

THE USE OF WORD SEARCH PUZZLES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

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Abstract- *This research purposed to describe the students' improvement in vocabulary by using word search puzzles. This was classroom action research with two cycles conducted on the first semester students of Bina Sarana Informatika Pontianak University consisting of 40 students. This was the classroom action research. Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting were conducted in each cycle. Field notes, observation checklists, interviews, and individual tests were used as the tools to collect the data. Qualitative and quantitative analysis would be used to analyze the data. The finding of this research showed that the use of word search puzzles could build the students' motivation and decrease students' reluctance to find a new vocabulary. It also experienced students to identify the word which allowed the students to have a better understanding of vocabulary. The word search puzzle led the students to build brains by finding the hidden word and improving vocabulary mastery. It was an effective way for the teacher in teaching vocabulary.*

Keywords: *improve, vocabulary, word search puzzles*

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the subjects that should be learned at every education level, especially in Indonesia. It is not easy to learn English for students since English is not their first language. There are many aspects of English to be mastered, and one of them is vocabulary. Vocabulary is the collection of words. Words are used for communication. People can communicate by reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Vocabulary is an important part of language proficiency since it forms a large part of how well students talk, listen, read, and write (Al-Furqon, 2017, P.102). For second language learners, vocabulary is crucial because it enables them to communicate ideas clearly both orally and in writing. Thus, students need to learn and improve their vocabulary. The more students master the vocabulary, the better the communication experience will be.

During the teaching and learning process, the researchers found the problem of limited mastery of English vocabulary experienced by students since the English words

are not familiar. Many students are reluctant to express their ideas, minds, feelings, and experience. They had the difficulty in pronouncing the words. Reading, writing, and translating the words, also remembering the words that had been memorized. So, the teaching and learning situation has not gotten good feedback. According to the problem above, the teacher tries to use the word search puzzle to help students improve their vocabulary mastery. The word search puzzles contain hidden words in the grid and requires students to be able to identify each word. Besides, it also allows the students to sharpen their brains by analyzing, finding, and marking the words inside the box. The purpose of this research is to describe how well the use of word search puzzles can improve students' vocabulary.

Vocabulary is an important component when people want to express their thoughts and ideas. Vocabulary also means the group of words that has a meaning. Vocabulary is very important for understanding and also as a form of expression of thoughts and ideas that we get (Silverman & Hartranft, 2015). Nurhalimah (2020, p.6) defines words as signs on symbols for ideas. The more words we learn, the more idea we should have. It allows people to express their ideas more effectively. Moreover, Hasan (2018, p.79) argues that vocabulary is one of the linguistic aspects that impress communicative ability. It can be said that vocabulary is an important aspect for having communication.

Learning vocabulary as a foreign language is not easy. The teacher of English should have the creativity to create an efficient and effective technique for teaching vocabulary. Besides, the teacher should establish the condition which makes teaching vocabulary possible. Realizing how important was vocabulary to build up the experience of the students in communication, teachers should provide the students with rich exciting exercises which are expected to help in improving their ability in English communication. To make students motivated and enjoyable to study vocabulary, the teacher should be creative in delivering material. The teacher should use varieties strategies in teaching vocabulary. One of the strategies that can be used by the teacher is using media to support the teaching-learning process. In this research, the researcher tried to use a word search puzzles to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Word Search Puzzle is a game that contains a table grid in the form of a square, in which the grid table contains hidden vocabulary that can be found either horizontally or vertically. The letters are arranged in

a grid to hide hidden words that are written in various directions in word search puzzles (Ersoz, 2000, P.27). Word puzzles help increase memory, vocabulary, and problem-solving skills and provide a great mental workout (Timmerman, 2013, P.12). According to Salingkat (2018, P.11), the use of word search games could improve vocabulary. It led to some advantages such as the students enjoying the teaching and learning process because they could learn with other teaching methods. Then, the students could identify words by finding the hidden word. It created a fun learning for students. Students who are learning English might avoid getting bored by using word search puzzles since it developed into critical and engaged students (Megawati, 2019, P.12)

Bringing word search puzzle into the classroom led to the procedures proposed by Shutterland (2009) and Munawarah (2013, P.8) as follow: (1) The teacher gives clear instruction to explain the word search puzzle rules. Before the game is played surely the teacher must show the rules to the students. (2) The teacher gives an example of how to play the games. (3) The students needed to focus on the teacher's instruction, so they would understand the game. (4) Teacher gives the word search games and asks the students to arrange the words. (5) Teacher gave 20 minutes to finish their work, then the students discuss it together.

In addition, Shutterland (2009, p.12) said that “word search will train students’ focus in identifying words which are hidden in the in the puzzle, exercise students’ brain and also help the students with the visual and hand-eye coordination in solving a puzzle”. Word searches had another real advantage, according to Sutherland (2009, p.12): (1) Word search puzzles preserved the brain lived. (2) Word search puzzles created vocabulary building. (3) Word search puzzles helped students to study and achieve new languages. (4) Word searches were a better way to improve spelling (5) Word search puzzles instructed our brain to recognize patterns and the competence to identify letters, faces, and all manner of objects. The students could learn with new experienced of recognizing the word and help to improve vocabulary mastery. Thus, it was possible to students to have better English communication skills.

METHODS

Research design

The method used in this research was classroom action research due to the goal of this research which was to find out the solution to improve students' vocabulary mastery. As stated by Sagor and Willian (2017, p.8) action research is represented to examine the data on one's work to help improve one's performance. Besides, Klein (2012, p.26) proposed that action research refers to a systematic study of practice arranged in a natural setting such as a school, community, or organizational setting to examine, understand, and change practice. Burns (2015, P.187) said that an action research brought positive change and improvement to the social circumstance of participant. It can be concluded that the action research was a study to see the development process of teaching and learning in solving the problem to create improvement. Kemmis & McTaggart cited in Syah (2013, p.5) The four phases in an action research research process that forms a continuing cycle or spiral of research and action: 1. Planning: a problem or issue is identified and a plan of action is developed in order to bring about improvements in specific areas of the research context. In this research, the researchers prepared the lesson plan, attribute to implement the words search puzzles, and tools for collecting the data; 2. Action: the plan is put into action over an agreed period of time. The researchers implemented the word search puzzles in the classroom based on the procedure sequentially; 3. Observation: the effects of the action are observed and data are collected. The researchers observed and started to collect the data through the tools prepared; 4. Reflection: the effects of the action are evaluated and become the basis for further cycles of research. After analyzed the data, the researchers made a consideration and correction related to progress of the implementation of word search puzzles whether it needed the next cycles or not.

Data collection

The subject of this research was the first-semester students of Bina Sarana Informatika Pontianak University consisted 40 students. The researchers were also helped by the collaborator to observe the process of teaching and learning. Observation and measurement techniques were used to collect the data. Observation checklists, field notes, interviews, and tests were tools for collecting data. The result of the observation was

recorded in the observation checklist, field note, and interview. Moreover, the objective test of the individual students' work was the measurement technique in this research.

Data analysis

Qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to analyze the data. Qualitative used to describe the process of teaching and learning was obtained from the observation checklist, field notes, and interviews. Besides, quantitative analysis was used to know the students' improvement in teaching vocabulary using word search puzzles by their mean score on the individual test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the observation and interview conducted in this research showed the students' improvement in vocabulary mastery by using word search puzzles.

Cycle 1

The first step in this research was planning. the researchers planned and prepared everything needed relating to the teaching properties, lesson plan for implementing the word search puzzle, and also the tools of collecting data such as observation checklist, field note, and test. The second step was acting. The researchers conducted the teaching and learning by implementing the word search puzzle. The researcher began to teach vocabulary and showed how Word Search Puzzle works. The researcher showed a word search puzzle and asked some students to come forward to circle the word they found. After the sequences of teaching above were done, each student was given a paper on the Word Search Puzzle. The students had to search, identify, and circle the words they found. The third is the observing stage, the researcher is helped by a collaborator to observe the activity during teaching and learning in the classroom using the observation checklist, field note report, and interview. The data showed that the teacher had good preparation for the teaching and learning process. The teacher also could implement the plan of the teaching and learning process well. The classroom atmosphere was still very passive at the beginning of learning, therefore the researchers tried to elicit answers from students by asking easy vocabulary questions. When the teacher starts asking students simple questions, they become more engaged. After the students appeared to be engaged, the teacher began the vocabulary learning by explaining the four-word classes: noun, verb,

adjective, and conjunction. However, only one student ventured to respond to the teacher's questions. The students became more interested after starting the main learning activity, which was to apply the Word search puzzle game. When students volunteer to come to the front of the class to uncover hidden words in the word search puzzle media. It showed that some students were still reluctant in finding the word because they were still afraid of making mistakes and not confident. From the interview, the students stated that it was difficult for them to answer the question since the teacher asked in English and did not give some clue because English is not their first language. The students also mentioned that they were afraid of making mistakes to search the word, and they worried about the spelling. Moreover, the students also stated that the word search puzzle activity was fun actually. They were able to learn with the new way of teaching and learning. Besides, the data was obtained from a measurement test that was conducted in the form of multiple choice which consisted of 10 items. The student's average score in cycle I was 67.69. The student's highest score was 90 and the student's lowest score was 40.

The last stage is reflecting. The researchers reflected that the result of this cycle 1 did not show a significant improvement, thus the researcher obtained some corrections: First, the students would lead with clear instruction. The teacher needed to make the students understand what would they do. Second, the teacher would help them by giving them clues to help them find the word in both languages Indonesian and English. It was also needed to extra attention to the students who got a difficulty. Third, the teacher added time to experience word search puzzles. Then, asked the students to come in the front of the class and memorize at least 10 words and discuss them together. It was hoped could build their motivation and enthusiasm with the learning provided by the teacher. Based on the correction and result above, it needed to continue the next cycle due to the purpose of this research in knowing how well the use of word search puzzles in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Cycle 2

Based on the result of the first cycle, the researcher decided to continue the learning process to the second cycle. The researchers conducted the planning stage by setting a new plan for doing the research by implementing the activities based on the correction in the latest cycle. The teaching properties, lesson plan for implementing the

word search puzzle, also tools for collecting data such as observation checklist, field note, and test were also planned by the teacher. The researchers conducted the acting stage by implementing the word search puzzle in learning vocabulary. The researcher started to teach vocabulary and explained the procedure of the Word Search Puzzle works. The researcher showed a word search puzzle and gave a clear directions and asked some students to come forward to circle the word they found. Then the students were provided with a paper on the Word Search Puzzle. The students had to search, identify, and circle the words they found while the teacher gave the clue bilingually about the word that need to find. The students were also allowed to open the dictionary to help them find the word. Furthermore, the researcher conducted the observing stage helped by a collaborator to observe the activity during teaching and learning in the classroom using the observation checklist, field note report, and interview. The data showed that the teacher had organized the learning well and could implement the word search puzzle better. Besides, it also showed that after using the word search puzzle game in the classroom, students were eager to go forward without having to wait for approval from the teacher. Students can also identify every hidden word in the media word search puzzle without the help of the teacher, and they can classify the word into the appropriate word class after they find the word. The students showed their enthusiasm since the teacher delivered the clue in finding the word hidden bilingually which made the students were being active and confident in finding the word. Besides, the teacher also put much attention to motivating students to find the word. It could be said that the cycle showed improvement.

Furthermore, from the interview, the students stated that they experienced new learning. They also could remember new words and improve their vocabulary mastery. The students mentioned that the word search puzzle was a fun way in helping them recognize and identify words better. Besides, the student's achievement in doing their measurement test in form of multiple choices consisting of 10 questions also showed an improvement. They were enjoying the test since they got much easier when the word search puzzle was implemented well. It was supported by the student's score in cycle 2 which was better than before. The student's highest score was 100 and the student's lowest score was 75. It affected the students' average score which became 82.74. Lastly, in the reflection stage, the researcher could propose that the students had improved their

vocabulary mastery by using word search puzzles. It could help them to have good progress in improving their vocabulary mastery.

The research was conducted in two cycles to improve students' vocabulary mastery by using word search puzzles. From the finding above the researcher could be said that the use of word search puzzles was an effective way in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The result showed an improvement in students. They were motivated and enthusiastic during the teaching and learning process. They got a new style of learning which allowed them to experience fun learning. The use of word search puzzles could help the students in developing brains, they were able to recognize and acquire new words. Chesy, Susilawati, and Bunau (2018, p.8) found that the use of word search puzzles improved vocabulary mastery effectively. It allowed students to learn new vocabulary, and help in practicing spelling and memorizing words. Moreover, through the word search puzzle, the students were inspired to learn and challenged to uncover every hidden word in the word search puzzle media. This persuades the researcher that the word search puzzle could improve students' learning motivation as well as their vocabulary proficiency in English. This suggests that using word search puzzles as media for teaching was useful and could boost students' interest in learning English vocabulary. Salingkat (2018) said that the word search puzzle was not only able to increase vocabulary mastery in English but it was also able to establish a pleasant condition and motivate students in learning which created the students' attitudes and motivation to learn improved positively.

Table 1.1. Students' Average Score

Cycle 1	Cycle 2
67.69	82.74

Based on the table above the students' average score improved from cycle to cycle. Furthermore, the observation also showed the improvement. The students showed the progress during teaching and learning activity using the word search puzzles. Lastly, the word search puzzle was an effective media used to teach vocabulary. It could build the students' desire to learn better to gain and improve their vocabulary mastery.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of word search puzzles in the first semester students of Bina Sarana Informatika University increased students' capacity to master English vocabulary. Word search puzzles demonstrated the learning process became more engaging, motivating, and exciting for students. After calculating the data and seeing that the average value achieved was shown significant improvement. It can be inferred that word search puzzles could assist individuals improved their English vocabulary mastery.

The teachers could use the word search puzzle as an alternative way of teaching English, especially in teaching vocabulary. It could help in solving the problem to improve the student's vocabulary mastery. For future research, the researcher suggests using more guidance and experience for students in using the word search puzzle.

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