

STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY ENHANCEMENT THROUGH CROSSWORD PUZZLE: CLASS ACTION RESEARCH IN A PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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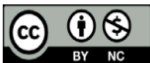
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Abstract:

Mastering vocabulary in English is such an essential facet that learners would be able to own productive and receptive skill needed to get their messages across and decipher the conveyed ones towards them. This Class Action Research (CAR) aims at pinpointing the intervention of Crossword Puzzle as a medium of teaching-learning vocabulary on Personal Recount Text. Collaborating with the classroom teacher, its use in one class of eight graded students in a public junior high school in West Java is conducted together with the instruments of observation and tests. It is found out that Crossword Puzzle radiates the teaching-learning process positively on account of students' enthusiasm and responses as well as profoundly inclines the mean of Pre-test, 40.61 to the one of Post-test, 80.60 aside from the majority of the students' achievement to the success indicator score on vocabulary mastery in one Cycle. Despite its benefits to other parties, it is advisable that further research is to fill the gaps on other writing genre with discrepant learning contexts.

Keyword: *vocabulary mastery; CAR; crossword puzzle; recount*



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INTRODUCTION

To be proficient in English on behalf of mastery in four skill mastery in English, speaking, writing, reading and listening, is likely a challenging case for learners. In other words, it is not a piece of cake to master productive and receptive skills. One of an essentially prevalent factors reaching students away from being proficient in English is a lack of vocabulary. As a matter of fact, it is asserted that vocabulary is a pivotal component in second or foreign language learning as pivoted to put forward meanings and thoughts through both receptive and productive skills (Carpenter & Olson, 2011). Thus, without vocabulary mastery, learners are restricted to be expressively articulated in a meaningful fashion, for as it is a collection of all words in a particular language with a form of an expression associated with meanings (Thornbury, 2002).

Based on a few preliminary classroom observations in the research site, vocabulary learning activities are not the ones that students are keen on doing. They seemingly have a lack of interest in being engaged in the learning process, yielding both limited vocabulary and its frequent word-misspelling. Hence, crossword puzzle is worth putting into practice. A word puzzle in a grid of black and white squares owns its goal to write one letter in respective white square to generate the words issued by the clues, and black squares inform where the word terminates (Claire, 2010) Such game is provided in squares and issues clues written the letter inside it. Undertaking it, then, prone to create Students' enjoyment and fun in learning process

is in the urgent need since this would promote both the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery and learning enthusiasm (Njoroge, Ndung'u, & Gathigia, 2013; Maududi, Purwanto, & Awalya, 2018).

This Class Action Research (CAR), moreover, aims at figuring out the teacher's intervention by employing crossword puzzle in the process of teaching-learning vocabulary in the class room and finding out its impact on students' vocabulary mastery through the tests administered. It is context-specific one bearing typical characteristics of the participants. Such purposefully benefits to at least three parties, namely other researchers, practitioners, and students. Those being interested in exploring on this issue may be inspired to conduct further study. Subsequently, teachers self-capitalize with the repertoire of teaching media arousing students' learning eagerness, thus gearing the vocabulary learning at full and learners are probed an enjoyable way to master the vocabulary themselves. Autonomous long-life learning is likely to emerge, accordingly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary consists of words bearing meanings constructing a language in which people communicate one another in a meaningful way. Essentially, it is asserted that vocabulary is a set of all words in a particular language and a form of an meaningful expression (Thornbury, 2002). Furthermore, it is stated that it is a prime component of language proficiency and caters much of the basis of how eligibly learners speak, listen, and write (Richards & Renandya, 2012). Pertaining to this, mastery in vocabulary plays a pivotal prerequisite to get the messages across intelligible in human communication in both any modes. In a harsh term, no vocabulary means no communication at all. A number of proponents promulgated vocabulary typologies, first of all, that is receptive ones – a collection of words that an individual can self-capitalize with assigned meanings when listening or reading and productive ones – a repertoire of words that an individual is prone to make use of them as writing or speaking (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Afterwards, vocabulary is categorized into two forms comprising Oral and Print vocabulary ones. Oral vocabulary one is a set of words for which we figure out the meanings when we speak or read orally. Print vocabulary comprises those words that the meaning is comprehended when we write or read silently (ibid). Last but not least, four divergent vocabularies are typified as listening, speaking, reading and writing vocabularies (Jhonson, 2008). Any mentioned tapestries of vocabulary is demanded as humans interact one another communicatively. Yet, this Class Action Research (CAR) particularly focuses on writing vocabulary, for the learners have to express their word knowledge of some parts of speech into written form on crossword puzzle.

Regarding with the urgency of mastered vocabulary, let's consider the following assertion of vocabulary mastery from scholars. It is propounded that vocabulary mastery, a great processing word skill of a language, is an individual achievement and attainment (Alqathani, 2015, Pp 21-34). It is the students themselves being responsible for inclining vocabulary knowledge so that they turn out into the biggest aspect of vocabulary mastery: It is self-personal achievement (Rivers, 1989). Subsequently, it is confirmed that learning vocabulary as a vocabulary mastery fashion is largely about remembering in which students in general are in the need to see, say, and write newly learned words a couple of times before being feasibly confirmed to have learned them (Mc Carten, 2007). In connection with this proposition, words are profoundly recalled through the three memory systems, namely short-term store (STS), working memory, and long-term memory (Thornbury, 2002). Briefly elaborated, Short-Term Store (STS) is the brain's capacity to maintain a restricted number of items of information for periods of time up to a few second; Working memory functions to execute the operation of words and manifold cognitive tasks such as reasoning, learning and understanding. Long-term memory is plausibly taught of as a kind of filling system in it has an enormous capacity, and its contents are durable over time; Fundamentally, knowing a words is not merely familiar with its form and its dictionary meaning, but also recognize its collocation and connotation, including its register and cultural accretions; It is advocated that materials' moving into permanent long term memory is ensured by a number of principles in practice, that is repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, use, cognitive depth, personal organizing, imaging, mnemonics, motivation, attention, affective depth (ibid). Eventually, concerning vocabulary assessment, five (5) aspects on the columns are prevalent with their thick description : matching word to definition, completing sentence, writing definition, writing original sentence, and mechanics (Leighille, 2016).

Crossword puzzle is one possible activity in practicing vocabulary enabling students to familiarize, recognize, manipulate and remember words (Scrivener, 1994). It yields enjoyment and fun atmospheres in learning process has a goal to solve a particular mentally challenging

task; It stands students ample chances of practicing and reiterating vocabulary, and stringing a fundamental sentence pattern, in turn impacting on their acceptance vocabulary (Moursund, 2006; Njoroge, Ndung'u, & Gathigia, 2013). It bails out to hold, enrich, enhance vocabulary, spelling skills, and knowledge of numerously diverse bits of information and be apt to confer to one's self esteem (ibid). Afterwards, such game own its kinds: Oral Puzzle, Picture Puzzle, and Object Puzzle- the crossword where inside the object is written a clue, imparting a blank puzzle without a hint to the students. Also, it makes up crossword and clues, picture clues, definition clues, and sentences completion (Widyasari, 2010). In line with learning media, Crossword puzzle belongs to this because it is a tool for deliver content or learning materials (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1992). In so-doing, it has some practical implications such individual, pair or small group activities, artwork. self-contained media learning, homework, and self-access centre (Case, 1994).

The teaching of vocabulary , i.e crossword puzzle implemented in the scientific approach in Curriculum 2013 complies to its learning principle, corrobotating students as a center of learning to, among other things, their systematic and holistic thinking ability (Majid & Rochman, 2014). In detail, scientific approach principles in learning activities are student-centred, students' self-concept, verbalism avoidance, students' thinking ability improvement, students' and teachers' enhanced motivation owing to students' having opportunities to convey their idea freely, thus gearing them to sharpen communication skills, the process of validation of concepts, laws, and their construed principles in their cognitive structure (Lazim, 2014). Being relevant to such approach, learning is seen not only as an estuary but also the interconnectedness of knowledge building reflected in the process skills; It is to explore and elaborate the subject matter as well as provide the teachers' widest possible chance of explore students' knowledge based on their abilities and needs (Wahyono, Abdulhak, & Rusman, 2017).

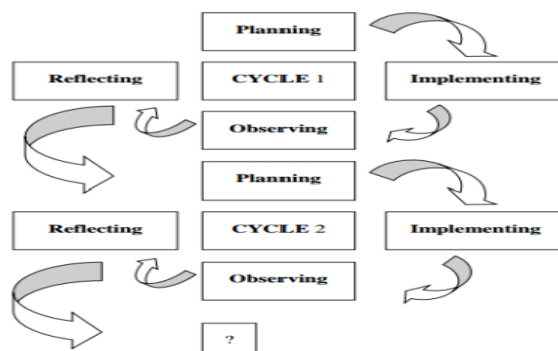
Two other facets relative to such approach are its steps and assessment to be elaborated. The scientific approach in Curriculum 2013 owns a few steps (Abidin, 2014; Permendikbud, 2013; Hosnan, 2014). They are as follows: (1) Observing - the students' seeing the clues in crossword puzzle to answer the blank grid on crossword puzzle; (2) Questioning - their asking or clarifying the clues; (3) Experimenting - teacher - student discussion about the clues of crossword puzzle, difficulties in words, or possible translation; (4) Associating - their having chances of recalling or linking their relevenat knowledge/info to fill the blank grid on crossword puzzle with their groups; (5) Communicating - their having to present their result before the classroom. In addition, standardized assessment methods are already determined to assess the learning quality of learning as well as the students' abilities (Permendikbud, 2013). They comprise attitude evaluation - teachers' assessment with observation, self assessment, and peer evaluation in the instrument forms, such as a checklist or assessment scale accompanied a rubric, and the teachers' journal, knowledge assessment, three kinds of assignment (written tests, oral tests, and assignments), and skill evaluation, practicing, learning tasks and using portpolio assessment (Sani, 2014 in Barawati, 2018). In fact, this study focuses on prior knowledge and subsequent one assessment indicated by vocabulary assessment in Pre-test and Post-test (Leighille, 2016).

METHOD

The Research type employed in this study is a qualitative one, particularly one of its typologies, namely Classroom Action Research (CAR). Belonging to a case study, it suits the research objectives in that it is a method to pinpoint what works best in one's own classroom so as to one's students' plausible learning enhancement, like vocabulary mastery (McKeachie, 2007). Furthermore, students' characteristics and classroom situations are well familiar as it is stated that Classroom Action research (CAR) is systematic inquest whose aim is to issue practices in typical situation (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Moreover, it is asserted that it is a research centered in the classroom, and simply tries to investigate what actually happens inside the classroom. (Dick & Bailey, 1991). Then, for the classroom teachers, research collaborators, it benefits to them concerning about the reflection so that they in return as practitioners think systematically about practice as well as plan the most effective strategies for upcoming ones (Mettetal, 2012). In essence, the researcher has a researcher (classroom) collaborator to investigate the practices of crossword puzzles feasibly impacting on the students' learning on vocabulary mastery. The site of Class Action Research is executed in VIII-G grade at Junior High Public School at the second semester of academic year 2019/2020 in West Java, learning English subject, particularly the vocabulary in Personal Recount Text. They are purposely selected on the basis of preliminary observation and discussion with the classroom teacher, revealing their lethargy

and low vocabulary mastery. The Classroom Action Research procedure makes up planning, implementing, observing and reflecting in a cycle employed as seen in figure 1 (Burns, 2010).

Figure 1
Action Class Research Model



The planning and implementing concerning the lesson plan and material preparation is conducted by the researcher, then the observing and the reflecting is pursued by both the researcher and research collaborator. The data collection techniques in this research consist of quantitative and qualitative ones: quantitative ones in the form of vocabulary mastery scores deriving from Pre-test and Post-test, designed by both the researcher and the research collaborator, to measure students' knowledge, ability or performance in a certainly given domain, i.e. vocabulary mastery (Brown, 2004) and qualitative ones in the field notes of the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site from the observation on the learning process in teaching vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzle (Cresswell, 2009)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings derive from the observational results in the process of teaching and learning vocabulary by students' undertaking crossword puzzle activities and the discrepancy of the test scores. The model of Class Action Research is employed on Burns' promulgate, namely the planning of action, the implementing of action, observing, and reflecting of action (one cycle). If the first cycle does not meet the criteria of success, the second one would be pursued. In other words, there would not be any further cycles as the success criteria, whose average total score is ≥ 70 .

In the preliminary study, two activities that were conducted: Pre-observation and Pre-test. The earlier activity was Pre-observation on the 22nd of February, 2020, focusing on the observation of the teacher - the student interactions in teaching-learning process. This aims at identifying the probable problems emerging in the classroom. The prevalent happenings are written in the form of field note. Then, the latter one is the Pre-Test on the 29th of February, 2020, involving thirty one (31) students, assigned to select the best answer in the multiple choice problems on vocabulary relative to personal recount text. This Pre-test is executed in order to find out their prior vocabulary knowledge prevalently employed in Personal Recount Text. Afterwards, it takes three meetings to complete four phases in conducting the Classroom Action Research in Cycle 1, elaborated as follows: the Planning is designed as the data from observation and pre-test 1 are gathered. The researcher plans to utilize crossword puzzle in order to overcome students' problem in vocabulary mastery. Similarly, it is believed that crossword puzzle is probable to enhance their vocabulary mastery, particularly the one belonging to Personal Recount Text. Prior to implement of the action, the lesson plan is constructed in the staged one.

Implementing phase is conducted in two meetings, on the 5th of March and the 7th of March, 2020. Meanwhile, the real teacher rolling as a research collaborator observes during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. On the first meeting, the researcher starts the teaching with some ice breakings in order to make the students comfortable. Then, it is proceeded the first activity by Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF) by giving an explanation of the characteristics of personal recount text based on the conversation on the source book such as giving the definition of recount text, its purpose of recount, and its language features. The second one is text identification by using some short conversation from the textbook about recount text, later assigning them to identify the text. Essentially identifying the language features of the text is what they are tasked. After their text identification, the explanation of the

social function and language features of recount text is imparted, that is to retell the past activities and simple past tense together with the determination of the main part of speech. They are asked to come forward to identify the Personal Recount Text. Eventually, they are assigned to complete and discuss the exercise differing from past activities to the ones happening now based on the verb and adverb in the conversation with their seatmate. This is terminated by the exercise discussion along with the researcher prior to the review concerning about the characteristics of recount text again briefly, the figuring-out of the difficulties and a conclusion in classroom session closure.

The second meeting is conducted on 7th the March by, at first, by reviewing the material of Personal Recount text, then focuses on crossword puzzle activity. Explanation on how to apply the game is put forward in brevity. Subsequently, students identify words on the clues on it as well as talk them over. The number of students is split into six groups, consisting of four or five so as to idea-generate in the next activity in filling out the grids only once. Such facilitates students with idea-collect and write them down. Thus, they have their ideas in written form. Implicitly, they are catered the chance of generating ideas as a way of problem-solving. The eventual one is that they have to present their work-sheets before the class. Their actual scores are probed in this cycle 1. The review, the wrapped-up conclusion the upcoming test reminder is conveyed before the call-it-a-day phase.

Regarding with the observation, the field notes coming from the collaborator and the researcher as students are engaged in the activity completion show up positive classroom atmosphere in both the first and the second meeting of the implementation stage. As a matter of fact, they are enthusiastic about not only paying attention to the explanation of recount text facets, but also its following up text identification. The seatmate discussion and teacher-student one seemingly bail this out much. Any arising difficulties are well handled owing to, among other things, clear explanation. Additionally, the atmosphere is alike as the crossword puzzle is introduced and implemented in the class room on the second meeting of the implementation stage. They are active in looking into the dictionary as locating the difficult words, or clues. Also, frequent questions come from their sides addressed to the researcher as a teacher, and even the research collaborator. Discussing and working to fill in the grids in the group apparently gets them spurred in being engaged in teaching learning process.

On the reflection stage, the scores resulted in cycle one after crossword puzzle's implementation are looked into, gearing a reflection to evaluate the teaching learning process. It is the fact that students become more radiant and make a progress in vocabulary mastery. This is deduced on the basis of the field notes on observation and the students' scores in Post-test. Similarly, significant improvement is achieved by the students after doing the action relative to quantitative and qualitative aspects. Therefore, the indicator of success referring to vocabulary assessment is already achieved and the learning radiance is accomplished. In short, it is possibly concluded that the cycle 1 is sufficiently terminated as the objectives of Class Action Research are successfully met.

To figure out the score discrepancy indicating the properness of the crossword puzzle as vocabulary learning media and the inclined fact of vocabulary mastery on the personal recount text, Post-test shall be undertaken. The thirty one (31) test takers (TT) undergo the pre-test and post-test. It was on the 23rd June 2020 as Post-test take place after the cycle-1 completion. During the two tests, students are individually asked and not permitted to look into the dictionary. Let's take a look at the following table.

Table 1
Students' pre-test and post-test scores

Number of Test-Takers (TT)	Students	Scores	
		Pre-test	Post-test
31	S1 - S31	16 - 70	63 - 93
TOTAL		1,259	2,499
MEAN		40.61	80.60

S1 means Student-1 as Test-Taker no.1 up to S31 as Test-Taker no.31. The lowest score in Pre-test is 16, and the highest one is 70. Then, the lowest score in Post-test is 63, and the highest one is 90. So, the scores in earlier test range from 16 to 70. Meanwhile, the ones in latter test range from 63 to 93. The data indicate that the improvement of the vocabulary mastery does take place. Even, it is pointed out by the fact that the mean of the test changes much from 40.61 to 80.60. Connected with the success indicator of the vocabulary mastery score, ≥ 70 (Leighille, 2016), the majority of Test-Takers in Post-test has achieved such score (80.64%) – twenty five (25) students have passed the success indicator compared with the ones in Pre-test (9,68%) – only three students have passed the success indicator. In brief, it is precise to employ crossword puzzle as a learning medium on vocabulary mastery relative to Personal Recount Text.

These findings are in line with the study of teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzle (Puspita & Sabiqoh, 2017). In addition, they are in accord with the research on teaching English vocabulary using crossword puzzle game whose research participants are the seventh grade students (Anwar & Efransyah, 2018). Furthermore, they are in consonance with the studies on the implementation of crossword puzzle to enhance vocabulary mastery with divergent research participants and settings, that is the one in the fifth grade students of SDN, public school in Golo (Lestari & Yulia, 2018). Similarly, they are conformed to the findings revealed in Class Action Research (Saepuloh, Suryani, Diningsih, & Sulistiyani, 2022) In a divergent level of education, these are in unison in the studies conducted in Junior High School classes (Tambaritji & Atmawijaja, 2020; Nasrullah, Alfiany, & Hamdan, 2021). Additionally, in the overseas classroom setting, they are pursuant to the study concerning about the use of crossword puzzle as a vocabulary learning strategy; This is a case of English as a second language in secondary schools in Kenya (Njoroge, Ndung'u, & Gathigia, 2013). The last but not the least, back to Indonesian Education contexts, they are in the same manner of the study on mnemonic technique with crossword puzzle media impacting on teaching vocabulary (Pratiwi, 2018).

On the basis of the previously mentioned earlier research, that making use of crossword puzzle in the classroom as teaching vocabulary on Personal Recount Text pays off, for the results are identical to vocabulary mastery enhancement identified, particularly in this Class Action Research, in the better score discrepancy after the teacher's intervention is already conducted. Yet, feasible divergences may come up owing to a few such conditions as students' lack of responses, overcrowded classes in which the teachers have difficulties in controlling the class, their incompetence in classroom management, ambiguity of the instructions, etc.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that crossword puzzle be executed in vocabulary teaching learning proses on the grounds that it departs two core reasons. The first one is that it encourages positive classroom atmosphere in that students are well-motivated, thus enthusiastic to be engaged in learning vocabulary, particularly relative to Personal Recount text. Similarly, the vocabulary learning is such an enjoyable activity that it yields in the betterment of the vocabulary mastery scores. Hence, the other one is that the teacher's intervention, the researcher's decisive crossword puzzle employment does enhance students' vocabulary mastery owing to the improved mean on the vocabulary assessment, starting from 40.61 to 80.60 in addition to the majority of their achievement to gain success indicator (≥ 70) in Post-test. Such implies some benefits to at least three parties in that students' finding way to learning vocabulary enjoyably, teachers' repertoire of teaching vocabulary strategies, and other researchers' inspiration to keep on researching on the available gaps or missing facets on the topic desired. It is advisable that other text genres, puzzle tapestry, and discrepant learning contexts be further explored.

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