

CHAPTER I

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1.1. Background of Study

English is now taught to pupils of elementary and even to kindergarten schools. However, teaching English to them is not an easy thing since it is a new experience for the students to hear and use English words and even sentences. Besides, children by nature are easily bored with monotonous and joyless classroom situation. Therefore, recommendations and suggestions are frequently given that teacher of young learners need to be more innovative, creative, and that they should use a wide variety of materials to enhance, foster and motivate students to learn English. Jestic (1986:39) supports the idea by saying “Supplementing regular lessons by a large variety of activities motivates even the usually non responsive, shy, passive on lookers, and they become active participants displaying their competence and newly found confidence in communicating in the foreign language”. Both teacher and learners then should cooperate and try to use a wide variety of resources in English teaching and learning.

One of the resources that can be utilized in teaching and learning English is poems. Poems are enjoyed by all the people from all walks of life including elementary and even kindergarten students. The uses of poems introduce an atmosphere of gaiety, fun and informality in the classroom, which

create far more conducive environment for language learning. Poems also permit maximum participation of all the students in that the whole class can recite the poems together. Besides that, poems have the necessary elements that can be used in learning a language such as repetition, single word, phrases or clauses and rhymes. A short and uncompleted poem provides an ideal medium for pronunciation, vocabulary, particular structure, and even writing practice.

Since teaching English in Indonesia is emphasized on the improvement of reading skill, vocabulary teaching should then be made more effective first. The students who lack vocabulary will find difficulties in comprehending the reading text and even in communicating their ideas. During his PPL period in St. Stanislaus Senior High School, the writer observed that most of the students were not interested in English lesson particularly in reading. When they got a quite long passage they would easily become unmotivated and uninterested. They just kept silent, fell asleep, did day dreaming, or disturbed the their friends. The main reason, was because they could not get the meaning of the whole passage, even though the vocabularies used in the passage were simple and common. This might result from the teaching practice itself that didn't put sufficient emphasis on vocabulary building. The teachers wished that the students, on their level could have comprehended the reading passage by themselves but in fact they couldn't. Therefore, in order to reduce the same problem for the younger generation, the beginners in English learning should be trained to learn as many vocabularies as

possible. Teachers of young learner should pay serious attention on the students' vocabulary achievement since they put the basic of English learning.

However, as the writer stated before, teaching vocabularies is not simply giving the students a list of words to be memorized, as most English teachers do nowadays because it can arise the students' boredom and fatigue and they are also not trained to think independently. As the result, they will be easily forget what they have memorized. Students, therefore, should be invited to participate actively in teaching and learning process. Jean Puget (1984: 28) emphasis the active role of the children by quoting the Chinese proverb "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". In his own words he wrote, "Knowledge is derived from action. To know an object is to act upon and to transform it. To know is therefore to assimilate reality into structures of transformation and these are the structures that intelligence constructs a direct extension of our actions".

Learning vocabulary through poems gives both the teacher and the students chance to manipulate words into action, which can help them to assimilate words being taught into the concrete actions or materials. Teachers can also focus on encouraging students to use more "adventurous" vocabularies. By having the students work in pairs or groups by adding a word or a line to what has gone before, writing poetry can easily be converted into an enjoyable writing or oral exercises. As a result, by the end of the lesson, they will have changed their tune or at least written optimistic new lyrics. Moreover, pride and

confidence can be observed from the students who can finish their work well. “Besides, upon seeing the class ‘sleeper’ come up with the prize poem of the day, you might even find yourself waxing lyrical, said Carroll (1992, 56)

Finally, since one of the purposes of learning and teaching English is encourage students to learn how to use the language instead of learning the usage of the language, poems thus take us one step toward achieving that ultimate goal that is language use by the students.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the above background, the writer is interested in making a study on the influence of using poems on children’s vocabulary achievement. The problem to be answered in this study is: “Do the students who are taught by means of poems have better vocabulary achievement than those who are taught using list of words?”.

1.3. Objective of the Study

Derived from the above formulated question, the objective of this thesis is to find out whether the use of poems in the second and third grades of elementary school students gives better effect on the student’s vocabulary achievement than those who are taught using the list of words.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is intended to promote the use of poems in helping children to expand their vocabulary achievement. It is also expected to give encouragement to the English teacher of children to use poems to teach new words in order to overcome the students' boredom in class.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

There are various techniques used in improving students' vocabulary such as story telling, poems, songs, games, pictures and other media. In this study, the writer limits the study only to the use of poems for children as a means of English vocabulary learning. The writer therefore, will not deal with the deep meaning shared by a poem. Poems which are used as the examples are short and uncomplicated, containing one or two short 'themes' and often repeated with minor variation. They do not contain the quality of imagination or depth emotion that characterize real poetry, but they can be used a bridge for learning real poetry as well as learning the language. Charlotte and Hepler in their book about Children Literature in the Elementary School (1987: 143) state that such rhymes may not have the sound poetry but they can serve as a springboard for diving into real poetry. The poems used in teaching should also appropriate to the age and education level of the children.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

The writer based his study on the theory of “How Children Think and Learn” Wood (1988:70). He Writes

Attending, concentrating, and memorizing are activities. Simply asking a child age six or seven to pay attention, concentrate, study, learn or remember is unlikely to bear fruit. Unless we embody the material to be learned and remembered in a task that makes sense to the child, one that involves objectives (he/she) can realize and that draws (his/her) attention ‘naturally’ to the elements we wish (him/her) to take in, our imperative to concentrate, memorize or learn are almost bound to fail.

Wood argues that activities or interactions are more likely to enable children to memorize items since they are more meaningful to the children. Poems can create these opportunities in the classroom where children can learn and participate actively and on the whole they find it more interesting.

Concerning the use of poems in language learning, Nicole Decure (1991: 6) proposes that poems can serve various purposes; learning vocabulary, becoming sensitive to rhyme and rhythm, and thus helping comprehension, grammatical purposes even. Quite often poetry uses repetition and alliteration, making it easier for words and phrase to be remembered and memorized. Like singing—and even better because one does not have to sing in tune—when the initial shyness is overcome most people enjoy reading poems aloud thereby making them come alive”. They can be repeated over and over, for the enjoyment of it—and in the process, a lot of vocabulary is learned.

1.7. Hypothesis

Dealing with the objective of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- a. The Alternative Hypothesis ($H_a : m_A \neq m_B$)

There is a significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the students who are taught using poems and those taught using a list of words.

- b. The Null Hypothesis ($H_o : m_A = m_B$)

There is no significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the students who are taught using poems and those taught using a list of words.

1.8. Definition of the Key Terms

Before we go further discussion, it is better to clarify the key terms used in this thesis in order to avoid misunderstanding. They are: poems, teaching, vocabulary, students' achievement and motivation.

1. *Poem*

Poem is piece of creative writing in verse, written with the intention of communicating an experience (Oxford, 1989:954).

2. *Children*

Children is young persons of either sex who are still in the early or immature state of development or cultivation (Webster, 1986)

3. *Teaching*

Teaching is an activity designed to promote learning (Tomlinson, 1995 : 9). It is described as ‘a complex open skill’. It is ‘complex’ because the teacher will be doing a lot at once with a lot of people and it is ‘open’ because there are many possible ways of responding to similar sets of circumstances.

4. *Vocabulary*

Vocabulary is a total number of word which (with rule for combining them) make up a language (Hornby,1987:6).

5. *Achievement*

Achievement is performance by a student in a course; quality and quantity of a student’s work during a given period. (Webster, 1986:16).

1.9. Organization of the Study

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter one contains introduction, significance of study, definition of key terms, scope and limitation of study, theoretical framework, and organization of the study. Chapter two concerns with review of the related literature. Chapter three deals with methodology of the research. The next chapter, chapter IV presents the findings and interpretation of the findings. The last chapter provides the reader with summary and suggestion of teaching English vocabulary using poems.