USING ENGLISH SONG MEMORIZATION TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE SEVENTH GRADERS’ MASTERY OF VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT: This classroom action research study aims at improving seventh graders’ vocabulary using English song memorization. The subjects were 41 seventh graders (F-class) at SMPN 7 Malang. Data collected through interview guide, observation checklists, field notes, vocabulary tests, and questionnaire. Analysis shows that in Cycle II students’ vocabulary mastery increased and met the criteria of success where 75% of them scored better than or equal to 75. Results of vocabulary test in Cycle I showed that 46.1% of students scored well. In Cycle II, 95% of students scored higher than or equal to 75, which indicated success.

Keywords: English songs memorization, students’ vocabulary mastery

Vocabulary is considered as an important language component because it can support the learners’ ability in developing language skills (Lado. 1979:50). In line with Lado, Cameron (2001: 72) emphasized the importance of vocabulary learning especially for children who learn a foreign language. She stated that vocabulary learning can serve as a stepping stone to learning and using grammar. Thus, it can be stated that vocabulary learning is also important to be conducted in the classroom.

The problem of vocabulary mastery concerned the researcher during her internship in SMPN 7 Malang. Based on her observation of the seventh graders at SMPN 7 Malang in the first semester of 2011-1012, the students had problem in memorizing and understanding vocabulary. They easily forgot some new words that the teacher taught and sometimes they could not remember how to pronounce the it, not to mention meaning of it. Furthermore, based on her interview with the VII-F graders in the first meeting of her internship, she found that most of the students did not like English subject because they found that English is difficult for it challenged them with lots of unfamiliar words. This shows that their tendency to repel the subject of English was caused by their lack of vocabulary. Thus, the researcher thinks that their English teachers needed to find better technique to make learning vocabulary more enjoyable.

In order to gain more information about students’ problem in mastering vocabulary, the researcher gave a vocabulary pre-test to the VII-F graders on 31 January 2013 before implementing the action. From the result of the pre-test, it was
found that there was only 2.63% (1 out of 38 students) who scored higher than or equal to 75 based on the minimum standard of learning mastery in the school, while the other 97.37% out of 38 students failed to pass the minimum standard. Students’ lack of vocabulary encouraged the researcher to conduct a Classroom Action research to solve the problem and help the students improve their vocabulary mastery by using English songs memorization technique.

Based on the prevailing theories and the real problems discovered in situ, the researcher suggests that the teachers can use songs as a tool to teach vocabulary in order to support students’ skill development. It is believed that memorizing songs are not only interesting for students but the songs can also help them to learn vocabulary more easily. Previous studies have shown the use of English songs as an enjoyable and effective approach to English language teaching (ELT). Here are some expert’s statements related with songs and vocabulary.

Shen (2009) stated some criteria why English songs can be an impeccable tool for language teaching. This is because songs have: kaleidoscopes of culture, expressiveness, recitability, and therapeutic functions. It can be assumed that English songs can provide the opportunity for vocabulary practice. They are usually based around a theme or topic that can provide the context for vocabulary learning. In order to enlarge student’s vocabulary, teacher needs to help them to ease the way.

Songs will be a good choice, because according to Millington (2011), songs play an important role in the development young children learning a second language. In addition, most children enjoy singing songs, and the songs can often be a variety from the routine of learning the foreign language. Thus, the researcher is interested in using English songs to improve student’s ability in mastering vocabulary.

The researcher is interested in using English songs to improve student’s ability in mastering vocabulary. Student’s motivation in learning English will increase if teachers use enjoyable approaches in their instruction. Then, the high motivation can ease students’ learning. In her study, Setia (2012) tried to find the effectiveness of using songs in teaching English language to primary school student. She discovered that the use of songs not only helps the students to improve their language proficiency, but it also stimulates and increases the students’ interest to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process. Additionally, songs can accelerate students’ confidence, learning ability and skill when activities are highly motivated and memorable.

Lado (1979:121-125) explains some steps that can be involved in teaching
vocabulary to the students as follows: (1) hearing the words, (2) pronouncing the words, and (3) grasping the meaning. Since English songs memorization technique required the students to do those three steps, the researcher choose this technique to solve the students’ vocabulary mastery problem.

Maess et al. quoted in Setia (2012:271) state that neurologist have also found that musical and language processing occur in the same area of the brain, and there appear to be parallels in how musical and linguistic syntax are processed. So that, utilizing English songs memorization which has a musical melody as a technique in language teaching can help the students to ease their process of learning, in this case in vocabulary learning.

In this study, the researcher applied English songs memorization to teach vocabulary as the technique that was expected to solve the students’ vocabulary mastery problem. English songs memorization technique was a technique in which the students should memorize an English song selected by the teacher based on the syllabus used by SMPN 7 Malang. The students are supposed to learn about descriptive text and procedure text. Thus, the English songs’ themes were about those two kinds of texts. To use the English songs memorization technique, the teacher provided the materials from the internet which are some videos of the songs used. The number of the English songs that should be memorized was about 2 to 4 songs. Every song contained some vocabulary focused that should be mastered by the students through memorizing the songs. The good point of English songs memorization is that it allows the learners to repeat and memorize the songs. It could be a contributive technique to vocabulary learning, because Nation (2005) stated that vocabulary needs to be met again and again to ensure it is learned. Also, through songs learners can also repeat words and phrases spontaneously (Slattery, 2001). Thus, it can be considered that English songs memorization is helpful to promote vocabulary learning.

Based on the background of the study, the formulation of the research problem is: how can the use of English songs memorization technique improve the seventh grader’s mastery of vocabulary at SMPN 7 Malang?

METHOD

This study was conducted at SMPN 7 Malang, involving 41 students with 20 females and 21 males of class VII-F in academic year of 2013/2014. This study uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The design is done in repeated cycles adapted
from Kemmis and McTaggert (1988). Each cycle consists of four steps: (1) planning of action, (2) implementing the action, (3) observing the action and (4) reflecting the action. The explanation of each stage will be presented in the following parts.

**Planning**

In the planning stage, the researcher prepared the research instruments, designed the lesson plans, selected the English songs, set the criteria of success and made the research schedule. The English songs used in this study were about descriptive and procedural text.

**Implementing**

In this stage, the researcher act as a teacher who implement the action, while the classroom English teacher take a role as an observer who observe the action implementation.

The action was implemented in two cycles. Each cycle was conducted in two meeting for the English songs implementation and one meeting for post test of vocabulary mastery. In the Cycle I, the researcher implemented two songs which are *Washy Washy Clean* (topic of procedure text) and *Three Little Birds* (topic of descriptive text). Then, the post-test in Cycle I was conducted on February 9th 2013. In Cycle II, the English songs implemented were *People in Town* (topic of descriptive text) and *Edelweiss* (topic of descriptive text). Then, the post-test in Cycle II was conducted on February 23rd 2013. Each vocabulary post-test consists of 20 numbers in the form of multiple choices. The questions related to the vocabulary items taught in every topic in each cycle.

There are several steps made in implementing the English songs memorization technique. The steps are: (1) introduce the song by playing the song video and/or singing the song by the teacher, (2) ask the students to do listening exercise given in the students’ worksheet and discusses the answer together, (3) lead the students to sing the song line by line until the students could memorize the song and could sing independently, and (4) lead the students to sing the song together with several fun supportive activities, for example: playing games, acting out the songs, and singing for group or individual competition.
Observing

In this study, the observation of the students’ mastery of new vocabulary was done to get the data on how well the implementation of English songs memorization technique can achieve the goal of the study. In this observation stage, the researcher collected the data related to the action implementation using some instruments. The first is the observation checklist that is filled by the observer. The second is the field notes made by the teacher. Those two instruments were used to gain the data related to the students’ participation. The third is the result of vocabulary test done by the students in the end of each cycle, it aimed at gaining data about the students’ vocabulary mastery. The fourth is the result of questionnaire given to the students in the end of the research, it aimed at finding information about the students’ response to the use of English songs memorization technique.

Reflection

Reflecting stage dealt with the activity to reflect the implementation of the action during a cycle which was obtained through the results of the observations. The researcher reflected the data from the implementation of English songs memorization technique in the teaching and learning process. The result then compared to the criteria of success designed. The study was stopped if the criteria of success were achieved. If it is unsuccessful, the researcher would improve the strategy based on the problem during the teaching and learning process and continue the study to the next cycle.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section describes the findings of this research. It includes the students’ vocabulary mastery, the students’ participation and the students’ response to the use of English songs memorization technique.

The Students’ Vocabulary Mastery

The researcher compared the result of three vocabulary test (pre-test in preliminary study and post test in two cycles) with the criterion of success. The criteria of success were at least 75% of the students achieve mark higher than or equal to 75. The comparison of the students’ achievement on vocabulary test in
the preliminary study, Cycle I and Cycle II were summarized in Figure 3.1:

![Figure 3.1](image)

The figure above is presented in order to show the improvement of students’ vocabulary mastery from the beginning up to the end of the study. The red color of the chart represents the number of students who get score lower than 75 which is considered failed, while the blue one represents the number of students who get score higher than or equal to 75.

In the preliminary study, there was only 1 student (2.6%) achieve mark 75. This result proved that the students were really lack of vocabulary and need to be helped to improve their vocabulary mastery. In Cycle I, the students who achieve mark higher than or equal to 75 were only 46.1% (18 out of 39 students). It was improved but still considered unsatisfactory yet, because it could not meet the criteria of success in the vocabulary mastery of the students. In Cycle II, there were 95% students (38 out of 40 students) who achieved score higher than or equal to 75. This result was really pleasing and showed the students’ improvement. Thus, it can be concluded that the study of the English songs implementation could effectively improve the students’ vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the study was stopped at Cycle II.

*The Students’ Participation to the Use of English Songs Memorization Technique in the Teaching and Learning Activity at the Classroom.*

This information was gained from the observation checklist and field notes. The detail information of the students’ participation will be explained based on the three
criteria measured in the observation checklist, i.e.: (1) the students’ participation in the English songs’ introduction part, (2) the students’ participation in the English songs’ discussion part, (3) the students’ participation in the singing practice part. The score used in the observation checklist is in a range of 1 up to 4. Score 1 and 2 are considered as failed, because score 1 is a poor level which represent that only 0% - 25% of the students participate. And score 2 is a fair level which represent that only 26% - 50% of the students participate in the classroom activity. Otherwise, score 3 and 4 are considered as successful, because score 3 is a good level which represent that 51% - 75% of the students participate action. Score 4 is a very good level which represents that 76% - 100% of the students participated in the activity.

The students’ participation in the English songs’ introduction part can be measured by using three indicators, i.e.: (a) the students listen to the song carefully, (b) the students enjoy the song and do the exercise given excitedly and (c) the students have a strong willing to answer the questions from the listening exercise given. The summary of the result on this first indicator is presented in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 The Students’ Participation in the English Songs’ Introduction Part</th>
<th>C1M1</th>
<th>C1M2</th>
<th>C2M1</th>
<th>C2M2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>(c)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
- C1M1 = Cycle 1, 1st meeting
- C1M2 = Cycle 1, 2nd meeting
- C2M1 = Cycle 2, 1st meeting
- C2M2 = Cycle 2, 2nd meeting

1 = П = 0%-25% of the students do
2 = F = 26%-50% of the students do
3 = G = 51%-75% of the students do
4 = VG = 76%--100% of the students do

The students’ participation in the English songs’ discussion part can be measured by using three indicators, i.e.: (d) the students actively answer the question from the exercise and/or the teacher, (e) the students can ask some questions related to the song given and (f) the students pay a good attention to the teachers’ explanation (feedback). The result will be summarized in Table 2:
Table 2 The Students’ Participation in the English Songs’ Discussion Part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1M1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The students’ participation in the singing practice part can be measured by using four indicators, i.e.: (g) the students can sing the song enthusiastically, (h) the students are not reluctant to demonstrate the song (sometimes with gesture and action), (i) the students can sing the song with proper pronunciation and (j) the students showing confidence to sing in the class activity. The result is summarized in Table 3:

Table 3 The Students’ Participation in Singing Practice Part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1M1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g)</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>(h)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(j)</td>
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</table>

From the result observation checklist and field notes, it shows that the students could actively participate in every activity in the teaching and learning process which use English songs memorization technique. Thus, it can be concluded that the students’ participation in following the classroom activity is showing positive progress from time to time and it meet the criteria of success because each indicators’ score was higher than or equal to 3.

The Students’ Response to the Use of English Songs Memorization

This information was gained from the questionnaire and it consists of 10 questions which covered the information about the students’ opinion whether or not the English songs memorization utilization could effectively improve their vocabulary mastery.

From the result of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the English songs memorization technique could effectively ease the students in memorizing and understanding the meaning of vocabulary taught; thus, they could improve their vocabulary mastery. Also, the English songs memorization is an interesting and fun
technique that can be used to encourage the students to participate in the teaching and learning activity enthusiastically. Finally, the students agreed that the English songs memorization were really necessary to be implemented in the school or for further learning, in order to improve their vocabulary mastery.

In teaching vocabulary to the students the teacher needs to understand some effective steps to teach vocabulary that are stated by Lado (1979:121-125). The steps are: (a) hearing the word, (b) pronouncing the word and (c) grasping the meaning through several ways. In this study, the teacher was also able to apply those steps in teaching vocabulary activity by using English songs memorization technique. By using English songs memorization technique the teacher could help the students hear the words before they learn further. It can be proved from the smooth process in teaching and learning activity. In the beginning of each meeting, the teacher always introduced the song by playing the songs without showing the lyric. This activity was aimed at helping the students to listen to the words carefully; thus, they can have enough time to hear the words. Furthermore, English songs memorization could also give a chance to the students to pronounce the words. In the teaching and learning activity of this study, the teacher always led the students to pronounce the words in the lyrics line by line until the students were able to pronounce the words properly. In addition, by using English songs memorization the teacher could help the students to grasp the words’ meaning indirectly. The following parts will explain the students’ vocabulary mastery improvement and the advantages of English Songs memorization in improving the students’ vocabulary mastery.

The Students’ Vocabulary Mastery Improvement

From the result of comparison score of three vocabulary test, it shows that almost all of the students gain their score of vocabulary test. Therefore, the conclusion is that the students’ mastery of vocabulary was improved. The students’ vocabulary improvement becomes an important thing to be considered because it can be a bridge to deliver idea using the target language learned. It is strengthened by Brooks (1964: 181) that stated vocabulary is the principal medium for interconnecting two language channels which are code and meaning channel. Thus, the students will be helped to learn English deeper if their vocabulary improved.
The Advantages of English Songs Memorization Utilization in Improving the Students’ Vocabulary Mastery

The advantages of English songs that can be seen in this study were in line with some function of songs in English Language Teaching as stated by Abdellah (2001:52-53). He stated that there are two different functions of songs in ELT namely function in linguistics factors and in affective factors. In the linguistic factor, he stated that English songs are able to enlarge the vocabulary background of children. This statement was strengthened by the result of this study, especially from the vocabulary test result. It was explained in the previous part that the result of vocabulary test showed the good progress, which meant that the students’ vocabulary mastery were also improved through the use of English songs memorization in the implementation of the action in the study. In the affective factors, Abdellah stated some benefits of the use of songs, such as: to add fun to the learning activity, to motivate children to participate even shy ones, to help teacher get closer to the students, to stimulate children’s interest in the new language and to create a lively atmosphere in the language classroom. Those five statements were also strengthened by the result of this research especially from the result of questionnaire, that shows both the teacher and students could enjoy the teaching and learning activity in a lively and fun atmosphere.

Therefore, in this study it can be stated that the utilization of English songs could give two kinds of advantages. First, the advantage on linguistics factor which was the students’ mastery of vocabulary improvement. Second, the advantage on affective factor; which were the students’ participation and the classroom atmosphere. Those two kinds of advantages support each other. This is because, if the classroom atmosphere is fun and alive, the students will be motivated more to participate in the teaching and learning activity, thus they could improve their ability in mastering vocabulary.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

There are some conclusions drawn. First, the English songs memorization can be considered as an appropriate technique to improve the students’ vocabulary mastery, especially the VII-F graders of SMPN 7 Malang. It can be seen from the students’ score on vocabulary test which increased from three vocabulary tests given in the preliminary study, Cycle I, and Cycle II.

Second, from the teaching strategy revised in Cycle II, it was found that
English songs memorization technique would be more promising in helping the students’ vocabulary mastery problem if it is completed by the use of additional media in the teaching and learning activity. The additional media that could complete the use of English song are picture and gesture. The picture could be use in the English song’s introduction and discussion part to help the students in understanding and memorizing the words meaning. The gesture could be implemented in the singing practice part to ease the students in understanding and memorizing the words meaning. Therefore, the students’ mastery of vocabulary could be improved by the use of English song which is completed by picture and gesture in the teaching and learning activity.

Third, English songs memorization could be a good choice of technique in building lively classroom atmosphere to evoke the students’ participation in teaching and learning activity. This is because, from the observation checklist, it was shown that the students could actively participate in the teaching and learning activity that was conducted by using English songs memorization.

Fourth, the active participation of the students in learning shows their motivation that would be able to build their enthusiasm in learning. Thus, it could be considered that English songs memorization can be a good choice of technique in teaching and learning vocabulary. This is because, from the questionnaire result, the students express their opinion toward the use of English songs memorization. They stated that English songs memorization is very interesting teaching technique to be used, because the material of English songs are fun, easy to be followed, listened and sung.

**Suggestions**

Furthermore, there are some suggestions addressed to English teacher especially those in SMP Negeri 7 Malang, and future researchers to use the English songs memorization technique.

Teachers need to facilitate the students in learning vocabulary using fun and enjoyable technique and material, and the English songs memorization could be a good choice to be applied.

In addition, for future researchers it is suggested to use the English songs memorization technique as resource or reference to explore this technique. Also, it is suggested for them to make further research about the technique of teaching vocabulary.
REFERENCES


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