

# Communicative Games in Teaching English at Elementary Schools in Jambi

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## Abstract

This research was aimed to describe the English language teaching at Elementary Schools using communicative games, especially for 1) design, 2) implementation, 3) evaluation and 4) Improved the students' vocabulary mastery. Quantitative method was used in this research, the data were analyzed and described descriptively. The research was conducted at Elementary Schools in Jambi in class V. The data was collected by using observation sheets to know the English learning process in class, and test was used in form of pre-test and post-test toward the students to know the improved of students' vocabulary mastery. Based on the research's result, knowing that: 1) English learning design using communicative games can be integrated into the scientific approach through modification of the games' steps. 2) Teaching English at Elementary Schools using communicative games can motivate students to learn English, students were more active and cheerful, students also more receptive to learn English in class. 3) Authentic assessment is done by observation for attitude assessment; test for assess the students' knowledge. 4) Students' vocabulary mastery increases, it is known from the results of students' learning tests before and after using communicative games in learning English in class.

**Keywords:** *communicative games, teaching English, Elementary School*

## Introduction

English is the first foreign language that has been introduced at elementary school level from grade 4 to grade 6 in the city of Jambi. English began to be taught as one of the subjects local content arranged in Governor's Regulation No.07, 2017 regulates English as one of the subjects of the local content at Elementary Schools. Learning English for elementary students is certainly not an easy thing for them. Not only children but also English teachers face difficulties in the learning and teaching process. This difficulty is due to many differences found in English. These differences include the many sounds and fowels or consonants of English not found in the arrangement of sounds and focal and consonants in the first language (mother tongue) and in Indonesian (second language). The way of writing and how to read a word in English is not always the same as in Indonesian. For example, the words "one" in English is read "wan."

Difficulties in how to pronounce and write can cause stress, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and reduce motivation to learn. These difficulties can also be an obstacle for children to master communication competence in English properly and correctly. However, these difficulties can be overcome if English teachers do things like: recognize the characteristics of elementary school-age children, treat children according to their characteristics, create a pleasant learning atmosphere, choose and use media, methods and learning strategies that are in accordance with the physical, mental, and emotional development of children, and treat children as individuals who are different, and who have interests, abilities, talents, and properties that are not the same. In addition, teachers also need to implement foreign language learning techniques that match their characteristics.

Elementary students have characteristics like being curious, and always wanting to gain new experiences. Thus elementary school children also have high motivation. Motivation to learn English for elementary school children will increase even more if the English teacher can create an interesting and fun learning atmosphere. To create an interesting and enjoyable learning atmosphere, of course the teacher must be good at choosing media, methods, and learning strategies.

Littlewood (1984) focuses on two important motivational aspects that influence foreign language learning, namely the need to communicate in a foreign language, and attitudes towards the foreign language community. Indonesian children in general want to be able to speak English because basically children are happy about new things. They also generally like foreigners who speak English. So children in general have

the motivation to learn English. The problem here is how elementary English teachers can foster and explore children's motivation so that their motivation becomes high to communicate using English.

In order to be able to achieve English language learning objectives at maximum, English teachers must pay attention to several things including: characteristics of elementary school children and learning materials that are in accordance with the physical and mental development of children, characteristics of foreign language learning, and the results of art and their maximum use maybe.

Elementary School students are included in the category of young learners, according to Cameron (2002), From a Piagetian point of view, as a gradual thinking develops children growth of intellectual knowledge and skills towards a formal stage, logical thinking. However, gradual growth is interspersed with certain fundamental changes, which causes the child to go through a series of stages. At each stage, the child is able to do so. In particular, the endpoint of Piagetian development thinking that can manipulate formal abstract categories using logic rules is held not available to children before they reach the age of 11 or older. In order, elementary students are still in the category of young learners. Therefore, the role of the teacher in determining the learning model greatly determines the success of a learning process. Sad (2015) in his research stated that although the teacher in the classroom the teacher feels ineffective in teaching young English students, they are willing to study and teach EFL in the future. Their level of will seems to be related to their sense of efficacy, which in turn seems to be related to the level of English proficiency they feel. As discussed earlier, teaching foreign languages at the primary level requires elementary school pedagogy and language teaching pedagogy. Thus, the specialist excellence mainly derives from their ability, pronunciation quality, fluency, accuracy, and the range of their main languages (Sad, 2015), but generalist classroom teachers have the main advantage of knowing primary schools. Considering the shortage of elementary language teacher specialists, the best substitute seems to be the generalist classroom teacher who are trained to teach foreign languages. Thus, it can be effective for teacher training curricula to include a fair amount of English language proficiency, especially pronunciation, and also include methods and strategies for teaching English to young students (Sad, 2015).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1992) expressed his opinion on the development of children that one of the most important premises in human development is that all developmental domains such as physical, social, emotional, and cognitive develop integratedly. So for elementary school children learning is a fun activity. There are several characteristics of children in learning that must be considered by teachers when they are preparing lesson plans, developing learning activities, managing classes, and arousing children's learning enthusiasm (Clements and Hawkes, 1985). Teachers must develop materials that are appropriate to the needs of children and that are appropriate to meet the challenges of teaching children who have different abilities, attitudes, and talents who are in the same class.

The elementary students' learning characters are:

1. Children learn integratedly. They do not need to distinguish subject areas or subjects being studied. For example, they learn Listening concepts when they exercise or play music.
2. Elementary students are not physically mature, and they need active activities. They will quickly feel tired sitting for a long time, and feel happy and not tired when they run, jump around, or bike.
3. Physical movements are also very necessary for the cognitive development of children so children must always be involved in active activities
4. Children at the ages of 6 to 9 years children begin to master the mental ability to think, and solve problems. However, they still need concrete objects to help solve problems.
5. Children's communication skills are increasing. They can already communicate interactively with adults, and with their peers.
6. Social emotional and moral development also began to increase. Children begin to be attracted to friendship. Creating positive and productive social relationships and work relationships with children of their own age can develop social competence.

In order for elementary students to feel happy, motivated, and confident in learning English, teachers must be able to create conducive situations that can make children feel safe. For this reason, English teachers need to know the characteristics of learning foreign languages, especially English so they know how children master the first language and the target language being studied. The following is a discussion of the characteristics of foreign language learning and its implications for learning English in elementary schools.

From some of the characteristics described above, the most dominant seen in elementary school student learning in the city of Jambi is playing. Learning English which is considered difficult will be more fun with the games. Children need happy and excited when they learn English, in playing they will learn english by listening, imitating and saying. They are happy even they have not realized what learning foreign language. If they are happy, they will have a good motivation to learn, and the goal of learning will be achieved.

The type of game that is most suitable for learning English at Elementary School is communicative game. Communicative Games is a kind of games in communication rule. Elementary students still lack in grammar and vocabulary. In communicative game emphasize into the fluency or achievement the communicative goals between the parties involved in that communication. Communicative games do not emphasize into the linguistic accuracy. For example when someone asks to others to describe an address, even though the language that used is wrong grammatically, but if he can describe it and can be understood by the requester, it means the communication is success.

According to Hadfield (1985) game is an activity that contains rules, goals, and pleasant elements. While Martin (1995) in his book Brewster (2004) defines games as any fun activity that provides opportunities for children's learners to practice foreign languages in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. it can be concluded that in the game there is a very important element, it is fun. This element is an attraction for children to do it.

Communicative Games is a set of well fun design activities can stimulate students' interaction in the classroom. These games require them to take part actively in classroom by speaking and writing in order to express their own point of view or give information. More than that, students' confidence will be automatically formed due to its concept in building habits of interaction. Game means "an activity with rule, a goal, and an element of fun" (hadfield, 1999). In addition, game is an activity in which the learners play and usually interact with others (Wright et al, 2006). They added that in order to express their own point of view or give information, the learners must speak or write as in getting the meaning from others, they have to understand what people are saying or have written (Gate, 2003).

Communicative Games can be an alternative way to overcome the elementary students' difficulty in learning English. in fact they can improve their motivation. However, talking about communicative games cannot be separated from those two terms, communicative and game. The word communicative refers to the communicative approach in which teaching-learning activity avoids the concentration towards grammar and vocabulary but emphasizes on the significance of language function (Harmer, 2001). In other words, these activities will involve students in real communication, where the achievement of their communicative task is more important than the accuracy of language they use. Therefore, it can give positive impact towards students' motivation and classroom atmosphere which in line with Wallace (1987), language games are used for increasing emphasis on the importance of motivation and the appropriate kind of positive effective atmosphere in the classroom.

## **Method**

This research is a type of quantitative research. This research was conducted on grade V students of state elementary schools in Jambi City. The sample of this study consisted of 3 elementary schools namely SD N 205 / IV, SD N 147 / IV, and SD N 02 / IV. The 3 elementary schools can represent elementary schools in Jambi City. Consideration of taking this sample is based on the character of the School, school level, and subjects of local content in the 2013 curriculum applied.

The data was collected by using observation sheets to know the English learning process in class. The process includes the design of learning used, the implementation of learning, and evaluation of learning. Assessment is carried out using the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (IPKG) and test was used in form of pre-test and post-test toward the students to know the improved of students' vocabulary mastery.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

Planning and learning actions begin with a guessing communicative game with the theme "Times" in which students use 2 types of cards namely Situation Cards and Objects Cards to increase their motivation and active participation in learning so that it will also increase the value of knowledge and speaking skills. In this process an increase in student motivation and activeness in learning.

The communicative game lesson plan design must also be modified in such a way that it can be integrated in the scientific learning steps as required in the 2013 Curriculum. The results of the modification of the learning steps are: (1) the teacher divides the class to form a group with a number of 4-5 students, (2) the teacher distributes game media to each group, (3) students observe pictures on the media card, (4) the teacher gives students the opportunity to ask questions related to the images observed, (5) the teacher gives a brief explanation adapted to the cards games on students, (6) students explore, (7) teachers explain the rules of the game and students do simulations, (8) students do communicative games in groups, (9) students associate learning, and (10) students communicate the knowledge acquired oral and written.

In the learning design obtained positive responses from design experts and it can be seen from the results of the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument. IPKG-1 about learning design that achieved a

value of 93.48. For the implementation itself, the value is 96.15. While the authentic assessment is worth 87.50.

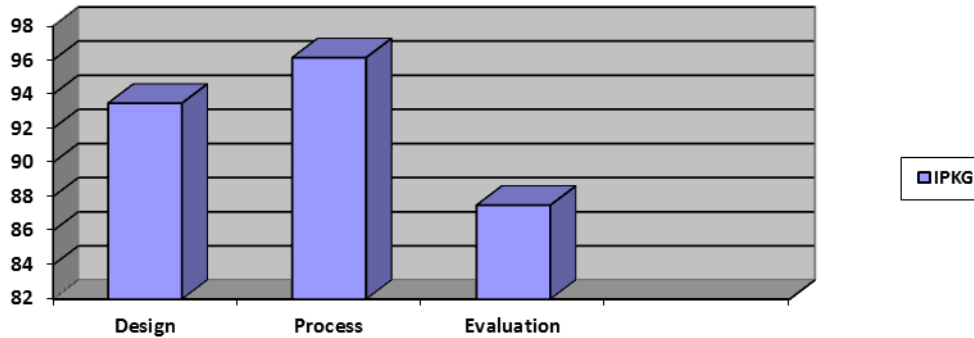


Chart 1: The assessment results are based on IPKG

Meanwhile the ability of students to obtain new vocabulary showed a significant increase. This is indicated by the results of English tests of students from 3 schools by comparing the pre-test and post-test average scores, it is known that the significant correlation value is 1 with a significance value (sig) of 0.018. because the value of Sig. 0.018 < Probability 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant increase in the results of student vocabulary acquisition by learning English using communicative games.

### Discussion

According to Hadfield (1999) game is an activity that contains rules, goals, and elements of fun. While Martin (1995) in his book. Brewster (2004) defines the game as any fun activity that provides opportunities for children's learners to practice foreign languages in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. From the two definitions above it can be concluded that in the game there is a very important element which is the fun element. This element is the main attraction of children in the morning to do it.

There are several reasons why games or games are well used in the teaching and learning process of English. According to Brewster, et al (2004) children like games because in addition to being fun and motivating, games can also be a means of practicing the ability of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Learning English using communicative games aims to increase students' motivation and active participation because it offers a pleasant learning atmosphere (Hadfield, 1999). Increased motivation and active participation of students are also followed by increased learning outcomes both knowledge and language skills so as to achieve learning objectives. It turns out, learning English using communicative games can 'force' students to do verbal communication (speaking) because that is the main requirement in the game. Communicative game-based learning is an effort to carry out renewal and development of learning quality so that students can have positive knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byrne & Rixon, 1979). One of the most important things in learning to use communicative games is that the learning process is no longer teacher-centered and is more focused on student activities (, in this case also supports the implementation of the rules in the 2013 Curriculum.

Learning English using communicative games is an effort made to engage students verbally active in language learning. Learning is done on the conditioning of students gaining hands-on experience through interaction in group learning and it is easier to recall what they hear, namely through question-and-answer with other students in a repetitive manner, so that mastery of the concepts of English learning material can be obtained quickly.

The observations during the research clearly illustrate that learning using communicative games can increase student motivation and active participation in learning and also learning outcomes. In the affective domain, students are trained to have confidence and courage in asking and answering questions both to friends and to teachers so that the learning process is not just sitting, silent, listening and taking notes, but the process of student learning participation is carried out optimally. Also created good cooperation when students do peer-correction in the game. Honesty and discipline are also formed when students do the game-based learning, besides that students also feel happy in learning and easy to absorb / understand the material being studied.

In the communicative game-based learning process, the teacher acts as a facilitator and as far as possible involves students actively in the learning process. This is in line with the demands of the scientific learning rules that in communicative game-based learning in groups students are active in observing, asking,

exploring, associating and communicating experiences as learning outcomes to other students. In this case students build their knowledge by making meaningful connections between the new concepts they acquire and the knowledge they have. This process activates intellectual power, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, and increases students' abilities and skills in language. The results show that students do active learning. Students' freedom to develop vocabulary and compete in a healthy and enjoyable way is one of the efforts to create conducive, meaningful and optimal learning conditions. Guidance and appreciation for students is also needed because good teacher and student relationships in learning will help student learning success.

The completeness of the learning outcomes of fifth grade students in learning English can be seen from the ability of students to understand and apply English vocabulary that they have obtained. Based on the results obtained, it is known that learning English using communicative games can improve student learning outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

From the research, the result can be concluded as follow:

1. The design of learning English with communicative games is an alternative method in learning English especially in elementary schools because students will feel motivated in the form of games that are presented so that students will speak (really make them speak) in accordance with the target language. This design was created and adapted to the aim of developing student competencies in the affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains. The communicative game design that is carried out must also be adjusted to the learning objectives, material, and learning conditions and the guessing game model can be the top choice for teachers with large classes and large numbers of students. The implementation of English learning through communicative games conducted in this study is in accordance with the steps of scientific learning required in the 2013 Curriculum. There are 10 standard steps of learning based on communicative games, namely: (1) the teacher divides the class to form groups with a number of @ 4-5 students , (2) the teacher distributes the game to each group, (3) the student observes the picture on the card, (4) the teacher gives the student the opportunity to ask questions related to the observed picture, (5) the teacher gives a brief explanation adjusted to the game card on students, (6) students explore, (7) teachers explain the rules of the game and conduct simulations, (8) students do communicative games in groups, (9) students associate learning done, and (10) students communicate the knowledge obtained verbally and writing. Learning media used in game-based learning is a simple technology that can be used anywhere and anytime because it is only a game card that is designed according to the learning theme and is used to 'force' students to speak so it is called communicative game. The teacher's role is only as a previous designer and facilitator when implementing learning.
2. Communicative game-based learning is constructivist learning that promotes student centered, appreciates differences, establishes cooperation, learns from reality, and learning provides a pleasant atmosphere, it turns out to increase active student participation in following the learning process and also influences the improvement of students' skills in speaking English according to the context.
3. Authentic assessment that emphasizes the accuracy of the data covering the realm of attitudes, knowledge and skills can be done during and after the learning process based on communicative games take place. The teacher can conduct an attitude assessment (affective) through observation while the learning process is taking place, or it can also be carried out an attitude assessment through self-assessment or peer assessment at the end of learning. Cognitive assessment can be done with tests after the learning process, while assessment of skills (psychomotor) can be done through writing skills or speaking practice at the end of learning.
4. Communicative game-based learning can increase the value of students' attitudes, knowledge and language skills. Doing the game well and correctly turns out to train students to work together, respect the opinions of others, be disciplined in carrying out roles, be honest in playing games and increase the sense of responsibility. This is what is required in the learning objectives in the affective domain. In addition, communicative game-based learning can also increase students' vocabulary knowledge. It is important to note that student learning outcomes in the three domains are increased: (a) do the communicative game properly and correctly because it will help students learn through various senses; listen, see, and speak, (b) make sure students do simulations and say vocabulary / expressions in the target language properly and correctly because these things will make students accustomed to, (c) the use of effective and efficient time allocation because the type of game will make participants complacent so that it will interfere with other learning targets, (d) good classroom management because game-based classes tend to be 'crowded' and 'noisy'.

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