (2006) toward the strategy that is used for teaching English to young learners where lots of brightly colored visuals will keep young learners’ engaged in activities. These are also related to Harmer’s explanation (2001) that young learners’ understanding comes from things that they see or young learners’ will respond well through visual things or concrete things.

### b. The Procedure of Mime Game

In teaching and learning process, there are three phases that should be followed by teacher and students in order to make the process of teaching and learning more effective. Those are pre-teaching activities, whilst-teaching activities, and post-teaching activities.

#### 1. Pre-Teaching Activities

Pre-teaching activities are done at the beginning of the class. There are several things that a teacher has to do in the pre-teaching stage. The teacher is required to prepare the students, both psychologically and physically to join in the teaching and learning process. First, the teacher can start the lesson by greeting the students in order to catch their first attention, asking students’ condition and asking them praying before studying.

*Teacher* : “Good morning students”.

*Students* : “Good morning, Ma’am”.

*Teacher* : “How are you this morning?”

*Students* : “Fine, thank you. And you?”

*Teacher* : “I am fine, too. Thank you”. Now, please the chairman led your friends for praying.

*Students*: (students are praying)

After that, the teacher checks the students’ attendance.

*Teacher*: “Well, I would like to check your attendance. For those whose name is being called, raise your hand and say Present, Ma’am. Do you understand”?

*Student : “Yes, Ma’am.”*

*Teacher: (after checking students’ attendance) “It seems nobody is absent today. Very Good!”*

Then, the teacher checks students’ readiness by asking the students several questions.

*Teacher : “Okay, are you ready to study?”*

*Student : “Yes Ma’am.”*

Before starting the lesson, the teacher has to create a good atmosphere in the classroom in order to make students enjoyed and comfortable to study.

## **2. Whilst- Teaching Activities**

This mime game will be used as one of the activity in whilst teaching. Because the topic that is used in this mime game is “Expressions of Feeling”, so the first thing that teacher should do in whilst teaching is by introducing this topic to the learners. The teacher may ask questions related to this topic. For example:

*Teacher : “How do you feel when you get the high score in your class?”*

*Student : “I feel so happy, Ma’am.”(expected answer)*

*Teacher : “Of course, you feel so happy.”*

*Teacher : “How is your feeling when your pet is died?”*

*Student : “I feel sad, Ma’am.”(expected answer)*

*Teacher: “Well, students. Those are the examples of expressions of feeling such as: I feel so happy and I feel sad .”*

After that, the teacher begins to explain the materials about “Expressions of feeling” as clear as possible. The teacher does not need to translate the word into the student’s native language. Students will understand the meaning of a certain word by using picture or realia and then ask them to pronounce the words. For example:

*Teacher : (the teacher shows the picture of sad person and explain of why does a person become sad, then pronounce the word “sad”).*

*After that, the teacher pronounces the word “sad” again and asks students to repeat it.*

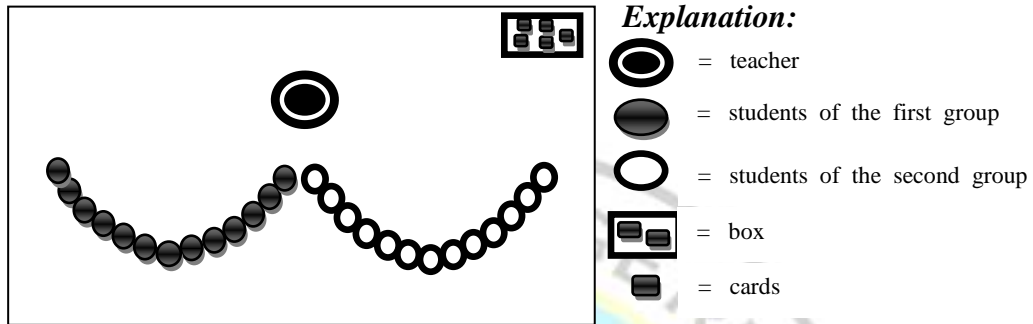
*Teacher : (the teacher shows the picture of happy person and explain of why does a person become happy, then pronounce the word “happy”).*

*So, the teacher pronounces the word “happy” again and asks students to repeat it.*

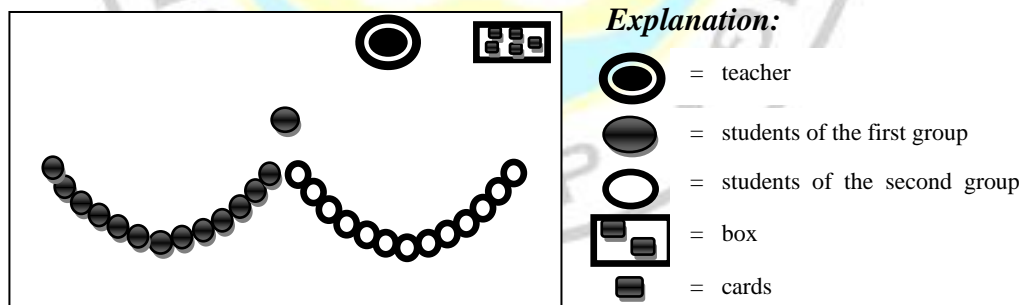
The teacher may do this way for the rest of expressions of feeling which are pensive, scared, surprised, confused angry, and sleepy.

To make students get engaged in teaching and learning process, the teacher inserts the game. The teacher asks students to play a game called as mime game. There are some steps that should be followed in teaching English to young learners by using mime game. Firstly, the teacher divides students into two groups and asks each group to make a half circle. It is aimed to let students easier to see the describer or the one who is going to mime the words later. Then, the teacher will put the box contains some cards that will be taken by the describer in the corner of the class.

This game will be begun by the teacher takes a role as a describer. A teacher will present a model of how to be a describer and all students will take a role as the guessers. After each group make a half circle, the teacher will take the card in the box and starts to mime the words by standing in front of the class between two groups. The student who is able to guess first on what the teacher mimes will be given a reward and then he/she will have a role to be the next describer.



Next, the selected student or the describer, who will mime a word, takes one card in the box but does not show the card to anyone even to a teacher. Then, the describer takes his role to mime a words in the card. The describer is not allowed to speak and he is only allowed to mime. It means that the describer acts out the words without speaking. In this phase, the describer will think and use his imagination to describe words in the card. The rest of the students or the guessers will also think and use their imagination to guess what the describer means. When the words have been guessed, this first round is over.



Then, the next round is begun by repeating this process for the rest words in the cards. Here,students will take in turn to be describers. When all the words have been guessed, the round is over or ends the game after the specified amount of time. The group whose members can guess many words than the other will win the game.

### 3. Post-Teaching Activity

In this last phase, the teacher gives feedback to the students toward the process and learning achievement. The teacher might conclude or summarize the lesson by himself or together with the students.



### **c. Advantages Of Mime Game**

There are some advantages of using mime game for young learners as follow: mime game teaches communication skills between young learners with others. They practice sending and receiving messages, they practice eye contact, and they also practice nonverbal communication. In addition, by doing mime game, young learners can stimulate their imagination on how to mime a certain word. Furthermore, young learners can stimulate their imagination in guessing words, they try to understand and guess what their friend tries to mime.

### **C. Conclusion and Suggestion**

Teaching English vocabulary to young learners at the age of ten means teaching English vocabulary to the fourth grade students of elementary school. It is essential for them to learn English vocabulary since they are young because vocabulary is a key to learn a language. Only with sufficient vocabulary, the learners can effectively express their ideas both in oral and written form later on. One way to teach English vocabulary to young learners is by using game called as mime game. Teaching English vocabulary by using mime game is begun by dividing students into two groups and ask them to make a half circle. Then, one of the selected students will take a card in the box. The selected student will stand in front of the class and try to mime the words in the card and the rest of the students will guess what their friend tries to mime.

Young learners always enjoy fantasy, imagination and movement. By using mime game, learners will get moved to express something by miming and using gestures. They also will imagine and think to guess what their friend's expression means. Young learners will be easier to remember things when they feel happy, enjoyed and comfortable of what they are doing. Therefore teachers have to create a conducive and pleasurable atmosphere, so that what learners learn can have a lasting effect on them.

In order to be successful in the teaching vocabulary to young learners, the writer suggests the following things: It is suggested that the teacher has to ensure that all teaching needs are available and ready to use. It is also suggested for the teacher to give some reinforcements and rewards to learners' responses in teaching and learning process because it will increase their motivation. Another suggestion is the teacher must create enjoyable, fun, and interesting situation as possible as he can in teaching English to young learners especially for those who study a new language. A pleasurable situation will help the teacher attract learners' interest in order to get the students' full attention toward the lesson. The enjoyment ought to be the foremost aims which hopefully will have good effects on learners' education because what they dislike, they drop as soon as possible. On the other hand when they like doing something, they will get engaged with it continually.

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