
IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN MASTERING BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR THROUGH BOARD GAMES

Susi Susanti¹⁾, WindaTrisnawati²⁾,
English Department of STKIP Muara Bungo
Emails: shusantitop@gmail.com¹, windatrisnawati@gmail.com²

ABSTRAK

Tata bahasa merupakan inti dari pembelajaran bahasa. Tatabahasa juga merupakan salah satu aspek bahasa yang sulit untuk diajarkan. Guru biasanya mengajarkan tatabahasa dengan menjelaskan formula dan aturannya kemudian menyuruh siswa untuk mengulanginya. Cara mengajar ini membosankan bagi siswa. Sebenarnya guru bisa mengajar tatabahasa melalui permainan. Ada sebuah permainan yang dapat mendukung pembelajaran tatabahasa yang disebut dengan permainan papan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penguasaan tatabahasa dasar siswa melalui permainan papan. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kelas. Penelitian telah dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester dua pada program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di STKIP Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo. Mereka dipilih melalui teknik total sampling. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui test tatabahasa dan wawancara. Data penelitian ini dianalisis menggunakan analisis data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan papan dapat meningkatkan pemahaman dasar mahasiswa tentang tatabahasa. Hal ini dapat dibuktikan dengan peningkatan nilai mahasiswa. Selanjutnya, mahasiswa memberikan respon yang positif terhadap penggunaan permainan papan dalam pembelajaran tatabahasa.

Kata kunci: *Tata bahasa dasar, permainan papan, penelitian tindakan kelas.*

ABSTRACT

Grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages. It is also one of the most difficult aspects of language to teach. Teachers teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. This results in bored and disaffected for students. Actually teacher can teach grammar through game. There is a game that can support teachers to teach grammar which called board game. This research aimed to improve students' mastery in Basic English grammar though board games and to figure out students' perceptions on the use of board game in teaching Basic English grammar. This research was classroom action research. The research was done in two cycles. The sample of this study were the second semester students of English Department at STKIP MuhammadiyahMuaraBungo. They were chosen through total sampling. The data were gathered by using grammar test and Interview. The data were analyzed with qualitative and quantitate analysis. The result shown that the use of board games could improve students' mastery in Basic English Grammar. It could be seen from the students' scores. Moreover, students gave positive responses toward the use of board games in teaching basic grammar.

Key words: *Basic English Grammar, Board Games, Classroom Action Research*

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages. There were four skills that are taught in English namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. English skills need the mastery of grammar. Grammar and the skills of English are closely related. People need grammar when they listen, speak, read or write. Understanding the grammar of English will support the understanding of another language aspects. When someone understand the grammar, it will be easier for him/her to understand speaking, listening, reading and writing in English.

Grammar is fundamental to language. Without grammar, language does not exist. (Nassaji, 2010:01). Grammar is as the way language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning (Ur, 1996). This definition is quite close to the common understanding of what grammar is. The main difference is that it tells us how the rules of language actually work – they arrange and shape words. Nevertheless, knowing what these rules do is not a very motivating factor alone. Crystal (2004) says, Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. Additionally, it can help everyone, not only teachers of English, but teachers of anything for all teaching grammar is ultimately a matter of getting to grips with meaning..” “It is necessary to know grammar, and it is better to write grammatically than not, but it is well to remember that

grammar is common speech formulated. Usage is the only test.” Savage (2010:2) said that grammar has been regarded as a set of rules (“third person singular present-tense verbs take an-s for subject-verb agreement”; “adjectives go before nouns”) to be memorized. Grammar knowledge is important, but only insofar as it enables students to communicate “accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.

As it can be seen from the above definitions, grammar is not an unimportant set of rules that can be ignored without consequences. It is a very complex phenomenon and even though learners may find it a difficult thing to master, the time devoted to that is certainly not wasted. Making students realize it however, is only the first step in teaching grammar, and the following activities can take many different forms, based on a selected approach and method.

Many people question on the essential of learning and teaching grammar. Hence, language teaching should concentrate on linguistic units or forms or language structure, which is the trend of the day. Despite the fact that the mastery of a language entails knowledge of the rules of grammar, some attempts of a new description of the language have arisen. The goal is to shift the emphasis in the area of grammar from the formal study of grammatical structures to the more actual use of language.

Grammar is one of the most difficult aspects of language to teach well. Many people, including language teachers, hear the word "grammar" and think of a fixed set of word forms and rules of usage. They associate "good" grammar with the prestige forms of the language, such as those used in writing and in formal oral presentations, and "bad"

or "no" grammar with the language used in everyday conversation or used by speakers of no prestige forms.

Language teachers who adopt this definition focus on grammar as a set of forms and rules. They teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. This results in bored, disaffected students who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests, but consistently make errors when they try to use the language in context.

Grammar is usually taught by using traditional method before the availability of computer in the classroom teaching. Grammar lesson seems complex to students, and teaching grammar is challenging. Teachers always rely on blackboard and poster as their teaching aids. Mohamad and Amin (2009:127) also emphasize, "Teachers can always creatively design the content of the courseware in making teaching and learning more meaningful. Students can use games to study grammar and with the guidance from a skilled teacher, grammar can be learned effectively and interestingly.

Grammar is one of compulsory subject that needs to be taken by the students of English department at STKIP MuhammadiyahMuaraBungo. They study grammar for four semesters. Based on the preliminary research, the researcher found that most of second semester students still get confused to understand grammar rules. They tended to memorize the pattern to comprehend the grammar. The result was they only understand the form but not the use of grammar in context. The researcher also found that the students got low score in grammar the average score of their mid- term was 68.

Based on the problems above, the researcher tried to give the solution to overcome that problem. Researcher proposed a way to modify the way to teach grammar which called board game. Games motivate learners. As Hansen (2004: 118) states, "Games are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy learners more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings." Games are highly motivating since they are amusing, interesting and at the same time challenging. The activities in a game get all the students to move around, activate their mental capacities and stimulate neural networks, thus motivating learners in learning and retention. At that time, students who are shy also attend the activities with fun, forgetting their shyness and feeling of fear.

According to Khine (2011: 53) "A game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. Games should be regarded as an integral part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of the term." This definition highly evaluates the importance of games in teaching. It adds to teachers' techniques in teaching that games serve not only as an 'amusing activity', but as a technique to carry out tasks to learners amusingly as well. Khine (2011: 53) adds: "Games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving at one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a chance to use the language freely and as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They can also serve as a diagnostic tool for teacher, who can note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action."

Khine further emphasizes the effective use of games. Students are always lazy to do the tasks. Therefore, games are used suitably in the way in which learners are led to participate in the games so that learners can have a chance to practice or use the new language items they have just learnt eagerly and willingly instead of forcing them to do the tasks unwillingly. It is more effective in a way that students can play and learn at the same time. Lee 2001: 3) defines: "Games in the strict sense, which have a definite beginning and end, are governed by rules..."

Similarly, Hadfield (2000) defines games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun." Games are not carried in chaos. Games have the rules, and for it is necessary players to digest these rules before the start so that they can play the games smoothly without committing them. According to (Pegrum, 2014) "The term 'game' is used whenever there is an element of competition between individual students or teams in a language activity."

When appears 'an element of competition', all above rules are most needed. Besides, games are, in this case, emphasized to encourage students' solidarity in teamwork in which they have to try their best to do the tasks or maybe to code any requirements given in the games for their team spirit. Therefore, games comprise many factors such as rules, competition, relaxation, and learning. The main focus of using game in class is not only to help students to learn more effectively but also to have fun.

Further, games add interest to what students might not find interesting. Sustaining interest can mean sustaining effort (Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2005). Let's take the grammar lesson which is considered as a boring one in a traditional way as a typical example. If the teacher just follows the tasks given in the textbook, students have to do the tasks in writing and reading, then the teacher herself will lead a grammar lesson to a boring, hard-digesting experience to their students and surely, do not meet the need for a more interesting and effective grammar class. At that time, game was the most useful. Games employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and grammar points in this case, and be used to practice many types of communication. If these games are good then learners will be learning while they are playing. The main reason why games are considered effective learning aids is that they spur motivation and students get very absorbed in the competitive aspects of the games; moreover, they try harder at games than in other courses.

It can be clearly seen that games can capture students' attention and participation. Thus, they can motivate students to want to learn more. Moreover, they can transform a boring class into a challenging one. (Aldrich, 2009) said that, "Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information.

Thanks to games, shy language learners will have more chances to speak and show their feeling and opinions in English as much as they can.

Furthermore, games promote learners' interaction comprises the nature of classroom pedagogy and classroom behavior. Pair or group work is one of the main ways to promote interaction. As Khine (2011: 53) expressed, many games can be played in pairs or in small groups, thereby providing a venue for students to develop their skills in working with others such as the skill of disagreeing politely and the skill of asking for help. In most games, learners have to play in groups in which everyone has a turn, encouraging everyone to take a turn, rather than letting others do all the talking and other actions, and discouraging one or two people from shutting out others. Naturally when playing games, students are trying to win or to beat other teams for themselves or on the behalf of their team. They are so competitive while playing since they want to have a turn to play, to score points and to win. In the class, learners will definitely participate in the activities. Therefore, in groups or in pairs, they are more willing to ask questions, communicate and discuss with their partners and think creatively about how to use English to achieve the goal. The competition in the games gives students a natural opportunity to work together and communicate in English with each other a lot.

A board game is a tabletop game that involves counters or pieces moved or placed on a pre-marked surface or "board", according to a set of rules (Booth, 2015). Some games are based on

pure strategy, but many contain an element of chance; and some are purely chance, with no element of skill. Games usually have a goal that a player aims to achieve. Early board games represented a battle between two armies, and most modern board games are still based on defeating opponents in terms of counters, winning position, or accrual of points. There are many varieties of board games. Their representation of real-life situations can range from having no inherent theme, like checkers, to having a specific theme and narrative, like Cluedo. Rules can range from the very simple, like Tic-tac-toe, to those describing a game universe in great detail, like Dungeons & Dragons – although most of the latter are role-playing games where the board is secondary to the game, serving to help visualize the game scenario.

The time required to learn to play or master a game varies greatly from game to game, but is not necessarily correlated with the number or complexity of rules; games like chess or Go possess relatively simple rulesets, but have great strategic depth. Each game shows the path that the players must follow and the English phrases that the players must produce orally. Each board game has a theme that requires the students to produce certain types of expressions, so they practice a variety of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and functional meanings.

Games can stimulate and encourage students to participate in the activity since naturally they want to beat the other team. Apart from having fun, students learn at the same time. They acquire new language. Students begin to realize that they have to use the language if they want others to understand what they are saying (Potter: 2012)

Furthermore, Richard-Azizova (2014) emphasize, "Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely." It is clear that in the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better. According to Duong (2008), 90% of his students confided that they could remember new words faster and better due to the relaxed atmosphere created by playing games. This is doubly reinforced by the same sentiment of Nguyen and Khuat (2003)

Games increase learners' achievement. As far as we know, games can involve all the basic language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and a number of skills are often involved in the same game (Freear: 2011). Further support comes Reinders (2012) "...games are a good way of practicing language, for they provide a model of what learners will use the language for in real life in the future exercises that practice and utilize the new language have been completed, games can then be introduced as yet another means for enabling greater comprehension." As strongly emphasized above, games can motivate learners, promote learners' interaction, and improve learners' acquisition. As a result, games can increase learners' achievement, which means that learners' test scores, ability of communication, some skills, knowledge of vocabulary, or other language skills can improve. Riedel (2008) emphasizes the advantage of games in improving learners' achievement, "We are teaching a new generation of students, which requires unconventional teaching strategies be put into practice in the classroom. And when schools use the games, the student benefits speak for

themselves--a greater desire to learn and higher test scores."

In brief, games prove to be a useful tool employed regularly in language teaching. Games not only offer learners a highly motivating, relaxing class, but most importantly meaningful practice to all language skills. Consequently, games can motivate learners, promote learners' interaction, improve their acquisition and increase their achievement

Based on explanation above, the researcher proposed a solution to overcome grammar mastery problem faced by students. The researcher used board games in order to create a challenging, fun, interesting and meaningful learning. Thus, the researcher will try to solve the problem in mastering grammar though playing board game.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was classroom action research. This research was conducted at STKIP Muhammadiyah Bungo. The subject of this research was the second semester students. They were chosen though total sampling. There were 16 students. They were chosen as the subject since they had low score in grammar. This research was conducted in two cycles. Each steps consisted of: planning, action, observation and reflection. The researcher collected the data using qualitative and quantitative method. Qualitative method consists of observation, field notes and interview.

- a. Observation, the researcher did an observation dealing with the real situation of the teaching and learning process
- b. Field notes, notes or field notes are descriptions and accounts of

events in the research context which are written in relatively factual and objective style. The researcher made notes in each observation done. The researcher made notes to all activities during the lesson and also noted about the students' reaction and response to the learning.

- c. Interview, the teacher conducted interviews from pre-research, in the process of action and at the end of the research. The researcher made interviews to the teacher and the students. In the pre-research, the researcher made interviews in order to know what problems both the teacher and the students faced especially in reading lesson. The interviews were given in the process of the action and at the end of the research aimed to know how far the action influences the students' reading comprehension.

Second, the technique of collecting the data using quantitative method is a test. In this research, the researcher used the objective test type for both pre-test and post-test. The result of the test was analyzed to know the students ability on Basic English grammar. The result could indicate whether the use of Board game was effective or not. In analyzing qualitative data, the researcher analyzed the result of the observation done during the teaching and learning process by using Constant Comparative Method as suggested by Strauss and Glesser in (Moleong, 2008). They say in general, the data analysis includes data reduction, data classification, data synthesis, and ended by action hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This was a classroom action research. Researcher acted as teacher collaborator and observer. This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of two meetings. Each meeting took 150 minutes. Before giving the action (board game) to the students, researcher conducted pre-test to obtain students score. The pre- test score was 65. Each cycle consisted of the following steps namely: identifying the problems, planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, reflecting the action and revising the plan. The target of cycle one was the average score of students could reach minimum 75. Meanwhile the target in second cycle was students could get 80.

Before doing cycle 1, researcher have done the observation to find out problems faced by students in understanding grammar. It was found that the students got difficulties in practicing the grammar rule. They could understand the patters but when the lecturer asked them to create sentences or do exercise, they were still reluctant to do it. Based on the problems found in the class, the researcher design a board game to help them practice the grammar easier. The topic was about gerund. First of all the lecturer explain the basic concept then they do practicing by using board game about gerund. At the end of the class students were asked to do the board game exercise and the average score was 69.

In the second meeting of cycle 1, the researcher used board game

about Infinitive. The class started with brief explanation about infinitives. Then, students directly practice their understanding through playing with board game. At the end of the class, the lecturer gave them quiz by using another board game. The average score was 76.

The result of the cycle 1 shown that there were improvement of students understanding in basic grammar. It could be seen from the result of students' post-test. The first post-test score was 69, then it improved in the second meeting 76. There were changing on students' attitude toward teaching and learning grammar. They shown positive responses. They enjoyed practicing grammar with board game. There were some weakness' found in cycle 1. It was found that some of students are still get low score. They had poor understanding in grammar.

After doing the reflection on cycle 1. Then, the researcher continue to plan the action in cycle 2. Cycle two was conducted in two meetings. The first topic was about "other, another and the other". The lecturer started the class by explaining the concept of the topic. Then the students practice that concept by playing board game. They were divided in to small groups. One group consisted of two or three students. They playing while practicing the grammar rules. At the end of the class they were given grammar test. The average score of the test was 79. Students shown that there have positive attitude toward the games. They had fun while practicing grammar.

In the second meeting of cycle 2, the researcher focused in improving students' understanding

on grammar and improve the positive attitude toward grammar lesson. The topic of the second meeting was: giving and taking order". The lecturer listed the expressions that could be used to express "giving and taking order. She also gave some examples. After that students practiced those expressions while playing them on board game. It was fun and challenging. Students could do much better this time. They get used to the game. The post-test score also improved. Their average score was 84.

Based on the result of the interview, students shown positives responses toward the use of board game in grammar lesson. They said that they enjoyed studying grammar while playing games. They thought that they were just playing instead of studying grammar. This game forced passive students to be active. This game could make every student actively participated in practicing the grammar. The used of colorful board was fun, they said.

The result of cycle 2 shown that the students were motivated in practicing and use the grammar rules. They show their understanding. They could get better score than cycle 1. The improvement of students' score could be seen in the following table:

Table 1
Students' average scores in cycle 1 and 2

Cycles	Average score		Grade/ category
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	
1	69	76	Good
2	79	84	Very Good

Finally, it could be concluded that using board game could

improve students' mastery on Basic English Grammar. Students enjoyed practicing their grammar though playing board games. Every student was participated actively in the game. It means that they practiced grammar actively. Learning with board game got positive responses from students. It was effective to break the traditional grammar teaching. It is suggested to every English Teacher to use board game in teaching Basic English Grammar.

So, Ha is accepted in this research that using board game could improve students' mastery in Basic English Grammar.

CONCLUSION

Traditional grammar teaching was by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. This results in bored and disaffected for students. But nowadays, teacher can teach grammar though games. There is a game that can support teachers to teach grammar which called board game. The result shown that the use of board games could improve students' mastery in Basic English Grammar. It could be seen from the students' scores. Moreover, students gave positive responses toward the use of board games in teaching basic grammar. They enjoyed the games. It made them understand and practice basic grammar easier.

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