

Teaching Vocabulary through Puppets to Kindergarten Students

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Abstract

Vocabulary is an important language component which is required in language learning. Without vocabulary, we cannot communicate effectively. Vocabulary influences the ability of students in learning process. There are a lot of medias to teach vocabulary for young learners. Teaching vocabulary is important to young learner as vocabulary or word component in communication. Teaching vocabulary to the young learners is very beneficial because they can remember more words. The more vocabulary they have, the easier they learn the language.

Considering toward this condition, one simple way to get attention from students is to create a fun method before starting the lesson. The writer uses hand puppets to teach vocabulary in the Kindergarten students. The uses of hand puppet make the learning process effective to teach vocabulary, because they can see the real media and memorize words being introduced. So, teaching vocabulary using hand puppet is an excellent option to teach vocabulary to young learners. The writer took three meetings of learning vocabulary activities in St. Yusup Kindergarten at Tropodo, and the writer found a result of the observation showing that the students improve their skill of learning vocabulary, progressing from learning vocabulary passively into learning the new words more actively and enthusiastically.

Key words: young learners, kindergarten students, puppets, vocabulary

Introduction

Language cannot be separated from human's life. By using language, people can do many things such as sharing their feeling and setting information, knowledge and everything they want. In this modern era, English becomes one of the most important language in the world. It consists of four skills which are reading listening, speaking, and writing.

English is one of the foreign languages for Indonesian students. English becomes a subject taught at schools and has an important position in education so that Indonesians are able to get involved in international communication in this globalization era. English teaching and learning involves four aspects that support four language skills such as: vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation.

Vocabulary becomes a language component which is required in language learning. Vocabulary cannot be separated from other elements of English in young learners' teaching learning process because vocabulary influences the ability of students in studying English language. Teaching vocabulary in young learners is challenging because they have difficulties to memorize new vocabularies. On the other hand, the more vocabulary they have, the easier they learn the language.

In Kindergarten, vocabulary is the first step to learn English, because without recognizing a lot of vocabulary in English, the children will get difficulties to understand the content in the target language. The teachers usually teaches vocabulary by introducing current words at the beginning of the lesson then translating those words.

Basic vocabulary is given by using strategies appropriate for young learners. Teacher must have strategy to teach students and give them the basic of vocabulary to make them understand more. Also, the teacher should be creative and became a good model in teaching English for their students. Teacher should create alternative techniques to teach young learners in order to interested them.

The alternative of teaching vocabulary for young learners is using puppets. There are many puppets available in toy stores, so the writer tries to use hand puppets for teaching English vocabulary to kindegarten students. Puppets can motivate children to learn

vocabulary and memorize words that the children watch and hear from puppet performance. Furthermore, puppets will make the students get relaxed and fun. By using puppet, it is hoped that the students can enjoy the teaching and learning process and memorize the words easily.

In this paper, the writer would like to share her ideas about teaching vocabulary through puppets to the kindergarten students, as carried out in Santo Yusup Tropodo, Sidoarjo. The writer took one class on the B₂ level.

Vocabulary

As vocabulary is the focus of the language, it somehow becomes a major problem in learning English. To support the speaker's interaction in communication, vocabulary becomes important because it can be used as basic foundation to construct words into a good sequence of sentence.

In some literature, the writer found the meaning of vocabulary. There are some experts who give definition of vocabulary. Hatch and Brown (2001) define vocabulary as a list or set of word that individual speakers of language might use critical importance of typical language. Furthermore Harimurti Kridalaksana (1994) noted that, vocabulary is a component of language that maintains all of information about meaning and using words in language.

The importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the most important language component that should be learned and mastered by young learners. According Hanafiah (2015) vocabulary aims to avoid the differences in every interpretation in communication which is raised in two way communication. This is usually called misunderstanding. Misunderstanding can produce

more than one meaning. It can come to a conclusion that if there is no good vocabulary mastered, there will be no good communication.

Vocabulary is the key of any language learning especially in learning English. In teaching learning activities, the teacher can add other fun activities connected with vocabulary to improve the students' understanding. Vocabulary is needed to obtain better communication in English learning.

The Characteristic of Young Learners

Young learners are unique characters. Young learners have different characteristics from adult learners. Scoot and Ytreberg (2004) added some other characteristics of children as follows: (1) they know that the world is governed by rules although they may not always understand them, (2) they understand situation more quickly than they understand the language used and they use language skills long before they are aware of them, (3) their own understanding comes through hands, eyes, and ears, (4) they are very "Logical", what is said first happens first, (5) it is difficult for them to know what a fact is and what fiction is. (6) young children are happy playing and working alone but in company of others, (7) they cannot decide what to learn, yet are enthusiastic and positive about learning, and (8) they love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves.

Based on the review above, children's natures and characteristics, if managed well, it can build up a great potential to learn a language.

Definiton of Puppets

Oxford dictionary (2018) puppet is a movable model of person or animal that is typically moved either by strings controlled from above or by a hand inside it. Cheitan (1995:1) as quoted by Nilawati (2009) states that puppet is the art of presenting an inanimate object in the form of a living character is the art of puppetry.

From the definition above, according to Queen Edelman (2016), there are six basic types of puppets:

1. Hand puppet



Hand Puppets is a puppet operated by putting one's hand inside it. It is easy to make and manipulate. It can do many things and is effective before a small audience. Commonly, the index finger serves as the neck while the thumb and the middle finger perform the arms of the puppet.

2. Rod puppet



It is being supported by sticks, sometimes one for the body and other small ones for the hands. The two small sticks are being held by one hand and the other with the remaining hand. It can only do limited things but are effective even before a large audience.

3. Shadow puppet



It is being casted using a cloth screen with a projector or a very bright light from behind. More importantly, the figures are commonly translucent enough for some colors to pass through the puppet. They are made from materials such as colored plastics.

4. Finger puppet



The puppeteer use each finger for every character. Most of them do not have hands and if they do, they are not moving at all. You know it's their part when they bend their fingers on the particular character.

5. Ventriloquist's Dummy



It is as big as a half of a regular adult. Either it's sitting on the ventriloquist's knee, arm, table or chair. A hand is supporting it from the back which is also the one controlling the dummy. Usually, it is a conversation between the two persons and it sounds like they can actually talk.

6. Marionette



It is commonly known as string-operated puppet which is like the most difficult to control. In another side of puppets above, they can move around a certain stage. It looks like a doll but there are strings attached to some parts of their body which are controlled by two hands.

Why teaching vocabulary through hand puppets

In this study, the writer chose hand puppet as the media to teach the students because hand puppet is simple to make and to modify. It also can be added by some colorful things and it is really interesting for the children. It is easy to move because it is controlled by hand.

Hand puppets are also easy to make. Simple hand puppets are usually not much larger than the hand itself. A sock puppet is a particularly simple type of hand puppet made from a sock. A glove puppet is slightly more complex, with an internal division for fingers allowing independent manipulation of a character's arms. Simple hand puppets are sometimes distributed as children toys. Children usually like to experiment in play with a puppet creating voices and movements

How to teach vocabulary through hand puppets

When a teacher wants to use pictures in teaching vocabulary to young learners, they need to have some preparations to make the teaching learning activities successful. According to Reyhner (1997: 98) as quoted by Nilawati (2009), there are several steps to teach vocabulary using puppets for young learners as describe below:

1) Lip Synchronization

Synchronize the opening of the puppets mouth with the spoken words. The puppeteer should avoid moving the mouth at random during a sentence. The puppeteers save the wide mouth openings for exaggerated or loud expression.

2) Mouth Action

Practicing to pen the puppet's mouth by moving the puppeteers thumb downward without moving his fingers upward. A slight forward thrusting of the hand may help when first starting out. This kinds of actions will make sure the bottom jaw moves and not the top of the puppets head called by "flipping the lid".

3) Eye Contact

The puppeteer should look the audience regularly. If the stage is elevated, the puppeteer will want his puppets to look down a little more than usual, rather than over the heads of the audience. This will ensure more effective eye contact. This is achieved by simple adjustment of the wrist angle.

4) Posture

To make the puppet appear naturally, good posture cannot be ignored. To achieve this, the puppeteer's arm must be held at right angles to the floors with the hand level. The puppeteer should not allow puppets to act from side or learn on the stages

5) Entrances and Exits

There are many ways to enter and exit puppet, one of the ways is to make the puppet appears as if it is walking up or down a ramp. This movement uses the whole arm and requires the puppeteers to keep his fare arm straight up and down while the wrist remains relaxed using a motion. From the explanation above, it is clear that each technique has its own characteristic. The researcher used the mouth action technique because it was easier to be done. It was not difficult to do and it looked simple.

The Advantages of Hand Puppets activity

When we were young, the use of puppets were mainly for entertainment purposes; puppets were just like every other toy that we owned. Young learners love a media that is fun and colorful that can motivate them to study actively in the class. Then, puppets as colorful and funny things can help them to understand the material of the study in the class easily.

According Anitha Benneth in Parent Circle article (2016), teaching vocabulary through puppet that might be unknown to teachers have some advantages, such as: learning communicate, understanding concepts, thinking creatively, participating in craft work, enjoying companionship, and developing motor skills.

The Result of Observation

On the first observation, the teacher introduced a new topic about kinds of animal in the farm. At the beginning of the meeting, some of the students were interested with the new topic, but some of them were not. Having explained about animals in the farm, the teacher introduced kinds of animal through puppets. Some the students who at the first were not interested with the topic, started to grow interest. They became interested and wanted to touch the puppets. After that, teacher asked them to memorize the name of animals in the farm through puppets that teacher showed to them. Some of them remembered names of the animals and remembered the puppets by the shape or the cuteness of it.

After teacher asked them to memorize the name of animals, the teacher asked one of the students by asking question with the puppets, “What is this?” and student answered. “This is a dog”. Then the teacher asked another student with the same question “What is this?” and student answered “Cow.” The teacher directly corrected with the correct sentence “This is a cow”. The students repeated the correct sentence until they understood. After that, the teacher asked to the students one by one to know that they remembered the name and kinds of animals in the farm through puppets although some of them were still confused





On the second day of the observation, the teacher asked the students to make a circle and to sit down. The teacher reviewed the topic in the previous meeting. Some of them showed enthusiasm to the animal puppets. The teacher gave a clue to see who remembered the last material. The teacher asked some of the student to answer. The teacher asked them to count the number of animals that were already taught in the last meeting. The students mentioned the name of the animals one by one as shown by the teacher through puppet. They started understood the animals names but sometimes they confused how to say it.

The other teacher did the assessment from students understanding in the previous meeting until the second day of the meeting to know the improvement of the. The assestment is qiute of rubrik to seeing the development of students. The process of the assestment is done with the teacher asked the students one by one to understand more about the animals in the farm by using puppets in their hand and mention the animal names correctly.

The other students started to understand after looking at their friend who came in front of the class to mention the name of the animals. After that the teacher invited the students to play mini-games by showing the picture and mentioning the name of the animals. The teacher mentioned the animal name then the students answered by lifting up the picture of the animals. The students understand about the animals name increased from the activity. Then, the other teacher gave point to the students who answered correctly.





On the last observation, the teacher invited the students to go to the multimedia room as the activity would require more space. The teacher asked the students to make a circle and sit down. The teacher reviewed the previous topic and the students gave quick response to the teacher. The teacher brought the puppet again to get their enthusiasm for learning. The teacher asked two students to come in front the class and answer a question “Is it a dog ?” and they answered directly “Yes”. After that, teacher directly wanted all the students repeated the answer “Yes, It is a dog”. The teacher did that for all the students. There were some students who still answered wrong, but after repeated again and again they could answer it correctly.

Teacher invited the students to play mini game. The teacher gave the students two sticks having happy and unhappy. It was used when the teacher mentioned one name of the farm animals. The teacher showed the dog puppet but the teacher said that “This is a cat”. So the students should lift up the stick and displayed unhappy emoticon because the puppet did not match what teacher said. While the teacher said the correct name, the students should display the happy emoticon. From this activity, we could see that the students more quickly faster to remember the animal name through puppet. Then, the other teacher who did the assessment gave point to the student through rubric scoring. The result of the rubric showed that teaching through puppet could improve students’ vocabulary.





Conclusion

Teaching vocabulary to young learners is important. Teachers have to use a technique which can attract young learners to stimulate their habit in learning vocabulary. One of the techniques used is puppet in teaching vocabulary to young learners. This technique can be implemented to encourage young learners to be enthusiastic and interest in learning vocabulary through hand puppets.

Throughout the three meetings of observation, the writer found that the young learner under observation showed improvements in learning vocabulary using hand puppet. In the first meeting, some students were more enthusiastic because they would learn new topics but some of them did not look happy. After the teacher introduced hand puppets, the students got more spirit and became more attracted to the materials taught during learning process about animals. In addition to that, the students activity has significantly reduced the errors on spelling, speaking, and memorizing the details of the puppet. To sum up, teaching vocabulary through hand puppets can be considered to be applied in order to increase the young learners' interest in learning vocabulary.

Suggestion

After the writer did the observation about teaching vocabulary through puppet, the writer suggest to the teacher to apply puppet in kindergarten which has more fun like previous meeting in teaching about animals in the farm through hand puppet. So, the students became interested to learn vocabulary in the learning process through hand puppets.

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