IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY USING CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the increase in students' mastery of English vocabulary using crosswords and to find out what are the effects of using crosswords in the learning process. This research uses classroom action research methods. Researchers conducted research in one of the junior high schools in Cimahi and the subjects in this study consisted of 34 students. For data collection researchers used observation, interviews and tests, to find out whether there was progress from students in improving their mastery of English vocabulary. This research was carried out in two cycles. In the first cycle the average value of students 58.97 and categorized as still very low or bad. Then the researchers proceed to the second cycle by using the steps in classroom action research and the researcher is more focused on attracting students' attention to focus on learning and explaining the instructions for working on crosswords. Therefore in the second cycle, the average value of students increased to 76.02 and the category is good. This shows that there is an increase in the mastery of English vocabulary after implementing crossword puzzle games in the learning process in the classroom.

Keywords: Improving, Vocabulary mastery, Crossword puzzle

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the abilities that every human being has to have to communicate. One of the languages that must be learned is English because English is an international language and has become a global language that is taught throughout the world including Indonesia. Shelagh Rixon in Bland (2015) in (Cahyati et al., 2019) reports that English was being taught at every younger ages, putting pressure on educational resources across the world. In learning English, of course we must master the vocabulary because vocabulary is included in important aspects of English, with vocabulary knowledge we can easily understand, read texts in English, speak words in English, listen to even write in languages English .

Vocabulary is a very important aspect in learning a foreign language. According to (Ur, 1996) Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as words that we teach in foreign languages. However, new vocabulary items may be more than one word: for example, the post office and mother-in-law, consisting of two or three words but expressing one idea. Freeman (2000:29) in (Anwar & Efransyah, 2018) said that "vocabulary is emphasized over grammar although work on all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) occurs from the start oral communication is a seen a basic". In addition, (Meyer & Schmitt, 2002) The mechanism of vocabulary learning is still a mystery, but one thing we can be sure of is that words are not obtained instantly, at least not for adult second language learners. This means that we cannot get or know vocabulary instantly without the effort of learning to understand vocabulary. Hornby says "Mastery is great knowledge about understanding of a particular thing" (Hasibuan et al., 2018). By understanding English words students can easily exchange information in English, understanding English

words in reading texts can even easily do English assignments. However, students' difficulty in learning even remembering English vocabulary becomes a problem for students to achieve the teaching and learning targets they want.

To overcome these difficulties, the teacher's job at school is that teachers must find ways to make teaching and learning in class fun so that students do not feel bored to learn English. The teacher must teach students by providing new vocabulary for each English learning, the teacher must provide an introduction to daily vocabulary with the aim of increasing students' vocabulary mastery. When researchers conducted research at one of the junior high schools in Cimahi, the problem of seventh grade students in junior high schools was that it was very difficult for students to understand English texts because they did not understand the meaning of words in English.

One way to make learning fun is to use games as a teaching method so that students feel happy learning in class. Researchers apply word games in the teaching and learning process in class to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Crosswords can train students to remember words and their meanings, because crosswords are a type of game that is related to the formation and discovery of words. Crossword puzzles are one method that can be used in learning English specifically in improving students' vocabulary mastery. Zaini, Munthe, and Aryani (2008: 71) in (Muzdalifah, 2018) argue that the Crossword Puzzle strategy is appropriate learning strategy without losing the ongoing learning essence. Even this strategy can involve the active participation of learners during the class. Futhermore, Sabiqoh (2016) in (Lestari et al., 2018) states that crossword puzzle is effective teaching tool of terminology, definition, spelling, and pairing key concepts with related names, resulting in greater retention and memorization of facts. By applying crossword puzzles to the teaching and learning process students can learn and can add insights into English vocabulary little by little.

METHOD

This research was conducted at a junior high school in Cimahi. The subjects of this study were eighth grade students consisting of 34 students, 17 female students and 17 male students. The method in this study uses the classroom action research (CAR) method. According to (Burns, 2009) Action Research is part of a broad movement that has taken place in education in general for some time. This is related to the idea of 'reflective practice' and 'teacher as a researcher'. AR involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context. Action research is research conducted in class by course teachers, especially with the aim of solving problems or improving the learning process. The teacher identifies the problem or area they want to improve and is based on the theory or experience or hypothesis that they think of as intervention.

According to (Elliott, 1991.) Action research is 'the study of social situations with a view to improving the quality of actions in them'. This simple definition directs attention to one of the most important motives for conducting action research. It lies in the willingness to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which teachers and students work in schools. Researchers used data collection techniques through interviews, observation and tests. In this study researchers used qualitative and quantitative techniques. According to (King, 1991) Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Meanwhile, Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. for qualitative researchers used to analyze data from interviews and observations. Whereas quantitative researchers use to measure and compare results from pre-test and post-test. The

purpose of using these two techniques is to find out whether there is an increase in students' vocabulary mastery learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After conducting research to improve students' vocabulary mastery using crossword puzzles, the researcher wants to present the results obtained during class action research. Researchers concluded that the students' English scores were very low, especially in their vocabulary mastery. From the pre-test results it can be seen that students' mastery of English vocabulary is still very low. To improve students' vocabulary mastery, this research was conducted in two cycles. Data collection tool is a student worksheet, from the student worksheet the researcher can see the correct answer after that, data from the student worksheet is calculated using the average score of all students. To calculate student results, researchers used the average score formula. All individual grades are added and divided by the number of students in the class.

$$N = \frac{\text{total points of correct answers}}{34 \text{ students}} \times 100$$

Note : N = Individual score

$$M = \frac{\Sigma x}{S}$$

Note :   M   = mean score
           Σ x   = sum of individual score
           S   = number of students

Cycle 1
Planning

Before starting the action of learning in class, after researchers know what are the difficulties of students in learning at this stage the researcher makes lesson plans, teaching materials for use in the classroom, student worksheets. In this stage the learning plan is very important because it is a plan to make efforts to improve students' vocabulary mastery and how to make students not feel bored in the classroom.

Acting

In this stage, researchers conduct learning activities in class in accordance with what has been arranged in the learning plan, first the teacher enters the class greeting students, checking student attendance then the teacher gives a little motivation to students and provokes students with questions to find out the extent of student knowledge about vocabulary. Then the teacher explains a little about what they will learn, namely writing and interpreting English vocabulary.

Next, the teacher distributes student worksheets or exercises to students to find out whether they can understand or not. In student worksheets that contain crosswords, many of them ask how to fill in the letters in the Box, then the teacher explains that they must first read the keywords that have been provided, they must understand the meaning of these keywords and then find the right words to fill in the empty boxes. After researchers examine the work of students almost all students can not answer and complete words correctly and correctly. After the teacher explains again how to find answers to fill in the crossword puzzle, only 10 out of 34 students can understand and fill in the crossword correctly.

Observing

While the researcher is conducting a teaching and learning process in class, Collaborators observe the learning process using crossword puzzle, how the effects of crossword puzzle for students. Using crossword puzzle in the learning process it can be seen that students experience less progress than before, students can be active in class and can even follow the teacher's instructions. The teacher and collaborator discuss the results of the learning activities in the first cycle and check each student's answers. Following are the results of each student:

Table 1. The Result of Students' Individual Score in the First cycle

No	Students' Name Code	Score
1	AAG	55
2	AMK	80
3	AH	65
4	AAE	60
5	ANK	40
6	AP	50
7	APA	70
8	ARBS	50
9	DP	55
10	DA	50
11	GS	45
12	IRA	65
13	KAA	50
14	LH	65
15	LPH	70
16	MAA	60
17	MRDK	65
18	MDA	40
19	MFF	50
20	MJIS	65
21	NR	55
22	NPM	75
23	PAP	80
24	PNF	50
25	RR	80
26	SA	65

27	SPR	50
28	TN	60
29	TM	55
30	TNY	70
31	TB	45
32	TIK	60
33	VMS	50
34	ZMP	60

Then students mean score in the first cycle was:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma N}{S} = \frac{2005}{34} = 58.97$$

From the table above it can be seen that the average value of students is 58.97 from the results it can be said that it is still low and unsatisfactory because it does not meet the school's (Minimum completeness criteria) which is 70 for English grades. There are some problems that make students' grades low, namely students are still difficult to understand the key words to answer crossword puzzles, some students still have difficulty memorizing and remembering vocabulary in English, when the teacher explains some students only choose to be busy themselves, there are students who do not dare to ask the meaning of vocabulary that is unknown, even other students are afraid to answer the questions asked by the teacher.

Reflecting

Based on the results of observations that have been carried out, at this stage the teacher can know and learn what deficiencies occur during learning so that there are still many students who have low grades and are still lacking in mastering English vocabulary. Because the results of observation of student scores are still low, therefore in the next cycle the teacher must arrange and correct any deficiencies that occur in the first cycle.

1. The teacher when entering the class before starting the learning process the teacher first prepares students to learn to focus on what they are going to learn.

2. The teacher must explain again how to do the crossword puzzle and help students understand the keywords that have been provided, and the teacher should not only focus on the game but must provide the keywords needed by students.

3. The teacher must help students memorize and remember vocabulary they don't know yet.

4. When explaining the teacher must focus on any student who has not paid attention to his goals so that all students can understand what is explained by the teacher.

5. The teacher must monitor each student while working on their assignments and be ready to help if there are students who have difficulties.

6. The teacher must tell students not to be embarrassed to ask the teacher what they don't understand so that when the teacher asks a question they can easily answer the question.

Cycle 2

Planning

Based on the results of reflection in cycle one, researchers found several problems, therefore researchers planned to solve problems in cycle one by improving the learning plan. The researcher plans to change the learning activities in the section giving a crossword worksheet, the researcher will not only focus on how students fill in the crossword puzzles but the researcher will ask students to dare to write answers in front of the class otherwise the researcher will teach students to remember and understand vocabulary so that students do not easily forget the vocabulary that has been taught. The teacher explains the key words to answer the crossword by paying attention to each student so that students focus on what is explained by the teacher and students will be directed to learn to find their own answers based on their knowledge properly and correctly and to help students remember the vocabulary that has been taught.

Acting

In this second cycle activity the teacher reviews what they have learned in the previous meeting, then the teacher introduces some new vocabulary words, then students learn to pronounce words correctly and learn to understand the meaning of words. The teacher attracts the attention of students by giving questions one by one for each student. Then the teacher gives back the student worksheets in the form of crosswords. However, in this activity the teacher explains to students how to fill in crosswords. The teacher explained before that students must understand the meaning of the keywords provided so students can easily find answers based on their own knowledge. The teacher also explains to students to dare to ask if there are words that they do not know yet so that the teacher can help solve one student's question by explaining and searching for answers together with the aim that not only one student knows the meaning but all students can know the meaning of the word together. In this activity the teacher also guides students by making a crossword game not only filling in the answers in the student worksheet, but students must actively find answers and run to the front of the class to answer questions. At the end of the teacher's learning with students recapitulate what they have learned and the teacher motivates students to continue to learn a lot about new vocabulary and also understand its meaning so that students' mastery of vocabulary will be more developed.

Observing

In the activities that researchers carried out in the second cycle, researchers saw developments with students. The students seemed to focus more attention when the teacher explained, many students had dared to ask questions, students were active in answering questions posed by the teacher and students could do the assignments well. After the teacher re-observes the teacher checks the students' answers and the teacher also gives a score. Following are the grades of each student in this second cycle:

Table 2. The Result of Students' Individual Score in the Second cycle

No	Students' Name Code	Score
1	AAG	70
2	AMK	90
3	AH	75
4	AAE	70
5	ANK	60
6	AP	65
7	APA	85
8	ARBS	70
9	DP	75

10	DA	80
11	GS	70
12	IRA	85
13	KAA	80
14	LH	75
15	LPH	90
16	MAA	75
17	MRDK	70
18	MDA	70
19	MFF	75
20	MJIS	80
21	NR	85
22	NPM	80
23	PAP	95
24	PNF	65
25	RR	85
26	SA	70
27	SPR	75
28	TN	75
29	TM	80
30	TNY	85
31	TB	60
32	TIK	70
33	VMS	70
34	ZMP	80

Then students' mean score in the second cycle was:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma N}{S} = \frac{2585}{34} = 76.02$$

The average score of students is 76.02 and the grade has fulfilled the requirements included in either category. The teacher concludes that this second cycle has been successful because the student's average grade has increased and the results are satisfying.

Reflecting

Based on the results of observations, after researchers saw the students' grades in the second cycle the researchers concluded that the second cycle had succeeded in increasing student grades. Problems found in the first cycle were successfully resolved in the second cycle and with satisfying results. Researchers see that students' vocabulary mastery increases, students feel happy learning vocabulary using crossword puzzles. In this second cycle students look more active in class so that the learning process in the classroom becomes effective. That way, because the results in the second cycle have improved and the results are satisfying, the researchers decided to stop the cycle.

Discussion

In increasing students' vocabulary mastery, researchers used classroom action research conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of four stages: planning, action, observation and

reflection. The planning stage is the stage to prepare how learning will be done in class to solve existing problems with students. Then the acting stage is the stage carried out during the teaching and learning process at the acting stage the researcher carries out learning activities in accordance with what the researcher has planned. Next, the observing stage at this stage collaborators observe the learning process in class and observe what happens in class and take notes. And the last is the reflection stage at this stage the researcher can find out how learning has been done whether it has succeeded in solving the problem or not, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of the researchers during the learning process. Data in this study were collected from student exercises or student worksheets and notes.

In the first cycle, researchers have not succeeded in solving existing problems because they can be seen from the results or grades of students who have not been satisfactory. The problem that occurred in this first cycle was the situation in the classroom which was still noisy, many students who were just busy themselves did not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, many did not understand how to do crossword puzzles because they did not understand words in English. Therefore, the researcher decided to proceed to the second cycle. Before the second cycle began the researchers devised a plan so that the problems in the first cycle did not occur again in the second cycle. The teacher makes the learning process not only focus on crosswords, but the teacher teaches some new vocabulary to students and teaches how to pronounce correctly repeatedly with the aim that students do not easily forget. The teacher also attracts students' attention by having students compete to find answers according to their own knowledge. The researcher also explained the instructions to answer the crossword and asked students not to be embarrassed to ask if there were new words they did not know yet. In the second cycle students become more active learning in class because the teacher and students together solve the existing problems. After the teacher observes all the students' grades, the teacher decides to stop the cycle because the student results show that there are many satisfactory improvements and it can be said that the second cycle has succeeded in increasing students' vocabulary mastery so that the use of crosswords has succeeded in increasing students' vocabulary mastery

CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted by researchers and based on the results discussed by researchers, it can be concluded that the mastery of student vocabulary has increased in the second cycle. This can be seen from the average value of students in the previous cycle only only 58.97 but after researchers increased learning activities in the second cycle the average score of students increased to 76.02.

The researcher acknowledged that it was not easy to teach English vocabulary to the eighth grade junior high school students, because many students did not like English lessons, they did not understand words in English and students felt bored being in class. Knowing this, the researchers applied the crossword puzzle game in learning to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Crosswords are very influential in the learning process because students become more active in class and they do not feel bored learning English, students can also remember the words taught and they can learn how to pronounce them well. From this statement it can be concluded that crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary mastery and crossword games provide a good influence on students in learning.

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