Using Contextual Crossword Puzzle to Improve the Vocabulary Mastery of Grade VIII C Students At SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta in the Academic Year of 2016/2017

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to improve the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII C students at SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2016/2017 through contextual crossword puzzle game. This was an action research (AR) conducted in two cycles. The research subjects were 33 students of Grade VIII C at SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta. The research procedure were reconnaisance, planning, action and observation, and reflection. The data were qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were in the form of vignettes and interview transcripts while for the quantitative data were in the form of pre-test and post-test. The instruments used to collect the data were observation checklist, interviews, and testing. The analysis of the qualitative data was obtained through several steps according to Miles and Huberman (1993) while for the quantitative data was obtained through t-test. The result of the study showed that there were some improvements on students' vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from the students' mean scores and attitude towards the implemented actions during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, using contextual crossword puzzle game could improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: *contextual crossword puzzle, vocabulary.*

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Introduction

Nowadays, English has been called as an International language which means that people all over the world will know and probably use English as their second language. In this case, we know that in using English, there are four macro skills to be achieved. Those are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Most of students only think that those are the most important skills to be learnt in English. However, in the field, vocabulary also plays important role in using English.

When we are learning the language, especially English, we should understand the word known and used in the language. Then, we can apprehend what the teacher and the text said, and also how the word should be spoken and written. In regard to this, learning vocabulary also makes us know the various meaning of any kind of words related to the language. Thus, mastering vocabulary is one of crucial aspects to support those four macro skills.

As stated by Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis of how well learners speak,

listen, read, and write. The vocabulary mastery will affect someone's ability in using the language either in spoken or written form.

Wilkins in Thornbury (2002:13) also states that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. For instance, we want to write a sentence in a context such as medication. If we do not learn the vocabulary, we will find difficulties to match the words with the context used in the sentence. So, that is why it will also be difficult to obtain the other macro skills successfully if we did not learn about the vocabulary properly.

Added to this, one of the scopes of English teaching and learning in junior high schools is the ability to comprehend and produce short functional text in the form of procedure, descriptive, narrative, and recount texts (Permendiknas, 2006). That is how vocabulary contributes to comprehend and produce texts as the students have to master vocabulary well in order to make them understand and produce those kinds of texts easily.

Based on the informal observation in SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta on Tuesday, April 19th 2016, actually the researcher had an informal interview with the teacher and also an observation in 7E class. There, she found some problems in vocabulary teaching and learning process.

First, the students had a difficulty in learning the vocabulary because the teacher taught the vocabulary in isolated way which is the teacher provided the vocabulary and the meaning without any correlation with the topic or text that they learnt in certain chapter. It makes them only know the word for a short time and cannot really understand the meaning as the vocabulary meaning can be changed depends on the context or the part of speech. For example, the teacher asked the students to open certain page then ask one by one to translate the word into Bahasa Indonesia. The example word is *"leaves"*, *"leave"* in Bahasa Indonesia; it can be *"pergi"* but it also can be *"dedaunan"*. If the students know one meaning only, they will think that the word *"leaves"* means *"pergi"* in Bahasa Indonesia. When it appears in *"the leaves in the three"*, we are sure that most of students will think it twice to translate the sentence. They will think it is miswritten or it has double meanings because the context and the part of speech is different.

Second, in the learning materials, the teacher made an English learning module which is compiled from some *BUKU SEKOLAH ELEKTRONIK (BSE).* The problem is that the teacher only compile the materials without considering the context, it means that the students had to memorize and understand a lot of vocabulary in the module which can make them under pressure.

Third, in the teaching and learning process, it is always about having a discussion in some topics then doing the task. So, the students feel bored and then make some noises in the class. They have their conversation with their friends, play a

game, and so on. Meanwhile, their teacher do not really pay attention to this. She will just simply give a warning to some students who make noise then continue her explanation. It does look really inefficient.

Therefore, the researcher assumed that the students' learning vocabulary development, especially junior high school students, is somewhat causing apprehension. Thus, the researcher decided to do further action to overcome those problems by doing deeper research in this final task. Then, she conducted the second interview with the English teacher. This informal interview conducted on Friday, November 11th 2016.

The teacher said that the vocabulary teaching in SMP N 7 Yogyakarta still focused on drilling. Through the interview, the teacher said that drilling is the effective way to teach vocabulary. Because, the teacher would give the students some new words then they had to find the meaning and the pronunciation. After that, the students should memorize the vocabulary and its meaning.

Besides, it seemed that dictionary was rarely used in the teaching and learning process as the students did not really like to open the dictionary and find the meaning there.

Moreover, the teacher also specifically gave the researcher the class which has a lack of vocabulary mastery to be researched, which is 8C class. This class has a lowest score in English lesson compared with the other classes and the students there found that English was a difficult subject to be learnt. Because, there are many words to be remembered. They said that they should have to learn Javanese and Bahasa Indonesia too, that is why it makes them tired and under pressure.

Considering this condition, the researcher try to find the effective solution by finding an interesting technique which is contextual crossword puzzle. Crossword is a kind of games done by filling the blank form presented with letters forming words as the answer of the question given.

Dhand (2008: 55-56) explained different kinds of benefits for using crossword puzzles included, it is fun and can raise students' motivation, it can be easily made by the teacher and even the students themselves, encourage the use of dictionary and can be used for different types of classroom activities.

Jones (2007) also suggested that crossword puzzles also have the advantage of appealing to different learning styles. Visual learners often have strong puzzle-solving skills, and feel great satisfaction when they complete one. Auditory learners enjoy step-by-step reasoning, so they also get benefit from the sequential steps of completing a crossword. Even kinesthetic learners enjoy the

multi-task strategies required to solve a crossword. Finally, crossword puzzles have the benefit of being customizable to study content.

In addition, puzzle creation software and websites are abundant, and easy to use, so teachers can create curriculum-specific crosswords with little trouble. Whether we are studying Abraham Lincoln, geometry terms, or the water cycle, a crossword puzzle with subject-specific vocabulary can be created with ease and in a short amount of time. Crossword puzzle has endured as a favorite national pastime because it is appealing to all ages, it can be completed in a rather brief period of time, and solving it provides a sense of accomplishment. For all these reasons, crosswords make a terrific educational tool, and teachers and homeschoolers will probably continue to use it for many years to come.

In fact, by using the word "contextual" in this technique, the researcher wants to design a crossword which have a similar theme with the topic that the students learnt in the module. For example, in chapter 1 of their module, students learn about describing family members, so here the students will be provided by a crossword puzzle for learning the vocabulary about family members such as father, mother, and etc.

Therefore, researcher hope by using the contextual crossword puzzle, the students will be easier in learning the vocabulary for each topic and also have fun. They do not find difficulties to understand the vocabulary, because they use a contextual crossword puzzle which is more like a game than a task.

Research Method

This study was aimed at improving the vocabulary mastery of grade VIII C students in SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta through the use of contextual crossword puzzle games during the teaching and learning process.

This was an action research study conducted in two cycles. It took two meetings in the first cycle and three meetings in the second cycle. The subjects of this research were 33 students of grade VIII C of SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta. The steps of the research were: 1). Reconnaissance, 2). Planning, 3). Action and observation, 4). Reflection.

The data were qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were in the form of vignette and interview transcripts. The quantitative data were in the form of pre-test and post-test. The instruments used for collecting data were observation checklist, interviews, and testing. The analysis of qualitative data was obtained through several steps according to Miles and Huberman (1993): 1).

Data collection, 2). Data reduction, 3). Data display, 4). Draw conclusions. The quantitative data analysis was obtained through t-test. The validity used for the qualitative and quantitative data were democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity and dialogic validity. The reliability used for both data were time triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theoretical triangulation.

Finding and Discussions

The actions implemented in this research were applying contextual crossword puzzle to teach vocabulary, asking students to bring dictionary, asking students to work in pairs or large group, giving feedback to the students, using classroom English during the teaching and learning process, giving rewards and punishments, and giving irregular verb list as a quiz.

In this findings, it showed the research findings of all the implementations. The research was aimed to improve the vocabulary mastery for grade VIII C students at SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta through contextual crossword puzzles game. For this reason, the findings of the research involved the actions to attain the goal. In the first cycle, the implementation of crossword puzzles in the form of game was successful to improve students' vocabulary mastery because the students were interested in playing the game. They clearly understood about the materials and the topics being learnt, and they could play the game with the help of clues provided.

However, there were some problems that occurred in implementing the actions related to the students' motivations and students' vocabulary mastery in cycle 1. Therefore, the researcher tried to solve the problems so the students' vocabulary mastery and the students' self-confidence in involving the teaching and learning process could be improved successfully in cycle 2.

In the second cycle, they fully understood about the game. Here, the researcher gave two different types of clues which were spoken and written clues. The students seemed excited, they could communicate and interact well in playing the game. It also improved students' self-confidence in the learning process. They enjoyed and were encouraged in the process of teaching and learning process. Dhand (2008: 55-56) confirmed that by using crossword puzzles, it will be fun and can raise students' motivation.

As mentioned before, the implementation of contextual crossword puzzle game to improve students' vocabulary mastery conducted was successful. It could be seen from the observation in the teaching and learning process and also the interviews with the students and the English teacher. Furthermore, the researcher also used pre-test and post-test to analyze the progress of the

students' vocabulary mastery. The improvement of their scores in pre-test and post-test could be seen in the following table.

Table 1: **The Average Scores of Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Pre-test and Post-test**

Class	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score
VIII C	58.42	68.73

Based on the table above, the researcher also used t-test to compare the result from the pre-test and post-test. She used two hypothesis. The first hypothesis was that there was no significance difference between the students' scores in pre-test and post-test. The alternative hypothesis was that there was a significance difference between the students' score in pre-test and post-test.

From the t-test analysis, it showed that there was an improvement of the students' mean scores from 58.42 to 68.73. The reason why there was an improvement on their score was because the test were based on the materials they had learnt from the two cycles and also due to the use of contextual crossword puzzle game in the teaching and learning process. Here, after analyzing using t-test, it also showed that the sig. (*p.*) <0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. So, there was a significance difference in students' scores after the implementation of contextual crossword puzzle to improve their vocabulary mastery.

Conclusion

This research was conducted in grade VIII C of SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta. This was aimed to improve the vocabulary mastery of grade VIII C students by using contextual crossword puzzle. The research began on January 2017 and ended in March 2017. It took two cycles and the materials given were related to narrative and recount texts.

As the action plans had been implemented on the first cycle, the English teacher and the researcher had some reflections about the implementation based on the observation and the interviews. It shown that there were several changes on students' vocabulary mastery. By implementing the contextual crossword puzzle in the teaching and learning process, it could improve the students' vocabulary mastery. It could also build up their motivation to be active and in the teaching and learning process.

However, there were some improvements to be added for the second cycle after the researcher and the English teacher analyzed the strengths and the weaknesses of the implemented actions which was presented in chapter IV. Therefore, there were some actions revised in the second cycle.

In the second cycle, the researcher and the English teacher found that by using the contextual crossword puzzle game to improve the students' vocabulary mastery was still successful and effective with some variations on applying the game like using written and spoken clues. It could be seen on the students' mean scores, it improved from 58.40 in the pre-test to 68.70 in the post-test. This demonstrates that the implementation of the contextual crossword puzzle was able to improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

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