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## **Creating Joyful Learning through Snowball Throwing to Enhance Primary Students' Vocabulary**

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### **Abstract**

The teaching of English has some challenges, especially in primary school. The primary students do not speak English as their mother language, therefore it is quite difficult for them to acquire English fluently. Additionally, English in Indonesia is a foreign language that the children do not use in their daily life, particularly in rural areas. The preliminary study found that the primary students' English score was under the minimum passing criteria which was 68, there was only thirty-four percent (34%) of students can achieve it. Thus, the use of teaching techniques was implemented to help the children to acquire better English. The purpose of this study was to examine how a snowball-throwing teaching method and youtube may be used to improve the vocabulary understanding of fifth graders. This study used collaborative classroom action research (CCAR). The results showed that the snowball throwing method and youtube can help students improve their vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary tests got an average score of 93.6, with ninety-eight percent (98 percent) of students reach with the criteria. They were enthusiastic about utilizing this method to learn English. They were also able to work well in groups, and displayed excellent teamwork skills.

**Keywords:** Joyful learning, primary students, snowball throwing, vocabulary



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## 1. Introduction

English as a global language considered to be an important language for all people. Many people communicate and exchange information across borders using English. Thus, the teaching of English in Indonesia has been widely taught starting from early stage. In 2004, the government implemented a new curriculum that made English a compulsory subject from grade four to six in all elementary schools. However, this policy was revised in 2013, when English was removed from the core curriculum and became an optional subject that schools could choose to offer or not. In 2018, the government implemented another revised curriculum that emphasized character building and required all subjects, including English, to contribute to the development of students' religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation and integrity (Mukminin et al, 2019). Teaching of English in elementary school is not as important as other subjects because there is no standard competence in the English subject in the Indonesian Primary Curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of English learning for young learners is only to focus on vocabulary.

The young learners do not have to acquire all four language skills just like higher grade learners. Young learners at the beginning level do not require excessive explanations or grammar rules in learning English. As their brain development is still in the concrete operational stages, young learners are incapable of learning abstract norms (Herwiana and Laili, 2019). Children who begin learning English as foreign language at a young age require only minimal vocabulary. To successfully acquire a language, students must increase their vocabulary size. Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language (Clenton and Booth, 2021). Therefore, vocabulary is necessary to improve comprehension in all four language skills. The other "half" of form-focused education, according to Brown (2007), vocabulary is the thousands of lexical building pieces available to the average language user. As we believe in teaching vocabulary, it is important to reiterate that lexical items are fundamental to all four skills; therefore, vocabulary is not a "skill" in the conventional sense.

Introducing English vocabulary to young learners probably will face some obstacles since it is their foreign language. Nevertheless, according to Saville (2012), by getting the stimulation and practice, young learners will obtain their new language acquisition and their Language Acquisition Device (LAD) will function optimally. LAD might play a role in facilitating the initial stages of vocabulary learning, especially when students encounter new words in meaningful contexts. Therefore, Early English instruction will not harm the young

learners. According to Lightbown and Spada (2011), the astounding rise of vocabulary is one of the most remarkable linguistic developments of the early school years. In early childhood, when the recurrence of everyday events and experiences offers repeated exposure to a small set of words, many words are learned. Children enter school with the ability to comprehend and generate hundreds to thousands of words. It is now acknowledged that young learners are a distinct group of learners because they have some characteristics; first, they begin to read and write very early in life; second, they do so by observing and participating in authentic real-life settings; third, their abilities to read and write develop concurrently and in interconnected ways and finally, they construct understanding and learning by actively engaging with learning materials (Shek, 2017).

Teaching primary students is more difficult than teaching adults. Primary students have less prior knowledge and experience than adults the teacher must create an engaging, energetic, and enjoyable classroom environment. Teachers need to introduce new concepts and vocabulary gradually and use concrete examples and visual aids to help them understand EFL teachers are confronted with the difficulty of vocabulary teaching (Ana, 2018). They must produce effective resources and techniques for students to acquire vocabulary (Herwiana & Agustina, 2017). The importance of vocabulary to foreign language learners has focused on effective vocabulary teaching strategies that have led to an increase in the acquisition of vocabulary (Alfadil, 2020). Beginners of second/foreign languages should be straightforwardly taught the language. Using engaging techniques and materials, a teacher can create an engaging classroom. Teaching primary students should involve stimulating all five senses, making the use of visual and auditory media crucial to teaching-learning activities.

Therefore, a teacher who wishes to teach English in elementary school must have a specific level of competency, be familiar with methods suitable for children of this age, produce aural-visual resources to support the teaching-learning process, and establish a comfortable classroom environment. Children are very active students, therefore learning new words should be presented engagingly. Teachers should examine what kind of strategy might work best for them. Utilizing techniques that are not only audio-visual but also tactile is preferable. As a game, it not only makes the students feel at ease and enjoy the teaching-learning activities, but it can also help them retain new vocabulary.

Most primary students have problems acquiring English. The results of teaching and learning English were unsatisfactory because there is a limited opportunity for students to engage with their environment using the language (Imani et al., 2021). The majority of students' abilities fall far short of expectations. The preliminary analysis in a public elementary school in East Java revealed that the student's scores in English test were extremely low. The scores were derived from an informal test that was distributed as part of a preliminary study with the theme "at the school." The test consisted of ten matching

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questions, five multiple-choice questions with three possible answers per stem, and five cloze questions. The class comprises forty-five students, but one student is absent. Thus, forty-four students took the examination. The outcome revealed that only 15 out of 44 students met the minimal passing standard criteria or familiar as KKM, which was 68. It indicates that only 34% of individuals scored do well on vocabulary tests. While 66% percent of the students failed to meet the minimum passing criteria. This phenomenon suggests that there were flaws in the process of teaching and learning English that must be resolved to improve the quality of teaching and learning English in EFL classrooms.

In the preliminary study, researcher found several reasons identified as the causes of the aforementioned difficulties. First, there is a lack of pupil concentration during teaching-learning activities. Second, the kids lack confidence in themselves. The third is the lack of engaging media and the poor quality of the book. Fourth, the instructor always employs conventional methods. The first reason for the problems is the overcrowding of students during the teaching-learning process as a result of their boredom with studying English and dislike for the topic. Therefore, they lack focus when studying English. The majority of students enjoy conversing with their classmates and annoying them. Due to difficulty remembering the words, the students tend to be timid. They have anxiety when speaking in front of the class. They are dissatisfied with their performance and frequently experience anxiety when the instructor asks them to speak. Those students who lack self-confidence will remain silent. Anxiety might cause students to learn more slowly than those with self-confidence. These students only require a little assistance and motivation.

The third cause is the teacher's failure to utilize teaching media in the teaching and learning activity. The school usually provides several teaching and learning aids such as dictionaries, photos, English puzzles, scrabble, and flashcards, but the teacher does not use them in their teaching and learning activity. In addition, there is also an LCD projector that the teacher has never used to help the learning process because creating such media was considered a waste of time. In addition, the only English textbook the students have was the workbook or familiar as *Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS)*. It was printed on low-grade paper and entirely black and white. After the researcher had studied the workbook, it appeared dull to read. The images are small, monochromatic, and written in small font sizes. In addition, the government prohibits schools from requiring students to purchase additional textbooks, thus, it will disrupt the teaching-learning process.

The final cause was that the English teacher always employs traditional tactics in which the role of the teacher is paramount. Typically, lecturing and question-and-answer sessions were utilized in teaching-learning interactions. The teacher never employs any other methods when teaching English. Although the teacher has attended a session on how to teach English, the English teacher never employs interesting activities to teach English. Therefore, it did not

contribute significantly to changing environment of the teaching and learning activities in the class.

In regard to solving the problems, the researcher tried to implement the technique to teach vocabulary. Snowball throwing is a technique that has been proven to give some positive impacts on students' academic achievement in all subjects. Previous studies related to snowball throwing have been conducted by several researchers and educators. Previous studies showed that snowball throwing is significant to improve vocabulary learning (Jaya, 2014; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019; Rita et al., 2015). Snowball throwing also improves students' academic achievement in reading skills (Fatimah Tenri Sari & Ahmadi, 2021) and speaking skills (Meilinda, 2017). Although snowball throwing techniques have been massively examined by researchers and educators, this technique is very rare to be explored in elementary school. Secondly, the research that implemented audio-visual medium in snowball throwing technique to increase vocabulary is very few. Thus, this present study integrated the snowball throwing technique and video from YouTube as a medium to teach vocabulary. The video from YouTube as an audio-visual medium give an authentic environment to learn English. Furthermore, the children can listen and pronounce the correct words in English.

Snowball throwing is considered a technique for creating joyful learning. Joyful learning is a type of learning process or experience that can help a student interested in teaching-learning activities. Typically, traditional instruction causes students to become bored and sit quietly in class. Learners can become more engaged in teaching-learning activities by conducting experiments, working in groups, and so on. Active learning is superior to requiring students to memorize lessons. To facilitate good information processing and long-term memory preservation, a teacher must make learning interesting and instill in students a sense of joy (Singh, 2014). Moreover, the snowball-throwing teaching technique relates to the principle of joyful learning; Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) where the background of the actual world is brought into the classroom. In this study, the researcher integrated the snowball-throwing technique into the teaching and learning activities. Thus, this present study tried to find out, "how does the snowball-throwing teaching technique enhance the vocabulary mastery of primary students?"

## **2. Method**

The design of this study was collaborative classroom action research where the researcher was helped by the English teacher. The English teacher was the observer who helped to collect the data and the researcher was the teacher. There were forty-five fifth-graders at a public elementary school in East Java who was involved in this study. The implementation of snowball throwing was conducted in two cycles with four times implementations in each meeting.

The data were gathered from vocabulary tests that was distributed as part of a preliminary study with the theme "at the school." The test consisted of ten matching questions, five multiple-choice questions with three possible answers per stem, and five cloze questions. The data were also from observations and field notes as additional information. Then, the data were analyzed through a descriptive qualitative approach. Before conducting the technique, the researcher prepared the kinds of things that can help the work of snowball throwing in the teaching activities. Pictures, related to the topic, the audio track, and the students' worksheets, were useful in supporting the implementation of the snowball-throwing technique.

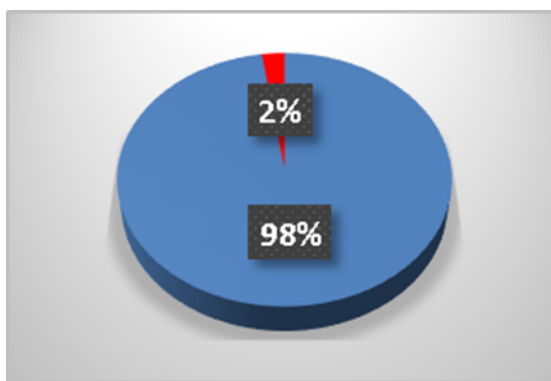
There were some steps in conducting the snowball throwing technique as stated in Wright (2006): (1) There were twenty to twenty-seven pictures related to the topic. Print all the pictures on paper. Each paper consisted of one picture. Then, the teacher crumpled a piece of paper (like a ball) consisting of a picture; (2) asked the students to stand up. Split the students into four groups, each group consisting of 10-12 students, and arranged them into form O (circle); (3) each group had 5-7 balls from the crumpled paper; (4) the teacher played the song using the tape recorder/ laptop; (5) the teacher threw the ball to the first student. The first student threw the ball to the other student, it turned from the right side to the left side until the teacher stops the music. These activities were conducted in the group; (6) in the first throw, the student who got the ball must answer orally what the name of the picture was. For example, the student answers "headache" and crumples it. Then the music was played again; (7) in the second throw, when the music stops, the next student who got the ball with the same picture, opened it and wrote "headache" on that crumpled paper and crumpled it; (8) then the music was played again, and the ball was thrown again when the music stops, the student who got the ball with the same picture opened the crumpled paper and writes a simple sentence from that word for example "I have got a headache". Then, he or she puts the crumpled paper on the board; (9) the teacher observed the activities and checked the answer. If the student could not guess the picture, the other students would help him or her. If all of the students could not answer correctly, the teacher would give the correct answer; and (10) these steps continue until the students finished the last picture.

### 3. Findings

During the teaching and learning activities, the teacher used three stages in the main activities of the lesson plan. In pre – activities, the teacher gave some questions related to the audio-visual song given to lead the students' background knowledge. Then, the teacher explained and pronounced the words based on the pictures, followed by the students. The teacher also gave an example of using the words in a simple sentence. Whilst- activities, the teacher gave modeling of how to play snowball throwing. Then, the students practiced snowball throwing in a group. As the students implemented the technique, the teacher monitored the students' answers. When the students found difficulties, it was allowed for them to ask questions so

the teacher's role was to guide and help the students. In post-activities, the students were given a quiz, they worked individually.

After the implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique, the average score of students' vocabulary tests was 93.6. There was ninety-eight percent of students (98%) got a score of more than or equal to 68. It meant the score had reached the criteria of success. Thus, it could be said that there was a significant improvement in students' scores. Some forty-one students achieved the minimum passing criteria (KKM) which were 68 but there was only one student who could not achieve the passing criteria. The percentage of the students who met the criteria of success was 98%, which can be seen in the diagram as follows:



*Figure 1.* The Percentages of the Students who Passed the Criteria of Success

Based on the data presented above, revealed that the number of students who achieved the criteria of success was higher than those who did not. As evidence, 41 students (98%) out of 42 achieved a score above or equal to 68 and there was only one student who has a score below 68. It was found that more than 85% of the students gained scores above or equal to 68. It meant the result of the vocabulary test met the criteria of success. Therefore, the researcher and collaborator decided to stop the cycle. The implementation of snowball throwing was only conducted in one cycle.

The implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique can help students to reinforce their memorization of the vocabulary. The improvement can be seen in the result of the vocabulary test. Before the implementation of snowball throwing, the student's scores on the vocabulary test were 66.4 and there was only thirty-four percent (34%) of students could achieve the minimum passing criteria which was 68. Then, after the implementation, the average score was 93.6 and there was ninety-eight percent (98%) of students could achieve the minimum passing score.

The factors which can be indicated in improving the technique are as follows: first, the use of color pictures can stimulate the students' attraction to learn English and make the meaning of the words clearer. Second, the use of the song (audio-visual) instead of visual

attraction, also can stimulate their listening, they know how to pronounce the words like a native. The songs are more authentic because they were taken from the internet (YouTube video) that was played originally by a native speaker. It is easier to imitate and remember the words. Third, in the activities, the students share and practice the words in a group, so they can enrich their vocabulary. Fourth, the students are working in a group so they do not have to feel shy or afraid because their friends will help them if they cannot remember the words. Fifth, the students have homework that is done individually. The homework consists of pictures, they have to name the pictures, and it also automatically can review the vocabularies that have been taught.

Moreover, the snowball-throwing teaching technique also gives a positive impact on the students' participation in the teaching and learning process. It is proven from the result of the research which shows that the students are actively involved in participating in the activities.

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings showed that the appropriate technique gave a beneficial contribution both in improving the students' scores on vocabulary tests and students' involvement during the learning process. The snowball-throwing teaching technique makes the students more active. It also develops their confidence through group work and makes good cooperation among their peer. Students were actively involved in the activities. Similar to the research conducted by Apsari et al., (2019) that this technique can improve students' participation in classroom activities because they have to work with their group.

The use of media such as pictures and songs from youtube videos in snowball throwing teaching techniques can attract students' attention. The use of media is to create a teaching and learning process more attractive (Fitriana, 2019). Students' attention may stimulate their motivation to learn. Motivation is considered to be one of the most important factors explaining individual differences in learning English as a second or foreign language (Leona et al., 2021). It is similar to previous research that pictures can increase students' vocabulary (Pasaribu et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2022). The use of YouTube also improves students' language skills (Meilinda, 2017). In addition, the cooperative learning model, snowball throwing with learning video media can facilitate students to construct their knowledge because it is following the basis for developing cooperative learning models, namely cognitive theory (Polangitan et al., 2022). Moreover, creative and effective teaching techniques could create a positive role pair work plays in promoting EFL vocabulary acquisition for children at the elementary level (Tseng et al., 2020).

The implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique can bring joy to the classroom atmosphere besides making students memorize the words. This relates to the theory of joyful learning. They can enjoyably learn the lesson. This technique can bring pleasure to the teaching-learning process, make more students more active, and also creates



emotional intelligence like self-confidence, cooperation through group work, and braveness (Singh, 2014).

Furthermore, the snowball-throwing teaching technique can enhance vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the result of the vocabulary test and the process of teaching and learning activities during the implementation. The vocabulary test was given at the end of the cycle.

The students' improvement in vocabulary could be inferred from the result of the test. There were 41 out of 42 (98 %) students who achieved the criteria of success. Only one student could not achieve the criteria of success because she had difficulty in learning, not only English but also all the subjects. She was a slower learner it was very difficult for her to understand the vocabulary written or spoken. It could be seen from the involvement in the group working on snowball throwing. She could not write the vocabulary correctly even though her friends in the group had taught her how to write.

The significance of the student's achievement scores above can be drawn that the technique implemented can improve the students' vocabulary mastery in one cycle. Furthermore, the findings deal with the student's active involvement in the learning process improved through the implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique. This finding was similar to the prior research that snowball throwing can improve students' academic achievement in vocabulary mastery (Jaya, 2014; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019; Rita et al., 2015)

Based on the findings of the research, students' competence to acquire the vocabulary and the students' involvement improved. There were 41 out of 42 students (98%) who achieved the criterion of success. The students' participation achieved more than 76% during the implementation of the snowball throwing teaching technique. The technique implemented by the teacher-researcher influenced much of the findings of the research. It showed that the snowball-throwing teaching technique can be used as an alternative technique to improve primary students' vocabulary mastery. However, this technique can be challenging to generalize and transfer the findings to other contexts and settings. This type of research is usually context-specific and situational, meaning that it is tailored to the particular needs and problems of a specific classroom or school.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings can be concluded that the implementation of the snowball-throwing teaching technique can improve the students' vocabulary mastery of fifth graders in elementary school. There are improvements in both vocabulary mastery and the student's participation during the implementation of the technique. The vocabulary memorization can be improved by the implementation of snowball throwing. Additionally, the use of media in this study may contribute to the success of students' achievements such as color pictures, audio-visual songs which were taken from youtube and group work. Future studies should evaluate the use of snowball throwing in the smaller or larger class. In addition, evaluating different level

of the students such as higher grade should also be compiled. Therefore, this teaching technique can be reviewed to help both instructor and researcher “see” teaching and learning from different perspectives.

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