

Increasing Students' Vocabulary Using Word Chain Game

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine whether the use of the Word Chain Game could improve students' vocabulary at the second grade of MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas. The research applied a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The participants of this study were 17 students. The data were collected through vocabulary tests, including a pre-test and two post-tests, to measure students' improvement. The findings revealed a significant increase in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the Word Chain Game. The mean score of the pre-test was 43.05, which increased to 58.35 in the first post-test and reached 72.47 in the second post-test. Additionally, the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion improved in each cycle. The results indicate that the Word Chain Game is an effective and engaging technique to enhance students' vocabulary. It also encouraged students to participate actively and made the learning process more enjoyable. Therefore, the use of interactive games such as Word Chain Game is recommended for teaching vocabulary in English as a foreign language classroom.

Keywords: *vocabulary; word chain game; classroom action research.*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the most essential components in learning English, as it supports students in mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, in many English classrooms, especially in Indonesia, teaching practices tend to emphasize grammar rather than vocabulary. As a result, students often have limited vocabulary mastery, which makes it difficult for them to understand and use English effectively. In Oxford learner's pocket dictionary (2008) states that vocabulary is all the words that a person knows or uses. Vocabulary is all the words in language. Vocabulary also lists of their meaning. Moreover, in Cambridge dictionary (2008) states that vocabulary is all the words that exists in a particular language or subject. In addition, Vocabulary must be emphasized in the English learning process in the classroom so that the improvement of students' English proficiency becomes more structured (wael et al. 2024).

However, in many English classrooms, especially in Indonesia, teaching practices tend to emphasize grammar rather than vocabulary. This condition leads to students having limited vocabulary mastery. In fact, vocabulary is considered the foundation of language learning, and poor vocabulary knowledge can hinder students' ability to develop other language skills (Wardani, 2016).

One effective strategy that can be used is the application of games in the classroom. Games are believed to create a fun and motivating learning environment, which can help students learn vocabulary more effectively (Hernandez & Gomez, 2011). One of the games that can be applied is the Word Chain Game. This game requires students to produce a word based on the last letter of the previous word, which encourages active participation and vocabulary recall. According to Adachitoka (2015), Word Chain Game involves students in generating new words by connecting them through their final letters, making it suitable for vocabulary practice.

Word Chain Game is a kind of game purposing to increase the player's ability in mastering vocabulary of words. According to Eichel (2014), in playing Word Chain Game, each of word does not allow to be repeated. It means in playing this game, students will produce the new English words and they will hear pronounce of the new words from their friends or from the other students. In other words, they will be familiar and know the words they have never heard before. The researcher conducted this research in MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas.

Izzah (2015) found that the use of Word Chain Game improved students' vocabulary mastery, while Yanti (2017) reported that students showed positive responses and enjoyed learning vocabulary through this game. These findings indicate that Word Chain Game has the potential to enhance vocabulary learning.

Based on preliminary observation at MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas, it was found that students in the second grade faced difficulties in learning vocabulary. They had problems in memorizing new words, understanding meanings, and using vocabulary appropriately. In addition, students showed low motivation in learning English due to the lack of engaging teaching methods. The teaching process was still dominated by conventional techniques, which did not actively involve students in learning.

To address this issue, an interactive and engaging strategy is needed to improve students' vocabulary mastery. One of the proposed techniques is the use of the Word Chain Game. This game encourages students to actively recall and produce vocabulary by connecting words based on the last letter of the previous word. Through this activity, students can practice vocabulary in a fun and meaningful way, which may enhance their motivation and participation.

The objective of this research is to find out whether the use of the Word Chain Game can improve students' vocabulary at the second grade of MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas. This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches knowledge related to vocabulary teaching strategies. Practically, it provides useful insights for teachers in applying interactive methods to improve students' vocabulary learning.

METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve students' vocabulary through the use of the Word Chain Game. The research was conducted in two cycles, and each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The scope of

this research focused on students' vocabulary mastery, particularly their ability to understand and recall English words. The subjects of this study were 17 students of the second grade at MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas.

The materials used in this research were vocabulary items related to students' learning topics, while the main tool applied was the Word Chain Game as an interactive learning technique. This game required students to mention a word based on the last letter of the previous word, encouraging active participation and vocabulary recall.

The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah 02 Aimas during the academic year 2018/2019. The data were collected through vocabulary tests, including a pre-test and post-tests in each cycle. These tests were used to measure students' vocabulary improvement. Operationally, vocabulary mastery in this study refers to students' ability to recognize, understand, and produce English words correctly. The improvement of vocabulary was indicated by the increase in students' test scores.

The data were analyzed quantitatively by calculating the mean score of students' tests and the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion (KKM). The improvement from pre-test to post-tests was also calculated to determine the effectiveness of the Word Chain Game in enhancing students' vocabulary.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The result of Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2

The pre-test had done before the classroom action research (CAR). It was conducted on Friday, November 09 - 2018. It started at 08.00 - 09.00 A.M. the researcher used multiple choice which consisted of 25 questions which the students carried out the test during 60 minutes. The score of pre-tests was 732.

The post-test 1 had done at the end of the implementation of cycle 1. It was conducted on Monday, November 19 - 2018. It started at 08.05 - 09.10 A.M. the researcher uses multiple choice which consisted of 25 questions which the students carried out the test during 65 minutes. The score of post-tests 1 was 992.

The post-test 2 had done at the end of the implementation of cycle 2. It was conducted on Monday, November 29 - 2018. It started at 08.00 - 09.00 A.M. the researcher uses multiple choice which consisted of 25 questions which the students carried out the test during 60 minutes. The score of post-tests 2 was 1,232. It could be seen that the students' scores had an improvement from pre-test until post-test 2. The students score in pre-test was 732; in post-test 1 was 992, and 1.232 in post-test 2.

2. The implementation of teaching vocabulary by using word chain games first cycle

a. Planning

The following points are the specification of the planning are first cycle:

- 1) Conducting the cycle in six meetings.
- 2) Administering the vocabulary learning process according to lesson plan.
- 3) Conducting pre-test in order to know the students' basic ability in vocabulary.
- 4) Preparing material for vocabulary.
- 5) Conducting a test of vocabulary by word chain game in last meeting.

6) Preparing the instrument for collecting data, such as observation, and test.

b. Acting

- 1) The action of cycle 1 started since November 05 until 30 2018.
- 2) The teacher implemented the teaching learning process based on the lesson plan that had been made.
- 3) The teacher started to explain the material in every meeting that would like to be learned by the students during the CAR.
- 4) The teacher used word chain game in order to measure students' vocabulary.
- 5) The teacher handled all of the activities in the classroom during this action.

c. Observing

In this phase, the observer tried to see all the activities in physical classroom. It may be about the teacher's performance, condition of class, student's response, how to teacher teaches vocabulary, and sometimes the observer asked some student's opinion about the process teaching-learning vocabulary. Related condition of class, it was still under control, it meant that most of students did not pay attentions to teacher's explanation, and some of them also did not work together in group work when they have played the game.

In the second action of the first cycle, there were found some students who active in answering the teacher's questions correctly. On the other side, the students seemed more enthusiastic to play game, and do the exercise related to the game. Moreover, after teaching learning process finished, it was also carried out the post test1, exactly on the third action of the first cycle to measure how well student's vocabulary that had been studied. Based on the result of the posttest 1, the mean score of the class derived 58.35 in which there were 2 students who passed the KKM 70 (seventy).

d. Reflecting

The researcher and the teacher discussed about the conclusion of the Implementing the action. Then, they tried to modify the action in order students more comprehend in vocabulary and in 35.54% of students in the class could pass the KKM because in the result of post-test 1 showed only 5.88 % students who passed the KKM.

Based on the first cycle, the researcher and the teacher felt satisfied enough because their efforts to increase students' vocabulary had been developed although all the targets could not be accomplished yet. Beside of that, the students seemed to accept the material easily and enthusiastically by using game.

From the reflecting phase above, there must be more efforts to develop students' vocabulary by using word chain game. It needed to be improved again in the next cycle. This effort was done in the next lesson plan of cycle two.

3. The implementation of teaching vocabulary by using word chain Game second cycle

a. Planning

- 1) Conducting the cycle in six meetings.
- 2) Administering the vocabulary learning process according to lesson plan.
- 3) Conducting pre-test in order to know the students' basic ability in vocabulary.

- 4) Preparing material for vocabulary.
- 5) Conducting a test of vocabulary by word chain game in last meeting.
- 6) Preparing the instrument for collecting data, such as observation, and test.
- 7) The teacher planned the other strategies to increase their vocabulary.
- 8) The teacher modified the lesson plan based on the phase in the first cycle.
- 9) The lesson plan used still related to using word chain game in improving student's vocabulary. There were any modifications in the second cycle; that was the teacher needed to give more time to the students in using word chain game which would increasing their vocabulary.
- 10) The researcher still also prepared the posttest 2 to collect data.

b. Acting

- 1) The action of the cycle two was done on November 30th 2018.
- 2) After the teacher reviewing the previous lesson plan, before the students read the material about vocabulary in students' handbook that given by the teacher, they were given some minutes to look up the difficult words, and discussed it in group work that the teacher divided, and each group consisted of five students.
- 3) The teacher asked to student some questions related to the task, and the students discussed it on their group.
- 4) After discussing the work result with their group, after that the representative of each group represented it in front of class. In this case, they matched the answers whether there were different answers or not.
- 5) The teacher gave the correct answers of the questions based on the material in the task.
- 6) The teacher applied the game to measure how well students' vocabulary that had been studied while the teacher handled all of the activities in the classroom during this action.

c. Observing

In the second cycle, generally the condition of class in teaching-learning process was better than the previous cycle. It could be seen from the students who read to follow the lesson, and most of them were enthusiastic to answer some questions who given by the teacher. In doing task of vocabulary, they seemed enjoyably. Then, when they have a group work to discuss the material, they were actively to participate within their group. In the third action of cycle two, the teacher was held on posttest 2. Based on the result of the posttest 2, the mean score of the class in vocabulary test gained 72.47 in which there were 12 students who passed KKM.

d. Reflecting

After knowing the result of vocabulary test, the researcher felt satisfied that their effort to increase the students' vocabulary by using words chains games that had been realized. The students could increase their vocabulary, and they seemed have fun. After achieving the target research of where minimally 75% students who passed the KKM, therefore the researcher decided to stop the CAR because it had already succeeded.

Hence, the researcher did not have to revise the plan, because every action was planned as good as possible, so that teaching learning activities could be accomplished well.

4. The Analysis of The Data After Classroom Action Research (CAR)

The data were analyzed quantitatively by comparing the results of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The analysis included calculating the mean score, the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 70), and the improvement percentage across cycles. The result of the pre-test showed that the mean score was 43.05, with only 5.88% of students passing the KKM. This indicates that students' vocabulary mastery was still low before the implementation of the Word Chain Game.

After Cycle 1, the mean score increased to 58.35, and the percentage of students who passed the KKM rose to 11.76%. The improvement from pre-test to post-test 1 reached 35.54%, showing a moderate increase in students' vocabulary. In Cycle 2, the improvement became more significant. The mean score increased to 72.47, and 70.58% of students achieved the KKM. The overall improvement from pre-test to post-test 2 reached 68.33%. These results indicate that there was a substantial improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the Word Chain Game. Therefore, the use of this technique was considered effective, and the research was concluded in Cycle 2 as the expected target had been achieved.

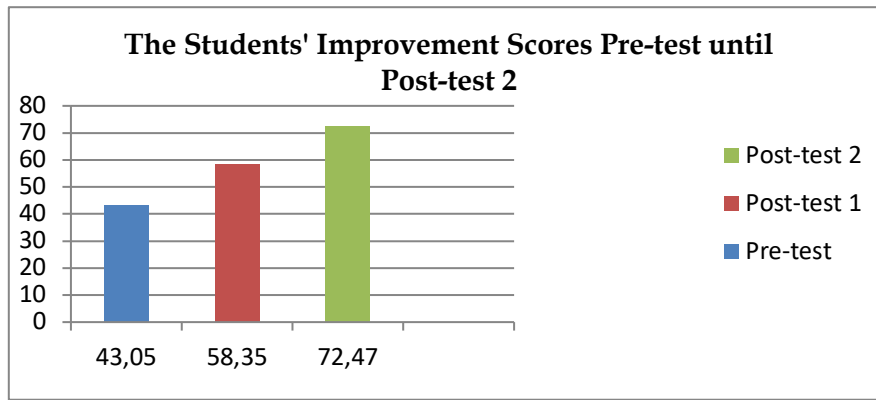
The results of this study indicate that the use of the Word Chain Game significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. At the beginning of the research, students' vocabulary was still low, as shown by the pre-test mean score of 43.05. This was mainly due to students' limited understanding of word meanings and low motivation in learning vocabulary.

After the implementation of the Word Chain Game in Cycle 1, students showed improvement, with the mean score increasing to 58.35. This suggests that the game began to positively influence students' vocabulary learning. However, the improvement was not yet optimal, as some students were still unfamiliar with the activity and required further guidance.

In Cycle 2, the improvement became more significant, as indicated by the mean score of 72.47. Students became more active, confident, and engaged in the learning process. The interactive nature of the Word Chain Game encouraged students to recall vocabulary, practice pronunciation, and connect words meaningfully. This helped students retain vocabulary more effectively.

Furthermore, the use of games created a fun and motivating learning environment. Students were more interested and enthusiastic in participating, which contributed to better learning outcomes. The findings are consistent with previous studies showing that game-based learning can enhance vocabulary mastery.

Table 1. The students' improvement of pre-test to pos-test 2



Based on the table above, the implementation of Word Chain Game is effective to increase students' vocabulary. The hypothesis of this study is a significant score of teaching vocabulary by using Word Chain Game. The hypothesis would be accepted if obtained post-test 2 were higher than post-test 1. To test the hypothesis of this research, the researcher used pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2, then the result of the calculation of data showed that pre-test was 43.05, post-test 1 was 58.35, and post-test 2 was 72.47.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Word Chain Game provides a meaningful contribution to improving students' vocabulary mastery. The consistent increase in students' scores across the research cycles reflects not only measurable progress but also a shift in how students engage with vocabulary learning.

Beyond numerical improvement, the findings highlight that learning through interactive games can transform a passive classroom into an active and student-centered environment. The Word Chain Game encourages students to actively recall, connect, and produce vocabulary, which strengthens their retention and understanding. At the same time, it reduces students' anxiety and builds their confidence in using English.

The significance of this study lies in showing that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when students are emotionally and cognitively involved in the process. This suggests that teaching strategies that integrate enjoyment and participation are essential in supporting language development.

In conclusion, the Word Chain Game is not only effective in increasing vocabulary achievement but also in fostering positive learning experiences. Therefore, incorporating interactive and game-based techniques is important for improving the quality of English teaching, particularly in vocabulary instruction.

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