

# APPLYING THE “WORD CHAIN” GAME TO TEACH DESCRIPTIVE SPEAKING TO THE EIGHT GRADERS IN SMPN 26 SURABAYA

# APPLYING THE “WORD CHAIN” GAME TO TEACH DESCRIPTIVE SPEAKING TO THE EIGHT GRADERS IN SMPN 26 SURABAYA

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## Abstrak

Selama beberapa tahun, kegiatan *speaking* dalam pelajaran bahasa Inggris didominasi oleh para guru. Para murid kekurangan kesempatan untuk melatih keterampilan *speaking* mereka. Kondisi ini membuat penguasaan kemampuan *speaking* menjadi lebih sulit bagi mereka dan guru tidak bisa mencapai tujuan dari pengajaran *speaking*. Salah satu tujuan pengajaran *speaking* dan mungkin menjadi tujuan akhir adalah membuat murid mampu berbicara dalam bahasa target dengan natural (Kayi: 2006). Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan permainan “word chain” yang telah dimodifikasi, yang mana biasanya digunakan hanya untuk meningkatkan perbendaharaan kata saja, untuk mengajar *speaking* deskriptif.

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, karena penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menjelaskan fenomena alami: apa yang sedang terjadi?, Mengapa hal tersebut terjadi?, dan bagaimana hal tersebut terjadi? (Chariri, 2009:9). Penulis fokus pada penerapan permainan “word chain” untuk mengajar *speaking* descriptive dan respon siswa terhadap penerapan tersebut. Pada bagian analisis data, penulis mendeskripsikan data yang diperoleh dari observasi, bagaimana guru menerapkan teknik tersebut, bagaimana partisipasi siswa, dan bagaimana respon siswa.

Hasil yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahwa permainan “word chain” dapat diterapkan dalam kelas *speaking* ketika materinya adalah teks deskriptif. Penulis menemukan bahwa permainan tersebut tidak membutuhkan persiapan yang lama, tidak memerlukan instrumen atau media, dan peraturannya mudah untuk dimengerti. Permainan ini mendorong siswa untuk berpartisipasi lebih aktif dalam kelas, lebih banyak berbicara dalam bahasa target, dan membuat siswa lebih nyaman dalam mengikuti pelajaran.

Kata Kunci: keterampilan *speaking*, permainan “word chain”, teks deskriptif

## Abstract

For many years, speaking activity in English class has been dominated by teachers. The students lack opportunities to practise their speaking skill. This condition makes mastering speaking ability is more difficult to them and teachers could not fulfill the aims of teaching speaking. One of the aims of teaching speaking and may be the final target of it is to enable students to speak the language naturally (Kayi: 2006). In this study, the researcher uses the modified word chain game, which is commonly used to improve students’ vocabulary, to teach descriptive speaking.

This study uses descriptive qualitative research method, because it aims to describe and to explain a natural phenomenon: what is happening?, why is it happening?, and how is it happening? (Chariri, 2009:9). The writer focuses on the application of the word chain game to teach descriptive speaking and the students’ responses toward it. In the data analysis, the writer describes the data gained from an observation, how the teacher applied the technique, how the students participated, and how the students’ responses were.

The result shows that the word chain game is applicable in speaking class where the material is descriptive text. The writer found that game does not require much preparation, does not need any instrument or media, and its rules are easy to understand. It encourages students to participate actively in the class, to speak the target language more, and makes the students enjoy the lesson.

Keywords: speaking skill, “word chain” game, descriptive text

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## INTRODUCTION

The opportunity to interact and/or build a relationship with people around the world is widely opened in this era. Some people call this era as globalization era, where human can easily be in touch with someone on the other part of the world. In order to be able to do it, people learn and practice English, because English is recognised as the international language. This condition is also applied in our country, Indonesia. In Indonesia, English has been included in the national curriculum since 1947. English is being taught from elementary school to high schools and even university. Even some kindergarten and playgroup in Indonesia nowadays also include a small portion of English material in their school. It shows that the Indonesian government and most people too, see the importance of learning English since early stage.

In learning a language, we have to know that there are four skills in language. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Brown: 2004). Listening and reading are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive ones. In this research, the writer is focusing in speaking, as speaking is the first productive skill which a person learns in acquiring a language. Speaking is chosen as the focal point by the researcher because speaking is very essential in society's daily life as people mostly communicate to each other by speaking.

According to Kayi (2006: 1), speaking is the process of constructing and transferring meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. That is the general definition of speaking. The simple definition is that speaking is expressing one's idea orally. Furthermore, Brown (2004: 141) divides speaking into six basic types; imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive. Type of speaking that is investigated in this research is extensive speaking (monologue).

Since language is a skill, the fastest way to master it is using it as much as possible. Most teachers now prefer to teach with teacher-centred style, where a teacher takes more parts than the students do in a learning process. The activities in such class are usually more rigid, so that students' creativity cannot be expressed freely. Students' critical thinking cannot be developed and they lack of using the language, because the students' involvement in the class is minimum. In result, the students will not be able to master the language fast. There are so many techniques that teachers can apply in

the class to stimulate students' participation in the learning process, one of them is using games.

By using a game in the class, students are expected to participate more in the learning process. Moreover, applying well-constructed games in the class will encourage students to learn and become more active, especially young learners. Wang, Shang, and Briody (2011) write in their article that games in English learning are useful because they can increase students' motivation and self-confidence.

“Word chain” is a well-known game and has been used in many language classes for a long time. This is the game where its players have to mention a thing based on a chosen theme simultaneously. The first player mentions a thing and the next player has to mention another thing whose first letter is the final letter of the thing which is mentioned by the previous player. When this game is played in a class, the first player is most likely the teacher and is followed by the rest of the class. The theme can be decided based on the level of the player (player's grade and vocabulary mastery). In other words, the difficulty of this game is adjustable. Examples of the themes which are commonly used are animals, fruit and vegetable, city and country around the world, food, and so forth. Most teachers assume that it only works in enriching students' vocabulary and spelling ability. However, by a little modification, it can be used to teach speaking skill and in this occasion, in this research, the material is descriptive text. One of the basic competence, for speaking skill, in the “Standar Isi” is the eighth graders must be able to produce a spoken descriptive text. Furthermore, based on basic competence number 4.4 in “Kurikulum 2013”, the eighth grade students must be able to arrange very short and simple oral and written descriptive text about person, animal, or thing correctly and contextually.

Based on the research background stated above, objectives of this study are:

1. To know how the word chain game is applied in a speaking class.
2. To find out (describe) students' opinion about the implementation of the word chain game in the class.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative research, because it aims to describe and to explain a natural phenomenon: what is happening?, why is it happening?, and how is it happening? (Chariri, 2009:9). It matches the

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objective of this research. They are to describe how the word chain game is applied in a speaking class and to describe students' opinion towards the implementation of the word chain game in the class.

This study was done at 8H class in SMP Negeri 26 Surabaya which is located on Jl. Raya Banjarsugihan no. 21 Surabaya. SMP Negeri 26 Surabaya was the school where the researcher was placed in the PPL program and met the teacher who had successfully done the technique and became the subject of this research.

The subjects of this research are the teacher and the students (34 students) of 8H in SMP Negeri 26 Surabaya. This research picked the teacher as the research subject because he had done the technique which is being investigated in this research successfully.

There are two sets of data in this study. They are teacher's actions in implementing the word chain game in the speaking class, students' participations during the activity, and the students' opinion about the class activity.

The first data is the implementation of the word chain game to teach descriptive speaking. The sources of it are the teacher and the students of 8H class. This data was collected by using observation checklist and field note. The observation sheet was used in the teaching-learning process, when the technique was applied. Observation sheets combine checklist and notes and consist of three parts. The first part, Part A, records the teacher's activities during the class, from the beginning to the end. This part has seven situations according to the procedure of the technique application. The second part, Part B, records the students' activities in the class. It also contains seven situations as Part A does, but this part focuses on the students' respond towards the teacher as they follow the activity. The last part, Part C, discusses the topics chosen by the teacher for the students and consists of three statements. The note is used by the researcher to note any additional information such as activities in the class that are not listed in or done differently from the checklist and so forth. It also used by the researcher to note both detailed and general condition of the class during the activity. The field note was also used during the teaching-learning process, but this instrument was only used to observe the students during the activity.

The second data is the students' responses towards the technique. The sources of it are the students of 8H class. This data was collected by using a questionnaire. The type of the questionnaire of which the students were asked to fill at the end of the lesson is

“closed questionnaire”. Consists of nine questions, this questionnaire aims to find out the students' interest on English subject, speaking skill, and also their responses towards the activity they have just been through. The questionnaires were given to all of the students in the class after the activity has been done. From the questionnaire, the researcher described the students' thought about the activity to answer the last research question.

In order to answer the first and the second research question, the researcher analysed the data according to the qualitative data analysis stage of Wolcott (1994). Those four stages are describe and highlight, analyse and identify pattern, contextualise and the last one is display findings. Below is the explanation of those four stages:

### 1. Describe and highlight

In this stage, the researcher described how the teacher applied the word chain game to teach descriptive speaking and highlighted some important data that were found in the observation. While in answering the second research question, the researcher describing and highlighting the students' responses in order to be able to find out the students' opinion towards the technique applied.

### 2. Analyse and identify patterns

After describing and highlighting, the researcher analysed the order of the teaching-learning process that were collected in the form of observation sheet and field note by doing the observation. The analysis of the observation sheet and the field note then led the researcher to identify several patterns which came up in the investigation. These activities were also done in answering the second research question about the students' responses.

### 3. Contextualise

In this stage, the researcher contextualised the result in answering the research questions by comparing the result to the related theory.

### 4. Display findings

The final stage is displaying the result which had been analysed and contextualised by providing the supporting theories on the result.

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## RESULTS

### *The Implementation of the “Word Chain” Game*

In the beginning of the lesson, the teacher greeted the students and asked couples of questions to help them recall the descriptive text material from the previous lesson. When the teacher greeted them in the beginning of the lesson, most of the students seemed enthusiastic, but some of them also looked a bit confused, because they were still working on other task. Despite of their confusion, they tried to follow the lesson well. They listened carefully to the teacher’s explanation though a few of them were still busy with other tasks from another subject. When the students had recalled the material, the teacher informed them about the activity they were going to do on that meeting, which was playing the word chain game. When the students found that they were going to play the word chain game, those who already know the game looked happy, while the rest were still curious about the game. From this point, all of the students started to pay more attention to the teacher. They tried to understand the procedure and rules of this game, because this word chain game was modified, describing the mentioned word was added into the game. Every student paid close attention when the teacher was giving an example of the gameplay. No student was talking to each other at the moment.

The teacher then explained briefly the procedure and the rules of the game. The scoring system that was used by the teacher was divided into two aspects, mentioning a word and describing the word. If a student could mention a word, four points would be given, and if the student also could describe the word with three descriptions, six points would be given (two points for each description). He also gave a short example of the gameplay in order to make sure all of the students know how to play the game. The teacher said,

“Misalnya saya bilang jam dinding, berarti saya deskripsikan, jam dinding itu bentuknya lingkaran, berwarna putih, dan berfungsi untuk menunjukkan waktu”.

The last preparation before starting the game was dividing the students in the class into groups and the teacher offered the students to choose whether they pick their own group or by the teacher’s decision. They chose to pick their own group. After making groups, the teacher asked one student from each group to be the captain. One student from each group who was selected as captain came forward to the teacher to take a small scroll randomly. The topic of the game that every group

had to play was written on those scrolls. Those topics were school, house, food, and animal. Group 1 got school, food for group 2, animals for group 3, and house for group 4. After everything had been settled, the teacher started the game.

The teacher started the game from group 1 by mentioning a word from the selected topic, school. He said “window”, then he described it,

“The window at our school was made from wood. The shape is square and the colour is grey”.

After the teacher had done, he chose randomly a student to be the first player from group 1 to continue the game and kept choosing the next player randomly until every member of group 1 had their turn while the teacher was also judging and scoring their answer.

When the first student got his turn, he looked a little bit panic, because the teacher chose the next player randomly and he was not ready. Some of students from other groups cheered on him and some others were giving him a clue of a word that he could use. When he had found the word that he can use, the rest students of group 1 started to think what the next word would be. Most of the students from group 1 who got earlier turn did not get much problem in mentioning the words, but they did get problem when they had to describe their words. Sometimes they knew what they want to say, but they can do it in English. Some students did not even know what to say. Realising this fact, the teacher then gave them a hint. He told his students that they can describe the thing that they had mentioned by its visual appearance, function, and what it was made from. Given clues by the teacher, student 3 was better than the previous two. Here is his answer,

“Ruler. Ruler is usually straight and long, but sometimes also in the shape of triangle. Its’ colour is transparent. It was made from plastic.”

The flow of the game was better and faster after the teacher had given those clues, though in the end he found three of eight students of group 1 could not describe their words in three descriptions.

Every student of group 1 had gotten their turn, and then the teacher continued to group 2. Members of group 2 looked very enthusiastic, more than group 1, because they feel that the topic they got was not difficult, so the risk of a dead end, a condition where no more word can be used, is very low. There were some students who already prepared their scenario and ideas to explain

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more about the thing that they may mention. Student 3 said,

“Ah, topik food itu mudah! Strawberry, yoghurt, tart, tofu, dan masih banyak lagi!”

The class became noisy, because students from other groups also commented at group 2's topic. The teacher told them to be quiet and the game will not be continued unless the students remain clam. Some students apologised and the class was calm again. The teacher then started the game with “Apple”, he described it, and point a student to be the next player. The first four players did not find any difficulty in finding words to use and describing the words and the flow of the game was faster than the previous group. The flow of the game was slowing down when the fifth player got her turn. She had to find a food which starts with letter E, and she could not think any other than egg, which was already used by the first player. The time was almost up when she finally answered,

“Eggplant. Eggplant is a bit long. The colour of eggplant is purple. Its shapes vary from straight to curvy.”

From this point, the observer noticed that a couple of students were talking to each other and another student was busy with a task from another subject.

Despite of some students from other groups got distracted on other things, the game became more challenging. The players were selecting a word to say more carefully in order to not put the next player into trouble. They started to avoid any words which end with letter E, because they could not find any more food that starts with that letter. In the end, the last player also got letter E to play and she could not find any, so she failed to get a score.

It was group 3's turn to play then. All of the members of this group did not look much different from the member of group 2. They all looked confident, because the topic they got, in their opinion, was very easy. The teacher initiated the game with “Eagle”. While group 3 was playing, the observer noted that the rest of the class were paying attention to the game. No one was doing something other than watching the game closely. Students from group 4 even helped the teacher judging when the third player of group 3 got letter E and he claimed that there is no more animal which starts with letter E. When the third player gave up, a member of group 4 told him that “Eel” can be used, then the teacher gave zero score to him and offered the next player to

choose whether he continue the game by directly describing “Eel”, but he will only get maximum six points, or picking a new word starts with letter L, from the final letter of “Eel”, so that he can get maximum 10 points. The fourth player decided to pick a new word. He picked “Lion”, described it very well,

“Lion is a big carnivore mammal. It has four legs. Male lion has hair.”

And he succeeded in getting 10 points for his group. A dead end occurred at the fifth player's turn. The letter he had to use was N, from “Lion” and since the whole class also could not find one, the teacher told him to use letter O, the letter that comes before N in “Lion”. No more problems occurred for the rest players of group 3.

The last group, group 4, was the one with the highest spirit when having their turn. This group was the only group had constantly followed the game from group 1 until group 3. The fact that there was only one out of nine players who failed to get maximum score proves that group 4 was observing and learning the game well. Before group 4 started playing, the teacher reminded them that they could only mention things which are commonly found in a house, since things which can be found in a house can be various from one to another. The teacher initiated the game with “bed” and the next player continued the game without any difficulties,

“Door. Door is made of wood, but sometimes also aluminium and glass. The shape is square. Its colour is white.

Until the last player, except for player number 2, who could only deliver one point of description, no one in this group was getting a problem. It was because player number 2 picked a word which had been used by a player from group 1 and the teacher asked her to describe it differently from the previous one. When group 4 was playing, only a few students from other groups gave their attention to this group.

In the end of the activity, the teacher announced the final score (average score) of each group and group 4 turned out to be the winner, but the overall students of the class seemed satisfied with the score they got.

### *Students' Responses*

In the end of the activity, the researcher asked the students to fill questionnaires which had been prepared before. The questionnaire investigates three aspects, students' interest in English subject, speaking

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skill, and their opinion about the activity they had just been done, the word chain game. The researcher also asked them to give their reason on some questions in the questionnaire.

From the students' answers in the questionnaires, the researcher found that almost all of students in the 8H class like English subject or only one student who dislikes this subject. The most common reason for those who like English subject is that this subject is exciting, fun, and easy to them. Some students also said that English subject can help them to open their opportunity to communicate or interact with other people worldwide, while some others like it because it is indeed not easy, but challenging. The only student who dislike English subject said that this subject is too difficult that she cannot keep up with the lesson. This student also dislike speaking skill for the same reason, it is too difficult to her. There were only two students who dislike speaking skill while the rest said that they like speaking skill. The reason from the most of them who like speaking skill is because they love to speak English in front of other people. Though most of them like speaking skill, almost every student claimed that they often experienced difficulty while they were speaking.

Most of the students in the class also claimed that their English teacher often encourage them to participate more in speaking lesson. While playing the game and speaking aloud in front of the rest of the class, no one in the class looked shy or nervous. This may be the evidence that they often do public speaking, at least in the classroom. When the researcher asked their opinion about the word chain game, through the questionnaire, all of them answered that they like this game. They all also answered that the game's rules are easy to understand and the topic used by the teacher in this game was interesting. Despite the fact that all students agreed that they like this game and its rules are easy to understand, there was one student who said that this game cannot be held anytime they want or in other words, preparation from the previous meeting is needed before playing this game in the next meeting. One is also the number of student who did not feel encouraged to participate more actively in speaking lesson while the rest (97%) did feel encouraged.

### DISCUSSION

From the result of the observation, the researcher finds out the answer of the research questions. This research investigates on how the application of the

technique in the speaking class is and the students' responses towards the technique.

The word chain game played in the class was a little bit different from what the researcher has explained in the chapter II, though the explanation was written based on the writer's experience when teaching along with the teacher in the PPL programme. The differences are found in the scoring system and the initiation of the game. When asked about the differences by the researcher at the end of the activity, the teacher admitted that he had changed some of the procedure to make it better. He explained that if the game were played using the old scoring system, as explained in chapter II, students were less active in giving oral description. The teacher also explained if the first player starts the game by describing and then finding the next word and so on, students would get into trouble very often, since they could not pick a word that they know they can orally describe well.

The teaching and learning process which was investigated by the researcher showed some characteristics of a successful speaking activity from Ur (1999: 120). Four out of five characteristics defied by Ur which could be seen in the class. They were:

- ❖ The learners talked a lot, it was quite obvious since in playing the game, the students need to produce oral description.
- ❖ Participation was even, there was no student who was dominant in the class, because each one of the students played the game in turns.
- ❖ Language was on acceptable level, the language produced by the students suits the material and the level.
- ❖ The students spoke the target language, it also was quite obvious, since the game is played in English.

While another aspect which still needs to be improved is the students' motivation. The researcher cannot say that the motivation of all the students was high, because in fact a few students did another task while the game was going on.

The students' responses which the researcher got from the questionnaire show the contrary. Only one student said that the game was not engaging. It did not encourage her to participate more actively. In other words, almost all the students said that the application of the word chain game to teach descriptive speaking encouraged them to be more active in the class. The students also said that they love the game. These results

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support Pound (2005) who said that playing game can motivate students to move forward and also suit Hadfield (1990) who state that a game has an element of fun.

## CONCLUSSION

According to the previous chapter, result and discussion, the word chain game technique which was applied by the teacher in the speaking class to teach descriptive text to the eight graders in SMP Negeri 26 can be used any time. This game does not require much preparation and even does not need any equipment to play.

In general, the students followed the game well and even enjoyed it. They looked happy when they did it. However, a few students got distracted by something else and did not pay attention to the activity, especially when the game was almost over (the fourth group’s turn). On top of that, all of the students like the game and it encouraged them to speak the target language more and be more active in the class.

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