

SNOWBALL THROWING IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to describe the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar and to investigate the benefits of applying snowball throwing. The research was conducted at STKIP Siliwangi Bandung. This study applied qualitative research involving one class consisting of second semester students in English Department who were taking the subject of foundation of English Grammar. The data were obtained from classroom observation and students' interview. The findings showed that there are seven stages in implementing snowball throwing in teaching grammar. The stages consist of preparing teaching material, forming group, re-explaining the material to the member of the group, formulating question, tossing the ball, answering questions and evaluating teaching and learning process. In addition, the findings also revealed that there are some benefits from applying snowball throwing in teaching grammar such as improving students' comprehension in learning grammar, creating enjoyable learning atmosphere, increasing students' vocabulary, developing students' speaking skill, developing students' cooperation skill and increasing students' participation in the class.

Keywords: Snowball throwing; benefits; grammar

I INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the system of structural devices by which a language organizes meaning. Concerning with the structure, it is the basic knowledge and skill for understanding the language naturally constructed and used. It involves the combination and arrangement of the phrases, clauses or sentences. In our daily speaking and writing we can not deny that structure leads us to construct sentences which are grammatically correct to convey our message, ideas, and information. A student must know for certain that he speaks correct and good English or to know whether or not the sentence pattern is correct, he must know the rules of English or its grammar because English grammar is the key to proficiency. It indicates that grammar plays a significant role in communication since it shows how language is used (Ismail, 2010). Therefore, grammar should be mastered by the learners that they can use English language in appropriate way.

Mastering English structure well will make us easier in learning English and we can transfer what we think or feel effectively. Without knowing the structure of the language, we may get a lot of difficulties. This means that teaching grammar has always been a central aspect of foreign language teaching because grammatical competence is crucial for communication to take place.

However, most students of Indonesia have difficulties in learning grammar. As stated by Onesty and Fitrawati (2013), grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages yet it also one of the most difficult aspects of language that is not easy to be taught. According to Richard and Reppen (2014), language learners may have spent many times for practicing the rules of correct sentence formation yet they still lack the ability of using grammar as a resource in communication.

There are many things that we can learn in structure, one of them is tense. Its difficulty might due to English has a different system from Indonesian. Their native language influences them in constructing English sentences. In Indonesia, there are no changes of the verb caused by time.

Based on the problem above, the teacher needs appropriate ways that can be used in order to make the students easily in learning tenses. Using game in teaching grammar it seems works for students since it can make an enjoyable atmosphere in the class. Games are used to make the children easier to understand and remember about grammar in some topics. By using games, the children do not feel that they learn something through that activity.

There is a lot of kinds of game that can be applied in the class, one of that is snowball throwing. Darusmin, Delfi, and Masyhur (2012) defined snowball throwing method as one modification of an interesting game that is mutually throwing snowballs which contains questions to fellow friends which focuses on the ability to formulate question. Using this technique will make all students be more active and it will force them to master the material since they have to answer the question anytime and surprisingly.

Therefore, based on the description above, this study aims to describe the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar and to the benefits of applying snowball throwing.

II MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 GAME

There were many studies conducted in investigating the effects of games in language learning. According to Cheng & Su (2012), game-based learning can make learners become the center of learning, make the learning process easier, more interesting and effective. In a similar vein, Uberman (1998) argues that after learning and practicing new vocabulary through games, students have the opportunity to use language in a non-stressful way. Thus, since the students have a chance to use the target language that they improve their communicative skills (Sorayaie-Azar, 2012).

In addition, according to Mahmoud & Tanni (2014), game is used for giving intense and passionate involvement in communication to the students so that they can feel enjoyment and pleasure in learning. Aslanabadi and Rasouli (2013) revealed that a game does not only bring fun for learners to the class, but they also motivate learners and improve their confidence. Furthermore, Donmus (2010) indicates that games can develop individuals' physical and mental capacities, and also can hold the attention of participants all the time and puts them in a race with themselves and also with others in order to obtain certain objectives.

Moreover, games increase learner's proficiency in practicing grammar. According to Deesri (2000: 3), with the help of grammar games, students can develop their ability in using language as they are given a chance to use language in the situations which have a purpose. In short, games provide learners with an opportunity to drill and practice grammatical rules and form by presenting them in communicative way.

In applying a game, McCallum (1980, pp. x-xi) recommends that the teacher should organize the game before the instruction. Rinvoluceri (1990: 3) proposes that in using games in teaching and learning process, there are three stages which using them as a part of grammar instruction:

- (2-1) Before presenting a given structure, especially to find out diagnostically how much knowledge is already known by the learners;
- (2-2) After a grammar presentation to see how much the group have grasped;
- (2-3) As a revision of a grammar area.

2.2 SNOWBALL THROWING

There are lots of kinds of game that can be applied in the class, one of that is snowball throwing. Darusmin, Delfi, and Masyhur (2012) defined snowball throwing method as one modification of an interesting game that is mutually throwing snowballs which contains questions to fellow friends which focuses on the ability to formulate question. Using this technique will make all students be more active and it will force them to master the material since they have to answer the question anytime and surprisingly.

Snowball throwing is a technique in cooperative learning. Considering the importance of cooperative learning, Richards and Lokhart (1994) claim that cooperative learning gives a number of advantages. First, it reduces the dominance of the teacher over the class. Second, it increases the amount of students' participation in the class. Third, it increases the opportunities for individual students to practice and use new features of the target language. Fourth, it promotes collaboration among learners. It also enables the teacher to work more as a facilitator and a consultant. The last, it can give learners a more active role in learning.

Snowball throwing method is a modification of the technique of asking the focuses on the ability to formulate questions that are packed in an interesting game that is mutually throwing snowballs (snowball-throwing) which contains questions to fellow friends. Method packed in a game requires capability that is simple that can be done by almost every student in the proposed question according to the material learned. Method is usually carried out by several groups consisting of five to eight people who have the ability to formulate questions written in a paper resembles a ball.

Then, the paper thrown to the other groups responded by answering the questions thrown at them. In a simple method of snowball-throwing can be described as follows. Students formulate the questions writing on paper based on the material described by the teacher. Then the paper is folded in such a way and then thrown to other groups. After opening the paper, another group answered questions and throw back to the group write the question.

Social life is the importance of individual life. From the points above we can conclude that cooperative learning for snowball throwing is a learning system that prioritizes the opportunities for the active participation of learners in learning and interactive dialogue. Because in the snowball throwing

students get the opportunity to give and answer questions from others, then the students are required to participate actively in class. This has demonstrated the existence of an interactive dialogue between learners. One of the accentuation models of cooperative learning is group interaction.

Some steps of implementing STT in the classroom are as follows (Istarani, 2012; Suprijono, 2013):

- (2-1) Teacher extends the material.
- (2-2) Teacher forms the students into groups, and calls each leader of the groups to give explanation about the material.
- (2-3) Each group leader comes back to their group and explains the material to their group.
- (2-4) Every student is given one worksheet for writing one question about the material explained by the group leader.
- (2-5) For each group there are three questions; the paper is rolled into a ball and thrown from one student in a group to the other student in the other group for approximately 2 minutes.
- (2-6) After the student gets one ball (one question), he or she is given chance to answer the question written on the paper.
- (2-7) Every group has their turn to answer the question; the group that gave wrong or incorrect answers and gets the lowest score is given a penalty.
- (2-8) Conclusion.
- (2-9) Evaluation.

Moreover, Istarani (2012:93) lists the advantages of the STT as follows:

- (2-1) It improves leadership skills amongst students because there is a group leader whose responsibility is to convey messages to her friends as members of her group.
- (2-2) It trains students to be independent because each student is given the assignment to create a question to be delivered to another student. Besides that, each student also has a responsibility to answer a question from one of her friends.
- (2-3) It develops creativity of the students who have to create questions and form their paper into a ball.
- (2-4) It creates a lively classroom atmosphere because all the students must work in order to complete their tasks.

This study applied descriptive qualitative research. This study was conducted in STKIP Siliwangi since one of the researchers is the English lecturer in the faculty. Thus, the researcher got easy access to conduct the research that it could gain the feasibility of the study. The participants of the study were the students of English Department of first semester of the university. The data of the study were obtained from classroom observation and interview. The observation was used to get the information regarding the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar. The classroom observation was conducted from October 6th until December 22nd, 2017.

Moreover, interview was used to obtain the specific information concerning the people's feelings or opinion which is not accessible through observation. The interview was conducted individually by using semi-structured interview since the researchers are able to extend the questions. The interview involved nine students represented the low, average and higher achiever students. Then, in order to gain valid data, the triangulation data was employed by combining different finding from observation and interview.

Moreover, the data from observation was analyzed by several steps. First, all of the notes regarding teaching simple past tense by using snowball throwing were transcribed. Second, the transcribed data was categorized based on the research question. Third, the categorized data were interpreted to answer the question.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SNOWBALL THROWING IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

This study was conducted in the class of foundation of English grammar. The implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar consists of seven stages as proposed by Istarani (2012) and Suprijono (2013). However, there were some modifications in terms of the focus of the study and materials in the classroom. In this study, the researcher applied snowball throwing through seven stages.

3.1.1 STAGE 1: PREPARING TEACHING MATERIAL

First, the lecturer prepared the teaching material. It covers eight topics including part of speech, present simple and progressive, past simple and progressive, future, modals, and passive voice.

Then, in the first meeting, the lecturer explained the topic of the teaching and introduced the teaching program. But, before explaining the rules to the class, the lecturer was required to understand how the game is played. Then, she explained its rules to the students in a simple way. In addition, demonstrations were given that the students can understand the rules clearly and easily. Then, she gave the illustration of applying snowball throwing by posing several questions written in a piece of paper and rolled it into a ball. Then, she threw it to a student and the students had to answer the question written on the paper.

3.1.2 STAGE 2: FORMING GROUP

Furthermore, the teacher formed the students into groups. There were eight groups and each group had to select the group leader. Then, the lecturer invited each leader of the groups and she explained the materials to them. The teaching material related to the simple past tense such as the rule of simple past tense, regular and irregular verbs, and some examples of sentences using simple past tense.

3.1.3 STAGE 3: REEXPLAINING THE MATERIAL TO THE MEMBER OF THE GROUP

Then, after the lecturer had finished explaining the teaching material, each group leader was asked to come back to their groups and explain the material to their group. This indicates that a leader has the responsibility to convey the teaching material to the member of the groups. This indicates that snowball throwing technique improves leadership skills amongst students (Istarani, 2012:93).

3.1.4 STAGE 4: FORMULATING QUESTIONS

After the group leaders re-explained their members with what the teacher has told them, each student in the group was required to write a question related to the materials on a piece of paper. Since the member of the group consisted of four students, there were four questions for each group.

Then, the paper was rolled into a ball and thrown from one student in a group to the other student in the other group for approximately 30 minutes. The student who got the ball (one question), he or she had to answer the question written on the paper.

The observation data revealed that when the students created a question, they looked very serious. Some of them attempted to create the challenging questions that are difficult to be answered. This showed that the activity makes students become concentrating in learning and try to formulate the questions themselves as good as they can (Gani, Yusuf and Erwina, 2017).

3.1.5 STAGE 5: TOSSING THE BALL

The observation data showed that the activities of tossing the ball made the atmosphere of the class become enjoyable. The students had different reaction when they got the ball. Most of them were very surprised and confused. And some of them looked enthusiasm in reading the question after they got the ball. This activity brings the enjoyable atmosphere in the class.

3.1.6 STAGE 6: ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

After the student got the ball (one question), he or she was given chance to answer the question written on the paper. The data from observation revealed that when the students got the chance to answer the questions, most of the students were able to answer the question related to part of speech, simple present and past tense properly and correctly. This means that this activity helped students use an appropriate grammar. It is supported with the data from interview; it was found that snowball throwing increased students' proficiency in practicing grammar communicatively. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

While learning simple past tense by using snowball throwing, I comprehend it better, because I had to answer the questions related simple past tense directly. Although we did not know the answer, we had to try to answer it. Thus, we tried hard to review what have been learned before.

(S2) (Interview, translated version)

The above excerpt showed that snowball throwing can help students mastering simple past tense as argued by Deesri (2000: 3) that with the help of grammar games, students can develop their ability in using language as they are given a chance to use language in the situation which have a purpose.

Moreover, when the students made mistake in answering the questions, the lecturer only took notes of errors and discuss them when the game was over. In other words, the lecturer did not interrupt them when they made the mistake. The lecturer only waited until the game is over to discuss and correct the

mistakes of the students. This resulted in the improvement of students' speaking ability as admitted by student one:

Snowball throwing activity can improve my ability in speaking. Since the activity forces the students to be ready to answer the question, then the passive one had to speak through answering the questions, giving the opinion and sharing the idea in the group related to the topic. And the most important thing is the students can express their ideas freely without being afraid of making mistakes.

(S2) (Interview, translated version)

The finding indicated that snowball throwing can improve students' communicative skills and they have a chance to use the target language (Sorayaie-Azar, 2012). This might due to students have the opportunity to use the language in a non-stressful way (Uberman, 1998).

3.1.7 STAGE 7: EVALUATING TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

The last stage in applying snowball throwing is evaluating the learning process and provided feedback to the students about the activities that they have just done. In this stage, the lecturer explained the students' strength and weaknesses during the implementation of snowball throwing. The data showed that snowball throwing does not only help the students to master the material itself but also it increases students' vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, the lecturer noted that after applying snowball throwing most of the students became more confident in expressing their ideas and opinions. This was due to the students were given the opportunity to express their opinion and ideas freely in answering the questions.

3.2 THE BENEFITS OF USING SNOWBALL THROWING

The data from interview revealed that there are several benefits of using snowball throwing. They are improvement of students comprehension in learning grammar, enjoyable learning atmosphere, improvement of students vocabulary, the development of students' speaking skill, and the development of students cooperation skill and the increase of students' participation in the class.

3.2.1 IMPROVING STUDENTS COMPREHENSION IN LEARNING GRAMMAR

Almost all respondents stressed the importance of snowball throwing in teaching grammar as perceived by student six in the excerpt below.

Through snowball throwing I learned more about grammatical rules while discussing with my friends to do the task from the lecturer. My understanding in grammar also developed since it forced me to open dictionary regularly and asked questions to my friends when I did not understand about teaching material especially how to change verb one to verb two.

(S6) (Interview, translated version)

The findings above also showed that snowball throwing is another way to help students to learn various grammar structures.

3.2.2 CREATING ENJOYABLE LEARNING'S ATMOSPHERE

All respondents expressed their supporting opinions that the snowball throwing is enjoyable. It can be seen from the statement of student one below:

I enjoyed learning grammar by using snowball throwing. It is due to the interesting of learning atmosphere. Thus, I want to improve my English.

(S1) (Interview, translated version)

The excerpt above gives a proof that the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar can create an enjoyable atmosphere during teaching and learning process (Shoimin, 2014).

3.2.3 INCREASING STUDENTS VOCABULARY

All respondents agreed that snowball throwing helped them in increasing their vocabulary mastery. It is supported by interview result of student two below.

After learning grammar through snowball throwing, my vocabulary mastery was increased. I required a lot of new vocabularies through the activity. Because when we learn by using conventional method we got difficulty in memorizing vocabularies. But it is different when we learned through snowball throwing, we can remember many vocabularies easily.

(S2) (Interview, translated version)

This finding indicates that snowball throwing made the students to remember vocabulary more easily. It is in line with Wirawan, Rita, and Waris (2013). They stated that snowball throwing technique is one option for teaching vocabulary which is efficient and much more useful in increasing students vocabulary.

3.2.4 DEVELOPING STUDENTS SPEAKING SKILL

Through the use of the snowball throwing, regardless of passive or active students, both of them have a chance to train their speaking skill. It can be seen in the excerpt below.

Learning grammar by using snowball throwing made me confident to give opinion or ideas. Because when we got the question we need to answer it directly. It made me think hard to review what I learned before with my friends in the group.

(S6) (Interview, translated version)

The data of interview above showed that snowball throwing can be an alternative way to overcome students difficulties in learning how to speak English. As stated by Crookal (1990, p. 112) that games reduces anxiety and improve self-confidence. It is also supported by the research finding of Aslanabadi and Rasouli (2013) that games do not only bring fun for learners, but they also motivate learners and improve their confidence.

3.2.5 DEVELOPING STUDENTS COOPERATION SKILL

The data of observation showed that the students in the similar group helped each other in composing the questions. This indicates that this activity can promote collaboration among learners as stated by Richards and Lokhart (1994) as one of the advantages of cooperative learning. The finding is supported by interview result of student five below:

The use of snowball throwing can develop teamwork because through discussion in group we can solve the problem or answer the questions from the lecturer.

(S5) (Interview, translated version)

The data of interview above showed that snowball throwing is emphasized to encourage students solidarity in teamwork since they have to solve the problem that teacher has given to them. As stated by Susanty (2016) that snowball throwing related to “the teaching technique for cooperative learning which allows students to work together in groups, pay full attention to each other, and allow each other to speak and to share information in groups”.

3.2.6 INCREASING STUDENTS PARTICIPATION

The observation data also showed that all respondents were involved actively in the teaching and learning process. They were more active in learning process because snowball throwing model gave much more opportunity to speak and discuss with friends and presented their understanding to the class. Students had to answer the question from the paper ball whenever they got the paper ball from other students. They had to give their opinion in response to the question. Then, they threw the ball to another student. The student who got the ball also did the same. And the lecturer played a role as observer and evaluator. This indicates that snowball throwing gives the learners opportunities for the active participation in learning process. As stated by student five in the following excerpt:

Learning grammar through snowball throwing forces the students to be active because the students here did not only get the teaching material from the lecturer but also need to discuss with the group to comprehend the teaching material. Also they need to answer the question directly. It means that they need to be active to comprehend teaching material so that they can answer the questions correctly.

(S5) (Interview, translated version)

In addition, another interview from student one stated the similar view on the implementation of snowball throwing. It was quoted as follows:

The use of snowball throwing in learning grammar made us more active because the questions were given randomly. So, the passive one becomes active and the active one becomes more active.

(S1) (Interview, translated version)

From both of excerpts above, it can be concluded that the use of snowball throwing encourages the students to be more active involved in the classroom since this method covers a rich communication where students must be active (Darusmin, Delfi and Masyhur, 2012).

IV CONCLUSION

Snowball throwing is a technique that focuses on the ability to formulate questions that are packed in an interesting game that is mutually throwing snowballs (snowball-throwing) which contains questions to fellow friends. This is used to train students to be more responsive to receive messages from other students in the form of snowball made of paper, and to convey message to friends in their group (Suprijono, 2013: 128). This study has described the implementation of snowball throwing in teaching grammar in STKIP Siliwangi Bandung. The implementation of snowball throwing covers seven stages: (1) Preparing teaching material; (2) Forming group; (3) Reexplaining the material; (4) Formulating questions; (5) Tossing the ball; (6) Answering the Questions (7) Evaluating. Those stages of snowball throwing result in better student learning especially in learning simple past tense.

The data revealed that snowball throwing was very helpful in providing the students with more enjoyable activities which made the students actively involved in teaching and learning process. In addition, through the activity the students can improve not only their speaking skill but also social skills. The activity can also increase students vocabulary mastery. It was also proven that snowball throwing helped students to improve their confidence in expressing their ideas and opinions.

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