THE EFFECT OF HIDDEN WORDS GAME ON THE EFL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

Intan Panca Mirta
Universitas Muria Kudus
mirtaintan1pm@gmail.com

Fitri Budi Suryani
Universitas Muria Kudus
fitri.budi@umk.ac.id

Nuraeningsih
Universitas Muria Kudus
nuraeningsih@umk.ac.id

Abstract: Teaching vocabulary to EFL students in this era can be a challenging task regarding their characteristic as the millenial generation. That's why, the proper choice of media to teach is needed that will enable EFL students to learn vocabulary effectively. This study aims to find out if hidden words game application can increase English vocabulary mastery of the EFL students. The design of the research was quasi experimental using a single group model of pre-test and post-test. The population of the study was the seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Kudus with class D as the sample consisting of 32 students. The instrument of the research was multiple choice test. The research finding revealed that hidden words game application can increase the English vocabulary mastery of seventh graders.

Keywords: *hidden words game, EFL students, vocabulary mastery*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a signficant language component that must be understood by EFL students. Shen (2008) highlights that vocabulary is a very important element in language (p. 135). People can not practice their language without mastering their vocabulary. Low vocabulary mastery causes them to be difficult to state their ideas suitably. When people do not master vocabulary, they can not read and understand English well. Therefore, EFL students should get more vocabularies when they study English in their early age. Moeller, Ketsman and Masmaliyeva (2009) argue that learning and teaching vocabulary in second or foreign language is vital because it gives access for leaners to all forms of oral and written communication.

Teaching vocabulary to EFL students in this era can be a challenging task regarding their characteristic as the millenial generation. That's why, the proper choice of media like using game to teach vocabulary is needed that will enable the students to learn vocabulary effectively. Gozcu and Caganaga (2016) mention some advantages of using game in promoting learning the target language. They include decreasing the students' anxiety towards language learning, increasing positive feelings, and improving self-confidence. In addition, games enable the language learners to participate actively and at the same time acquire the target language unconsciously. However, Fudhla (2013, p.103) emphasizes that "language teachers should understand how and when language games are appropriate to be used".

Digital game is a media of teaching that can be an interesting alternative way to teach vocabulary for the millennial EFL students. It is a game running in electronic application in the form of game application. This application is liked by many young people, and can be downloaded in their smartphones. It can be played either online or offline. Derakhsan & Khatir (2015, p.40) state that "vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and

enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way." This is one of the solutions that can be used by teachers to help their students of the millennial era to master vocabulary.

Some previous studies show that the use of game can enhance students' vocabulary mastery. Orawiwatnakul (2013) reveals that learning vocabulary through crossword is the best way to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Masri and Najar (2014) report that the use of word games for teaching English vocabulary for primary students had a positive effect on students' English achievement. This is in line with Hidayat (2016) who indicates that word game helps students memorize vocabulary easily and motivate them to learn vocabulary. Nawayanti (2013) finds out that game can attract students' interest and improve their understanding on vocabulary. Rohmah (2014) also finds out that the use of whispering game is effective for teaching vocabulary to the eight grade students.

Generally, learning by using digital game is more interesting than by using non-digital game. According to Zin et al. (2009) "digital games, an interactive technology can foster learning process effectively and interestingly especially among young learners" (p. 322). Gross (2014) notes that such game can encourage student participation and maintain their contribution successfully. So, using digital game will give students an interesting learning experience as well as effective learning.

Most of the studies on game used non-digital game. Research on the use of digital game is still rarely conducted. This current study aims to find out if digital game, namely hidden words game application, can increase English vocabulary mastery of the seventh graders. *Hidden Words* game is one of the offline game applications to teach vocabulary in a fun way for students. Some of the benefits of using this game is that it can easily improve vocabulary and spelling skills. Moreover, it can improve concentration of the learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Game as a Teaching Media
Media is very important in teaching and learning process. Media makes teacher easier to explain the material and help the students to understand the learning. According to Clark (1994) "any necessary teaching method could be designed into a variety of media presentation" (p. 22).

There are some varieties of medium that can be used in teaching and learning process. Suparno in Manik and Christiani (2016) divide them into five types, namely non-projector viewing media, projector-viewing media, auditory media, audiovisual media, and game. Non-projector viewing media is the media that cannot be projected to other surface. The examples include flash card, and pictures. On the other hand, projector-viewing media belongs to the media that can be projected to other surface like LCD. Meanwhile, auditory media is defined as the teaching media that confides the message by sound. Tape, recorder, and CD are some examples of auditory medium. Audiovisual media is the teaching media which confides the message through around and also its picture or action can be seen following by its sound, for instance TV, VCD, and video. The last type, i.e., game includes the teaching media which is done by individual, group, or in pairs, for example puzzles and guessing the words. Nowadays, game has developed into digital game in the form of game application. It can be played either online or offline after downloading the game application.

The use of media in teaching and learning bring some benefits. The class atmosphere will be more interesting and relaxed which makes the students are easier to understand the material. In addition, the students will be more motivated to learn in the class. Nuryadi in

Nugraha (2017) list some benefits of using media such as interesting and fun for students, effective and efficient.

Game is a media of teaching consisting of an activity or system that has the fun nature and some rules, levels, and achievements. Rixon (1981) defines game as a closed activity that has a beginning and an end with a winner who defines the end of the game.

According to Silsupur (2017) "Games can help teachers to create contexts in which language is meaningful. Games can help teachers to make input comprehensible." (p. 84). Gozcu and Caganaga (2016) mention some advantages of using game in promoting learning the target language. They include decreasing the students' anxiety towards language learning, increasing positive feelings, and improving self-confidence. In addition, games enable the language learners to participate actively and at the same time acquire the target language unconsciously.

The games used as teaching medium can be divided into digital game and non-digital game. There are some games that can be used to teach English, such as jumbled-letter game. Fudhla (2013) states that "jumbled-letter game is a language game that requires the learner to arrange the alphabet letter into specific word. Jumbled-Letter game is a kind of language games that is appropriate to be applied in vocabulary teaching." (p. 103, 108). This game can appear in both non-digital game and digital game. In digital game, the jumbled-letter game is available in game application, namely hidden words game.

Hidden Words Game

Hidden words game is created by Mobigame Inc. it is a kind of digital games that can be played offline after the players download this game application. This game is fun, and easy to play. In this game, the player tries to find the words on a board that contain some letters. The player will guess the possible words that make the game more challenging.

This game is not only easy to play, but also very simple. To play it, the player can swipe up the letters in some ways like vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and even backwards to have a correct word. This game has more than 400 words to find. It is featured with enjoyable graphics. Moreover, it offers various levels from easy to hard. It also has bonus coins, time records, simple rules, and no time limit. When the player gets difficulty in finding the correct word, it gives hints to help the player. Hidden words game is easily downloaded in play store in the smartphone.

This game application can be an alternative way to teach vocabulary to EFL students. It provides a fun way for them to learn vocabulary and at the same time help improve their vocabulary mastery.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This present study aims to examine whether hidden words game application can increase English vocabulary mastery of the seventh grade students The method of this study is experimental research with the research design using a single group model of pre-test and post-test. The population of this research was the seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Kudus. The sample consisted of 32 students of class D.

The instrument used in this study was multiple choice test. The test contained 20 questions with four options of answer. To maintain the reliability of the instrument, the try out test was administered. The try out test was given to class C and the result indicated that the intrument is reliable.

To collect the data, the pretest and posttest were given to the students. The pretest was given before the treatment, whereas the posttest was given after the treatment. The treatment was done by teaching the seventh grade students using Hidden Words game application.

The data were then analysed using statistical calculation. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were applied to analyse the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting the treatment, the pre-test was given to the seventh graders of class D as the sample to get the students' vocabulary mastery data score. The pre-test data score can be presented as follows:
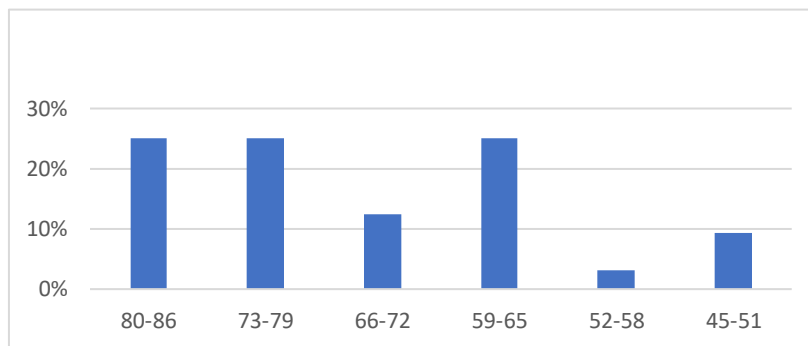
Figure 4.1 The Bar Chart of The Vocabulary Mastery in Seventh Graders of SMPN 2 Kudus Before Being Taught by Using Hidden Words Game Application

According to the pre-test calculation result, the maximum score is 85 and the minimum score is 45 with the mean is 70.1 and the standard deviation is 7.85. It means that the English vocabulary mastery of the seventh graders of SMPN 2 Kudus before being taught by using hidden words game application is sufficient.

After giving the treatment, i.e. teaching vocabulary by using hidden words game, the post-test was conducted and the data showed that the maximum score is 90 and the minimum score is 65. The mean score is 80 with the standard deviation is 6.1. Therefore, the vocabulary mastery of the seventh grade students is categorized good. The data can be seen in the following bar chart:
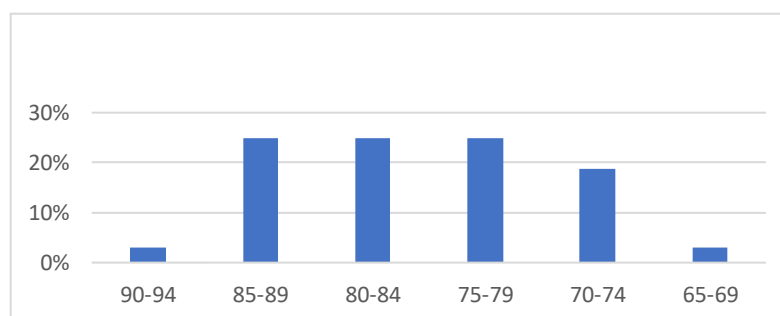
Figure 4.2 The Bar Chart of The Vocabulary Mastery in Seventh Graders of SMPN 2 Kudus After Being Taught by Using Hidden Words Game Application

To find out the effectiveness of hidden word game on the students' vocabulary mastery, the t-test analysis was conducted. The data analysis showed that $t0 = 6.58$ with t-critical 2.042 $(\alpha) = 0.05$ (two tailed) and with degree of freedom (df) = 31. So, H_0 was rejected and Ha was accepted because t0 falls into the critical region. It means that there is a significant difference between the English vocabulary mastery of the seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Kudus before being taught by using hidden words game and that after being taught by using hidden words game.

Teaching vocabulary to EFL students needs an interesting way in order not only to catch the students' attention, but also help to increase their vocabulary mastery. Before implementing the game, most seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Kudus learned vocabulary by memorizing words they read in dictionary. It makes the students feel difficult to remember the vocabulary especially when they leave the class. Moreover, it makes the students feel bored. Fudhla (2013) suggests that "the teacher should provide vocabulary which avoiding vocabulary list memorization" (p.102).

The use of hidden words game to teach vocabulary can be an interesting alternative way as Silsupur (2017) notes that "games can help teachers to create contexts in which language is meaningful. Games can help teachers to make input comprehensible." (p. 84). In addition, Gozcu and Caganaga (2016) explain that game can reduce the students' anxiety towards language learning, increase positive feelings, and improve self-confidence of students. Games also enable the language learners to participate actively and at the same time acquire the target language unconsciously. The use of game specifically in teaching vocabulary will make the students remember the new vocabulary in the target language easily (Fudhla, 2013).

Hidden word game is a kind of jumbled-letter game application which requires the player to find the words on a board that contain some letters. The players are required to guess the possible words that make the game more challenging. Moreover, this game is very simple but fun because the player can swipe up the letters in vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and even backwards to have a correct word. This game has more than 400 words to find, enjoyable graphics, the various levels from easy to hard, bonus coins, time records, simple rules, no time limit, and hints to help the player. Hidden Words game is easily downloaded in play store in the smartphone.

With such features, hidden words has already firstly attracted the EFL students in the seventh grade to learn vocabulary. In addition, the seventh grader students are the millenial generation that are familiar with the use of technology like smartphone. The game itself offers a fun and interesting way for them to learn vocabulary that keeps away boredom. This condition could grow their motivation and interest in learning vocabulary. Finally, this will enhance their vocabulary.

The result of this present study reveals that hidden word game application is effective in increasing the seventh grade students' vocabulary mastery. This is in line with Orawiwatnakul (2013) who explains that the language game is the best way to increase students' vocabulary mastery. It provides the students a real world context into the classroom as well as a flexible communicative way in learning vocabulary (Derakhsan & Khatir, 2015). Hidden words game helps EFL students to memorize vocabulary in an easy way. Furthermore,

they do such activity in a fun and interesting way. Hidden words game, thus, offers a suitable teaching media to teach vocabulary to EFL students in this millenial era.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research result shows that there is significant difference between the English vocabulary mastery in seventh graders of SMPN 2 Kudus before being taught by using hidden words *g*ame application and that after being taught by using hidden words *g*ame application. Therefore, hidden words game application is an effective teaching media to increase the English vocabulary mastery of seventh graders. Some benefits of the use of language game makes the students learn vocabulary easily and in a fun way. As a result, they can improve their vocabulary mastery.

Based on the findings, teachers are suggested to use language game like hidden words game application to teach vocabulary to EFL students. The characteristics of EFL students in this millenial era will fit the use of language game in the form of game application so that they will master vocabulary as expected. Hidden words game is also recommended for students who feel difficult to master the vocabulary, because it can help the students to increase their score in vocabulary test. Moreover, hidden words game application consists of vocabulary which is needed by the students. Hidden words game has many levels that can be used for all levels of students. Hence, hidden words game is appropriate media for EFL students to improve their vocabulary mastery.

REFERENCES

Clark, R. E. (1994). Media Will Never Influence Learning. *ETR&D*. 2(2), 21-29.

Derakhsan, A., and Khatir, E. D. (2015). The Effects of Using Games on English Vocabulary Learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*. 2(3), 39-47.

Fudhla, N. (2013). Enhancing Student's Vocabulary by Using Jumbled-Letter Game in English Language Teaching. *Lingua Didaktika*. 6(2), 102-108.

Gozcu, E & Caganaga, C.K. (2016). The Importance of Using Gmaes in EFL Classroom. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 11(3), 126-135.

Gros, B. (2014). Digital Games in Education, The Design of Games-Based Learning Environments. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 40 (1), 23-38.

Hidayat, N. (2016). Improving Students' Vocabulary Achievement through Word Game. *Journal of Educators Society*, 1(2), 95-104.

Manik, S., Christiani, M. (2016). Teaching Vocabulary Using Matching Word on Computer Assisted, Language Learning. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*. 4(7), 1-26.

Masri, A. A., and Najar, M. A. (2014). The Effect of Using Word Games on Primary Stage Students Achievement in English Language Vocabulary in Jordan. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*. 4(9), 144-152.

Moeller, A., Ketsman, O., & Masmaliyeva, L. (2009) The Essentials of Vocabulary Teaching: From Theory to Practice. *Diverse by Design*. Central States Conference Report. Pp 1-16. Carolyn Guiscoigne and Melanie Bloom, EditorsEau Claire, WI: Crown Prints.

Nawayanti, R. (2013). *The Effectiveness of Touch and Go Game in Teaching Vocabulary*. (Undergraduate Thesis, Walisongo State Institute for Islamic Studies). http://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/1733/1/093411048_Coverdll.pdf.

Nugraha, F.F. (2017). Interactive Multimedia Use of Games Model on IPS School Study List. *Journal of Elementary Education*. 1(1), 17-24.

Orawiwatnakul, W. (2013). Crossword Puzzles as a Learning Tool for Vocabulary Development. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*. 11(2), 413-428.

Rixon, S. (1981). How to use games in language teaching. London: Macmillan.

Rohmah, O. N. (2014). *The Effectiveness of Whispering Game to Teach Vocabulary*. (Undergraduate Thesis, Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto). http://repository.ump.ac.id/1232/1/Oktaviana%20Nur%20Rohmah_COVER.pdf

Shen, Z. (2008). The Roles of Depth and Breadth of Vocabulary Knowledge in EFL Reading Perfomance. *Asian Social Science*. 4(12), 135-137.

Silsupur, B. (2017). Does Using Language Games Affect Vocabulary Learning in EFL Classes? *Journal of Foreign Language Education and Technology*. 2(1), 83-104.

Zin, N. A. M. et al. (2009). Digital Game-based learning (DGBL) Model and Development Methodology for Teaching History. *Wseas Transactions On Computers*. 8(2), 322-333.

64