



TEACHING VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS THROUGH SNAKE AND LADDER GAME

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Abstract

Vocabulary is one of the important elements in the process of learning, mastering, and using language. As a part of language elements, it should be taught earlier to the students in order to ease them in mastering a language in the future. However, teaching vocabulary to Young Learners is different from teaching vocabulary to teenagers and adults for some reasons. Generally, young learners are children who are still in a period of good growth. They tend to be more active because they like playing and doing many activities. They cannot listen longer and cannot handle more abstract ideas but may be willing to speak, sing, or move. For those reasons, teachers have to create a learning situation based on students' need and interest which is learning by playing. This paper will present an interesting activity named "Snake and Ladder" game that can be used as a solution in teaching vocabulary to young learners. Through the implementation of "Snake Ladder" game, students will be encouraged and motivated to learn vocabulary by playing. The use of this game is also expected to facilitate students in learning, understanding, and enriching their vocabulary collection.

Key words: Game, ELT, Vocabulary, Snake and Ladder, Young Learners

A. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of language elements which is significant to the learners in order to master a language. It is one of English language components that is very important for the learners in school, especially young learners. By mastering much vocabulary, it will be easier for the students to use those vocabulary in expressing their mind and communicating with others. Thus, students should have much vocabulary to produce ideas as well as in written or oral form because the amount of their vocabulary will influence their ability in expressing something in English.

Cameron (2001:73) mentioned that vocabulary is about learning words; children are not only expected to know the word but also they have to know what the meaning of that word. Moreover, vocabulary can be defined as a list of

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collection of words arranged in alphabetical order and explained. It is also the total number of words in a language; all the words in a language; all the words known to a person or used in a particular book subject, etc.

Vocabulary should be taught earlier to the students. According to Cameron (2001:72), early level of schoolings is an appropriate time to maintain useful vocabulary in foreign language learning. It can be said that vocabulary should be taught to students, especially since they are still young learners, because this is the best time for them to learn it. This will help them to learn the language in the future due to the basic of that language has been learned since their young.

Ytreberg (1990:2) defined the notion of young learners. According to him, young learners are the students of kindergarten and elementary school. They are divided into two categorizes which are determined by their ages. First category is kindergarten students. The age of the children range from five until six. Second category is elementary school students. These children are seven until twelve years of age. In short, it can be said that the students who are studying in kindergarten (5-6) and elementary school (7-12) are classified as young learners.

Teaching vocabulary to young learners is different from teaching vocabulary to adult. According to Syafei and Wati (2013:665), in teaching vocabulary to young learners, teacher should give the materials and activities that appropriate with students' development where students learn better through playing or fun activities. They cannot be forced to learn something seriously because they still have short attention span in learning process. All they want is only playing and playing. Considering these facts, teacher needs to be aware and more creative. The teacher needs to create an interesting activity in teaching learning process, so students will be interested to follow the lesson.

Teaching vocabulary to young learners is important because vocabulary plays a crucial role for them to be able to communicate. In teaching vocabulary to young learners, teacher should make it simple and fun. Teacher should choose the best activity to deliver the material in order to get students attention in learning process. As young learners only have short attention span in learning something, teacher has to create an interesting activity so they will not get bored and can focus while following the lesson. This is due to the fact that most learners are less interest in learning vocabulary when they are only required to spend amount of time in memorizing and learning a word.

Some problems may occur in the process of teaching learning vocabulary to young learners. This is due to the reasons that young learners learn language differently from adults to some extents. Firstly, getting young learners attention during the lesson is not an easy thing. They are difficult to control and even have no focus in the lesson. Secondly, they respond to meaning rather than to language form. It means they will learn better if the lessons focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency rather than on accuracy. Thirdly, children only focus on here and now situation. Lastly, children need to have all five senses stimulated which can be accomplished by providing sensory aids and physical activity.

In another hand, many students still face problems in learning vocabulary. Syafei and Sari (2013:128) mentioned several factors that influence students understanding in learning vocabulary such as students' lack of knowledge,

students' low desire to read, lack of media in teaching vocabulary, the low quality students assignments, and inappropriate technique and approaches used by the teacher in the learning process. Those factors will cause problems to students in learning English.

Moreover, the use of the same activities in teaching also influence students' interest in learning process. When teachers always use the same way in teaching without giving any innovation, students may feel bored in learning English because they think English is not interesting.

According to Thornbury (2002: 144), vocabulary cannot be taught. It can be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities, and experienced in all manner of associations but ultimately it is learned by the individual. Teacher can help students by giving ideas on how to learn to them, but each will finally learn a very personal selection of items, organized into relationships in an individual way.

To help students in learning English especially in mastering vocabulary, teachers have to prepare something new to make students interested and motivated. An appropriate strategy, method, technique, and media is required in teaching and learning process. One of appropriate technique in teaching vocabulary is by using games. Game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. It is useful to present vocabulary to students. Uzami and Sunaryo (2012:10) mentioned that game can make students interested to follow the lesson because it can create a fun way and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Teaching vocabulary through game will make students easier to memorize the words that learnt. Students will also be fun in studying.

To overcome those problems mentioned above, the writer wants to discuss about the use of Snake and Ladder game in teaching vocabulary to Young Learners, especially Elementary School Students. Snake and Ladder game is a simple board game with counters and dice (Kusrini, 2012:4). Meipiana (2014:381) added that Snake and Ladder game is a classical board game which is played on a playing board with numbered grid squares. The objective of the game is to avoid the snake slides and climb the ladders to the end of the pattern playing board. The winner of the game is the one who owns the counter that first arrived at the end of the number on playing board. Then, the game can be used in teaching vocabulary to elementary school students such as introducing the names of animals, fruits, things, and so on.

By implementing Snake and Ladders game, students will find out their vocabulary easily. They will find out the vocabulary when they have to answer the question on the picture card given after they throw the dice and get the number on board. The picture cards will provide some clues, such as picture, box, and letter, based on certain category. Moreover, Snake and Ladder game can stimulate students' active thinking because it needs comprehension, activity, and cooperation of the students.

However, in using this game to teach vocabulary to young learners, students should already have a bunch or a group of vocabulary in their mind. These vocabulary collection come from several previous meeting. In other words, Snake and Ladder game only can be used in teaching vocabulary to young learners if teacher have taught some groups of vocabulary to the students.

Furthermore, Snake and Ladder game is categorized as a kind of educational game. It has a purpose on exercising students in enriching their vocabulary through learning by playing. The game requires some kind of tools such as snake and ladder board, the dice, the counters, and picture cards. All those components are safe to be used by young learners. In addition, practically in applying this game, the students are demanded to be active in the class because they are the center of teaching learning process.

The examples of Snake and Ladder Board, The Dice, The Counters, and Picture Cards can be seen below.

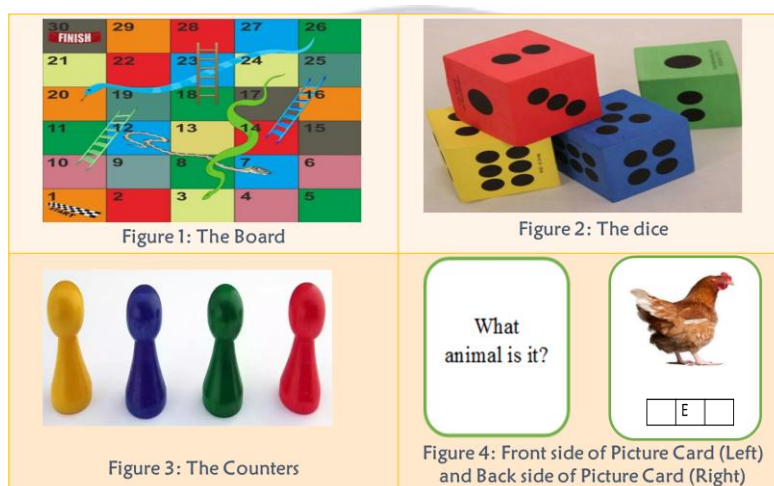


Figure 1: The examples of Snake and Ladder Board, The Dice, The Counters, and Picture Cards

The rules of implementing Snake and Ladder game in teaching vocabulary to Young Learners can be seen as follow: Students are divided into several groups depending on the amount of the students in the class. Each group takes their counters based on their sequence of player. The first player takes turn; roll the dice and get the number. The player then puts the counter on the Snake and Ladder board according to the number of dice she/he gets. The player takes a picture card and teacher will come to her/him to ask the question. Then, the player shows the picture card to his/her group members and guess the answer in a specific time.

If the player can answer correctly, the counter can still be placed on the board according to the number on the dice. However, if she/he failed, the counter will be moved back two steps and the picture card will be put at the bottom of the set of picture cards. If the counter stops on the tail of snake square board and the player guesses the picture card correctly, the counter can still be placed on that board number. However, if she/he failed, he/she will be moved to the end of snake board. If the counter stops on the ladder square board and the player guesses the picture card correctly, the counter will be moved to the top of the ladder. However, if she/he failed, he/she will be moved back two steps. The first player from the first group becomes the last player in her/his group. After that, the first player from another group takes turns. Finally, the winner of the game is the group who owns the counter that first arrived at the final number of the board.

In addition, the name of Snake and Ladder game can be varied since the game only can be used when students already have a group of vocabulary. The variation of name can be taken from the group of vocabulary that have been taught to the students. For example, when the group of vocabulary that have been taught is about animals, the game is then called Snake and Ladder Game Animals. In the other hand, when the group of vocabulary that have been taught is about food and drink, the game is then called Snake and Ladder Game Food and Drink.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Procedures of Implementing Snake and Ladder Game in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

Vocabulary is one of English language components that is very important for the learners in school, especially young learners which are included kindergarten and elementary school students (Syafei and Agus, 2016:49). Vocabulary consists of several part of speech such as noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. The teaching of vocabulary based on those part of speech to elementary school students is determined by students' level of class: beginner (grade 1-2), intermediate (grade 3-4), and advanced (5-5).

To be successful in teaching vocabulary to elementary school students, teachers should be able to select an appropriate material (part of vocabulary that is going to be learnt by students) based on students' level. An interesting technique and activity also required to be used. The selection of these materials and appropriate activity will influence students' achievement in learning vocabulary. Thus, teacher needs to work hard and be more creative in selecting the material which should be fit to the lesson and students level and in choosing an interesting activity in teaching vocabulary to Young Learners.

One of the interesting activities that can be used by the teacher in teaching vocabulary to young learners is Snake and Ladder Game. This game is used to teach some vocabularies related to nouns. These are the procedures of implementing this game in the class.

Before starting to play Snake and Ladder game as a part of students' vocabulary practice, teacher explains the game briefly since the students have been familiar with it. This is also to make sure all students know about the game that is going to be played in the class. The components of the game such as the board, the dice, the counters, and the picture cards also can be shown to the students to catch their interest.

Then, teacher divides the students into several groups and defines the sequence of the player in the game. After students sit with their group members, teacher starts to explain the rules of playing Snake and Ladder game. Teacher has to make sure all students understand with the rules, so the game can be started and played well.

To start the game, teacher asks the first player from the first group to roll the dice. After that, the counter will be put on the board according to the number she/he gets. Then, the player takes a picture card and teacher comes to her/him to ask the question on the front of the card. If the player cannot understand the question, teacher is able to translate it into students' mother tongue. Next, the

player shows the picture card only to his/her members group and try to guess the answer of the questions together. If the question can be answered correctly, the counter will still be placed on that number of board. However, if the player cannot answer it well, the counter will be moved back two steps and the card will be put at the bottom of the picture cards set.

The game is continue to the first player from the second group and the player will do the same activities that have been done by the first player from the first group. To sum up, the first round is ended when the first player from all groups have got chance to roll the dice, put the counter, take the picture card, and guess the answer of the picture card. After that, the second round will be started. The procedures of playing the game on the next round are the same with the first round. Finally, the teacher will stop the game when one of the counters has arrived at the final number of the board.

At the end of the game, teacher announces the winner of the game and give a special reward. Then, teacher together with the students try to answer the picture card that cannot be answered correctly by the students when playing the game (if any). Finally, teacher asks students whether they have problems when learning vocabulary through playing by using Snake and Ladder game.

2. The Reasons of Implementing Snake and Ladder Game in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

In teaching vocabulary to young learners, teacher should create an interesting learning situation to catch students' attention. Therefore, Snake and Ladder game can be used as an interesting activity in teaching vocabulary to young learners. The reasons why this game should be implemented in teaching vocabulary to young learners can be seen as follow.

- 1) Snake and Ladder game provides many varieties of pictures and colors that can catch students' interest in learning vocabulary.
- 2) The students got actively involved in teaching and learning process.
- 3) The game made the teaching and learning process more fun.
- 4) The atmosphere of the game helps the students learn and remember the new words faster and better.

In addition, here are some advantages of using Snake and Ladder game in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

The first reason is Snake and Ladder game is a traditional game that has been known by students. This may be helpful for teacher to bring the game to the class, since students have known the original rules of the game. In short, the teacher only needs to introduce the game briefly.

The second reason is the game has simple rules so the students can follow the instruction easily. Although the teacher has modified the rules of the game, the original rules may still exist. The winner of the game is the owner of the counter that first arrived at the end of the number in board square.

The third reason is the appearance of Snake and Ladder board game is eye catching and interesting. It has many colors that make students feel enjoy to learn. They will feel more relax and interest in following the lesson.

The fourth reason is this game makes the teaching and learning process more fun and less stressful. Since the game is played in group, student will have chance to get help from their group member in guessing the correct answer, so they will not feel afraid and then feel secure. This also will increase their self-confidence to speak up in the class. By implementing this game, the students will also learn how to work in group and cooperate with their friends.

The last reason is the game can encourage students' participation and can remove the inhibitions of those feel bored with the formal classroom situations.

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Snake and Ladder game can be implemented as an interesting activity in teaching vocabulary to young learners. This is a classical board game which is played on a playing board with numbered grid squares. The game can give motivation and catch students' attention in learning vocabulary because it contains some activities. Students roll the dice, put the counter on the board number, take a picture card, and then require to guess the answer of certain vocabulary based on the clues given. Moreover, all the components use in the game such as snake and ladder board, the dice, the counters, and the picture cards are user friendly and safe for children. Through Snake and Ladder game, students will learn vocabulary by playing. By using this game, students can learn vocabulary easily and enjoyable.

To be successful in implementing Snake and Ladder game in teaching vocabulary to young learners, the writer suggests the following points. *Firstly*, teachers have to make sure that students already have a group of vocabulary collection before using the game in the class. *Secondly*, when playing the game, it is better if the students sit on the floor because it will be easier for them to do some movements. *Thirdly*, if students are more than twenty, teacher can add more counters to the game and modify the amount of the numbers on the board by adding some grid squares. However, the game will be more affective to be implemented if the amount of students is under thirty. *Fourthly*, the size of the components use in this game should be large and fit to the amount of students. This will influence students' interest to play the game. *Lastly*, it is expected that there will be further research about the implementation of Snake and Ladder game in teaching adjective and verb to young learners.

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