

## FOSTERING LEARNERS' VOCABULARY THROUGH JUMBLED-LETTER GAME

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### ABSTRACT

This article is written based on a research done to solve students' difficulties in improving their vocabulary skill in MKU classes at Universitas Negeri padang. According to some English teachers and students, teaching vocabulary through memorizing the list was very boring and should be avoided. Besides, it was difficult for the students to write correct spelling for certain vocabularies. To overcome these issues, gamification strategy namely Jumbled-Letter game was applied in an experimental study. The design used in this study was one group pre-test post-test design and the sample was chosen through simple random sampling technique. The data was collected through pre-test and post-test. The data then was analyzed using T Paired test (SPSS 23). Based on the data calculation, the mean score of pre-test was 50.87 and the mean score of post-test was 76.23, and sig. 2 tailed test was  $< 0.05$ . Based on T Paired test analysis and interpretation, it was found that the mean score on post-test was increased and the significance score shows that the strategy was significantly effective. Thus, Jumbled-Letter Game was effective to boost learners' interest and improve their vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** vocabulary teaching, language game, gamification, jumbled letter game

### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini ditulis berdasarkan penelitian yang dilakukan untuk mengatasi kesulitan siswa dalam meningkatkan keterampilan kosa kata mereka di kelas MKU di Universitas Negeri Padang. Menurut beberapa guru dan siswa bahasa Inggris, mengajar kosa kata melalui menghafal daftar itu sangat membosankan dan harus dihindari. Selain itu, sulit bagi siswa untuk menulis ejaan yang benar untuk kosa kata tertentu. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, strategi gamification yaitu permainan Jumbled-Letter diterapkan dalam studi eksperimental. Desain yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah one group pre-test post-test design dan sampel dipilih melalui teknik simple random sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui pre-test dan post-test. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan uji T Paired (SPSS 23). Berdasarkan perhitungan data, skor rata-rata pre-test adalah 50,87 dan skor rata-rata post-test adalah 76,23, dan sig. 2 tes berekor adalah  $< 0,05$ . Berdasarkan analisis dan interpretasi uji T Paired, ditemukan bahwa skor rata-rata pada post-test meningkat dan skor signifikansi menunjukkan bahwa strategi itu efektif secara signifikan. Dengan demikian, Jumbled-Letter Game efektif untuk meningkatkan minat pelajar dan meningkatkan penguasaan kosa kata mereka.

**Kata kunci:** pengajaran kosa kata, permainan bahasa, gamifikasi, permainan huruf campur aduk

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning vocabulary would be troublesome for most English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and learners. Indeed, most of EFL learners admit that mastering vocabulary is a must. Nevertheless, it seems that appropriate technique or strategy has not been applied yet by the teachers in order to help learners to acquire the second language (L2) easily, whereas vocabulary building is an important element in acquiring new language. This situation is also found by the writers who teach English for General Purposes classes in Universitas Negeri Padang. The students need more innovative and interesting ways to solve any problems related to vocabulary building. That is how this research was initiated.

To overcome the problem above, a strategy called gamification was used. The underlying theory why gamification would be useful to be applied in EFL class is the effectiveness of language games in vocabulary teaching. There had been several researches conducting language game in vocabulary teaching which proved that language games are effective to improve vocabulary mastery. Silsupur conducted a research on language game and its effect to learners' language skill. She then

found that language game effectively improves the language learners skill and motivation. (Silsupur: 2017) . Besides, language games are assumed efficient to reduce learners' anxiety, stress and any other negative feeling (Maria and Othman: 2015). It is supported by Mehregan (2014) who also found that language game improves learners' learning result as well as their interest. Moreover, applying language game in vocabulary teaching provides meaningful and joyful real world context learning which will positively contribute to the learners' outcome (Fudhla: 2013).

Nevertheless, there were few researches which focused on how the learners could memorize or use the new vocabularies with correct spelling (Fudhla: 2018). There is still limited language game which accentuates the spelling. That's how, a more innovative language game which also focus on the spelling is needed.

Due to the situation above, the writers developed a language game namely Jumbled-Letter Game (Fudhla: 2013). It is a language game which provides opportunities for learners to master vocabulary in such meaningful but joyful way. This game instructs the learners to arrange the alphabet letter into a target word in L2. By using this kind of language game, memorizing list of

vocabulary can be avoided and the learners may master the vocabulary quickly. Besides, one of the advantages of Jumbled-Letter Game is it can be implemented for all language levels as long as the language class requires vocabulary mastery (Fudhla: 2013). In addition, the use of Jumbled-Letter game may resolve learners' difficulty in arranging correct spelling in L2.

Therefore, this language game was experimentally implemented into English for General Purposes classes (MKU Classes) at Universitas Negeri Padang to know whether this strategy would effectively improve learners' vocabulary mastery as well as their interest. Thus, the focus of this paper is to explore about the research finding on the implementation of Jumbled-Letter game. Moreover, the advantages of this game will also be exposed later.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE GAME IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

It has been widely known that applying language games in language teaching increases the effectiveness of learning process and outcome. There are several studies such as Silsupur (2017) and

Derakshan and Khatir (2015) who had proved that language game significantly improves the learning outcome and reduces learners' stress and anxiety. Abram and Walsh (2014) also states gamification is effective to be applied on vocabulary teaching. It means that language game may provide meaningful learning for the learners in acquiring the target language.

In addition, Fudhla (2013) states that gamification is an effective learning media since it provides a combination of thought and actions to meet the learning goals. Language game is amusing and interesting and can be implemented to every language skills. Besides, language game will provide contextual and meaningful learning. Hence, although games usually create noise and commotion, they are still worth to be implemented in the classroom since they motivate students, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency.

Based on some general concepts about language games above, it can be said that using language game in language teaching is appropriate one. It can be used for all language skills and components, includes vocabulary teaching.

### **Jumbled Letter Game for Vocabulary Teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT)**

**a. Jumbled-Letter Game**

Jumbled-Letter Game is a language game used to teach or to learn vocabulary in language learning, especially in (English Language Teaching) ELT. The main activity of this game is the students arrange a word or vocabulary from jumbled-alphabet letter in the target language. The teacher mentions specific words or clues in their lingua franca and then the students arrange the word in target language by using alphabet letter. The students are only given limited time to arrange the word so that they should arrange it as quickly as possible.

The purpose of this game is to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Besides, it is assumed that it may improve students' vocabulary building. The students will easily recall the new vocabulary in and spell correctly.

**b. Jumbled-Letter Game Preparation**

There are several things to prepare before applying Jumbled-Letter game. These preparations will assist the teacher in designing and using the game smoothly in the classroom.

1) Teacher should consider about how and when it is appropriate to use language game.

- 2) Teacher should choose and decide what material to be taught to the students.
- 3) Teacher prepares some pieces of alphabet-printed-paper (size 1,5 cm x 1,5 cm) as much as the amount of alphabet. (Teacher may prepare more because every alphabet might be used more than once in a specific word, e.g crocodile.) (Figure 1).
- 4) Teacher counts the students in the classroom and then decides whether the game is done individually, in pair, or in group.
- 5) Teacher prepares the steps, rules, and variation to apply the game.

After doing the preparation above, the teacher is ready to use the game in classroom.

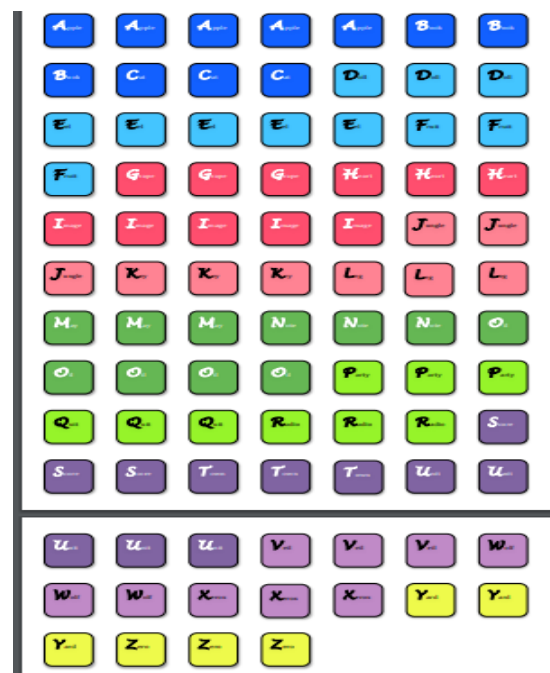


Figure 1. Printed Alphabet on Paper

### c. Steps and Application of Jumbled- Letter Game in Vocabulary Teaching

A teacher who wants to use Jumbled-Letter game should know that the steps, application and techniques to apply this game is flexible and can be modified. It depends on the situation in the classroom and teacher's method of teaching. The following is a kind of steps to apply Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary about health to college students.

Teacher greets the students and introduce the new material that is about "Health"

- 1) Teacher firstly explains the material by using his/her own method. He/she may use media such as pictures or any visual aids to teach the students about health and any other terms related to the topic.
- 2) Teacher mentions and may write down the new word on the board. The teacher may use the native language of the terms and then mention the terms in the target language. (The method of teaching the new material may be vary depends on the teacher) and so on. The teacher has to make sure that the students have known the new words before continuing to use Jumbled-letter.
- 3) Teacher asks the students to write down the new words on their notebook. The

purpose is to make the students know about the word spelling, so that they can recall their memory about word spelling during applying Jumbled-Letter game.

- 4) Teacher explains that they are going to have a game named "Jumble-Letter Game" to increase their ability to master new vocabulary. Teacher explains the purpose of the game and then distributes the alphabet letter paper set to the students after deciding whether they should work individually, in pair or in group.
- 5) Teacher asks the students to arrange the small papers alphabetically on their desk in order to help them to select the letter they are going to choose later easily. Example:

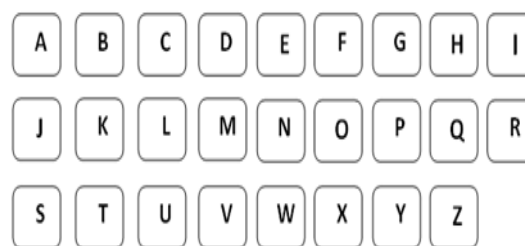


Figure 2. Arranged Alphabet on desk

- 6) Teacher explains the procedure of the game. Firstly, teacher mentions the words in students' first language. Secondly, the student should arrange the word mentioned in the target language in correct spelling by using the alphabet

papers. Thirdly, teacher explains that the time to arrange the words is limited, around 5-10 seconds. The easier the words are, the shorter the time is. So, the students should arrange the words as quickly as possible. When the time is up, the students are forbidden to continue their work, even prohibited to touch the alphabet letter papers. They should show their word arrangement to the teacher.

In Example 1, the teacher mentions “operasi”, then the students have to arrange the English word of “operasi” by choosing the alphabet to spell the word “surgery”. Then, teacher begins to count the time “one... two... three... four..... and five! Stop!” None of the students continue their work and they have to show their arrangement to the teacher

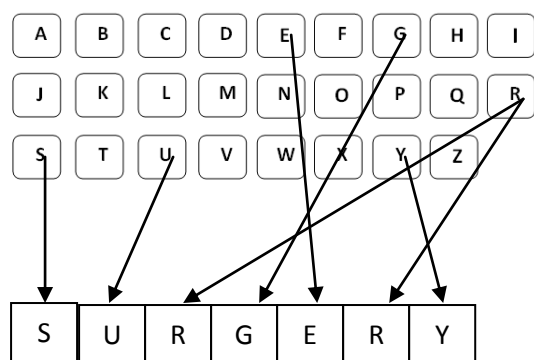


Figure 3. Example to arrange the alphabet

7. Teacher should look at the students-words-arrangement and evaluate whether the words arranged are correct or not. Teacher may repeat the step 7 until all of the students can arrange all the words correctly.
8. Teacher may develop or modify the steps above based on class situation. For instance, the game begins with group work. If all of the group can arrange the word correctly, then the teacher ask the students to do the game with their pairs. If they successfully arrange the words in pair, it is time for them to work individually. So, all of the students have a chance to master vocabulary, memorizing vocabulary and knowing the correct spelling of the vocabulary learned.
9. The Jumbled-Letter Game will be more interesting if it is competitive. It means that the teacher may ask the students to compete between them about who will be the first one that can arrange the words in target language correctly. For instance, the teacher divides the students into group consist of 3 students. Then, the teacher writes down the name of each group in the board. For group that can arrange the word faster and correctly in the allocated time, they will be given mark “100”. But for



groups who cannot arrange the word correctly or have not finished their arrangement in allocated time, they will get “-50”.

## METHODOLOGY

It was experimental study using One Group Pre-test Post Test Design. This design was chosen since vocabulary teaching has small portion but it influences the learning process. The population of the research was the students who enroll the MKU classes which are taught by the researchers as much as 6 classes. The sample was chosen using simple random sampling technique. There was one class chosen as the experimental class consisting of 53 students. The language game strategy was applied for four meeting.

To collect the data, the researchers used pre-test and post test which were given before and after the treatment given. The mean score of pre-test and post-test was then compared to know whether there is increasing result on vocabulary learning. Besides, before giving the pre-test to the sample, a diagnostic test was administered to measure sample's normality and homogeneity.

Having collecting the data, a statistic application was used to calculate and analyze the data (SPSS 23). The data

analysis technique used was T Paired test. The data was then interpreted and discussed.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Below are the results of data analysis:

### 1. Normality test

The figure 4 below is the result of normality test. The figure shows that the sample was normally distributed. It means that the chosen class can be taken as the sample class.

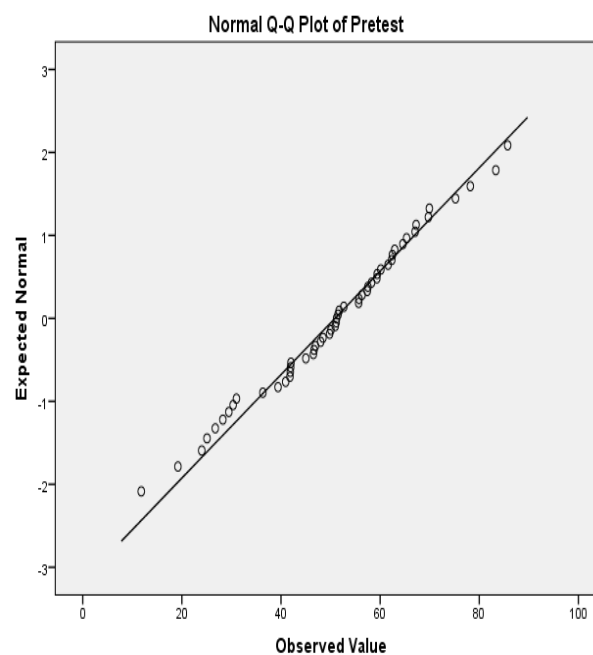


Figure 4. Normality Test Result

### 2. Pre Test Result

The pre-test result shows that the mean score is 50.87, the higher score is 85.73 and the lower score is 11.8. It can be seen that learners' preliminary vocabulary mastery was considered low.

### 3. Post-test result.

The pre-test result shows that the mean score is 76.23, the higher score is 94.8 and the lower score is 35.6

The result of pre-test and post-test above was analyzed by using T Paired Test (SPSS 23). The result shows that the sig 2 tailed test is 0.00. it means that the sig. score is lower than 0.05. thus, the strategy is effective to improve learners' vocabulary and interest

Based on the result above, it can be concluded that Jumbled Letter game was effective to boost learners' vocabulary mastery and learning interest. Thus  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected.

The effectiveness of Jumbled-letter game in this research may be influenced by several factors such as it helps the learners to both memorize and spell the vocabulary correctly, it provides joyful but meaningful learning, and it increases learners' motivation, cooperation and positive competition among them.

#### **The Advantages of Using Jumbled-Letter Game in Vocabulary Teaching**

As other language games, Jumbled-Letter game has advantages and strengths to be applied in the classroom. Here are the advantages of using Jumbled-Letter game in teaching vocabulary:

- 1) Reducing students' anxiety, obstacles and difficulties during learning new vocabulary
- 2) Memorizing the new vocabulary and the correct spelling in a fun and entertaining ways.
- 3) Can be applied for all language levels related to vocabulary teaching
- 4) Overcoming the students' difficulty to arrange the correct word spelling
- 5) Can be applied for all language materials related to vocabulary teaching.
- 6) Easy, cheap and challenging
- 7) Can be applied at home (students' independent learning)
- 8) Can be combined with other teaching methods and technique.
- 9) Flexible steps and applications
- 10) Meaningful, amusing and interesting
- 11) Increasing and encouraging students' cooperation and friendly competition
- 12) Encouraging shy students to participate actively
- 13) Providing students' self evaluation  
Students centered.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Jumbled-Letter game is a language game that is appropriate to be applied in vocabulary teaching. It emphasizes the students' vocabulary learning in a fun and



entertaining ways. The students are able to master the vocabulary faster and even may spell the words correctly. In conclusion, learning vocabulary through games is one of effective and interesting way that can be applied in any classrooms. It is suggested that games are used not only for fun, but more importantly, for the useful practice and review of language lessons, thus leading toward the goal of improving learners' communicative competence.

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