

Original Research Article

## A Study on Effectiveness of Using Games in Learning English Vocabulary

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**Abstract:** The study reveals the effectiveness of games in learning English vocabulary of non English major students at the University of Transport and Communications out. In this study, the majority of the students supported the use of games as the best way of learning English vocabulary as well as showed their positive attitude after the treatment, as detected by the tests, questionnaire and interview. From the research findings, several further studies as well as suggestions for teachers were made in the hope of improving the teaching and learning English vocabulary in Vietnam University.

**Keywords:** games, English vocabulary, language learners, questionnaire and interview.

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale for choosing this topic

Vocabulary is a very important element of a language, including English language. It is a good device to connect four major skills in English such as listening, speaking, writing and reading. Its importance was stated by many linguists from very early time. Della & Hocking (1992) stated that if we spent most of our time studying grammar, our English would not improve very much. We would see most improvement if we learned more words and expressions. In addition, we could say very little with grammar, but we could say almost anything with words.

However, most of students at university find it boring to learn vocabulary. They often forget nearly all of the words which they have just learned for a short time. The causes for being boring in learning vocabulary can be seen in the following reasons. Firstly, students consider the teachers' explanations boring. In this case scenario, language learners have nothing to do in a vocabulary learning section but to listen to their teacher. Second, students only think of vocabulary learning as knowing the primary meaning of new words. Therefore, they ignore all other functions of the words. Third, students usually only acquire new vocabulary through new words in their text books or when given by teacher during classroom lessons. For example, learners find many new words in a text and then ask teachers to explain the meanings and usages. Forth, many students do not want to take risks in applying what they have learnt. Students may recognize a word in a written or spoken form and think that they have already known the word, but they may not use that word properly in different contexts or pronounce it correctly.

In recent years, communicative language teaching (CLT) have been applied in our country and its effectiveness in learning and teaching has been shown to us. CLT is an approach that helps students be more active in real life situations through the means of individual, pair and group work activities. It encourages students to participate activities to communicate with their classmates, using their own language.

Students at university must learn many subjects a day and English is one in many. In English classes, they must study plenty of vocabulary on each unit. However, most of teachers at university often force their students to learn new

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words in traditional ways which lead students to get bored with it. Their common perception is that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature. If there are having fun, hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a miss conception. Nowadays, most of teachers are using the CLT approach method and in CLT classes, learning vocabulary is considered as one of the primary activities of students in the classroom. Successful vocabulary learning is only on the right way to lead the process of students. Good learning atmosphere and method can guide the students to learn a language more and meaningful. To accomplish such condition, teachers must create various types and attractive methods for the classroom. It is possible to learn a language as well as through games. Games can help the teachers to create contexts in which by games the students can take part widely and open mindedly. To win the games each student or group should competitively answer the questions addressed by the teacher or other students or groups. In order to do so, they must speak or write in order to express their own points of view or give information (Khuat & Nguyen, 2003).

### **Aims of the study**

The purpose of the study is to find out the ways to use the games effectively in teaching English vocabulary at the University of Transport and Communication. Therefore, the specific aims are:

- To explore the learners' beliefs and instructors' problems of using games in classroom.
- To offer suggestions for the teachers to increase the effectiveness of using English games in teaching vocabulary at university.

### **Scope of the study**

The research is merely concentrated on describing the real statement of using games in teaching vocabulary for students. Due to the time constraints, this study only involves a small population of four K62 classes at the University of Transport and Communications.

### **Significance of the study**

This study points out the real problem of learning English vocabulary at university. More importantly, the findings and recommendations of the study will be of some help to the improvement of the teaching and learning vocabulary of students in general and of students at the University of Transport and Communications in particular. The study may give some suggestions of games for teachers to help their students learn new words effectively. The results of this study may also be useful for those who are interested in this field.

### **Method of the study**

To fulfill the above aims, the study was carried out with different methods of data collection:

a. A quantitative questionnaire which consists of two parts:

- ❖ Part 1: aims at finding the teachers' difficulties as well as their ways for using games in classroom.
- ❖ Part 2: aims at checking the students' attitude of using games in learning vocabulary.

b. An informal interview with students to explore students' attitude of using games and how to use games effectively.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Related literatures**

#### **1.1 Roles of vocabulary in language learning and teaching**

For many years, vocabulary was the poor relation of language teaching. Its neglect has been in part due to a specification in linguistic research on Syntax and Phonology which may have postered a climate in which vocabulary was felt to be a less important element in learning a second language (Carter, 1998). However, its importance has been discovered recently. According to David & Squire (1984), they summed up that without grammar, very little understanding of language could be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing could be conveyed. Its importance was stated by Harmer (1997): "If languages structures make up the skeleton of language then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh". By this confirmation, we can see that vocabulary plays an important part in English language learning. Without it, we can not express our ideas as well as the meaning of the message we want to communicate. To give further importance of vocabulary, Roger, Phillips & Walters (2005) said that vocabulary was more important to students. It was more important than grammar for communication purposes, particularly in the early states when students were motivated to learn the basic words they needed to get by in the language. As a result, it is obviously necessary to have ways of learning and teaching vocabulary effectively. The effective ways of learning vocabulary are introduced in the following part.

#### **1.2. Effective ways to learn English vocabulary**

##### **a. Problems of learning English vocabulary**

In the learning scheme of upper-secondary school, we do not have a particular subject for students to learn vocabulary. Most of vocabulary has been taught within lessons of speaking, listening, reading and writing. During the

lesson, students use their own vocabulary and they are introduced to new words provided by the teacher and classmates which they apply to classroom activities. For many learners of English, whenever they think of vocabulary, they think of learning a list of new words with meanings in their native language without any real context practice.

A number of learners may share the same experience of looking up words in a bilingual dictionary to find their meanings or definitions when they encounter new words. They may even write down lines of new words without any idea of the real use of them in context. Working this way, after a short period of time, many learners may find out that learning vocabulary in list does not satisfy themselves and they think the cause for it is just their bad memorization. Research and publications have shown that this is not a very effective way to study vocabulary. DeCarrico (2001) stated that words should not be learned separately or by memorization without understanding. Moreover, "learning new words is a cumulative process, with words enriched and established as they are met again", Nation (2001, p.6). Therefore, the "look and remember" way of vocabulary learning seems to be not very effective for learners of the English language for students.

Furthermore, some other students may require teachers to give meaning and grammatical function for words that they are not familiar. Learners just wait for teachers who control the lesson to provide new forms of words, then they write those words in their notebooks or complete the exercises. They may use words which they have learnt in the exact formats as the original patterns in which those words appeared. This kind of rote verbal memorization is good to a certain extent since it helps students learn and use the correct form of words. However, according to DeCarrio (2001), the vocabulary used in such context was rather simple because grammatical and phonology aspects were emphasized; and as a result, the lexical aspect was neglected. In other words, learners just know how to use the vocabulary in an exact form, but they do not know how to use it with different shapes of meanings in real life communication.

Unlike traditional way of teaching and learning vocabulary, in a communicative language teaching approach (CLT), learners are required to participate in different activities in class. These activities ask students to interact socially in class. They help students develop all of their skills of learning a language.

### ***b. Effective ways of learning and teaching vocabulary***

Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a language, including English. Many books of methodology have guided the ways of teaching English vocabulary to students. They introduce the ways of presenting, eliciting, practicing, and checking vocabulary. Some techniques have been introduced such as visuals, mime, realia, situation, explanation, example, synonym, antonym, translation... Many linguists state that the technique of teaching vocabulary in the context is the common way for learners to retain new words for a long time. The context provided by reading supplies information about new words from the surrounding words and the learners need to recognize the relationship between unknown words and relevant contextual information for the new words that need to be learned (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Krashen, 1989). According to Jacobs (1994), he supposed that explaining new words was the most important factor for learning vocabulary. Carter (1998) stated that networks of various kinds offered a systematic basis for vocabulary development. Furthermore, Allen (1983) suggested that visual aids, pictures, and mime were also useful techniques to encourage students to use English words in communication.

Games are very helpful in teaching and learning a foreign language. Hadfield (1990) stated that the most useful place for game was at the free state of the lesson after presentation stage, as a chance for students to use the language they have learnt freely. Since games are highly motivating and entertaining, they can give shy students more chance to give their own ideas and thinking. Further supporting games comes from Zdybiewska (1994), who believed games to be a good way of practicing language, provided a model of what learners would use the language for real life in the future. Besides, Khuat & Nguyen (2003) also supported using games in teaching vocabulary. They said that games brought a relaxation and fun for students. So, they learned and retained new words easily. Moreover, games usually involved competition and could keep learners' attention. Vocabulary games brought a real world context into classroom and enhanced students to use English in a flexible and communicative way.

To support the importance of games in teaching and learning vocabulary, Wright, Betteridge & Buckby (2005) said that students' effort was required at every moment and ought to be maintained over a long period of time. Games helped and encouraged many learners to sustain their effort, interest and work. Beside that, well-chosen games were also invaluable as they gave students a break and at the same time allowed students to practice language skills. Games were highly motivating since they were amusing and at the same time challenging. Furthermore, they employed meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They also encouraged and increased learners' cooperation in classroom.

## **1.3 Kinds of games which enhance vocabulary learning**

### ***a. Definition of games***

There are varieties of definitions of games. According to Hadfield (1990), a game was an activity with rules, a

goal and an element of fun. With a little difference in defining the games, Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2005) stated that “game” meant mentioning to an activity in which the players were entertaining and engaging, often challenging, and an activity in which the learners played and usually interacted together.

#### ***b. Advantages of using games***

According to Kim (1995), using games is an advantageous way of teaching English. He listed some following advantages of games.

- + They are motivating and challenging.
- + Learning a language requires a great deal of effort
- + Games help students make and sustain the effort
- + Games provide language practice in the various skills- speaking, writing, listening and reading.
- + They encourage students to interact and communicate.
- + They create a meaningful context for language use.
- + Vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and increase students’ use of English in a flexible, meaningful and communicative way
- + Games usually involve friendly competition and they keep students interested in learning the language
- + Games can help them (students) learn and hang on to new words more easily

#### ***c. Disadvantages of using games***

- + Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson.
- + Games are often consuming much time of the lesson.
- + The source of the games is limited.

#### ***d. Kinds of games which enhance vocabulary learning***

According to Luyen & Hoa (1999), vocabulary can be a significant part in learning and teaching English. They suggested some games which had been applied to students with a great accomplishment in Vietnam for many years.

#### **Game 1: Wordsquare**

Teaching aim: to get students to recognize the spelling of new words

1. Teacher writes the word square on the board or makes a poster of it.
2. Teacher tells the students what the topic is and how many hidden words there are. Students come to the board and circle any words they can see.

#### **Game 2: Bingo**

Teaching aim: to get students to practice listening to new words and to match sounds with spelling.

1. Teacher gets the class to brainstorm a list of 10 or 15 new words and put them on the board
2. Students choose any five and copy them into their books.
3. Teacher reads out the words in any order.
4. Each time the student has one of the words teacher reads, he/she puts a tick next to that word.
5. The first student who ticks all five words shouts “Bingo”.

#### **Game 3: Matching**

Teaching aim: -To get students to match the new vocabulary with definitions, translations of pictures.

- To save time for pre-teaching

1. Write the new words on the left hand side on the board
2. Write definitions, translations, or draw pictures on the right hand side on the board
3. Get students to come up to the board and “match” items in the left hand list with the items in the right hand list by drawing the line between them.
4. Four or five students can work at the board at the same time.
5. Check answers by asking the class “Do you agree?”

#### **Game 4: Noughts and Crosses**

Teaching aim: to get students to put the new vocabulary into a sentence

1. Teacher puts a grid on the board with 9 new words in it.
2. Students work in pairs. One of the students copies the grid in his/her book
3. One student is “Noughts” (“O”) and the other is “Crosses” (“X”)
4. One student starts. He/she chooses a word and makes a sentence with it. If the sentence is correct, he/she puts his/her mark (“O” or “X”) in that square.
5. The first student who gets three-in-a-row (across, down, or diagonally) is the winner.

### **Game 5: Pelmanism**

Teaching aim: to recognize the words and its meaning:

1. Teacher prepares 6 to 8 cards and writes the number from 1 to 8 on one side of the card. The meaning of the words is written on the other side of the card.
2. Teacher ticks the cards on the board so that students can see the side with the number
3. Students are divided into two groups. Each group chooses 2 numbers on the cards.
4. Teacher shows 2 cards which students have chosen. If these two cards match with each other, this group will gain one mark.
5. If the cards do not match, teacher puts them back down and the game is continued until all the cards match.

### **Game 6: Kim's game**

Teaching aim: to check students' memory:

1. Teacher writes the words which students have learnt in the previous lesson on a poster.
2. Students are asked to work in pairs or small group of 4
3. Teacher lets students look at the poster in 30 seconds.
4. Teacher then puts away the poster and asks students to write down as many words, phrases and/or expressions as they can remember from the poster on the board within one minute.
5. The pair or group that can write the most correct items will be the winner.

### **Game 7: Crossword Puzzle**

Teaching aim: to check students' knowledge about the meaning and spelling of the words

1. Students are assigned to sit in pairs or groups.
2. Teacher prepares a poster with hidden words in the vertical and horizontal rows.
3. Clues are given to help students guess the words.
4. The clues are numbered.
5. Students choose the number and use the clue to find out the word on the row that has the clue number.
6. The group or pair finds out the hidden word firstly will be the winner.

### **Game 8: Jumbled words**

Teaching aim: to get students to practice spelling new words:

1. Teacher writes 5 or 6 words with jumbled letters on the board and tells the students what the topic is.
2. In pairs, students rearrange the order of the letters to get the correct words.
3. Students come to the board to write the correct words.

## **2. Related studies**

Using English language games was one of the most effective classroom tools for enhancing learning to students. Therefore, a number of studies were carried out on this field.

Uberman (1998) conducted her research with the aim to compare the influence of language games and traditional retention. The participants involved in her study were two groups of grade 3 students. She divided the participants into two groups: experimental one and control one. She used a matching game for the experimental group and translation for the control one to help them remember the idiom relating to the part of the body. The result showed that the experimental group retained new vocabulary better than the control one. In terms of motivation, Uberman observed that fewer learners participated actively or enthusiastically in the lesson of translation, but most of students showed great interest in taking part in language games.

Khuat & Nguyen (2003) also conducted their study on the effect of language games on students vocabulary learning. The question they wanted to examine is whether language games helped students retain vocabulary effectively. Their participants are students in classes at the Distance education center (DEC). To find out the answer to their research question, these researchers use many kinds of instruments in their research methodology: applying games in their own classes, vocabulary pre and post tests, observing other teachers' classes, interviewing both teachers and students. The results from the test show that their students learn new vocabulary more quickly and retain it better when it was applied in the relaxing and comfortable environment of language games. Seventeen among twenty students who were interviewed expressed their satisfaction, and pleasant feeling after playing language games.

In Vernon's study (2006), there was nothing that engaged students more than teaching English through games. In her opinion, a boring class would take in less than half of what a teacher said and retained none of it. Whereas an intensive, interested and involved class, learning through English language games, would take in 100% of the lesson and retained up to 80% of it. Vernon's result was conducted by observing and testing on the children at the age of ten to twelve at her English speaking club. With the data collected in the research Vernon (2006) concluded that using language

games in class could be one of the most exciting ways to teach children English.

Unlike other researchers, in his research Jung (2005) would like to share his ideas about the advantages of language games by observation through a competition. The participants were college freshmen at lower-intermediate language level (about 18 years old). By observation, Jung shared the results that students were more engaged in and committed to using English than they would be in the classroom. In their regular class, these students only listened to their teachers passively, and they accepted all of teachers' explanations. However, when taking in the language games, students felt very eager because they were the center of the lesson. In each of the games, students found their own ways to express themselves.

### 3. Summary

In this chapter, the relevant literature which is needed to form the theoretical framework for the present studies are presented.

This chapter has pointed out the real problems of learning and teaching language vocabulary. In addition, although vocabulary is considered as the most important part in language acquisitions, most of students at university have been fed up with new words. Hence, this chapter mentions some games that we can use in teaching vocabulary because of most advantages of theirs.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1. Overview of current teaching and learning vocabulary at the University of Transport and Communications

The study was conducted at the University of Transport and Communications. The participants for the study consist of 8 teachers of English and 80 first-year students from four K62 classes. The teachers have been teaching English for over two years at university. Most of the students have been studying English for seven years at secondary school and high school. However, like most other students in Vietnam they have got few new words. Even, great number students do not know how to say simple words. Consequently, their ability of speak and write in English cannot be improved. In addition, many students come from different places with different backgrounds.

The students are studying in classes of about 40 to 70 students per class. They are learning two textbooks, namely "General English – Elementary" and "General English – Pre-intermediate" which have been edited and collected by the English section itself. Each textbook includes 10 units in class. Each unit has a specific topic and it can cover all four skills such as: Reading, Speaking, Writing and Listening and main language items. According to the syllabus, students have five 50-minute periods a week for their English classes in average. Vocabulary was taught in each part of the unit. Instructors had used many techniques of teaching vocabulary in these classes and one of which was games which had been used to teach English vocabulary in two classes from the beginning of the school year.

### 2. Research methods

#### 2.1. Research participants

The participants for the research were 8 teachers of English and 80 students chosen randomly from four K62 classes at the University of Transport and Communications. The teachers had been teaching English for over two years. They were willing to take part in the research because they would like to explore their students' beliefs about the games which had been applied to the latter. Most students have been learning English for 7 years. The English program applied to these classes was General English – Elementary and Pre-intermediate for 6 weeks.

#### 2.2 Research instruments

To get the result for the study, two questionnaires had been designed and applied for both teacher and students: one questionnaire for teachers (including 15 items and one extra question) and one for students (including 20 items). The questionnaire 1 (see Appendix 1) was designed to explore the teachers' difficulties in using games and the ways of teachers carrying out games in classroom. It was adapted from Murdoch (1997) Qualities and Competencies of a good English teacher cited from Curriculum Development in Language Teaching by Richards (2001). The questionnaire was divided into two clusters. The first one was used to convey the teachers' difficulties in using games. It consisted of 8 items, from the item 1 to 8. The second cluster was used to get the ways of teachers carrying out games in classroom (consisting of 7 items, from 9 to 15).

The second questionnaire was for students to explore their thinking, impacts and interests of using games to learn vocabulary. The questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 2) (consisting of 20 items) was divided into 3 clusters. The first one aimed at getting the students' thinking about vocabulary games. It consisted of questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 17. The second cluster was used to explore the students' impacts of using games to learn vocabulary (consisting of items 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20). The last one was used to get students' interest about the games (questions 13, 15, 16). This questionnaire was adapted from Deci & Ryan (1985) 18-item Intrinsic Motivation Inventory. The questionnaire 2 was

then translated into Vietnamese language (see Appendix 3) to help the participants understand exactly the meaning of each item in the questionnaire. The Vietnamese version was administered at the same time with the English version to the participants.

Each answer in the questionnaire was scaled from 5 to 1 respectively strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree with each statement in the questionnaires. In the part B of the questionnaire 1 (for teachers), the format was slightly different when researcher replaces “strongly agree” and the others by “always, often, sometimes, seldom, and never”. The researcher just would like to measure the frequency of teachers’ use of games in classroom.

### 2.3. Research design and procedure

The research was designed basing on the descriptive approach-the data of the study were described to get the phenomenon of using games currently. The questionnaire 2 was piloted to 20 students in an economics class and 4 teachers at the same school. Then, the piloting results were analyzed at home. The questionnaire 2 (for student) was reliable ( $\alpha = .816$ ). The questionnaire 1 (for teachers) was under the standard ( $\alpha = .451$ ). After the piloting time, some adjustments for both questionnaires had been done before administering the questionnaires to the participants. Finally, the questionnaires were administered to the participants. In the administering time, the students were delivered the questionnaire 2 and asked to give their opinion about each statement in the questionnaire 2. Students were asked to give their opinion by circling the number marked from 1 to 5. The administering time of the questionnaire 2 were controlled by the researcher. The questionnaire 1 was delivered to English teachers at this school on rest-time. They were invited to give their ideas about the statements stated in the questionnaire 1 during the rest-time. Then, the data were collected and the results of the study were discussed carefully at home.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### 1. Overview of statistical procedures

After obtaining the data for the study, the researcher used the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) to analyze them. The answers of questionnaires 1 and questionnaire 2 were scaled the reliability to know whether the Alpha of the data reached the standard or not. The descriptive statistics was measured to get the mean and the standard deviation of each questionnaire. The relationships between the clusters were also computed by SPSS software.

Both questionnaires 1 and questionnaire 2 reached the standard of the study at the administering time. With the questionnaire 1, the result was reliable ( $\alpha = .756$ ). The questionnaire 2 was reliable,  $\alpha = .854$ .

### 2. Description of findings

After analyzing the data of the study carefully, the hypotheses were clarified.

#### 2.1. Students have a positive attitude towards the use of the language games in the classroom.

The answers of students in questionnaire 2 showed students’ preferences of using games in learning vocabulary to other ways. most of students said “agree” playing games was a good way to learn vocabulary ( $M = 4.19, SD = .41$ ). They would like to use the games as a new technique to learn vocabulary. The traditional ways of learning new words were not suitable for them.

**Table 1: The mean of the students’ attitudes of using games in learning vocabulary**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOTAL	80	3.20	5.00	4.1869	.40610

With the result in students’ thinking, students’ impacts and students’ interest (see Table 2), we could see that students were strongly motivated with the vocabulary games. They were pleased to take part in the language games in the classroom. They thought that learning vocabulary through games was more enjoyable. The result of the students’ thinking about the games proved it to us with the high mean ( $M = 4.28, SD = .46$ ). When they had a good thinking about the language games, they could learn and remember the vocabulary better. Basing on the descriptive statistics in the students’ impacts in remembering vocabulary ( $M = 4.13, SD = .45$ ), we could see that the learners had a great interest of using games. They felt excited and enthusiastic in joining the games activities in classroom. The result of the students’ interest about the games was a proof for us ( $M = 4.20, SD = .54$ ).

**Table 2: The mean of clusters of the students’ attitude of using in learning vocabulary**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students’ thinking	80	3.17	5.00	4.28	.46
Students’ impacts	80	3.18	5.00	4.13	.45
Students’ interests	80	3.00	5.00	4.20	.54

## 2.2 Time-consumption and limitation of vocabulary game sources are the main difficulties of English teachers at this university

When using vocabulary games in classroom, teachers often faced many difficulties. Time-consumption and limitation of the game sources were two main obstacles to teachers. The instructors often took much time for the preparation of the vocabulary games as well as the time-consuming lessons (6 out of 8 teachers said “agree” with the statements numbered 1 and 4 in the questionnaire 1, account for 75%). The facilities for getting new kind of games to teach new words were rather limited (5 out of 8 teachers said “agree” with the statement numbered 3 in the questionnaire 1, account for 62.5%).

To mention to the ways of playing games in classroom, most of teachers preferred asking their students to play games in groups (7 out of 8 teachers said “often” with the statement numbered 10 in the questionnaire 1). Almost of teachers did not like asking their students to play games in pairs (only 1 out of 8 teachers said “often” with the statement numbered 11). Moreover, teachers’ ideas of applying games in the lessons were also different. Most teachers used games at warm-up activities to review students’ vocabulary (7 out of 8 teachers said “often” with the statement numbered 13 in the questionnaire 1). Playing games at the post-stage of the lesson was another choice of teachers (3 out of 8 teachers said “often” with the statement numbered 15).

## 3. Other Findings

The statistical number also said that the thinking, the impact and the interest of students in using language games had a moderate correlation. The cluster 1 and the cluster 2 showed that there was a marked relationship between the students’ thinking and the effectiveness of using games ( $r = .647, p = .000$ ). It meant that if students thought of games as a good way for them to learn vocabulary, they would learn and remember more vocabulary. The students’ interests and the effectiveness of using games also had a moderate relationship ( $r = .569, p = .000$ ). It meant that if students were interested in the games activities, they could learn vocabulary better. The same correlation also happened to the students’ thinking and the interests, cluster 1 and 3 ( $r = .534, p = .000$ ). It meant that if students thought of games as a positive device of learning vocabulary, they were willing to take part in the games. All the clusters influenced and stimulated each other.

According to the answers of the English teachers in the questionnaire 1, the researcher realized that teachers of English at university were facing other problems beside the time-consumption and the shortage of games sources. The affordable and the controlling the games were other troubles for teachers (2 out of 8 teachers said “agree” with the statement numbered 2 and 6 in the questionnaire 1, account for 25%). As a result, the noise affected the nearside classes (3 out of 8 teachers said “agree” with the statement numbered 7 in the questionnaire 1, account for 37.5%). All of the difficulties for teachers to carry out games in classroom could be seen in the table below.

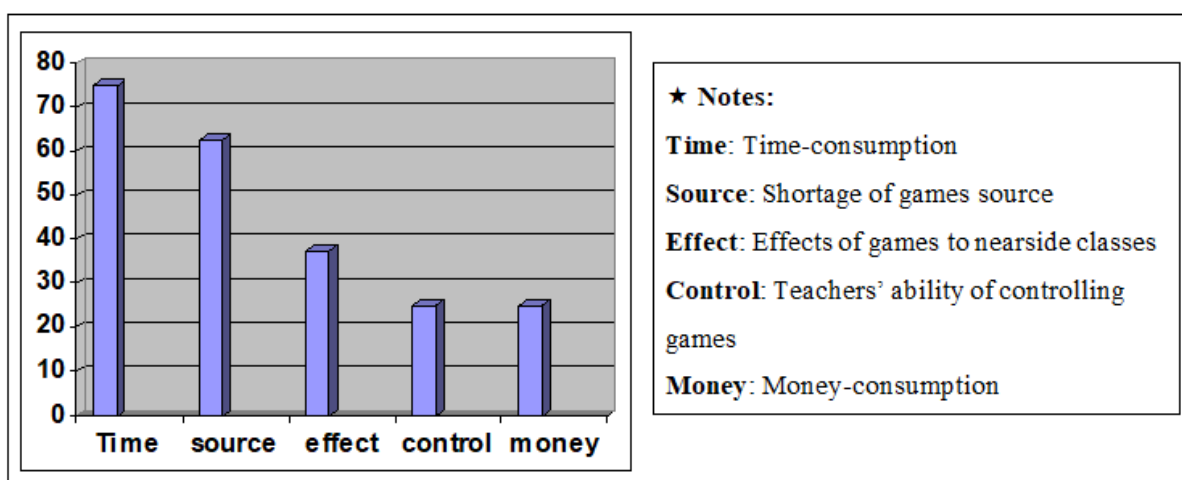


Table 3: The teachers’ difficulties for using games in classroom

## SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

### 1. Summary of research problem, method and finding

Vocabulary was considered as a bridge to connect four skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) in English. However, its importance was still ignored by many teachers at university. In classroom, they just focused on teaching grammar. As a result, most of students could not use their own knowledge of vocabulary to communicate in real life. Learning vocabulary, students felt boring with the traditional ways of studying it. Ways of learning vocabulary such as listening to teachers’ explanation, looking and remembering the words or writing the new words on the papers many



times was no longer an effective way of teaching and learning vocabulary. Using games in teaching and learning as a replacement for the odd one was considered the best choice at this time in the English classes.

To carry out the study about the use of the games in teaching vocabulary to students K62, two questionnaires had been used to get the data for the study. Two questionnaires were scaled to get the reliability by SPSS software to assure the exact result. They had been piloted and adjusted before administering to the participants. Then, the results of the study were discussed carefully to assure that they answered correctly the research questions.

The result of the study showed that most of students enjoyed learning English vocabulary through games. They were eager to take part in the activities of the games. Games motivated students to learn vocabulary better than other ways. However, when creating games for students in classroom, teachers met some difficulties (see Table 3). Time-consumption and limitation of the game sources were considered as two main reasons which caused the absence of the games in each lesson.

## **2. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY RESULTS**

### **2.1 Students' attitude and perception about the use of games in teaching and learning vocabulary in classroom**

Overall, the results of the present study showed that most of students who practiced vocabulary activity with games felt more motivated and interested in what they were doing. Therefore, it was obvious that the hypothesis of this study was that students had a positive attitude to language games was proved to be correct when the result of the study revealed the same thing. The research findings was based on the findings of previous studies such as Wright, Betteridge & Buckby (2005) and Kim (1995), which revealed that the use of language games in EFL classes had positive effects on learners motivation. The related studies of Uberman (1998); Khuat & Nguyen (2003) also showed that most participants in their study reported their positive opinions towards language games. In fact, the results of this study were supportive to the study of Uberman (1998) and Jung (2005). These researchers also aimed at investigating learners' motivation by using language games. Similar to the result of Khuat & Nguyen (2003), language games could enhance students' motivation in their learning. This result, therefore, supported the result of the current study which was carried out to students K62 at the university of Transport and Communications.

From his own observations, the researcher noticed that the time students spent working on the words was usually slightly longer than when other techniques which were used. This might suggest that more time should be devoted to activities leads to better results. The result of the current study suggested that the fun and relaxed atmosphere facilitated students' learning. The use of games during the lessons might have motivated students to work more on the vocabulary items on their own, so the game might have been a good stimulus for learners.

Although, it could not be said that games were always better and easier to cope with for everyone, a majority of learners found games relaxing and motivating. Games should be an integral part of a lesson, providing the possibility of intensive practice while at the same time immensely enjoyable for both students and teachers. The research produced the evidence which showed that games were useful and more successful than other methods of vocabulary presentation. Having such evidence at hand, the researcher wished to recommend the wide use of games with vocabulary work as a successful way of acquiring language competence.

### **2.2 Teachers' difficulties in using games in classroom**

Although most of English teachers realized the advantages of games in teaching and learning vocabulary, the appliance of them might be still limited. The difficulties of teachers at university in using games were consistent with the disadvantages of using games supposed by Kim (1995). The consumption of time and shortage of game sources were main obstacles that prevented teachers from using games in their lessons. Moreover, the ability to control the students while they were playing games was another problem for teachers. When the vocabulary games were used in the lesson to get the best benefits was still a controversial question for the instructors. The absence of the games in classroom might cause the limitation of students' knowledge of English vocabulary in particular and interests of learning English in general. The instructors should overcome the trouble to help students feel more interesting in learning vocabulary. It was said that the efforts of teachers could not be accomplished without the help and encouragement of the rector at university.

## **3. Suggestions for using games in classroom**

Some suggestions might be offered to English teachers to help overcome the main difficulties of using vocabulary in classroom.

### **3.1 Ways of using vocabulary games to save time for teachers in classroom**

According to Hadfield (1990), a game could be used at any state of the lesson. Having a similar idea to Hadfield, Rixon (1981) suggested that games should be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they were suitable and carefully chosen. Uberman (1998) said that games were often used as short warm-up activities or when there was

some time left at the end of a lesson. Lee (1979) stated that a game should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class had nothing better to do. Games also lent themselves well to revision exercises helping learners recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way (Dyenne, 2001).

To sum up, language game was an implementing way to motivate learners, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency in classroom. Games could be used as short warm-up activities or when there was some time left at the end of a lesson. In this case, a game should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do. Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. On the other hand, games could be used at all stages of the lesson. However, teachers ought to be sure that games provided were suitable and carefully selected by the teachers. Before playing a game teachers should give attention to the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and the classroom settings.

### **3.2 Ways for teachers to get more sources of vocabulary games**

The shortage of vocabulary games source was one of the main difficulties for English teachers, especially at university. Eight kinds of games had been suggested to help English teachers overcome this problem. Basing on these kinds of games, teachers could create a plenty of suitable games for their students. Besides, the head of English teaching staff should hold a corner of exchanging experience of using vocabulary games for all English teachers. At this corner, teachers might share and exchange their kinds of vocabulary games together. Moreover, some contests of creating vocabulary games should be celebrated every school year. These ways could help English teachers get a large reference of games. Besides, the head should invest more facilities for English language teaching. For example, some modern computers and books of English vocabulary games should be well-equipped at the library. Thanks to the computers and the books, English teachers could get more kinds of games from the internet and book sources. Besides, the researcher might offer some kinds of books and websites which could supply some sources of vocabulary games for teacher. They might give English teacher a hand to solve the problem of shortage games. These kinds of books and websites were available at Appendix 5.

### **4. Limitation of the study**

In addition to reaching the aims of the research, there still existed some considerable limitations of the study

Firstly, the instruments for collecting the data were slightly limited. The result of the study might be more convincing if the observation sheets and the interview were used together with the questionnaires to obtain the data for the study. Besides, the shortage of time was another problem. In fact, the time for using vocabulary games in the classroom during ten weeks was limited. Most of the games were administered in classroom by the researcher during 10 periods. The study result might be invaluable if the researcher could explore the real picture of using games in teaching vocabulary at some other universities.

Secondly, the participants were only 80 students and 8 teachers of English at university. The result of the study might be better if the research time was extended and more participants from different courses could be involved in the study.

### **5. Recommendations for further research**

Although the study achieved its goal to explore the attitude and perception of the learners as well as the obstacles of the instructors towards the vocabulary games, the researcher was still not happy with it. The study result might be better if the researcher was allowed to have more time to use the other instruments beside questionnaires for the research. More kinds of games might have also been applied to students and then, they would be a valuable collection for the researcher to prove the effectiveness of using games to audience. Moreover, the collection of games might be a good reference for the further study in the future.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The result of the study proved that students K62 have a positive attitude and perception to language games. In other words, language games have a great contribution to enhance learners' motivation. First, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. Second, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. These create the motivation for learners of English to get involved and participate actively in the learning activities. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative ways. As a result, students prefer using language games in learning vocabulary to other ways in the classroom. Beside that, the teachers' difficulties in using games have been assessed. The best ways to help teachers avoid problems have been suggested. The findings of the present study are not only consistent with the theoretical background of the thesis but also supportive of previous research on using language games.

Therefore, the role of games in teaching and learning vocabulary cannot be denied. However, in order to achieve the most from vocabulary games, it is essential that suitable games are chosen. Whenever a game is to be conducted, the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and the classroom settings are factors that should be taken in to account.

In conclusion, despite the limitation of the study, the most important contribution of this study is that it provides EFL learners and teachers with a new way of learning vocabulary beside the traditional ones. It shows the participant's attitudes towards the use of language games in classroom. It has been proved that games are used not only for mere fun, but more importantly, for the useful practice of language lessons, thus leading toward the goal of improving learners' communicative competence. With respect to learner's interest and effective foreign language vocabulary learning, language games approach is promising to both research and pedagogical perspectives.

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