DEVELOPING SNAKE AND LADDER GAME BOARD AS A MEDIA TO TEACH ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to develop Snake and Ladder game as a media to teach vocabulary to elementary students. This study used the R&D cycles from Borg and Gall (1983), i.e. (1) need analysis, (2) product development, (3) try out, (4) product revision, and (5) final product. The product is a set of board game called Giant Snake and Ladder. The product was tried out in 5b class SDN Percobaan 1 Malang. The result of the try out indicates that the game is suitable for learning vocabulary since it involves physical movement and group work. The students also learn some new vocabularies through this game. The materials of the vocabulary cards deal with post office, bank, and hotel.

Key Words: vocabulary, elementary students, board game

Vocabulary is the language resource, students have to know vocabularies to produce sentences. Thus, the young English learners in elementary school need to build up their vocabularies of the target language. Cameron (2007:73) states that words are the key unit in building up skills and knowledge. Therefore, students need to master English vocabularies in the primary level. In addition to the importance of vocabulary, Chapelle and Jamieson as stated in Setyawan (2011:1) say that vocabulary is the most important subject for the students to learn.

Considering the importance of learning vocabulary, teachers, parents, or the young learners’ facilitators should be able to find a meaningful and enjoyable way to facilitate vocabulary learning for young learners. Cameron (2007:1) states that children lose interest more quickly and less able to keep their motivation when they find a task which is too difficult for them. In addition to the nature of children characteristic in learning, Harmer (2007:82) believes that children can be easily bored and lose interest after ten minutes or so. Thus, in teaching young learners the facilitators should be able to carry out the language lesson along with the activities that are meaningful, fun and interesting for the learners.

Game is one of the media that can be used to teach vocabulary to young learners. O’Dell and Head (2003:4) state that games play a very important role in vocabulary learning because they provide an enjoyable way of reentering words and they also give the students opportunity to use the word in a memorable context. Huyen and Nga (2003) also say that games contribute to vocabulary learning and a chance to learn, practice and to review the English language in a pleasant atmosphere. In addition, game is good to build the children’s characteristics. According to Talak (2010:11), games are fun activities that promote interaction, thinking, learning, and problem solving strategies. The young learners can learn about healthy competition or fair play, since they must follow the instruction and the rule of the game. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have a game which is meaningful. It means that games are used not only for fun, but to
bring the target language to life, to review language lessons, and to facilitate the reluctant children to speak and communicate actively.

Games such as board games can be offered as an instructional media to teach English for young learners, especially the elementary school. Snake and Ladder is one of the examples of board games. It is a popular board game around the world. Snake and Ladder facilitates the students to learn about counting, life, interaction and socialization. In this game, implicitly, the elementary students can learn about up and down in life or about joys and troubles. Ladders represent “the up life and joy”, while the existence of the snakes represent “the down in life or trouble”. In addition, the young learners also learn about fair play, patience, and how to take turn.

However, this game is not really good for learning English vocabulary since this game does not have a lot of instruction dealing with English learning. This game is only enjoyable but less meaningful in language learning. Based on that reason, the researcher decided to develop the Snake and Ladders game so that it can be used as a media to build and reinforce the elementary students’ vocabulary mastery as well as develop their ability to socialize with their friends by playing and working together in a team or group.

METHOD

The design of this study is research and development which follows the R&D cycles which were presented by Borg and Gall (1983). The flow chart of the R&D cycles by Borg and Gall was presented through figure 1.

![Figure 1 The flow chart of R&D cycles Borg and Gall (1983)](image)

The need analysis was done by analyzing the syllabus of the fifth grade of elementary school for the second semester in SDN Percobaan I Malang and doing classroom observation. Based on the syllabus, the themes which were discussed in
the second semester were post office, bank, hotel, at the plaza, weekend, and telling time. Due to the limitation of the time, this product only covered three themes, i.e. post office, bank, and hotel. From the observation and the result of the teacher interview, it was found that the students really need a media that could facilitate the students to work in group so that the low achievement students could learn from the higher achievement students. Then, the product was developed based on the result of the need analysis. The product development covers four procedural steps: (1) Materials selection, (2) Designing the lay-out of the game, (3) Expert Validation, (4) Revision. The materials were selected and developed based on the themes presented in the syllabus and the words were mainly chosen from the students’ text book entitled English for Kids, published by Dinas Pendidikan Kota Malang. The design of the game included the appearance of the board, the dice, the tokens, and the play guide. After developing the preliminary form of the product, the next step was doing expert validation. The result of the expert validation showed that the material or the content of the vocabulary cards were suitable for the fifth graders. The font and the font size were interesting and readable. The pictures and the colors used were also suitable and interesting for male and female students. The design of the board and the material used in printing the board were suitable for elementary students. The play guide and the answer key were easy to be understood. The tokens used in this board game were very unique and interesting. However, the expert also gave some criticism and feedbacks about the product, i.e. the board of the game should be printed larger, the teacher should explain some rules in the play guide by using bahasa Indonesia to help the students understand the rules, the dice should be made neater, the vocabulary cards should be laminated. For overall opinion, the expert said that this board game was suitable for the fifth graders. Then, the revision was done based on the feedback from the expert. In order to obtain the empirical validation and also to check whether or not the product under development could be accepted by the students and the teacher, the try out was done. Interview guide and questionnaire were used in the try out to obtain the data from the teacher. The data from the teacher would be used as the base of final revision. Meanwhile, questionnaire was used to obtain the data from the students. The student questionnaire focused on whether or not the students like this game and whether or not the students could learn English vocabulary easier through this game. In addition, field note was also used to record the condition of the class when the product try out was done. Finally, the final revision was done based on the feedbacks which were obtained in the product try out. The result of the revision became the final product of this study.

FINDINGS

The results of data analysis were separated into three sub point, (1) teacher interview, (2) teacher questionnaire, (3) students questionnaire, (4) observation. The details description of each result was as follows.

Teacher Interview

The English teacher was asked to explain her opinion about the board game under study. The teacher said that this game was suitable for the fifth graders in SD Negeri Percobaan I Malang, since the rules of the game were applicable for the students. The students could understand and follow the rules
easily after the teacher explained the rules at the beginning of the lesson. Related to the game’s equipment, the teacher said that the play guide was understandable for the teacher and the answer key was easy to be used. The tokens were suitable for the students as the shape were very cute and colorful. The dice size was suitable with the board of the game size. Besides, the color of the dice was eye catching and interesting. However, the board of the game should be printed larger because it was too small for eleven groups’ students. The teacher said that the pictures of two kids named “Dona and Doni” printed on the board were too big. The pictures should be smaller, so, the size of the squares could be designed bigger. The colors which were used in all game equipments were good since the colors were suitable for male and female students. The colors were neither too masculine nor too girly.

Related to the vocabulary cards, the teacher said that the vocabulary cards’ materials were suitable for the fifth graders of SD Negeri Percobaan I Malang. Yet, the vocabulary cards should be printed bigger so that all the students in one group could read it easier at one time.

Overall, the teacher liked this game because this game involved physical movement. Therefore, the students were not easily getting bored. Through this game the students could learn while playing and communicating with their group in English.

**Teacher Questionnaire**

Based on the result of the questionnaire, Giant Snake and Ladder was a good game for elementary students because this game facilitated learning with physical movement so that the students were not becoming bored so easily. Then, this game also gave the students chance to work in group so that the low achievement students could learn from the higher achievement students. However, this game could not facilitate the learning process of the special needs student in 5b, since the instructions and the problems written in the vocabulary card were too difficult to be understood by him.

**Students Questionnaire**

The number of the students who joined try out was 42. The result of the students’ questionnaire was figured through the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The students like Giant Snake and Ladder.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The students find new vocabularies through Giant Snake and Ladder.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The vocabulary learning through Giant Snake and Ladder is easier.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Giant Snake and Ladder is easy to be played.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A hundred percent of the students or 42 students who join try out like the game. They liked the game because it involved group work. By working in group they could play with their friends, learn how to cooperate, and they could learn how to take turn. Then, the students stated that they could improve the vocabulary and reviewing the previous material by playing this game. In addition, the students also interested in the game board’s design and rules, i.e. the tokens, the
giant dice, the giant board, and the vocabulary cards. They stated that the rule and the design of the game was challenging and promoted relaxed learning.

Related to the vocabulary improvement, twenty students or 71 percent of the students found new vocabularies through this game. Meanwhile, twelve students or nineteen percent of the students did not find new vocabularies through this game.

The questionnaire also tried to reveal whether or not the students felt that learning vocabulary through this game was easier for them. In figure two, description number three indicated that only twelve percent of the whole students or five students out of 42 students did not think that learning vocabulary by playing Giant Snake and Ladder was easier. In their opinion, Giant Snake and Ladder, was only an enjoyable game that could not facilitate vocabulary learning. Meanwhile, 88 percent of the students or 37 students thought that learning English vocabulary through Giant Snake and Ladder is easier for them because they could learn while playing with their friends so that they could understand more easily.

The last point of the questionnaire tried to find out the game’s level of difficulty from the students’ point of views. From figure two description number four, only twelve percent of the whole students or five students out of 42 students thought that this game was difficult. They thought it was difficult because the questions on the vocabulary cards were too difficult for them and the time limit to answer the questions was too short. On the other hand, 88 percent of the whole students or 37 students out of 42 students thought that this game was easy to be played, since the rules were simple, they already familiar with the game, and the number of difficult and easy questions on the vocabulary cards were balance.

In conclusion, through the students’ questionnaire, Giant Snake and Ladder could be used as a media for vocabulary teaching as almost all of the students loved this game. Then, they also found new vocabularies through this game. Most of the students also thought that learning vocabulary through this game was easier and enjoyable because they could study and play at the same time. In addition, most of the students loved the equipments of the game, such as, the giant board, the giant dice, the tokens, and the vocabulary cards. The giant board and dice was attractive because those things facilitated physical movement, the students could walk on the board and throw the giant dice. The students also interested in the tokens, since the tokens were cute and colorful. At last, based on the students’ opinion the vocabulary cards were good because the numbers of easy and difficult questions were balance. They also could play the game in group so that they learned about cooperative work.

**The Result of Classroom Observation**

The try out was held at the school’s auditorium. First, the teacher divided the class into eleven groups. Nine groups consisted of four students, while two groups consisted of three students. Then, the teacher explained the rules of the game to the students by using English mix with bahasa Indonesia. After that, the teacher asked the students to choose their own tokens.

From the observation, it was found that the students really enjoyed the game. They tried to answer the questions printed in the vocabulary cards together with their own groups. The students also loved the tools of the game. At the first time they saw the game’s equipment they said that the tokens were cute, the dice’s color was interesting, and the board pictures and colors were attractive.
The obstacle was appeared when the students could not step on the board game easily because the thirty squares in the board of the game was too small for eleven students. Then, the vocabulary cards’ sizes were also too small, since they have to read it together with the members of their group at one time.

**The Revision**

From the result of data analysis, the biggest problem of Giant Snake and Ladder was on the appearance of the board and the vocabulary cards. The English teacher said that the thirty squares on the board were too small because the pictures of the two kids and the dialogue’s bubbles were too big, (see appendix 1, figure 1). Therefore, based on the English teacher’s suggestions, some revisions were done related to the design of the board. The picture of two elementary students and the dialogue’s bubbles were made smaller so that the size of the squares could be enlarged, (see appendix 1, figure 2).

In addition to the board of the game’s revision, the appearance of the vocabulary cards was also revised because based on the teacher opinion and the observation the students could not read the instructions clearly, since the size of the cards were too small.

The vocabulary card before revision had some qualifications. The qualifications were as follow, (1) width 10 cm and height 8 cm, (2) the font type was Kristen ITC (3) the font size was 18pt, (see appendix 2, figure 1).

In consideration with the feedback that the size of the card was too small, some improvements were made in term of the size of the cards and the font size. The size of the cards after revision was 16,5 cm X 13 cm. Then, the font size was 48 pt. However, the researcher did not change the font type because based on the data obtained in the try out the font type was already readable and suitable for the students, (see appendix 2, figure 2).

**The Final Product**

The final product was developed through modification and revision based on the needs of the students, and the English teacher’s feedbacks.

The final product of this study was named Giant Snake and Ladder. It consisted of some interesting tools, (1) board of the game, (2) giant dice, (3) tokens, (4) a set of vocabulary cards, (5) answer key, (6) play guide. All the tolls which were used in Giant Snake and Ladder were user friendly and safe for children. The board of the game was printed in flexi fronlite. The size was 3m x 3m. Then, the size of the dice was 10 cm x 10cm x 10cm. The dice was made from duplex paper and painted with acrylic painting color. The tokens were made from the same material as the giant dice. The set of vocabulary cards were printed in art paper.

The final version of vocabulary cards in Giant Snake and Ladder consisted of three themes, post office, bank, and hotel. The vocabulary tasks were in the form of anagram, making simple sentence, guessing word through picture, and guessing word through some clues.

**DISCUSSION**

As mentioned before, the purpose of this research was to develop a board game for vocabulary teaching for the fifth graders of SDN Percobaan 1 Malang. By playing this game the students could experience learning and playing at one time.
The final product of this study was a package of a board game named Giant Snake and Ladder which contained some equipment, a board of the game, a dice, eleven tokens, a set of vocabulary cards, play guide, and answer key.

Giant Snake and Ladder promoted a very enjoyable learning because the rules were designed to facilitate physical movement. The elementary students could step and move around the board, they also could throw the giant dice. Elementary students were active learner, their motivations and interest in learning English increased because Giant Snake and Ladder allowed the student to have a lot of movements. Suyanto (2007:17) said that children or young learners were very active and imaginative, they liked to learn by game, story, or song to kill their boredom.

In addition, Giant Snake and Ladder also chance the students to experience group work. By working in group the students could learn about cooperative work to achieve the final goal. In Giant Snake and Ladder each group must work together to solve the problem printed in the vocabulary card. Group work encouraged the students to negotiate and have discussion with their group to make a strategy or an agreement. It was in line with Lewis and Bedson (1999:6) that group work allowed the students to learn how to achieve consensus in a small group. Besides, through cooperative learning the low achievement students could learn from the higher achievement students. Suyanto (2007:94) said that children could learn from their friends through cooperative learning. The most important thing was, group work encouraged the students to think how to behave and use their language skill strategically when they had discussion with their group’s members.

However, at the last meeting of the try out the researcher found out that a student with special need in that class could not play the game because his group did not let him to be the token’s mover. He did not shake the dice or step on the board. Therefore, the researcher believed that young learners needed a game that gave them chances to work in group. Students must learn how to appreciate others rights and how to work in group since they were very young, so they would grow up as good and sociable humans. Children should learn that they might not discriminate another person just because he/she has disability. According to Harmer (2007:166), group work could develop a sense of belonging among friends.

Beside physical movement and group work, through the result of the tried out, it was found that the students loved Giant Snake and Ladder because it had unique equipment, for instances, the larger board, the tokens, and the dice. Besides, the students also loved this game because they had already familiar with Snake and Ladder Game’s rules and regulations. Therefore, the majority of the students did not have any difficulties in following the rules of Giant Snake and Ladder since some of the rules are the same as the original Snake and Ladder. This is in line with Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby statement (2006:4), to minimize the difficulty it is essential that the learners be familiar with the game in their own language.

Giant Snake and Ladder gave a very simple understanding about fortunate and unfortunate events in our life. As mentioned previously, Snake and Ladder game tried to introduce up and down in life through the presence of snakes and ladders. The snakes represented the unfortunate events in life while the ladders
represented the fortunate events. The students had to know that they would experience both happiness and sadness in their life so they must be able to face both conditions.

The final result shows that Giant Snake and Ladder could be used as the media to teach vocabulary, since the majority of the students totally liked the media. Thus the board game could help the students to learn vocabulary in an enjoyable way as the students love to study through game.

On the other hand, Giant Snake and Ladder Jr. also had some weaknesses. This game could not be played in a narrow room. Then, Giant Snake and Ladder was quite hard to be applied in a big class, since it required a very good classroom management. The teacher must be able to control the condition of the class when the students played this game. Thus, this game also very challenging for the teacher.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The suggestions are given to the English teacher who is willing to use Giant Snake and Ladder as media for vocabulary building and the future researchers who want to conduct a study to develop this game. The suggestions for the English teacher are as follows.

1. Giant Snake and Ladder is more suitable to be played outside classroom.
2. The teacher can change the material in the vocabulary cards. He/she can adjust the content based on the students needs and he/she do not need to reprint the board since the board is usable for any topic.
3. Giant Snake and Ladder can be used to introduce fortunate and unfortunate events that happen in the students’ lives. Thus, after playing the game, the teacher can try to stimulate the students by giving some questions, such as “What do you learn from this game?” or other questions, so that the students can conclude what they have learned from this game.
4. The teacher can modify the tokens’ shape based on the students’ preference.

In addition to the suggestions for the teacher, there are some suggestions given to the future researcher. The suggestions for the future researcher were as follows.

1. Further development of the Giant Snake and Ladder is advisable to be carried out in order to develop a game which will function for assessing language skills like, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
2. Giant Snake and Ladder needs more variation in term of types of topics, exercises, and rules. Thus, further researcher can develop Giant Snake and Ladder with more challenging topics, exercise, and rules.
3. Future researcher may also conduct a study to find out the effectiveness of Giant Snake and Ladder on the teaching and learning vocabulary.
4. Future researcher can also conduct a study to develop board game for the disability students. Thus, students with disability can learn by using attractive media which are suitable for them

REFERENCES


Appendix 1

Figure 1 Board before revision

Figure 2 Board after revision
Figure 1 Vocabulary card before revision

Figure 2 Vocabulary card after revision