



EFL Young Learners' Perception of Vocabulary Teaching Through Snowball Throwing Technique

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Abstract

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The aim of this study is to investigate young learners' perception of the snowball-throwing technique in teaching vocabulary. The research used a qualitative research method and the participants were the fifth graders in the public elementary school, in East Java. The result showed that the implementation of the snowball-throwing technique in teaching vocabulary can help students to learn English. They enjoyed learning English with this technique and they felt more active in participation, happy, and confident in learning activities.

Keywords: young learners, snowball throwing, vocabulary, joyful learning

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INTRODUCTION

Children who are still developing their first language proficiency may frequently cause issues while teaching them a foreign language. Therefore, it would appear that they should focus on improving their L1 proficiency before moving on to another language. A second perspective on the subject, however, demonstrates that youngsters can also acquire L2 proficiency at a period and under conditions quite similar to when they acquire L1 proficiency (Gruss, 2016). The significant aspect to teach English to young learners is fun and interesting learning. During this period young learners can learn simple words in a foreign language. Therefore, the teachers should not give them complete and difficult grammatical sentences. They should be introduced to vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary has known as one of the components of a language. It is an important factor to learn a language especially English. Kweldju (2002) stated that the most common problem in learning a language is vocabulary, therefore Kweldju (2002) suggested teaching English based on lexis. It can be learned at every level from beginner to advanced or from children to adults.

Vocabulary is the basic component that can develop four language skills (Brown, 2007). Those who can acquire a good vocabulary can develop all the skills better than those who have a limited vocabulary. Young students pick up the language by starting with single words and progressing to whole phrases (Gruss, 2016). Young children are quick to learn words, and slower to learn structure (Philips, 1993). That is why learning words is more important than learning structure for young learners. In addition, Suyanto (2004) said that elementary school learners started to learn English in the third or fourth grade, they are in the concrete operational stage, therefore they need a lot of illustration models, pictures, and others activities, and they like learning in pairs or groups.



Additionally, the importance of vocabulary to foreign language learners has focused on effective vocabulary teaching strategies that have led to an increase in the acquisition of vocabulary (Alfadil, 2020).

Joyful learning is a kind of learning process or experience that could make learner feels pleasure in teaching-learning activities. The traditional method usually makes learners get bored and sit passively in class. Joyful learning can make the learner more active in teaching-learning activities, it can be done by doing experiments, group working, etc. Active learning is a better way than asking the learner to memorize the lesson. Teaching vocabulary to young learners is difficult (Lelawati et al., 2018). That is why, the teacher has to bring joy and make students enjoyable to learn because it can give effective information processing and long-term memory storage (Singh, 2014). Furthermore, Kholil (2009) stated that joyful learning also creates emotional intelligence, feeling, cooperation, and imagination.

The researcher is interested to use the snowball-throwing teaching technique because it is related to the theory of joyful learning. Snowball throwing is developed from Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). It brings real-world context into the classroom. Contextual learning is known as experiential learning, real-world education, active learning, and learned-centered instruction (Suprijono, 2009). In snowball throwing, the student works in a group and answers the question from the crumpled paper which is thrown (Suprijono, 2009). In this study, the researcher modified and combined the technique which is used in snowball throwing.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design. This study was conducted in an elementary public school in east Java. The participants in this study were fifth-grade students. They consisted of 42 students. The data was gathered through a questionnaire and observation checklist. The questionnaire was used to obtain information about students' perceptions towards the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching vocabulary. Utilizing a questionnaire, the researcher gathered information regarding how students felt about the implementation of the snowball-throwing technique in vocabulary instruction. The observation checklist was filled out by the observer. It was used to gather the data during the teaching and learning activities in the class. The data that was taken from the questionnaire and observation were analyzed descriptively.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The result of the questionnaire showed that the students gave positive responses to the implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique. There were 42 or 100% of students who stated that they were interested, felt more active, and happy, and had more self-confidence in learning English using the snowball throwing teaching technique because it was enjoyable.

The next variable is the teacher in the way of teaching. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of students gave positive responses to the performance of the teacher in teaching, but there was only one student who did not like the teacher's way of

teaching. Ninety-three percent (93%) of students stated that the teacher's voice was not loud and seven percent (7%) students said the voice was enough. Dealing with these statements the process of teaching and learning was not disturbed, they still could hear the teacher's voice even though it was not loud enough. One hundred percent (100%) of students stated that the teacher explained the lessons clearly. One hundred percent (100%) of students gave positive responses that the teacher showed positive behavior when teaching.

There were ninety-seven percent (97%) of students stated that the teacher used a good and creative technique in teaching English but only one student did not give a response. Ninety-three percent (93%) of students gave negative responses and two percent (2%) of students gave positive responses to the language used by the teacher. She did not use English when teaching. In line with that, the teacher considered using Bahasa Indonesia instead of English to teach the elementary students. Because the students could not follow the lesson if the teacher used English. Therefore, she decided to use Bahasa Indonesia in giving the command and explanations while she still used English to describe and pronounce the vocabulary. There was ninety-five percent (95%) of students gave positive responses to the media used in the snowball-throwing teaching technique. They stated that the media are interesting because they were colorful, unique, funny, good, and beautiful and make the meaning and explanation clearer. While, five percent (5%) of students who gave negative responses, said that they did not like the picture and song.

The fourth variable is about classroom atmosphere, ninety-seven percent (97%) of students stated that they liked to sit in a circle and work in groups because it was fun. Cooperation is recommended for a better effect on long-term retention to foster a supportive environment and to nurture vocabulary growth through peer interaction, especially in school contexts (Tseng et al., 2020). While there was three percent or one student (3%) did not like working in a group because it was complicated.

There were one hundred percent (100%) of the students gave positive responses to the topics that were taught by the teacher, it was interesting and easy to be understood. One hundred percent (100%) of students stated that the pictures were attractive and clear. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of students stated that the color used was also attractive while three percent or one student (3%) gave a negative response because he did not like the picture.

The sixth variable is about the media, one hundred percent (100%) of students were interested in the use of pictures and songs. Most of the students like to listen to the song entitled "I'm sick", they wanted to listen to it over and over again. This song showed a gesture from the sick people and the students followed it enthusiastically. One hundred percent (100%) of students gave positive responses that the teacher used many kinds of media. One hundred percent (100%) of students gave positive responses that the teacher was skilled enough to use the media. One hundred percent (100%) gave positive responses that the media used was appropriate with the topics given.

The last variable is competence. One hundred percent (100%) of students could understand easily the vocabulary using the snowball throwing teaching

technique. One hundred percent (100%) of students did not have any difficulty in learning English because the pictures were clear and attractive. One hundred percent (100%) of students stated that using the game in learning English could enhance their vocabulary mastery. They said it was very easy to learn English when using the game. In line with this statement that young learners may learn a foreign language better through a game (Ana, 2018).

The result of the observation checklist showed that the observer gave positive responses that snowball throwing teaching technique can improve the student's motivation and vocabulary mastery in learning English. The technique is easy to apply and understandable by students. This is a new technique to teach vocabulary to the students. In the teaching and learning process, some students asked to have more explanation so the teacher decided to give more explanation. Besides that, this technique is more attractive than the technique usually used by the English teacher (observer). The students looked more active, enthusiastic, and easy to remember the words using this technique. The students were interested in the media used such as songs and pictures, it could be seen when they imitated the movement of the singer and the rhythm of the song during the teaching-learning activity. In the first and second meetings, some students have less confidence in doing the game, they felt afraid to answer the question but in the following meeting, they were not afraid anymore. This situation was handled by their friends in the group. The students showed good cooperation in working with their group. The clever students can help those who could not answer the question. While the teacher checked the answer and guided the students if they have any difficulty. The students were very crowded when doing the game at the first meeting because this is a new experience for them but in the next meeting, they were familiar with the game and not very crowded. Insufficient time might be the problem in doing this technique, the more words are used in the game, the more time it takes. While the time allotment in elementary school is 70 minutes/per meeting.

The findings showed that the student's perception of the snowball-throwing technique is good. It is similar to a previous study that the correlation between snowball throwing and students' perception is high (Suprihat et al., 2019). Additionally, students agree that snowball throwing is good to be implemented to teach English especially in teaching English components (Apsari et al., 2019). The students were more active, enthusiastic, and easy to remember the words using the snowball-throwing technique. It is similar to the research conducted by Jaya (2014).

CONCLUSION

The snowball-throwing teaching technique also gives a positive impact on the student's participation in the teaching and learning process. It is proven from the result of the research which shows that the students are actively involved in participating in the activities. This can be seen from the result of the questionnaire and observation checklist.

Instead of that, there were weaknesses in this study. The teacher should consider how many words are used in the game. The more words are used, the more time it takes. Secondly, the number of students in a group will bring an

impact on the success of the implementation. It will be better if they work with not more than ten students in a group.

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