



USING *KARUTA* GAME IN TEACHING VOCABULARY FOR YOUNG LEARNER

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Abstract

This article explains the implementation of *Karuta* game in helping Elementary School students' grade 5 and 6 in mastering vocabulary. Vocabulary is the important basic part to be mastered by students who learn English in order to facilitate them to communicate in English. However, there are some problems faced by the teacher while teaching vocabulary to young learner. Teacher should be creative in choosing media or technique in teaching vocabulary to young learners. Using game in classroom activity is best solution for young learners due to one of their characteristics who tend to like learning by playing. *Karuta* Game can help teacher to teach vocabulary in fun way. This game is expected to motivate and stimulate the students to engage in learning process.

Key words: Vocabulary, Young Learners, *Karuta* Game

A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to Indonesian young learners is a big challenge for teachers because they have different characteristics with teenager and adult. As a language component and the basic part of language learning, vocabulary should introduce by the teacher. Learners who are in young age or early stages such students in Elementary school may first introduce some vocabulary of the target language based on their school curriculum. As stated by Cruse (2000), vocabulary is a list of words that have meaning. In addition, Nunan (2005) stated that in the early stages of learning and using second or foreign language, students are better to master vocabulary first than grammar. Students may not be able to communicate effectively or express their idea by using the target language without mastering vocabulary.

Generally, teacher still faces many problems in teaching vocabulary to young learners. First, young learners have short attention span. They may learn very easily and may forget the lesson very quickly. They easily get bored and tend to like to play with their friend or their toys. Second, teachers tend to use monotone technique or media in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. Sometimes, teachers use inappropriate media or technique that make students easily get bored

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and less intention to follow the lesson. Teachers still use the traditional media or techniques such as ask the students to read aloud or ask students to repeat the word aloud after they pronounce the word. These techniques may make them think that learning English is boring and difficult.

Due to those problems, teachers as facilitator should facilitate them with the best media and technique that are appropriate for their level. The classroom activities should be more challenging, fun, interesting, and stimulate them to engage with classroom activities. Young learners can be categorized as kinesthetic learners because they may love learning that involve active movements in classroom activities. Therefore, they may love to learn language by playing. According to Piaget in Wati (2013), baby and children are programmed by nature to learn with unique way based on their brain and body developments. It can be concluded that generally young learners demand a fun classroom activities where they can actively involve, experience a real life and play.

Using game in teaching vocabulary can be a good technique to reach students motivation and understanding in learning process. According to Martinson and Chu (2008), games are the effective tools for learning because it teaches us how to organize, to consider alternatives, and to think flexibly. Students may draw their own meaning from these experiences while learning from their mistakes and also from each other. Games are popular among children because they like to play. Through game, students can interact, discover and experiment with their surroundings. Games may bring an enjoyable, fun, interesting classroom's atmosphere so that it can stimulate and motivate the learners to learn new vocabularies. By using game, they also learn how to be responsible with their task, activate their critical thinking, and engage in classroom activities.

Many kind of games can be used by teachers to teach vocabulary to elementary school students or young learners. However, the writer chooses *Karuta game* as a technique to teach vocabulary to Indonesian's young learners. *Karuta game* is a snap game that's uses flashcard to introduce vocabularies and help students to memorize the word easily. *Karuta game* is one of the best classroom activities in teaching-learning vocabulary. This article may explain how *Karuta Game* can help teacher to teach vocabulary to Indonesian's elementary school students. Thus, the writer focuses on the young learners in elementary school in grade 5 and 6. According to Piaget's theory cognitive developments, students at those levels are in formal operational stage where they already think logically or abstract ideas (Piaget in Trisna, 2013). Therefore, writer makes the variation of this game that is suitable for students' grade 5 and 6.

B. DISCUSSION

Karuta Game is a card game where there are at least three people in a game, one is a reader, and the others are as players. This game is also known as snap game that use some flashcards as media where the students have to snap one of the face up cards on the table that has been called out. This game is best used for practicing the specific vocabulary items for elementary school students.

However, in this paper, the implementation of the game focuses on young learner in elementary school in grade 5 and 6. The students not only snap the card that is called out by teacher, but also they have to snap the card after the teacher reads a short description about the picture on the card. Moreover, the cards do not spread on the table, but teacher spreads them on the floor away from the students. This challenge will make them enthusiastic to snap the right cards.

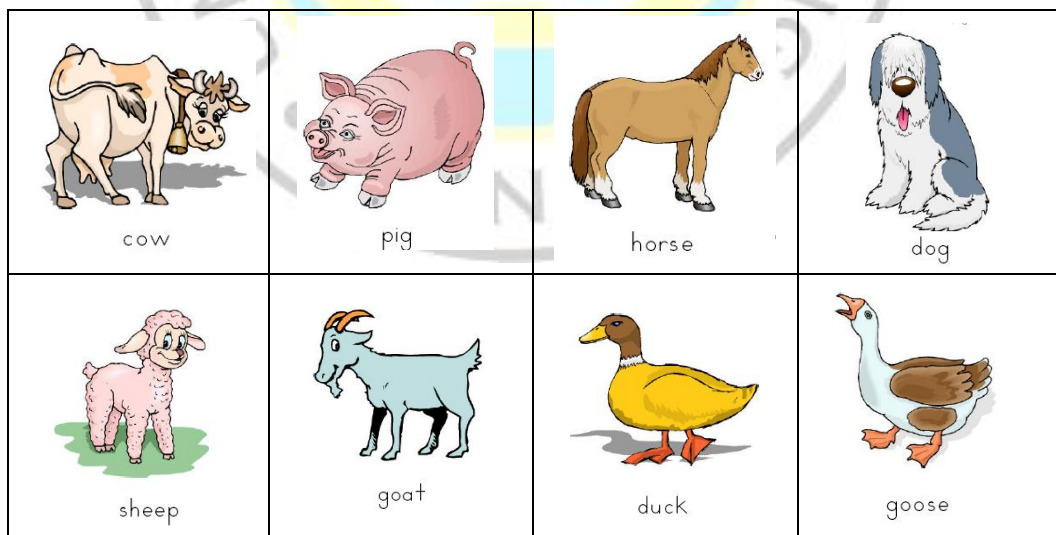
There are some stages in applying *Karuta Game* in teaching vocabulary mentioned on the following sub topic.

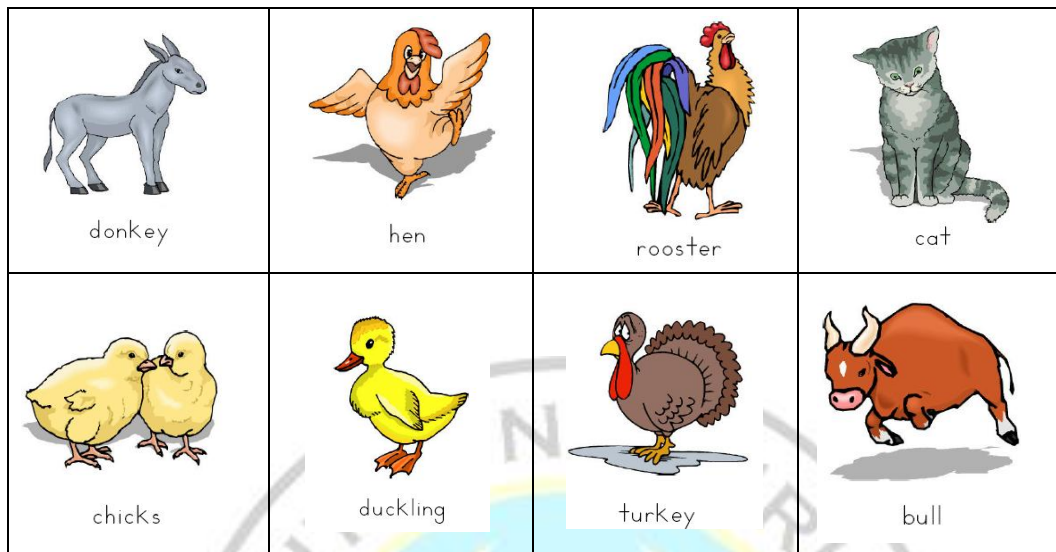
1. Teacher's Preparation

Teacher should do some preparations before starting the classroom activities in order to achieve successful in teaching vocabulary by using this game. By doing preparation, it will help teacher to be more organized well prepared so she/he will be more confident to teach the lesson. In implementing *Karuta Game*, the teacher should make the following preparation.

First, the teacher should prepare the material that will be taught in classroom. The material should be appropriate with students' need, level, intelligence, and should motivate them to learn and suitable with curriculum. In implementing *Karuta game* in teaching vocabulary, the appropriate materials will be used are the name of animal and their characteristics. However, the teacher has to limit the vocabularies for one meeting.

In *Karuta game*, teacher use Flashcards that contain of words and picture or word only in each cards. Teacher can get this card in *pdf* printed that are available in many websites in the internet based on their level. The flashcard can be downloaded from <http://www.teahchildrenesl.com/flashcard/>. There are many available flashcards in this website.





Picture 3. The example of Farm Animals Flashcards

The teacher also uses a song video for warming up activity in order to support teacher in activating students' knowledge about the topic. The song video can be downloaded on YouTube at channel Fox Pail and click the key "Old McDonald had a farm". To play this video teacher needs a laptop, speakers, and projector to help teacher showing the video. Besides in using this game, teacher also needs to prepare a stopwatch. The teacher can use her/his mobile phone stopwatch for counting the time limit in playing the game.



Picture 4. Projector, Laptop, Speakers, and Stopwatch

2. The Implementation Karuta Games in Teaching Vocabulary

There are two phase in teaching vocabulary in the class namely planning and practicing. In planning phase, teacher introduces the topic that they are going to learn and mention some vocabularies should be master by students at the end of the study. In practicing phase, students have opportunity to practice the words that have been explained by the teacher.

a. Planning phase

This phase is known as pre-teaching activity where teacher do some activities tointroduces the topic they are going to learn and some vocabularies should be mastered by students at the end of the study. Teacher also explains the objectives of the lesson. At this phase students will learn and understandsome new words. For example, today they are going to learn about farm animals. Before starting to

lesson, the teacher shows the song video of farm animals titled “*Old McDonald Had A Farm*” to activate their knowledge about the topic. The video can be played twice and ask the students to follow the song. After watching the video, the teacher asks the students what kind animals that McDonal had in the farm. While the students say the name of the animals, the teacher writes them on the board. Then, the teacher ask learner to say the word that she/he pointed on the board. For example, the teacher says “*Cow*”, and then the students repeat and shout out the word.

The teacher shows the flashcard of farm animals and practices how to say the animals name in the card. The teacher needs to briefly describe about each animals to support the illustration of animals on the card. The teacher can also write the animals description in different card so at the end the students will have a task to match the flashcards of animal with the card of animals’ description. Furthermore, the teacher can mention the animal’s name and ask the students to describe the animals. The teacher needs to guide them is they are make mistake in making a simple sentence. This following activity will help students to remember the words unconsciously.

b. Practicing phase.

In this phase students have opportunity to practice the words that have been explained by teacher. This phase is also known as whilst teaching activity where students will practice the new words by using *Karutagame*. The teacher lets students know that they are going to play *Karutas* game. This game is appropriate activity to practice the vocabularies they have learned. The teacher tries to explain about the game and the rules of the game. To make it challenging, teacher tells the students that they are going to compete in team. There are following steps in using karuta game in teaching vocabulary:

First, the teacher and the students do some preparations before starting the game. They need to manage the classroom. They have to make a big space for this activity so they have to arrange the tables and chairs to the backside of the classroom. The teacher randomly spread the flashcards face up on the floor in front the class, under the board. Then, the teacher divides the students into teams. The teams should not be more than 6 in order to enable the teacher to control them. In Indonesian school, one class contain of 20 until 25 students. Therefore, the teacher should divide them into 4 teams that contain 5 or 6 students. Each team should have a name, for example team Superman, team Spiderman, team Boiboboy, and team Batman. The students stand a little far away from the cards around 2 meters.

Second, the teacher demonstrates how to play the game with two students as volunteer while the other students pay attention how to play. The teacher holds some cards that contain of animal description and read one of its characteristics. However, the teacher can make these description cards or she/he is confident to describe the animals orally without using the description cards. If the students already guess what the animal is, she/he runs to the cards that spread on the floor, snap the right card and take the card. The first hand that snaps the right card is allowed to take the card.

Third, after the students understand how to play the game, the teacher guides the students to start the game. The teacher let the students know that they will

competewith the other team to collect the right card. The game will be started when the time is already set up. Each team line up neatly and four students who stand in the first line are nominated to be the first runner. They will says to the teacher, "Hello, tell me about yourself." Then the teacher says. "I eat the grass. I run so fast." The teacher is allowed to make some body movement or gesturing the sentences they said in order to make them get the point of the animal description. If the students can guess what animal that the teacher means, they may run to the card, snap the card and take the card with her/him. Student who takes the right card will be the winner. If there is a student put the wrong card, he/she has to take the card to the floor and the team will lose one point.

Teacher takes note the score for each team. When the teacher says "The time is up", they have to stop the game. The team who collect more farm animals' flashcards is the winner. They will get a reward. The team who is losing will get a punishment to sing a song in English and dancing in front of the class. Meanwhile, during the game, teacher has to make sure that all students involve and participate in the game. It is suggested that teacher gives compliment for every students who take the right animal's flashcard such as *very good, excellent, smart, clever, amazing, and so on*. The teacher also takes note for every mistake students made in guessing the words. Later, the teacher may discuss about the mistake with the students. The point in this game is not in guessing the right words, but how much the students made the wrong guessed. After the game is finished, the teacher can lead students doing discussion about the game and reviewing the game to see their opinion about the game.

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

Vocabulary is one of language component that contain a word or phrase that have a meaning. Teaching vocabulary is very important to students in learning a foreign language. By having many vocabularies of the target language, students will be able to communicate using the target language and they will also good in learning the four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Teaching vocabulary to young learner is not an easy task. Due to young learners' characteristic; like to play, have short attention so they easily get bored, and cannot control their own thoughts; teacher should be creative in choosing the appropriate media or technique in teaching vocabulary to young learners. The best way to teach vocabulary to young learners, especially elementary school students, is by using a game. It can help teacher to deliver meaning of word to the students in interesting and fun way. *Karutagame* is a technique that is suitable to teach vocabulary to elementary school students because of their characteristics that like to learn by playing.

Karutagame is a Japanese game that similar to snap game where there are two cards; first is the pictures with word, and second card is the description of the picture. The students have to find the matching card that has been described by teacher. The students have to snap the card and take the card with him/her. Based on the implementation of the game in chapter three, this is the variation of how to play the *Karutagame*. The writer tries to combine the game with guessing and

gesture the word activity to make the meaning delivered more to the students. This game helps teachers to grasp young learners' attention for the rules which involving competition between them and using time limit to force them quickly to get many right cards. It also help the teachers to know how many vocabularies that the learners could remember.

2. Suggestion

Based on the conclusion above, the writer suggests to the English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learner to have more knowledge, information, and skills. They are demanded to be up to date, so that they can design a classroom activity in teaching vocabulary. Furthermore, English teachers should have a good understanding about, young learners' needs, young learners' cognitive characteristics based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, so the teacher can create the classroom activity or media that is appropriate with young learners' cognitive developments.

In addition, the teachers should encourage themselves to create new and creative ways of teaching by using various media, or techniques that can be used in classroom. Using game is best way to teach vocabulary to young learners, because they like learning by playing. One of best game can used in teaching vocabularies is *Karutagame*. *Karutagame* is a card game that is best used in practicing new vocabulary items. Teacher should also be able to modify the game rules based on students' need or level. Through this game, the students may enrich and expand their vocabulary, and also the game is able to attract the learners' interest since there is competition in game. Therefore, the elementary students as young learners will enjoy the learning process in the classroom.

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