
Teaching English Vocabulary for Young Learners through Electronic Guessing Game

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ABSTRACT

This study was an evaluative study as a part of research and development study which aimed at: (1) describing the benefits and the problems of implementing Electronic Guessing Game in teaching vocabulary; and (2) the students' vocabulary mastery and their achievement motivation after the Electronic Guessing Game Implementation. The researcher collected the data of the study through observation, interview, questionnaire, and test. Since the data were in the form of quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers analyzed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the study show that: (1) the benefits of implementing Electronic Guessing Game were: It makes teaching and learning process becomes fun; it activates the students to get involved; it integrates spelling, pronunciation, and meaning; it helps the students to memorize the vocabulary; and the learners like it. While the problems were: it needs sufficient facilities and some technical problems occur during the implementation; (2) the students' vocabulary mastery improved after Electronic Guessing Game Implementation; and (3) most of the students are very motivated in learning vocabulary through Electronic guessing Game.

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1. Introduction

Age is one of the important aspects of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). According to Harmer (2007), based on their ages, learners of EFL can be classified into three different categories, namely: young, adolescence, and adult learners. In teaching those three different learners, an English teacher should prepare himself for various teaching strategies. It is because those three types of learners have different needs, competencies, and cognitive abilities. For instance, young learners may learn a foreign language better through a game, while adult learners may learn best by enabling their abstract thinking (Harmer, 2007).

In teaching English as a foreign language field, McKay (2007) states that young learners are those who learn English as a foreign language or second language for the first six or seven years of the formal school system that is usually in the elementary school level. In Bali, Indonesia, English is being introduced since elementary school. Based on McKay's definition, those elementary school learners in Indonesia, whose ages range from 7 to 13-year-old, can be categorized as young learners.

TEYL is not an easy job. It is because young learners have a short span of concentration, love to play, and get bored easily. Those characteristics of young learners force the English teacher to be creative in designing the instruction to make them interested in it. Game is one of the strategies that can be used for motivating young learners to learn. Experts believe that games can help and encourage learners to maintain learners' interest and work; help English teachers to create contexts where the language is useful and meaningful; and provide one way of helping the learners to experience language rather than merely study it (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). Similar opinion also comes from Scott & Ytreberg (2000) who state that young learners love to play and learn best when they enjoy themselves.

Moreover, current technology existence brings many positive effects toward the games for TEYL development. The use of computers which can run pictures, audio, and videos, is possible to help the English teacher create an innovative game to be used for teaching young learners. Therefore, considering the characteristics of young learners, the role of game in TEYL, and the benefits of using a computer in TEYL, the writer developed Electronic Guessing Game as an innovative strategy for teaching vocabulary to young learners.

1.1 Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a very important aspect of learning a language. According to David Wilkins, a linguist, (as cited by Thornbury, 2002) without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. From that statement, it can be said that vocabulary is the first and foremost thing that a learner needs to know if he wants to use the target language being learned. Improving learners' vocabularies will bring many benefits to their language mastery development.

According to Rider (2003), it is important to improve the learners' vocabulary because when the learners improve their vocabularies, they will feel smarter. It is because they will find themselves understanding more of what they read and what they hear. In addition, they will also find it easier to express themselves because they have a better command of their language. In addition, Thornbury (2002) also states that to be able to communicate in a language naturally, one should master at least 2.000 words. From that explanation, it cannot be denied that vocabulary has a significant role in the process of mastering a language.

In teaching vocabulary, to make it effective, a language teacher should make sure that the vocabularies which are being learned by the learners are stored in their long-term memory, so that those vocabularies will not be forgotten easily. According to Thornbury (2002), one of the ways that can be done by a language teacher to make their learners store the new words that they are learning in their long-term memory is by imaging or visualizing the words. He also adds that language teachers should provide their learners with attractive and easy to interpret pictures for illustrating the meaning of target language vocabulary. Furthermore, Rider (2003) states that in teaching vocabulary, a language teacher should also make sure that the vocabularies that are being taught based on common words, not obscure words that learners will encounter only once or twice in a lifetime. In addition, the vocabulary is not the same as spelling, because knowing the spelling of the vocabulary without knowing the correct pronunciation and meaning will be useless.

In this study, the writer developed EGG based on the aforementioned principles in teaching vocabulary. In this game, the vocabularies are visualized by using pictures, clues, and gesture (when it is applicable). In addition, the game also provides the students with the correct pronunciation of each word that they are learning.

1.2 Electronic Guessing Game (EGG)

Young learners love to play games. It is because games are fun. That is why games can be defined as an activity with rules, a goal, and an element of fun (Hadfield, 2002). The guessing game is actually not a new game. As its name, the major activity in this game is guessing a word based on some given clues. Gordon (2007) states that guessing game can provide comprehensible input to language learners at the preproduction and the low-emergent proficiency levels. The game works because it has a unique structure. While providing a rich source of input, it puts limited demands on learners in terms of expected output. In a language guessing game, the teacher describes an object, person, or phenomenon and children try to identify the item (Gordon, 2007).

In this study, the writer developed an electronic guessing game that is designed by utilizing computer program. The writer made the guessing game in the form of electronic game because according to Gordon (2007) there are some benefits that can be gained from integrating technology for teaching young learners, namely: (1) using technology can motivate and make young learners produce positive attitude toward learning; (2) technology allows the teacher to set up a meaningful context for communicative activities and to engage learners in authentic and realistic experiences that add excitement to the learning process; and (3) various combinations of text, pictures, and sounds offered by an assortment of technology can be used to improve receptive language skills, inspire classroom discussions, elicit target language from individual learners, and stimulate different learning styles while engaging the learners.

1.2.1 The Steps in Developing EGG

Four steps were conducted to develop the EGG, namely: creating a storyboard, creating and assembling media elements, performing online reviews, and delivering and implementing materials (see Figure 3). Those steps were adopted from the steps of developing multimedia as proposed by Lee & Owens (2004).

1.2.1.1 Creating Storyboard

A storyboard is a blueprint that is made as the guideline in developing the EGG. A storyboard is used for previewing purpose before developing an electronic learning media (Clark & Mayer, 2008). It can be in the form of sketches only, to full graphic plans (Bitter & Legacy, 2009). There were three steps conducted in designing a storyboard. First, the writer decided the purpose of the study, listed the materials to be used for creating the game, which include: vocabularies which were going to be taught, pictures and audios to illustrate the words. Second, those materials were translated into a screen-by-screen outline. Third, title frame, main menus and course introductory segments were added.

1.2.1.2 Creating and Assembling Media Elements

When the storyboard was ready, the writer developed the EGG by following the storyboard step by step. First, they developed the template of the slides which suited the storyboard. Then, they collected the materials needed, as what was listed on the storyboard. After that, the materials were arranged based on the storyboard.

1.2.1.3 Performing Online Reviews

Online review means that the writer ran the EGG and checked it whether or not it has been made as what it was intended on the storyboard. In addition, this review was also conducted to make sure that there was no technical problem in running it. After reviewing the EGG, the writer made some revisions based on the weaknesses which were found during running it.

1.2.1.4 Delivering and Implementing Materials

When the EGG had been revised based on the result of the online review, it was ready to be implemented in the real teaching and learning process. The implementation was conducted to find out the benefits and the problems of applying the EGG.

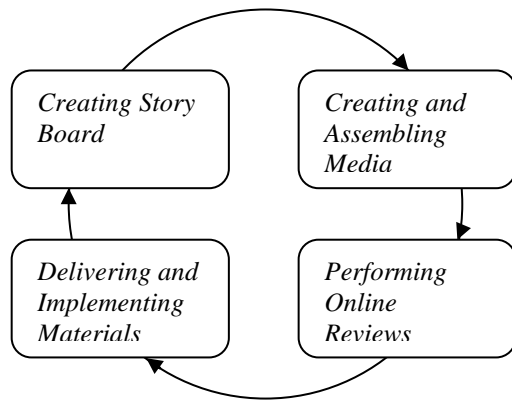


Figure 1.
The Steps in Developing Electronic Guessing Game
(Adopted from Lee & Owens, 2004)

1.2.2 The Strategy for Teaching Vocabulary Using EGG

As what has been explained previously, the guessing game is a game that the main activity is guessing certain words based on some given clues. Generally, there are four activities in implementing EGG for teaching vocabulary, namely:

a. Dividing the learners into small groups

The first thing that has to be done by the teacher in implementing EGG for teaching vocabulary is dividing the students into small groups that consist of two or three students.

b. Explaining the rule

The next step is explaining the rules of the game. The English teacher has to mention the rules of the game. Those rules are: (1) some clues will be shown one by one; (2) an opportunity to guess the word that is indicated by the clue will be given right after the clue is shown; (3) the group who has raised their hand at the first place will be given the first opportunity to guess; (4) the group who has answered, but the answer is not correct will lose their chance on the next opportunity; (4) the group who gets the highest score will be the winner.

c. Starting the game

The teacher starts the game by showing the clues one by one and gives the opportunity to the group to make their guess by following the rules that have been explained.

d. Deciding the winner

When all of the words have been guessed by the learners, the teacher announces the winner of the game that is the group with the highest score.

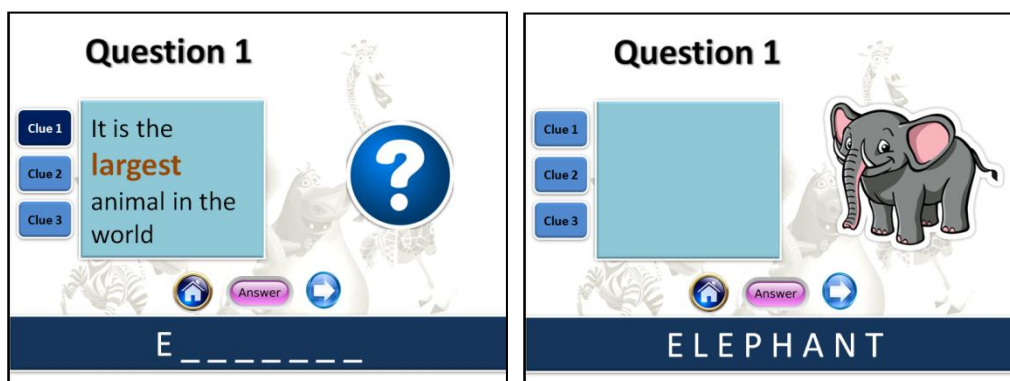


Figure 2.
Sample of the EGG

2. Methods

This study followed retrospective evaluation model that is proposed by Ellis (1997), which consists of seven steps as what is shown in Figure 5. In this study the retrospective evaluation was done in order to find out: (1) the benefits and the problems of the EGG implementation; (2) the students' vocabulary

mastery; and (3) the students' achievement motivation after the implementation of the game. One English teacher and thirty-two elementary school learners were involved in this study.

2.1 Method of Data Collection

The data were collected through observation, interview, test, and questionnaire. The observation was conducted to find out the data about the situation during the implementation of the EGG during the real teaching and learning process. The interview was done to confirm the data from the observation and to find further information about the benefits and the problems in implementing the electronic games from the learners' and the teachers' point of view.

In this study, there were two types of test were used, pre-test and post-test. A pre-test was administered to find out the students' vocabulary mastery before the implementation of the EGG, while the post-test was delivered to find out the students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the EGG. The questionnaire was used to collect the data about the students' achievement motivation after the implementation of the EGG.

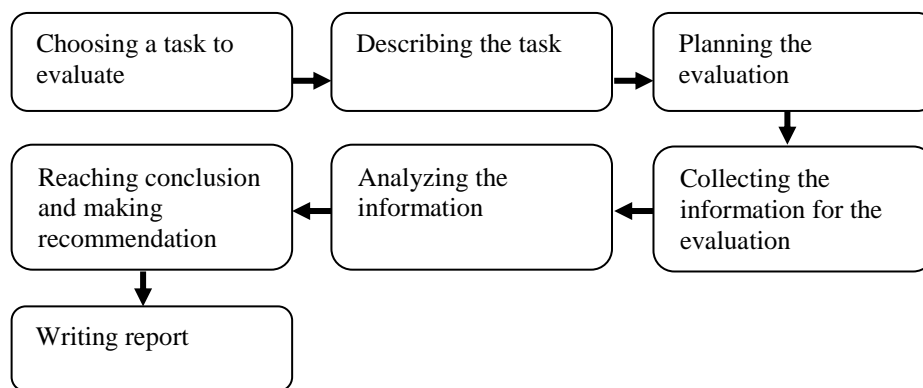


Figure 3.
The Steps in Conducting Retrospective Evaluation
(Adopted from Ellis, 1997)

1.2.2 Data Analysis

Since various research instruments were used to collect the needed data and they produced both qualitative and quantitative data, the gathered data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data were analyzed using interactive model analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three major steps, they are data reduction, data display, and conclusions: drawing/verifying.

During data reduction process the collected data were selected and reduced to get the needed data only. Then, the selected data were classified and displayed in a table based on the purpose of the study. When the data had been classified and displayed, the writer drew the conclusions to answer the research questions (The steps in doing the qualitative analysis can be seen in Figure 2).

On the other hand, the quantitative data, the result of the pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistic. The quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed to find their mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, while the result of the questionnaire was analyzed to find its mean score only. The writer used SPSS 16.0 in doing the descriptive statistic analysis.

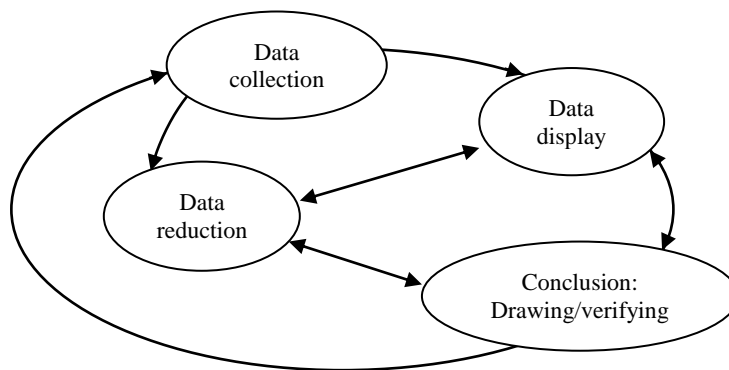


Figure 4.
Interactive Model of Data Analysis
(Miles & Huberman, 1994)

3. Findings and Discussion

As what has been explained previously this study was focusing on three major purposes, namely: (1) the benefits and the problems of the EGG implementation; (2) the students' vocabulary mastery; and (3) the students' achievement motivation after the implementation of the game.

3.1 The Benefits and the Problems of Implementing EGG

To find the benefits and the problems during the implementation of the EGG, the writer conducted observation and interview. The results of the observation and the interview show that:

3.1.1 The Benefits of Implementing EGG

a. Teaching and learning process becomes fun

Since the characteristic of a game is fun, the implementation of EGG could make the learners enjoy the class. It can be seen from the laughter and the enthusiasm of the learners during the implementation of the game. During the implementation, the class became so noisy, but that noise occurred because the learners were trying to get a chance for guessing the words. Sometimes, they made wrong guessing, but they still kept smiling and laughing at each other. It means that they enjoyed the class very much. It is also supported by the comments of the learners and the teachers who state that the class was fun.

b. It activates the learners to get involved

Seeing the noise that indicates the learners' efforts to get a chance to guess the word, it can be said that the EGG could activate the learners to get involved in the teaching and learning process. From the result of the observation, it was found that the learners almost were not afraid of making mistakes in guessing the word. This result of the study is in line with the statement of Lee (2000), who stated that game motivates introvert students to interact with other students and get involved in the teaching and learning process.

c. It helps the learners to memorize the vocabulary

Since the EGG combines pictures, audios, and clues, it helps the learners to memorize the vocabulary that they learn. It is in line with Thornbury's opinion who states that visualizing is one way that the teacher can use to make the vocabulary that is being learned by the students stored in their long-term memory (Thornbury, 2002).

d. It integrates spelling, pronunciation, and meaning

The use of EGG made the learners learn the spelling, pronunciation and the meaning of the words at the same time. It is because it provides the spelling, the audio about how to pronounce the words, and the pictures that illustrate the meaning of the words. As what is explained by Pim (2013) who believes that the integration of ICT that can produce audio and video in teaching English to young learner will help the learners in practicing the language especially in oral language. Since the EGG

provides the learners with spelling, pronunciation, and meaning it will help them to produce English orally.

From the result of the observation and the interview, it was confirmed that the students really like the EGG. It can be seen from the fact that, at the end of the lesson using the electronic game they always requested to have another EGG on the next meeting. Similar result of study also identified by Letchumanan and Hoon (2012), who found that students preferred and enjoyed learning new words through computer games. In addition, the result of the study that was conducted by Lee (2012) also reported that the students had positive attitude toward the implementation of game in learning English.

3.1.2 The Problems of Implementing EGG

To identify the problems in implementing the EGG, the writer also did an observation and interview. The result of the observation and the interview shows that:

a. It needs sufficient facilities

To conduct teaching and learning process using EGG, it needs at least a computer or laptop, but it will be better if there are LCD projector and pointer. By using LCD, it will enable the students to see the slide more clearly and by using pointer the teachers can operate it while moving around the class so that the class will be more attractive.

b. Some technical problems occur

Since it is an electronic media, some problems may occur during the implementation. Based on the observation, the most common problem was the EGG was stopped working and the teachers had to reopen it.

3.1.3 Students' Vocabulary Mastery

This study was also conducted to find out the students' vocabulary mastery before and after the EGG implementation. Therefore, the writer administered pre-test before the EGG was implemented and administered post-test after the EGG had been implemented. 32 fourth grade students were involved in the study. The result of the pre-test and post-test show that the students' mean score on the pre-test was 5.34 and it improved to 7.38 on the post-test. The summary of the result of the pre-test and post-test can be seen in Table 1. below.

The result of the study is in line with the result of the study that was conducted by Alemi (2010), who implemented word games for teaching the third-grade students of Junior High School. The result of the study shows that the implementation of word game could improve the students' vocabulary mastery. A similar study was also conducted by Azar (2012), he found that games are really effective in helping students to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Another study by Muhanna (2012) also confirms that games could improve the students' vocabulary achievement.

Table 1
The Result of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Test	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-Test	5.34	5.00	5.00	0.82733	4.00	7.00
Post-Test	7.38	7.50	8.00	0.70711	6.00	8.00

3.1.4 Students' Achievement Motivation

Students' achievement motivation was measured using an achievement motivation questionnaire which consists of 12 items. The questionnaire was distributed to the 32 students after they were taught using the EGG. The result of the questionnaire shows that most of the students (81.25%) stated that they were very motivated. While the other students (18.75%) stated that they were motivated. The result of the study is supported by Lee (2000), who stated that the use of a computer that offers a variety of activities increases students' motivation because those activities make them feel more independent. The result of the questionnaire is summarized in Table 2. below.

Table 2
The Result of the Questionnaire

Student	Category				
	Very Motivated	Motivated	Moderately Motivated	Less Motivated	Not Motivated
Number	26	6	0	0	0
Percentage	81.25%	18.75%	0%	0%	0%

Note:

51-60 : Very Motivated

41-50 : Motivated

31-40 : Moderately Motivated

21-30 : Less Motivated

12-20 : Not Motivated

4. Conclusion

From the result of the study that has been explained previously, it can be concluded that EGG is good to be used for teaching vocabulary for young learners. It can be seen from the results of the study that show the students' vocabulary mastery improved after the implementation of the EGG and most of the students were very motivated to study vocabulary through the EGG. However, the English teachers who are intended to implement it in their class have to be aware of the problems that they may encounter.

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