

USING TABOO GAME TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 1 SEMIN GUNUNGKIDUL

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Abstract

This study has the purpose to investigate the implementation of *the Taboo* game to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The method used in this research is classroom action research. The research was conducted in two cycles at *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul* started from 13th February 2020 to 27th February 2020. The participants were 32 students of VIII A of *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul*. Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This research used several data instruments, i.e. observation checklists, tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The research findings showed that *the Taboo* game can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The mean score of the students in the pre-test increased significantly from 56.07 to 97.3 in the second post-test.

Keywords: *Taboo* game, improvement, vocabulary

Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of any language. It is a fundamental aspect that we should have in communication, especially for EFL students. Nam (2010: 127) said that vocabulary assists students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (as cited in Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012). Besides, according to Deller and Hocking, the understanding of English is influenced mostly by vocabulary.

Teaching vocabulary has an important role in learning English especially for EFL students to help students to understand and express language. The most important thing that should be focused on to improve students' vocabulary is increasing their motivation in learning. The game can be an effective alternative to improve students' vocabulary (as cited in Toma et al., 2017). Some institutions consider that using a game can be very helpful in improving students' interpersonal skills and vocabulary if the students are engaged in playing with their friends (Akdogan, 2017). Besides, using games in learning activity includes learning in context. The students will know the meaning of words, where they can use the words and the functions of the words at once.

The importance of vocabulary became a concern for many teachers to find the most effective way to improve students' vocabulary. Since it has been the most priority in learning a foreign language, teachers are required to pay more attention

to improve their students' vocabulary, especially in the village schools. The researcher considers that in her home town, Gunungkidul, the students are not aware of their English skills. She also encountered some problems related to vocabulary mastery.

In this study, *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul* was chosen because it is located in one of the small sub-district in Gunungkidul. Also, based on the observation, there were some problems related to their vocabulary mastery and motivation in learning English. It happens because English language lesson is taught in the fourth grade of Elementary School or even in the seventh grade of Junior High School in many schools in Gunungkidul. That is why their vocabulary size should be improved more than students in the cities.

In this research, Grade VIII students were chosen because they were preparing themselves to have a National Exam (UN) in the following year. Besides, most of the students have little motivation to improve their vocabulary because they are not given a special time to learn vocabulary in the classroom. That is the reason why this research was conducted in *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul*. Also, this research can increase their motivation to improve their vocabulary.

There are so many games that can be used in learning activities. The *Taboo* game was chosen to be implemented to improve students' vocabulary because this game can be used at any level of class. This game is relevant because it can be adapted based on the context. By using this game, the teacher can make the cards by themselves and adjust the words based on the material. The *Taboo* game helps students increase their competition, cooperation, enthusiasm, and motivation in learning vocabulary. However, this research is aimed to know whether *the Taboo* game can help the students improve their vocabulary mastery and motivation in learning English. Based on the problems, there are two research questions, i.e. how is the *Taboo* game implemented to improve vocabulary of grade VIII students of *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul*?, and how effectively does the *Taboo* game improve vocabulary of grade VIII students of *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul*?

Method

This research is a classroom action research to answer the two research questions. John Elliott (1991) defines action research as a process including teachers' collaboration to evaluate their implementation, increase consciousness toward their theory, explain their conception of values, try out new strategies which supported by educational values, record their work in an understandable form for the other teachers, and eventually develop a teaching theory by research practices. Besides, according to Bryman and Bell, classroom action research is an approach to diagnose the problem and develop a solution by the collaborative action of the researcher and client. On the other hand, classroom action research needs a good collaboration between the researcher and the participants for finding the best solutions for certain problems in the classroom. To find the best solution for the students' problem, the researcher should reflect and then find the real problem that is faced by the students during the teaching and learning activity.

According to Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) Classroom Action Research (CAR) in principle has a sequence of steps of reflection, planning, and acting. They proposed a spiral model consists of four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (see Figure 1)

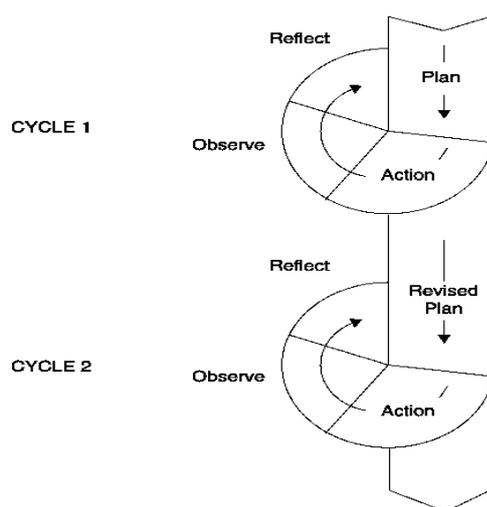


Figure 1. Kemmis and Mc Taggart’s action research spiral
Source: Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988

According to Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1998), there are four fundamental stages of the process. Planning the action focused on who, what, when, where, and how the action will be done to improve students’ vocabulary mastery. In this stage, an observation and a pre-test were conducted to find some problems related to vocabulary mastery and then tried to give the solution. Action is done during the implementation of the *Taboo* game. It should be done under control so the implementation would be done as planned before. Observation is a process of monitoring the teaching and learning process in the classroom and collecting the data include observation sheets and test results. Reflection is a process of analyzing the results of the three previous stages and based on the collected data.

In conducting this research, several instruments were used to collect the data needed properly. There were observation checklists, tests, questionnaires, and interviews. This research was conducted at *SMP Negeri 1 Semin Gunungkidul* which is located at Semin Wetan, Pundung Sari, Semin, Gunungkidul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. One of the classes in the eighth-grade class was chosen. This class consisted of thirty-two (32) students. In detail, the research was conducted in February 2020 which happen during the even semester 2019/2020 academic year.

Table 3.1 The blueprint of the questionnaire on the use of *Taboo* game to improve vocabulary mastery

| No | Aspects of investigation | Theories | Statements |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Students’ participation in classroom | Games involve friendly competition that keeps their interests and motivations (Huyen, 2003) | 1. The <i>Taboo</i> game makes me more interested in learning in the classroom. |

| No | Aspects of investigation | Theories | Statements |
|----|---------------------------------|--|---|
| | | Games are recognized can provide a better atmosphere for students to improve their motivation in learning and intensity of learning efficiency (Abrams, 2009). | 2. The <i>Taboo</i> game can increase my motivation to learn new vocabulary. |
| | | Games bring a relaxing and fun environment that helps students retain word more easily (Huyen, 2003) | 3. The <i>Taboo</i> game creates a fun learning atmosphere. 4. The <i>Taboo</i> game makes me more focused on following the learning activities in the classroom. 5. The <i>Taboo</i> game helps me participate more actively in learning in the classroom. |
| 2. | The effects of using Taboo game | Some institutions consider that using games can be very helpful to improve students' interpersonal skills and vocabulary if the students are engaged in playing with their friends (Akdogan, 2017). Using games as methods in learning can be beneficial for the students to encourage creativity and spontaneity, participatory attitudes of the learners, and establish a learner-focused (I-Jung, 2005) Games bring a relaxing and fun environment that helps students retain word more easily (Huyen, 2003) Games involve friendly competition that keeps | 6. The <i>Taboo</i> game makes me more creative. 7. The <i>Taboo</i> game helps me to cooperate with my friends in the classroom. 8. The <i>Taboo</i> game helps me to guess the words based on the explanation that is given by my friend. 9. The <i>Taboo</i> game makes me more cooperative in the classroom. 10. The <i>Taboo</i> game helps me to memorize new vocabulary easier. 11. The <i>Taboo</i> game encourages me to be more competitive. 12. The <i>Taboo</i> game can help me to |

| No | Aspects of investigation | Theories | Statements |
|----|--|---|--|
| | | their interests and motivations (Huyen, 2003) | improve my vocabulary knowledge. |
| 3. | The effectiveness of the <i>Taboo</i> game | Games are recognized to provide a better atmosphere for students to improve their motivation in learning and intensity of learning efficiency (Abrams, 2009). Games give advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary by giving relax and fun activity to the students that can help them learn and remember new words easier (Akdogan, 2017) | 13. The <i>Taboo</i> game is an effective medium to learn English. 14. The <i>Taboo</i> game is an effective medium to learn vocabulary. 15. The <i>Taboo</i> game is an effective medium to be used in the classroom. |

Findings and Discussion

From the observation result, the students faced a lack of vocabulary and less motivation in learning English. The students rarely speak in English during the teaching and learning activity. The teacher sometimes had to translate English into Indonesian to help them understand what the teacher was saying. In the next meeting, the students were given a pre-test to know how much the students' vocabulary mastery. The pre-test was not given directly to the students but there was a brainstorming activity with a video and some brief explanations about the purpose of the pre-test and instructions to do the pre-test.

In this step, a pre-test was administered to the students in the form of matching and fill in the blanks or completion. There were 25 questions which consist of 10 fill in the blanks and 15 questions on a vocabulary list. The correct answer was scored 1 and the wrong answer was scored 0. After that, the sums of the scores were calculated to count the mean or average.

The pre-test results showed that the students are still at a low level of vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from their pre-test scores. Most of the students did not reach the KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum), i.e. 75.00 points. Some other indicators were related to the vocabulary mastery level. First, the students had a problem in understanding the meaning of some words. They did not know the meaning of some words that were given in the test. Second, the students mispronounced some English words. It could be proved when they played the *Taboo* game and mentioned the word incorrectly. For example, when the student mentioned the word "Laughing", he pronounced it literally while the pronunciation should be /læfɪŋ/. Third, the students were could not spell words correctly. It could be proven that the students had difficulties when asked to spell the word by the teacher.

After conducting the observation and pre-test, some problems related to vocabulary mastery were identified. The students had a lack of vocabulary and less motivation in learning English. The students had a lack of vocabulary because the students rarely speak in English during the teaching and learning activity. Moreover, the teacher sometimes had to translate English into Indonesian to help them understand what the teacher was saying. The students had less motivation to learn English because they were not given such a fun and interesting environment in English teaching and learning activity. In the first cycle, the researcher tried to overcome those problems by implementing *the Taboo* game. In this cycle, the teaching and learning process began. The actions included to plan, act, observe, and reflect on the implementation of *the Taboo* game as a medium to improve students' vocabulary and motivation in learning English.

Cycle one was done smoothly because most of the students were well-behaved and attentive. They also respect each other, so they were not laughing at other students who made a mistake in pronouncing some words. The lesson started with a brief explanation about present continuous tense by playing a video. Then, the teacher gave examples and the formula of the present continuous tense. In this case, the teacher focused on daily activity vocabulary. So, the teacher gave a vocabulary list related to daily activity verbs. After that, the teacher asked the students to find the meaning of those words and find the possible clues that related to those words.

After they finished the group discussion, the teacher tried to ask each group to make sure they already got the meaning and clues of each word. Then, the teacher instructed the students to repeat the words with the correct pronunciation. After that, the teacher asked the possible clues that related to the word intended. For example, when the teacher asked the possible clues for the word "studying" to the students, then some of them answered with "BOOK", "MATH", "BIOLOGY", and "STUDENTS". This activity was expected to help the students to be able to play the *Taboo* game and giving the appropriate clues for each word.

Furthermore, the teacher gave a brief explanation about what the *Taboo* game is and how to play that game. Certainly, the teacher also gave rules to the game. After they understood, the teacher started the game. The teacher instructed the students to stay in their group. After that, the teacher gave each group cards and asked them to play the *Taboo* game in a small group. There were four students in a group. The two students gave the clues, and the two others would guess the intended word. They did it in turns. They could switch the cards with the other groups if they already finished it.

The students were given the first post-test at the end of the lesson. The test consists of 25 questions with the same form as the pre-test. The students should work on it in 30 minutes. After the students finished the worksheet, the teacher checked and collected the students' answer sheets.

The test results of the first cycle showed that their mean score from the pre-test to the first post-test improved from 56.07 to 79.5. The students' motivation in learning also increased and they were not afraid to speak English. The students were joyful and enthusiastic about joining the learning activity, especially while implementing the *Taboo* game. However, some students misspelled some words and seemed were less challenged.

That is why in the second cycle the researcher planned to overcome the problems by giving the students more chances to spell some words and playing the

Taboo game in groups and competing with them to get the highest score. Moreover, the students were given 20 more new action verbs to be combined with the previous words to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

The *Taboo* in the second cycle game was implemented in groups. Each group consists of four students. This game was done by competing in a group with another group. There should be the teller group and the guesser group. The rules were just the same as the previous meeting. The difference was they were given 30 seconds only to give clues and guess what the intended word is. The guesser group was allowed to discuss the answer while guessing. The score is given to the group who could give the correct answer. When the group could not answer correctly, the score would be given to the teller group. After the teller finished the 12 cards, they switched the position. The teller group became the guesser. They did it to the other groups also. The group who got the highest score became the winner.

After the teacher finished implementing the *Taboo* game, the students were given a post-test. The test was conducted to measure the improvements of the students after implementing the *Taboo* game. 25 questions should be answered by the students correctly. The form of the test was the same as the previous test.

At the end of the meeting, the teacher reviewed the vocabulary that had been learned. Then, four students were interviewed as representatives to know their perception after the implementation of *the Taboo* game. The students seemed enthusiastic and more challenged while playing *the Taboo* game. They became more confident in speaking English and were not afraid to make mistakes. The implementation of the *Taboo* game brought a fun environment. Moreover, the *Taboo* game helps the students remember more new words. It could be indicated that the vocabulary knowledge of the students improved.

Besides giving an interview, the students were given questionnaires by the teacher. Based on the questionnaire, statement number 1 until 5 were about students' participation in the classroom, question number 6 until 12 were about the effect of using the *Taboo* game, and question number 13 until 15 were about the effectiveness of the *Taboo* game.

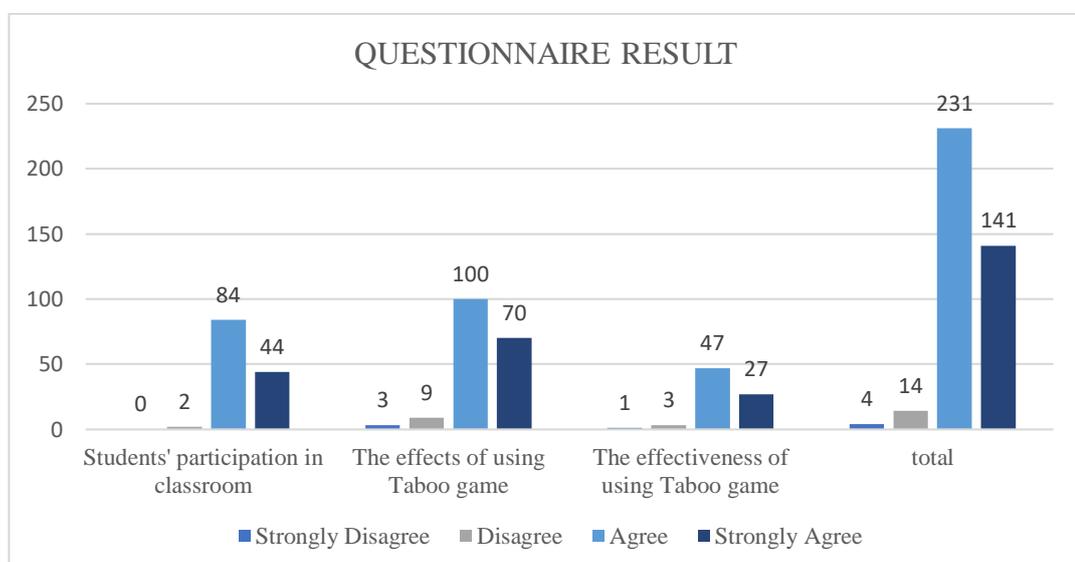


Figure 2. Questionnaire Result

The questionnaire results showed that besides improving students' vocabulary, the *Taboo* game increased students' participation in the classroom, gave some good effects for the students to be more creative, cooperative, and competitive. They agreed that the *Taboo* game was effective to be implemented in learning vocabulary in the class. As mentioned by Lewis & Bedson (2003), playing games in the classroom can help the students develop their ability in cooperation, competition, and collaboration with others to reach a particular goal.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|-----------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pair 1 | pretest | 56,07 | 27 | 12,434 | 2,393 |
| | posttest2 | 97,33 | 27 | 4,707 | ,906 |

Paired Samples Test

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|---------|---------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 pretest - posttest2 | -41,259 | 11,651 | 2,242 | -45,868 | -36,650 | -18,401 | 26 | ,000 |

In addition, the paired t-test was performed to compare the mean score before the implementation of the *Taboo* game (pre-test) and after the implementation of the *Taboo* game (post-test 2). The result showed that there is a significant difference in the score for pre-test (M=56.07, SD=12.434) and post-test 2 (M=97.33, SD=4.707), p=0.00. The p-value of the paired t-test was 0.00 (Table 1.). It means that the p-value was less than 0.05. Therefore, the use of *the Taboo* game in the teaching and learning activity in the classroom was effective.

Conclusion

In this study, to answer the first research question, the researcher implemented Classroom Action Research using Kemmis and McTaggart's model which consists of four steps. The steps include planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. There were two cycles in this research. In every meeting, the researcher played the game once. Furthermore, after they implemented the game, the researcher conducted post-tests, interviews, and questionnaires.

From the data, two findings were concluded. The first finding is the students' vocabulary improved after implementing the *Taboo* game as a teaching vocabulary medium. The improvement was significant. It was shown by the mean score of the students in the pre-test, i.e. 56.07 and it increased to 97.3 in the second post-test. The result of the paired t-test also showed that there is a significant difference (p ≤0.05) between the pre-test and last post-test. It can be inferred that the students' achievement was satisfactory. The research also showed indicators that the use of the *Taboo* game in improving students' vocabulary was effective. It was proved from the questionnaire result and interview results that the students became more

interested and they enjoyed learning English better and they could memorize new vocabulary easier.

The second finding is the students' perceptions of the use of *the Taboo* game in teaching and learning vocabulary. The *Taboo* game can make the students more interested and participate more actively. It can be seen from the observation conducted during cycle I and cycle II. The teacher got high attention and positive responses from the students. The classroom situation was interactive but still conducive. They were motivated by the teaching and learning process.

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