

CREATING INTERACTIVE WORD WALLS TO HELP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

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Abstract

The increasing of global communication makes the demand to mastering English also increase, including Indonesia. In learning English, understanding vocabulary is considered as an essential thing because without vocabulary, people will not be able to express their ideas and comprehend what other people say, in other words, they are not able to communicate each other. In order to mastering English vocabulary, students from elementary grade are introduced to English vocabulary by using many kinds of interactive media that can help this purpose. One of the media to help students' vocabulary mastery is called *Interactive Word Walls* which is used in elementary school. Interactive Word Walls is a vocabulary learning media where the words that have been learned are displayed on the wall. This paper will discuss the procedure in creating this media, the application method, and the use of it.

Key words: Vocabulary, Elementary School Students, Interactive Word Walls

A. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the basic instrument of a language, without a vocabulary, no language will exist. People need vocabulary to master four basic skills in a language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. From that statement it is very obvious that mastering vocabulary is essential for a person in order to understand what others saying and to be able to express himself with words. Vocabulary mastery is a must for people in communicating each other in their daily life.

Since English became the international language in the world which allows people all over the world communicate each other, the mastery for English vocabulary also becomes crucial in order to prepare them for globalization era. Countries with non-native English speaker or treat English as second or foreign language, such as Indonesia, endeavor their people to master English. They start to learn English at young age or when they are still at elementary school which means they are at the state of young learners. As explained above, to master a language, people need to master vocabulary, as the result young learners also have to master English vocabulary to make them able to master English.

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Mastering vocabulary for young learners is not an easy matter. They are very different from teenager or adult when learning. First, Young Learners are known for their enthusiastic, energetic and confidence in learning. They tend to feel free when learning and less shy. They are not afraid of making mistakes when learning, they are very confident. And also their energetic characteristics make it hard for them to just stay and listen to teachers. They also have short-term memory; memorize things easily and also forget them easily.

The second difference is that the vocabulary they need to learn is different from adults. Young Learners are easier to catch the meaning of simple words and connected with their daily life. They are still at the age for understanding concrete objects rather than abstracts words such as mentioned by Piaget that children are situated in a *concrete operational stage*. They commonly will easier to understand noun they can touch or see and action verbs they can perform. These simple nouns are such as *flower, table, chair* and *book* with can be represented around them. The action verbs such as *stand, walk, and jump* that they can perform easily. Abstract vocabularies such as *love* and *hate* are pretty difficult for them to understand since those words are cannot be seen or touched.

From those differences, teachers have to be aware that Young Learners need different treatment in teaching English. Teachers have to suit their teaching with learners' characteristics and needs when learning vocabulary and take advantages from those differences. They have the role as the mediator for those characteristics and needs. But in reality, teachers are still facing many obstacles in teaching English vocabulary and not able to take advantages from Young Learners' characteristics such as enthusiastic, energetic and confidence.

The first obstacle faced by teachers is the existence of assumption that English is difficult and teachers are not able to get rid of that assumption. This assumption indirectly makes the learners do not have motivation in learning English vocabulary. The second is conventional teaching. When teaching vocabulary, teachers commonly only mentions the vocabulary, ask learners to write it in their notebook, read it again and memorize the vocabulary without any help of teaching media. The last obstacle is the difficulties face the teachers in putting learners' focus on the lesson as the teaching and learning process going on. These obstacles occur because teachers do not provide an interesting media when teaching vocabulary to Young Learners. In a simple way, they are not creative in producing media for teaching vocabulary to the students. There were some studies which had been conducted related to the teaching vocabulary. One of them was the study conducted by Fitriani and Isyam (2012) that focused on the use of Beyond Centre and Circle Time (BCCT) to teach vocabulary to kindergarten's pupils.

According to the problems above, a teacher should be able to create a media which can cope with the Young Learners' need, a media that can catch their attention and an interactive media which allows Young Learners to express themselves and get rid of the conventional vocabulary learning.

B. DISCUSSION

Vocabulary is essential in a language. Vocabulary is defined as: 1) all words that a person knows or uses. 2) all words in a particular language. 3) the words that people use when they are talking. 4) a list of words with their meaning especially in a book for learning foreign language (Hornby, 1989). In short, vocabulary is all about words and its meanings in a certain language which is used by a person to speak or writing and to listen or reading in order to communicate with other people. The definition clearly says that when people learn a language, it is a must for them to learn vocabulary because they have complementary relationship as stated by Nation in McCarten (2007): “knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.”

For Young Learners, learning vocabulary is not an easy task. Their vocabulary acquisition is still at the state of *concrete operational stage* where they are able to understand concrete vocabulary (noun and action verb) such as *table and chair* not at the stage to understand abstract vocabulary such as *thinking or loving*.

Young Learners' character during learning process is different from adult. Harmer (2007:14-15) states that children is not focus on what being told but also learn all sorts of other things at the same time. Children usually respond well to activities that focus on their lives and experiences. But a child's attention span – their willingness to stay rooted in one activity – is often fairly short. Last, he stated that their ability to become competent speakers of a new language with remarkable facility, provide they get enough exposure to it is a crucial characteristic.

For these reasons, a teacher should be able to select the vocabulary that close to the students' life and fit the vocabulary teaching method to Young Learners characteristic by providing a suitable media called Interactive Word Walls. Interactive Word Walls is organized words that are displayed on the walls of a class room with an interesting visual that catch the students' interest to look at it and memorize it directly because it is can be seen all the time during the classes. Brabham & Villaume in Jasmine & Schiels (2001: 302) defines a word wall as a collection of high-frequency –words that occur frequently – sight words that are age appropriate, classified into groups or categories, and is located on the wall of a classroom for children to easily see and learn. In addition, Cronsberry (2004: 3) defines word wall as a group of words that are displayed on a wall, bulletin board, chalkboard, or whiteboard in a classroom.

Using this media in learning vocabulary can give teacher and students some advantages as proposed by Cronsberry (2004:3):

- 1.It provides an approach to meaningful teaching of vocabulary with an emphasis on students engagement and higher level thinking skills;
- 2.It builds vocabulary, thereby improving reading comprehension and writing style;
- 3.It reinforces understanding of subject-specific terminology with a focus on students internalizing key concept;
- 4.It helps students improve spelling and awareness of spelling patterns;
- 5.It provides visual cues for students;

6. It encourages student independence when reading and writing.

In creating Interactive Word Walls there are some steps that should be followed by teacher and students.

1. Selecting the Vocabulary

It is very important for teacher to carefully choose the words to be used in word walls in order to suit students' ability in understanding the vocabulary which is taught. Teacher also has to consider the criterion for choosing the words to be placed on the word walls. These criteria are about how useful are those vocabularies in students' daily life and how often do the words occur during the lesson - high frequency words.

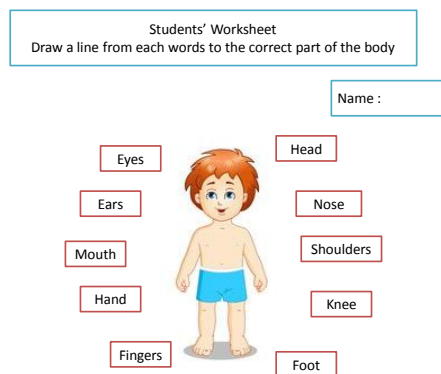
There are many topics of English vocabulary words that are taught in elementary school that are related to the students' surroundings such as things in classroom, part of human body and family members.

2. Choosing the Model of Vocabulary Arrangement

Once the topic of vocabulary has been chosen, students and teachers will choose the arrangement model for vocabulary to be made on the wall. There are no really set of the rules of how the words should be put on the wall as long as the connection and content of vocabulary is clear, it means, when the students and teachers look at vocabulary, there will be no confusion. The writer will suggest three models of word walls arrangement: mind mapping, tree mapping, and alphabetical order word walls.

3. Completing a Worksheet

After selecting the vocabulary and deciding the model of vocabulary arrangement to be placed on the walls, teacher divides the students in a group of five students. Each group is given a worksheet of part of human body that mirrored the model of vocabulary arrangement which will be used for word walls.



Students' Worksheet

During this activity, teacher guides the students to complete the worksheet by giving some clues to make this process become interactive. Teacher also draws a boy on whiteboard to make it easier when explaining the picture. The process of this activity can be seen in the illustration between teacher and students below:

Teacher reads the words one by one aloud and students repeat them.

Teacher : *Imagine this boy is you. I will read again the words one by one and you will point each word on your body. Ready?*

Students : *Yes! Ready!*

Teacher : *Can you point your nose?*

Students look confused and teacher gives a clue.

Teacher : *It is on your head* (showing head by using gesture).

All students point their body's part differently.

Teacher : *One by one, please. Raise your hand first. Whose group's going to answer it? Group 3, please. Can you point your nose?*

Members of group 3 give different answers.

Teacher : *Charlie, where is your nose?*

Charlie : (point his ears).

Daisy : *That is not nose, Charlie.*

Teacher : *What about Daisy? Where is your nose?*

Daisy : (point her nose).

Teacher : *That's correct. This is your nose* (while pointing at her nose). *Now, draw the line from the word nose to the nose of the boy* (gives example of drawing the line on the whiteboard).

This activity continues until every word is lined to the picture of the boy.

4. Building the Word Walls in Classroom

Wall space and room arrangements often determine the configuration and placement of the word walls. They may be arranged on cupboard or classroom's door, on classroom walls, on windows, or hung from the ceiling with wire.

Step 1

Determining the wall space which will be use to place the word wall by considering its visibility for all the students in the classroom and the space needed for building the word walls

Step 2

Prepare the materials needed – colored materials to make it attractive – in creating word walls, they are bulletin board, paper glue, windows markers, colourful papers and scissors.

Step 3

Students copy the worksheet which has been filled into a bigger scale. The vocabularies are rewrite with bigger letters to make it visible from the distance.

Step 4

In this step, students and teachers are ready to build the walls. The paper with the vocabularies wrote by the students are ready to be put on the white board or bulletin board. Students can draw the picture of the boy on the worksheet together with their peers to enhance students' creativity and cooperative aspects with the guidance form teacher. The picture and

the papers with vocabulary on are connected by using lines to make clear connection and to avoid confusion.



Teacher and students putting the words together

5. Doing Interactive Activity

In the following meetings, teacher has to make sure that words which are already put on the wall are used again that will allow the repetition for those words through interactive activities so that the learners won't forget the words in the future. There are many activities that can help students interact with the words on the wall. Olson suggests many of the activities such as Bingo, Be a Mind Reader and Guess the Covered Word.

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, Interactive Word Walls is a helpful media for Elementary School Students to master English Vocabulary. This media help students to memorize this vocabulary slowly during their daily learning process since the words are put on the wall of the classroom and accessible to students. It is also an interesting media to be used in Elementary Classroom because it is presented in a colourful ways and created or arranged in many forms in the class. Last, this media is also is also a creative media for both teacher and students that allows the interaction between the teacher and students, students and their peer and students and teacher with the words on the wall.

Based on the discussion, it can be suggested as following:

1. Select the vocabulary which is useful for learners in their daily life, and high-frequency words whether it is form textbook or other sources.
2. The words should be placed on wall space where students can access them from the whole class.
3. Teachers have to provide many interactive activities in learning process which allow students to interact with words on walls.
4. The arrangement of the word wall has to be effective. Do not overcrowd the words at one space of the walls and use the walls space wisely.

Note: This article is written based on the writer's paper supervised by Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Syafei, M.A

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