

TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GAME-BASED LEARNING FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract: This article aims at knowing the teachers' perception toward the use of game-based learning in teaching vocabulary for junior high school students. The research design used in this study is descriptive qualitative. One teacher from each three types of junior high school in Malang; private, public, and Islamic junior high school participated in the semi-structured interview. The interview was conducted through online meetings using Google Meet app due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve questions were delivered in *Bahasa* (Indonesian) to ease the participants to understand and answer it then it was transcript to collect the data. The findings of this study are teachers' shared positive perception toward the use of game-based learning as vocabulary teaching media. They also agreed that game-based learning is worth to enhance students' vocabulary since there are more advantages despite the challenges they faced.

Key Words: teaching vocabulary, game-based learning, teachers' perceptions

INTRODUCTION

It is very important for language learners to learn vocabulary which is a critical part of foreign language learning (Alqahtani, 2015). Learners' English mastery can be developed by gaining much vocabulary so they can use it to

comprehend and communicate in English well. Despite the importance of vocabulary, it seems unfortunate that teaching English is very likely to face some challenges particularly deal with vocabulary. Students were found to have less motivated in learning English since they do not understand the lesson well. It caused by their lack of vocabulary and the monotone teaching method applied in the class (Kumalasari, 2018; Profita, Susilohadi, & Sarosa, 2014).

The fact that relevant studies above seem contradictory to another fact that vocabulary can be taught by applying some teaching media such as game-based learning. The students will gain more vocabulary through playing games since game-based learning designed to motivate students to immerse themselves with the educational materials in a playful, sportive, and dynamic way (Pho & Dinscore, 2015).

Moreover, investigating perceptions on the vocabulary teaching media plays a crucial role since it will be very helpful for the improvement of the learning process and students' vocabulary proficiency (Marzano, 2020). Therefore, the researcher wants to conduct a research to know how the teachers' perceptions toward the use of game-based learning as teaching media for junior high school students. The research question of this study is "How do the EFL teachers perceive the teaching vocabulary for junior high school students using game-based learning?" Based on the research problem, the purpose of this study is to explain the teachers' perception toward the implementation of game-based learning as vocabulary teaching media.

METHOD

The researcher used descriptive qualitative as the research design of this study. The participants of this study were three teachers of three different kinds of junior high school; Islamic junior high school (*MTs*), private and public junior high school. Those selected teachers had applied game-based learning as their vocabulary teaching media. Moreover, all of them had different experiences in using various kinds of game-based learning. The teachers' names pseudonymous

as P3 (teacher from Islamic junior high school), P2 (teacher from public junior high school), and P1 (teacher from private junior high school).

The research instrument was arranged by the researcher using *Bahasa* (Indonesian) to ease the participants to understand and answer the questions. It was submitted and validated by three EFL lecturers teaching at Universitas Islam Malang. They were asked to give responses or comments if there any. The instrument consisted of twelve open-ended questions.

The researcher contacted the three participants used an online messaging app (WhatsApp) during the COVID-19 pandemic for getting permission and it has been approved by the participants. Then, the researcher sent the participant consent form to be signed by the participants as the approval letter. Three participants took part in a face-to-face interview under a special condition which using an online meeting app (Google Meeting) since the limit of school access. The interviews were conducted individually at different times for each participant and the online meetings were recorded. It held for about fifteen minutes for each participant. The researcher held the interview twice in the range of a week for each participant to make sure the data is reliable.

To get the trustworthiness of this research, the researcher used members check as the triangulation strategy. The participants were asked to review the accuracy and meaning between the transcripts and what they have shared on the interview sessions.

The data analyzed using thematic analysis method by several steps; organizing and familiarizing, coding and reducing, finally representing and interpreting the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research describes a research question stated earlier “How do the EFL teachers perceive the teaching vocabulary for the junior high school students

using game-based learning?” Based on the data analysis, the findings are described in the following.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Using Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students

The findings of this study found that the three teachers’ shared positive perceptions toward the use of game-based learning as vocabulary teaching media. Departing from their statements that it made a new and exciting class atmosphere which is lead the students more engaged in the learning materials. Moreover, the students were more actively participate when using game-based learning rather than using memorization. P1 stated that:

“In my opinion, game-based learning attracted the students’ attention. For instance, when I entered the class then I said that ‘we will play games today’ then they will be curious about what kind of game they will play on that day. Moreover, I always gave them various kinds of games.” (P1)

Additionally, students became enthusiastic about the game they would learn. P2 added:

“When I used memorization, the students were getting bored. One or two students shared their memorized vocabulary with me, then the others were being noisy. Not all of them were engaged to the class activity. Then I used games as their learning tool so all of the students can do the activity together. The students were happier and not being bored anymore.” (P2)

Game-based learning is very useful as teaching media such as for ice-breaking. It also made a new and exciting class atmosphere. P3 mentioned:

“I used game-based learning since it easily made the students understand. Besides, junior high school students still an age categorized enjoy playing games.” (P3)

The Teachers’ Perceptions about the Advantages of Using Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students

All of the participants shared their perceptions that applying game-based learning gives many advantages in enhancing the students’ vocabulary. Games increased the students’ motivation for enhancing their vocabulary since games provide a fun way to learn. P1 stated:

“When they were excited and being active in the classroom activity, they enhanced their vocabulary direct indirectly and it remained long last in their memories, even after they went back to their dorm, even at the next meeting.” (P1)

Games-based learning increased the students’ enthusiasm and made students more competitive. Moreover, it can train the students’ character, especially in their responsibility when they work at the team since in teamwork, each student has their role in the group. P2 mentioned:

“I think the use of game-based learning in teaching vocabulary for junior high school students is efficient. The students were getting excited since I made them in groups. So there are winners and losers, then the students were getting excited to follow the competition with the other groups.”(P2)

Game-based learning also gave another advantage which was making an exciting classroom atmosphere and the students were more engaging in the learning materials.

Besides, the three teachers shared the same opinions that the application of game-based learning is quite easy. Searching the reference games which was suitable for the lesson topic eased the application of game-based learning as vocabulary teaching media since the vocabulary for junior high school students still simple and basic one. P1 mentioned:

“Using game-based learning in teaching vocabulary for junior high school was so easy. It did not need to be complicated since the complicated game only made the students getting confused and the instructions on how to play the game only took time.” (P1)

Despite there are some preparations needed before applying game-based learning such as making cards, it can be used for other classes or even it can be used for the next school period. P2 added:

“I think using game-based learning is quite easy and simple. Furthermore, the students remembered their vocabulary much longer, I mean they not forgot the vocabulary easily.” (P2)

Besides game-based learning was easy to be applied, it also enjoyable for the students. P3 explained:

“It attracted the students’ interest since the use of game-based learning made the vocabulary given was being more understandable for the students.” (P3)

The Challenges Faced in Performing Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students Based on the Teachers’ Perceptions

The three teachers shared their perceptions about some challenges they faced when applied game-based learning in teaching vocabulary for junior high school. Each of them has different challenges and also how the way they solved it.

The teacher from private junior high school (P1) shared the challenges she faced when performing game-based learning was the students’ boredom when she has applied the same games in the same class. The students were less excited to play it again. The way to overcome that kind of problem was the teacher has to be more creative in giving the students more various kinds of games. As she described:

“There was an obstacle when I have used the game and then I reused it in the same class. The results were they already used to the game and easily play it, then they were easily getting bored. In that case, the class atmosphere became not conducive and noisy then it disturbed the learning process.” (P1)

The teacher from public junior high school (P2) stated that the challenge she faced when applied game-based learning in teaching vocabulary was there are some students were being inactive when they formed in a group. It might happened if the group members’ skills distributed unevenly. To cope with this challenge, the teacher divided the group by herself and made it heterogenic. She mentioned:

“Since if I asked them to make their group, they will only be gathered with whom they get along with, the clever students will be in one group. So I kept motivate them to work together, asks if he did not get some points to his teammates who more clever. Otherwise, I kept told the clever students to give chances to the other group members.” (P2)

The other challenges faced by the teacher from Islamic junior high school (P3) were she has to be always well-prepared and there are some students who unsatisfied in playing games. She overcame it by searching for games that are

easy to be prepared or she could ask the students to prepare the games' properties based on their creativity. She also not used games too often with made a variation of still giving the vocabulary memorization as the intermezzo and kept making it balance with the lesson topic.

Discussion

The Teachers' Perceptions of Using Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students

The findings of this study found that based on the three teachers' perceptions, they had the different intensity of the implementation of game-based learning as the vocabulary teaching media. Private junior high school students' teacher (P1) used game-based learning more often rather than the other teachers who participated in this study. It caused by she taught students in boarding school whom had a lot of activities besides the school itself, so it made them were easily getting sleepy.

Moreover, the three participants shared their perceptions that game-based learning is a good media to be used in teaching vocabulary. It is in line with statements that using games for language learning is also one way to train learners' vocabulary since games will help and encourage students to maintain their interest (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2007).

As in the previous study exposed teachers' positive perceptions in using language board games to facilitate students in learning vocabulary (Sasidharan & Eng, 2013), the present study also indicated teachers have positive perceptions in the application of various games in teaching vocabulary. Games, in various kinds and applications, contribute positively to ease the teachers in enhancing students' vocabulary.

The Teachers' Perceptions about the Advantages of Using Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students

The three participants shared the same opinions about the fact that game-based learning helped the students gained vocabulary in directly and indirectly ways even it will remain long last in their memory since they got the vocabulary

when they were engaged in the activities together. This study found that games provide the language meaning which emotionally experienced by the students which better than they have to merely study on it (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2007).

The finding of this study shared similar results with the previous studies (Putra, 2020; Ramadhaniarti, 2016) that students gave positive responses to the use of game-based learning for teaching vocabulary. The three teachers in this study shared the same perceptions that game-based learning is a good teaching media to increase the students' vocabulary since it made the class atmosphere more cheerful, and the students interested in learning since they were provided by the fun, enjoyable and challenging game.

The Challenges Faced in Performing Game-Based Learning in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School Students Based on the Teachers' Perceptions

The three participants delivered some different challenges they faced when applied game-based learning in teaching vocabulary for junior high school students. However, all of them agreed that planning simple games was needed to prevent misunderstanding in the games' instruction and made the learning process goes well efficiently. The main point is how to create the game which engaged the students in the lesson topic.

The participants' statements above implied the importance of integrating games as learning media with learning materials to maximize students' vocabulary mastery as the learning results (Jacob, 2016). Besides guiding the game process, teachers also need to provide additional sessions for students after the game to discuss and evaluate what they have learned through the games.

The students will be more immersed in the learning process since they involved in a competitive environment as found in the previous study that friendly competition encourages the students in enhancing their vocabulary (Ramadhaniarti, 2016). Additionally, the urgency of discussion and review of the vocabulary the students gained during the games is undeniable to make sure they

understand and remember it until the next meeting. The teachers have to guide the students to use the vocabulary they got for daily communication. All of these steps will make the students not only learn new words, understanding, and remembering by kept used the vocabulary in their daily life communication.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result of the interview showed that based on the teachers' perceptions, game-based learning was a good media to facilitate junior high school students in learning vocabulary. Despite game-based learning for teaching vocabulary media gave many advantages as mentioned above, there were also some challenges related to the games preparation and the students' response to the games as well. Finally, all of the participants agreed that there were more advantages than challenges. Then, it can be said that game-based learning is worth used for teaching vocabulary for junior high school students.

Teachers as the instructor in class can use their creativity to make the students engage the vocabulary learning with simple games. It can be in a kind of matching games, or gap games, or etc. that related to the topic being discussed in the class to avoid students' boredom. Teachers still have to assist the students when performing game-based learning especially when the students play teamwork games to make sure all the students participate evenly in the group. Evaluating the learning results after the games have done is also suggested.

It is expected for future researchers to conduct similar studies about the application of game-based learning for the higher education level to figure out whether it is in line with the teachers' perceptions of the present study's findings.

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Malang, 6th August 2020
 Acknowledge by,
 Advisor I,

Atik Umamah, S.Pd., M.Pd.
 NPP. 14290819863226

