Using "The Sims" To Teach English Vocabulary For Young Learners

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Abstract

The Sims with their realistic animation, complex scenarios and impressive interactivity, computer simulation games might be able to provide context-rich, cognitively engaging virtual environments for language learning. However, simulation games designed for second language learners are in short supply. As an alternative, could games designed for the massmarket be enhanced with support materials to allow students to enter and make use of them for learning? This classroom-based investigation looked into whether the best selling game "The SIMS" could be rendered pedagogically beneficial to young learners by means of supplementary materials designed to meet criteria for second language learning. The mixed-technique study will significant improvements in vocabulary knowledge, as well as a generally positive reaction to the modifications among users and will better to use this technique for young learners.

Key words: Game, ELT, Teacher

A. INTRODUCTION

The English language has started widely and be one of the most important languages in the world. It is spoken by more than 380 million people in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the former British Empire. It is the largest of the Western languages. Many people are aware of the value that the English language has in today's world (Baugh in Amari, 2015). In Indonesian, English is needed to Indonesian students because English can be used as tools to communicate with other students from all around the world. It should be taught in elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school.

The English language has four main skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The important thing to master these skills are vocabulary. According to Coxhead in Sekti (2014), the more words students know well and can use, the more meaning they can communicate in a wide variety of circumstance. The students should mastering vocabulary of English before they learn English, and the student who master vocabulary most can easier to understand when they are studying English. Mastering vocabulary is important because it is a basic point of a language.

Teaching English to young learners is one way to introduce English as a foreign language. The teacher has important roles in teaching vocabulary to young

learners. While children may not understand English subject, the teacher should make the class enjoyable and create an interesting technique to make students feel comfortable during the learning process. There are many ways to make this condition, teacher can use interesting media like movies, songs, even games.

One of technique that can be used to teach vocabulary is by using the video game. A video game is a game that needs an electronic device to play, and player gets faced the visual feedback from the device. The Sims is one of the examples of the video game. The Sims is a simulation daily life game, in which player should make their own character or avatar called "Sims" and take this character into a house. Each of character has their mood and can be changed appropriate with a condition.

Recently, the format and the interactivity of the games have changed, It can introduce for the educational setting. Some games consist of animations and video, that can be an interactive media in language learning. The Sims is one of games which have featured in the learning process. The Sims's simulation can contributed in special ways to increase vocabulary acquisition of the students. With the storyline of The Sims, there are many new words that students can be achieved.

B. RESEARCH METHOD
i) Formulation of the Problem
The problem of this paper is formulated in the following question "how does the teacher use "The Sims" to teach English vocabulary for young learners in ESL class".
ii) Purpose of writing this paper
The purpose of the study is to explain how teacher use "The Sims" to teach English vocabulary for young learners in ESL class.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. Definition of young learners
Young learners are students which is learning English. Young learners are supposed to be children from five or six years old until eleven or twelve years old. Young learners are students who are studying in elementary school or senior high school in the age between seven years old until fifteen years old, and they are studying English as the second language for about one up to four years. They have to learn English as a second language about eight years, but they still cannot speak English.

Scott and Ytreberg suggest, Young learners can be divided into two groups, *Younger Children* (six to eight years old),and *Older Children* (nine to twelve years old). Young children very different with older children, whereas the young children more enthusiastic to acquire information. Young children are inexperience and lack of knowledge (1990, p.1). In this reason, they often get misunderstanding in designing a concept of a language in their mind, and misinformation in school learning. Based on grade level, young learners can be divided into *Lower Classes* (students in first grade, second grade, and third grade), and *Upper Classes* (students in fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade)

(Suyanto, K:2007). Some of the preschool students or kindergarten students which is also learning English is called *very young learners.*

Young learners "generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them" (Harmer, 2007, p. 82). They are imaginative, keen, outspoken and inquisitive. Young learners enjoy repetition of routines and activities and they love to be creative. They are less inhibited than other age groups but their self-control is very poor. Since they have a lot of physical energy, physical movement should be an essential part of their learning (Brendon, 2012). However, these children are not only interested in the physical, but also the tangible. They learn from everything around them and "their understanding comes through eyes and ears and through hands". Young learners learn by example and the most important role for a teacher is to be their living example (Harmer, 2007, pp. 82-83). These children also have a positive attitude to learning and learning new things is an adventure for them ("Motivating Learning in Young Children", 2007).

2. Characteristic of Young learner

The children have their own characteristic. This characteristic include their ways of thinking, attitude, aptitude, et cetera. The children have no idea or purposes in their study. They only focus on the abstract things in learning the foreign language and extend the common skill like talking and body language. And children often get bored, that means the teacher should prepare many of ways which used to make an interactive class. Syafei (2016:9) says that the characteristics which young learners share are as follow.

(1)Young learners are only just beginning their schooling so that teachers have a major opportunity to mold their expectations of life in school.

(2) As a group they are potentially more differentiated than secondary or adult learners, for they are closer to their varied home cultures, and new to the conformity increasingly imposed across cultural grouping by the school.

(3) They tend to be keen and enthusiastic learners.

(4) Their learning can be closely linked with their development of ideas and concepts because it is so close to their initial experiences of formal schooling.

(5) They need physical movement and activity as much as stimulation for their thinking, and the closer together these can be the better.

3. Teaching English to young learner

Teaching English to young learners should be prepared well. The teacher has an important role to make students understand the subject of study. Teacher should make the learning process become fun and naturalbecause the environment of learning the English language often make students stress. While teaching, teachers should make learning activities simple so that the children can enjoy the learning

process and can understand them. In teaching English to young learners, the teachers must understand the concept of acquisition and learning. Acquisition can be characterized as a procedure of having language normally or unconsciously. However, learning is a process of having language certainly. Teaching English to young learners is controlling and encouraging young learners in the age between seven until fifteen years old, for their exercises in getting the hang of, knowing, understanding, and understand thoughts, abilities, and data of English utilizing traps and methodologies which will be utilized as a part of changing and reclassifying their idea forward their every day encompassing circumstance as an outside dialects students.

Teaching English to young learners needs situations in which the students get language abilities through acquisition rather than learning. It means that the students get language commonly and demonstratively. In teaching English to young learners, the English teachers have to know the sorts of language learning resources for young learners. Learning resources are not extra materials for comfort but rather major materials which are requested and learned as entertaining exercises which young learners do in their every day lives. Along these lines, perfect English teachers to young learners are the individuals who are well-known with English songs and games in English. In addition, they can arrange those materials into becoming entertaining ones. There must be a reasonable characteristic amongst procedure and resource.

4. **Using The Sims in teaching vocabulary**

Based on Ravi in BBC News (2001), he believed that the world of the Sims can do a better job of teaching vocabulary and grammar than traditional methods. The inherent fun of game playing could help teachers to make learning languages funnier. The games are one of attractive thing for the children. With games, they can learn everything that they need unconsciously. Sometimes, students which are study via games, such as The Sims, usually do not feel like studying, but it is like relying solely on to get information.

The Sims is computer-based best seller game which allow the player to create the virtual family character, Sims, which is then they can mentor through everyday life challenges. The player has to visit their Sims' natural and emotional needs, help them seek out of jobs, find solutions to private and social problems, and beautify their homes furniture. The Sims disclosure player to a big agreement in written language in the instruction, control, and status bar labels, cautionary and news updates, and product characterization for shopping in the game.

The Sims seems to teach vocabulary learning based on everyday objects, everyday acts, and everyday situations which are used and learned by students in the game environment, especially words which is related to home, furniture, personal adjectives, and basic verbs compatible with the lower level for ESL students. Aldrich (2009:21) defined that the Sims is a part of the game which is consist of all prepackaged educational simulation and some serious games and group challenges, serve some abstract world and the players' role in it, and have some ability to switch to the attractive world.

In first time playing The Sims, The student will choose their own characteristic. There are about 16 personality trait, and it can be got special ways

to acquire new words in each of trait. Once it has been ready to create The Sims character, The student can move it into the base house as The first tutorial. In this house, it starts with the basic set of furniture (such as a bed, refrigerator, a sink, TV, a couch, etc.). The student should complete order to higher level, keep the character alive and happy.

5. Discussion

A. Implementation

The Sims is computer-based best seller game which allows the player to create a virtual family character, Sims, which is then they can mentor through everyday life challenges. The player has to visit their Sims' natural and emotional needs, help them seek out of jobs, find the solution of private and social problems, and beautify their homes furniture. The Sims disclosure player to a big agreement in written language in the instruction, control, and status bar labels, cautionary and news updates, and product characterization for shopping in the game.

To know the efficiency of vocabulary learning through The Sims games, the writer wants to know how students' knowledge background can help them and what progress that they get. To achieve the goal of this paper, the writer focuses on students' perception, their attitude, and what they get through learning which is use vocabulary game. This paper involved The Sims game in teaching vocabulary to young learners so that the writer can see how students give respond to new vocabularies given. The writer also wants to know wether there are any problems with language learning.

In this paper, the writer provides some method for using The Sims games in teaching vocabulary. Before start the learning process, the teacher should understand about The Sims games and how to play it. Firstly, the teacher persuades students to the computer laboratory, guide them to sit in front of each computer desk, and give them test in order to know their knowledge about English vocabulary. In the first fifteen minutes, the teacher collects the test. After that, the teacher gives the students break time, such as playing music, or short video. The teacher explains to them what they are going to do in the laboratory, describe the definition and how to running The Sims game. Before, running the Sims game, the teacher asks students to open translate tool in their computer and write down every single new word and its meaning for them. Then the teacher operates the computer on the teacher's desk and by using the LED projector, the teacher leads the students to open The Sims game program.

In the beginning of the game, the students as a player should make their first and last character's name (Sim), set the Sim's voice, and how they walk. The player also can change and make the character appearance and personality which is appropriate for their desire. After finishing this step, the teacher asks students to write down the new words as much as possible during the first step of the game into a piece of paper and teacher collects it.

The second step is building home. Before students do this step, the teacher should give direction to doing this step via LCD Projector. After creating the Sim, the player has the capital around 20.000 simelons (The Sims currency), the player can buy empty land to build a home, or buy a ready-made home. After buying empty land, or a ready-made home, player moves them into the house so that they

can get a job, meet people, or just stay at home. If you have cash, it is also possible to drive existing residents out and move to theirs. During students playing in this step, the teacher has to guide the students while checking students' new words sheet and take attention in the words which are new for them. Teacher make 2 word sheet with a group of word like the word related to clothes or foods, so the words are as follow clothes and food and one piece of paper for free words.

After finishing this step, the teacher also asks students to write down the new words as much as possible during this step in a piece of paper and teacher collects it again.

After finishing the second step, the teacher goes on to the final step. The teacher gives simple playing instructions in the Sims daily life. For example, instructions how to get money to use in daily life with get a job on the cafe or selling something, how to have a friendship with the Sims residents with social interaction on the game with others, how to have a family, and how to get daily skill in the Sims game.

The teacher gives the students about thirty minutes to play the Sims daily life. During students playing in this step, the teacher still has to guide the students while checking students' new words sheet from the second step and take attention in the words which are new for them.

After students finish their game limit time which is given to students, the teacher starts to discuss these new words that have written by students before. Firstly, Teacher makes student in pair and instruct student to combine their words. The teacher ask and chooses the words which are the most unfamiliar for some students, and write it on the whiteboard. For example Student group A have "Belt" and teacher will write "Belt" on whiteboard. While writing those words, the teacher does the repeated method that makes teacher mention the written words and asks students to repeat it. After the teacher finished write the words into whiteboards, the teacher point one of the words and asking that meaning to one of the students. Each of students should get their turn. Example, if the group B know the meaning of "Belt" one of them will raise hand and answer "Belt is a strip of leather or other material worn around the waist or across the chest, especially in order to support clothes or carry weapons".

In the last activities, the teacher asks students to write all the words from the whiteboard along with the meaning. The Teacher will give vocabulary sheet and instruct The student to write down the words from each group on the white board and the meaning of them. After that, The student try to make that word on the sentence or draw it. For example, the student will write "Belt", the meaning of it and make a sentence which related with "Belt" like "My belt is originally from Europe". Moreover, The student can choose to draw a "belt" on the Sheet.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Vocabulary is one of language element which is have to master by foreign language learners to get communication skills in that language. The most important reason for giving methods and activities is can create comfort situation and can be enjoyed by young learners so that they use English in daily life. Therefore, it needs strategy and right technique to apply in the classroom. Young

learners need a specific strategy in vocabulary learning to conclude words from context and find out the meaning of the words. One of the specific technique that can be applied in teaching vocabulary is using The Sims game.

The Sims is computer-based best seller game which allowsthe player to create the virtual family character, Sims, which is then they can mentor through everyday life challenges. The player has to visit their Sims' natural and emotional needs, help them seek out of jobs, find solutions to private and social problems, and beautify their homes furniture. The Sims disclosure player to a big agreement in written language in the instruction, control, and status bar labels, cautionary and news updates, and product characterization for shopping in the game.

The writer have some obstacles if this technique will be apply in school, especially in Indonesia. First, not all schools have enough computers. Some school have 35 – 40 students in the class and just have 15-20 computers. Second about the spec of the computer, most of computer in school is too old and can't reach minimum requirement of The Sims game, so they are can't run it.

The writer suggest to the teacher to make a section time if the school have not enough computers. The teacher divide students into 2 sections, each section are 20 people. The other suggestion is the teacher bring a laptop which can run The Sims and play in front of class.

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