

# ENHANCING STUDENT'S VOCABULARY BY USING JUMBLED-LETTER GAME IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## Abstrak

This paper aims at discussing the ways to enhance student's vocabulary by using jumbled-letter. For some language teachers, teaching vocabulary is challenging, especially in English Language Teaching classroom. Nowadays, the teacher should provide a vocabulary teaching which avoiding vocabulary list memorization or vocabulary translation. Besides, the teacher also should consider about the students' different ability to master vocabulary. Some language students may master new vocabulary faster than others and some of them may find many difficulties to master new vocabulary. On the other side, some students may master or memorize some vocabulary but they cannot spell the word correctly.

*Key words: picture word inductive model, self-efficacy, writing skill, descriptive text*

## A. Background

For some language teachers, teaching vocabulary is challenging, especially in English Language Teaching classroom. Nowadays, the teacher should provide a vocabulary teaching which avoiding vocabulary list memorization or vocabulary translation. Besides, the teacher also should consider about the students' different ability to master vocabulary. Some language students may master new vocabulary faster than others and some of them may find many difficulties to master new vocabulary. On the other side, some students may master or memorize some vocabulary but they cannot spell the word correctly.

Although teaching vocabulary is now less emphasized due to communicative approach in language teaching, it cannot be neglected that without having a big scope of vocabulary mastery, the language learner would face some obstacles to master the language learned. Vocabulary is one of the components of language that may help language learner acquire the target language. Due to this condition, the teacher should find appropriate methods or

techniques to teach vocabulary to the students.

Apparently, there are so many ways to teach vocabulary. In conventional teaching, some teachers usually give a list of vocabulary to be memorized or give a list of vocabulary which uses both native and target language (L2). But, it is assumed that this way of vocabulary teaching method burdens the language students with a list of unused vocabulary memorization. It is because the students only focus on memorizing the vocabulary without knowing appropriately how and when to use the vocabulary in daily speaking. Another way to teach vocabulary that had been proposed by some language teachers is using language games. Language games are kind of games used to help both teacher and learner to teach and learn the target language. It is believed that by applying language games in language teaching, especially in vocabulary teaching, it may improve the students' ability to acquire the language.

It has been showed that language games have advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways. First,

language games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. Second, language games usually involve friendly competition and they keep students interested. These create the motivation for students to get involved and participate actively in the learning activities. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way (Huyen and Nga, 2003).

One of the language games that can be used to teach vocabulary to language learner is Jumbled-Letter Game. Jumbled-Letter Game is a language game that requires the learner to arrange the alphabet letter into specific word in target language which is asked by the teacher. By using this kind of language game, teacher can avoid memorizing list of vocabulary and the students may master vocabulary faster. One of the advantages of Jumbled-Letter Game is it can be applied for any language levels as long as the language teaching requires the students to master vocabulary. In addition, the use of Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary may overcome the students' difficulty to arrange the correct word spelling.

The purpose of this article is to discuss about the use of Jumbled-Letter Game in vocabulary teaching in English Language Teaching Classroom. The underlying theories about language game and the application of this game in classroom will be provided later.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. Language Games**

#### **a. The Concept of Language Games in Language Teaching**

There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature, and if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways

of doing this is through language games.

According to Wittgeinstein (as cited by Xanthos, 2006) language games refer to games which enable language learner to learn the language. It means that the learner may use certain games as media to learn language. Cross (1992) and Martin (2000) said that language games are effective teaching tools and have many positive aspects, such as creating a relaxed, friendly, and cooperative environment. While Mc Cabe (1992) defined language game is an activity to be repeated by two or more player in language teaching. The repetition enable students to communicate effectively since playing language games will help children develop their language learning and thought.

Ersoz (2000) said that language games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The students want to take part and in order to do so they must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or information.

Then, Uberman (2008) stated that language games can be used to recall and revise language materials in a pleasant, entertaining way. Even if games resulted only in noise and entertained students, they are still worth paying attention to and implementing in the classroom since they motivate students, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency.

Based on some general concepts about language games above, it can be said that using language game in

language teaching is appropriate one. It can be used for all language skills and components, includes vocabulary teaching.

### **b. How and When to Use Language Games in Language Classroom**

There is one thing that should be considered by language teachers whenever they want to apply language games in classroom, that is they should understand how and when language games are appropriate to be used. It is needed to be remembered that not all of language classroom situations are appropriate to use language games, since a high frequency of using language games may lead the students to indiscipline and “addicted”, or they lead the students to boredom.

If a teacher plans a language game, it is crucial to explain the rationale of the game to the students in the class, no matter what. For example, if a teacher wants to employ a short, simple hangman or hotseat game, the teacher should swiftly - but very clearly - inform the students that this game will help them with spelling, get their brains focused on recognizing the shape and structure of new words, and will facilitate their learning of new vocabulary.

Yearin (2012) added that to make sure the students are aware of the learning benefits of the activity, preparing such an explanation will also help teachers to make sure that they know precisely why they are spending time on the game in the lesson in the first place. Such explanations are absolutely vital, because they satisfy the more serious learner who can feel pressured by game time, they make sure the weaker students understand that this isn't a waste of time and also enable all of the students to comprehend that

the teacher is playing for an explicit reason, has planned the game to enhance their learning, and is not just wasting time by adding a fun element to the lesson.

According to Cervantes (2009), there are some suggestions that should be wisely considered by language teacher before planning a language game:

1. Teacher needs to consider the appropriate game for specific class needs and objectives.
2. Teacher needs to select a game that will include many students and make them work continuously.
3. Teacher needs to consider about the size and the amount of the students in the classroom, whether they may work individually, in pair or in group.
4. Teacher should determine the time allocation of the game. It is need to remember that language game is not the only one activity during teaching and learning process
5. Teacher needs to take such a note about whether the language game is appropriate to be applied in classroom, whether the students enjoy it or not, whether this language game is likely to play again in the classroom, etc.

## **2. Jumbled-Letter Game in Vocabulary Teaching in ELT**

### **a. Jumbled-Letter Game**

Jumbled-Letter Game is a kind of language game that is used to teach or to learn vocabulary in language learning, especially in English language teaching. The main activity of this game is the students arrange the new words or vocabulary from jumbled-alphabet letter in the target language. The teacher mentions specific words in native language and then the students arrange the word mentioned in the target language by using alphabet letter. The students are only given limited time to arrange the

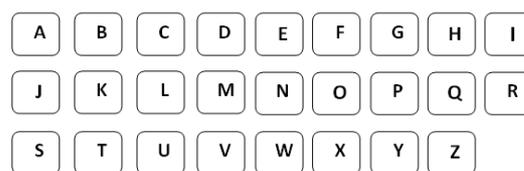
word so that they should arrange it as quickly as possible.

The purpose of this game is to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Besides, it may improve students' memory of vocabulary. The students will easily recall the new vocabulary in the target language and spell it in the right order and letter.

#### b. Jumbled-Letter Game Preparation

There are several things that a teacher needs to prepare before using Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary. This preparation will help the teacher to design and to use the language game smoothly in the classroom.

1. Teacher should consider about how and when it is appropriate to use language game as had been mention above.
2. Teacher should choose or select vocabulary material to be taught to the students and how much new vocabulary will be given to the students. For instance, a teacher will teach elementary students in grade of five. One of the material relate to vocabulary teaching is about "Animal". Then, the teacher selects the name of the animals and how many animals that will be taught later on. Teacher may decide he/she will only give ten names of the animals, such as snake, bird, crocodile, rabbit, turtle, buffalo, horse, roaster, butterfly and monkey.
3. Teacher prepares some pieces of small paper in size 1,5 cm x 1,5 cm as much as the amount of alphabet letter, that is 26 pieces. (teacher may prepare more pieces of paper just in case of consonant or vocal alphabet that might be appear more than once in a specific word, e.g crocodile.)
4. Teacher writes down a letter of alphabet for each of the small paper (picture 1).



Picture 1. Letter on the paper

5. Teacher counts the students in the classroom and then decides whether the game is done individually, in pair, or in group. If the amount of the students in a classroom is 20 students and the teacher wants the students work individually, it means that the teacher should prepare 20 sets of alphabet letter papers (step 4). If the teacher wants the students work in pair, it means that the teacher should prepare 10 sets of alphabet letter papers. If the teacher wants the students to work in group consists of 4 students, the teacher should prepare 5 sets of alphabet letter and so on, and so on. (in case of limited time and preparation, teacher may order students to prepare their own alphabet letter papers after explaining how to prepare it or showing an example of the alphabet letter papers set).
6. Teacher prepares a note to write students' achievement after using the Jumbled-Letter game.

After doing the preparation above, the teacher is ready to use the game in classroom.

#### c. Steps and Application of Jumbled-Letter Game in Vocabulary Teaching

A teacher who wants to use Jumbled-Letter game should know that the steps, application and techniques to apply this game is flexible and can be modified. It depends on the situation in the classroom and teacher's method of teaching. The following is a kind of

steps to apply Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary about animal to elementary students.

1. Teacher greets the students and introduce the new material that is about “Animal”
2. Teacher explains the material first by using his/her own method. He/she may use media such as pictures or any visual aids to teach the students about animal and its name. for instance, teacher teaches 10 new vocabulary about animals name. (the method of teaching the new material may be vary depends on the teacher)
3. Teacher mentions and may write down the name of the animals in the board. The teacher may use the native language of the animal first and then mention the name of the animal in the target language. (The method of teaching the new material may be vary depends on the teacher)

e.g.



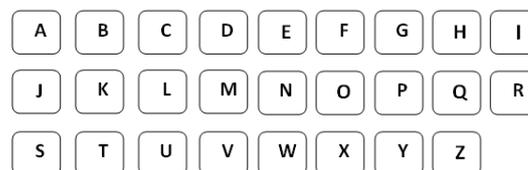
Picture 2. Example

And so on. The teacher has to make sure that the students have known

about the name of the animal in target language (English).

4. Teacher asks the students to write down the name of animal in their notebook. The purpose is to make the students know about the word spelling, so that they just recall their memory about word spelling in Jumbled-Letter game.
5. Teacher explains that they are going to have a game named “Jumble-Letter Game” to increase their ability to master new vocabulary. Teacher explain the purpose of the game and then distributes the alphabet letter paper set to the students after deciding whether they should work individually, in pair or in group. (students may have their own alphabet letter set)
6. Teacher asks the students to arrange the small paper alphabetically on their desk in order to help them to select the letter they are going to choose later easily.

e.g.



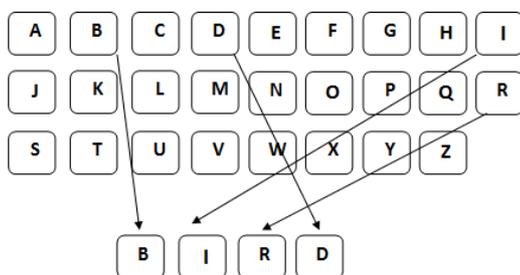
Picture 3. Letter to be selected

7. Teacher explains the procedure of the game. Firstly, teacher will mention the name of the animal in native language. Second, the student should arrange the name of the animal mentioned in the target language in correct spelling by using the alphabet letter papers. Third, teacher explains that the time to arrange the words is limited, around 5-10 seconds. The easier the words are, the shorter the times are. So, the students should arrange the words as quickly as possible. When the time is up, the students are forbidden to continue their work, even prohibited to touch

the alphabet letter papers. They should show their word arrangement to the teacher.

e.g.1

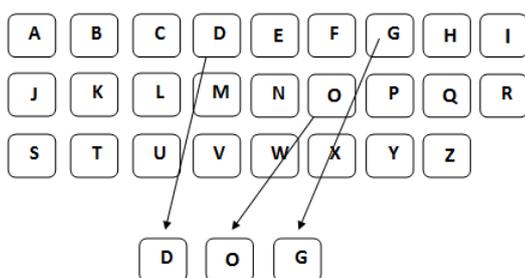
the teacher mentions “burung”, then the students have to arrange the English word of “burung” by taking the letter one by one from the alphabet letter papers to become “Bird”. Then, teacher begins to count the time “one... two... three... four..... and five! Stop!” None of the students continue their work and they have to show their arrangement to the teacher.



Picture 4. Model

e.g.2

the teacher mentions “anjing”, then the students have to arrange the English word of “anjing” by taking the letter one by one from the alphabet letter papers to become “dog”. The teacher begins to count the time “one... two... three... four... and five! Stop!” None of the students continue their work and they have to show their arrangement to the teacher.



Picture 5. Model 2

And so on. Teacher repeats this step several times until all of the new vocabulary had been arranged by the

students. If there are ten new vocabularies, it means that there are ten native words mentioned by the teacher and ten target words arranged by the students,

8. Teacher should look at the students-words-arrangement and evaluate whether the words arranged are correct or not. Teacher may repeat the step 7 until all of the students can arrange all the words correctly.
9. Teacher may develop or modify the steps above based on class situation. For instance, the game begins with group work. If all of the group can arrange the word correctly, then the teacher ask the students to do the game with their pairs. If they successfully arrange the words in pair, it is time for them to work individually. So, all of the students have a chance to master vocabulary, memorizing vocabulary and knowing the correct spelling of the vocabulary learned.
10. The Jumbled-Letter Game will be more interesting if it is competitive. It means that the teacher may ask the students to compete between them about who will be the first one that can arrange the words in target language correctly. For instance, the teacher divides the students into group consist of 3 students. Then, the teacher writes down the name of each group in the board. For group that can arrange the word faster and correctly in the allocated time, they will be given mark “100”. But for groups who cannot arrange the word correctly or have not finished their arrangement in allocated time, they will get “-50”.

d. The Advantages of Using Jumbled-Letter Game in Vocabulary Teaching

As other language games, Jumbled-Letter game has advantages and strengths to be applied in the classroom. Here are the advantages of using Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary:

1. Reducing students' anxiety, obstacles and difficulties during learning new vocabulary
2. Memorizing the new vocabulary and the correct spelling in a fun and entertaining ways.
3. Can be applied for all language levels related to vocabulary teaching
4. Overcoming the students' difficulty to arrange the correct word spelling
5. Can be applied for all language materials related to vocabulary teaching
6. Easy, cheap and challenging
7. Can be applied at home (students' independent learning)
8. Can be combined with other teaching methods and techniques
9. Flexible steps and applications
10. Meaningful, amusing and interesting
11. Increasing and encouraging students' cooperation and friendly competition
12. Encouraging shy students to participate actively
13. Providing students' self evaluation
14. Students centered.

### C. Conclusion

Jumbled-Letter game is a kind of language games that is appropriate to be applied in vocabulary teaching. It emphasizes the students' vocabulary learning in a fun and entertaining ways. The students are able to master the vocabulary faster and even may spell the words correctly. In conclusion, learning vocabulary through games is one of effective and interesting way that can be applied in any classrooms. It is suggested that games are used not only for mere fun, but more importantly, for the useful practice and review of language lessons, thus leading toward the goal of improving learners' communicative competence.

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