

## TEACHERS' VOICE OF USING CROSSWORD PUZZLE GAMES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

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### Abstrak

Salah satu teknik yang dapat digunakan guru dalam mengajarkan kosakata adalah dengan menggunakan teknik permainan sehingga guru dapat menciptakan pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dan cepat dipahami bagi siswa. Dengan teknik ini, guru dapat menciptakan ruang kelas yang nyaman bagi siswa sehingga siswa dapat meningkatkan keinginannya untuk belajar bahasa Inggris. Guru dapat menggunakan permainan teka-teki silang untuk meningkatkan kosa kata siswa. Teka-teki silang berdampak positif bagi siswa; siswa merasa senang dan tertarik untuk belajar bahasa Inggris, dan siswa dapat menambah kosa kata sesuai dengan materi pada saat itu. Peneliti ingin mengetahui pengalaman guru dalam menggunakan teka-teki silang untuk meningkatkan kosa kata siswa. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif, dengan lima orang guru SMA di Mojoagung dan Mojokerto sebagai partisipan. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan kuesioner terbuka dengan menggunakan Google Forms. Peneliti menggunakan wawancara semi terstruktur melalui WhatsApp. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru dapat menggunakan permainan teka-teki silang dalam mengajar untuk meningkatkan kosa kata siswa. Guru menggunakan berbagai jenis teka-teki silang sesuai dengan kebutuhan mereka, sedangkan jenis teka-teki silang adalah teka-teki silang lisan, gambar, dan objek. Hal terpenting dari penelitian ini adalah manfaat penggunaan teka-teki silang, yaitu dapat meningkatkan kosa kata siswa. Teka-teki silang memiliki tantangan ketika diterapkan dalam pengajaran, yang dapat dilihat dari tantangan internal dan eksternal.

**Kata Kunci:** Pengalaman guru, Teka teki silang, Kosa kata.

### Abstract

One technique that teachers can use in teaching vocabulary is using game techniques so that teachers can create learning that is fun and quickly understood by students. With this technique, teachers can create comfortable classrooms for students so that students can improve their desire to learn English. Teachers can use crossword puzzle games to improve students' vocabulary. Crossword puzzles positively impact students; students feel happy and interested in learning English, and students can add vocabulary according to the material at that time. The researcher wants to know the teacher's experience using crossword puzzles to improve students' vocabulary. This research is qualitative research, with five high school teachers in Mojoagung and Mojokerto as participants. In this study, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire using Google Forms. The researcher used semi-structured interviews via WhatsApp. The results of this study indicate that teachers can use crossword puzzle games in teaching to improve students' vocabulary. Teachers used various types of crosswords according to their needs, while the types of crosswords are oral, picture, and object crosswords. The most important thing from this research is the advantages of using crossword puzzles, which can improve students' vocabulary. Crossword puzzles have challenges when applied in teaching, which can be seen from internal and external challenges.

**Keywords:** Teacher's Voice, Crossword Puzzle, Vocabulary

### INTRODUCTION

One technique that can be used by teachers in the teaching and learning process to create learning that is fun and quickly understood is to use game techniques. By using the game technique, the teachers can create a

comfortable classroom for students so that students can improve their desire to learn English. The purpose of the game technique in learning is so that students do not get bored with learning. It can also reduce fatigue and drowsiness while studying. The existence of games can improve students' interest in the learning process. It is the

same as the opinion by Ersöz (2000) that games will be exceptionally motivating in teaching foreign languages because games are considered very interesting and can be used to train all kinds of language and communication skills. When the teacher uses interesting games in teaching to improve student learning motivation, the teacher must participate in the game. It means that the teacher must consider what games are suitable for the conditions of the students. The teacher should choose a game that follows the learning objectives, so the teacher must understand the game.

One of the essential things in learning English is vocabulary. Teachers should focus more on students' vocabulary in learning foreign languages. Teachers can use any technique and method in teaching English. Sallis (2005) said that several activities could help students improve their vocabulary, namely using words in conversations and doing crossword puzzles. Students who use crossword puzzles can acquire new vocabulary and improve it. It follows the opinion of Njoroge et al. (2013) that crossword puzzles are games that can make the learning process exciting, funny and provide opportunities for students to practice their vocabulary. Teachers can use crossword puzzles in teaching to improve students' vocabulary and make the learning process fun. Crossword puzzles positively impact students; students feel happy and interested in learning English, and students can add vocabulary according to the material at that time.

The researcher has found several relevant studies related to this research. The First relevant studies are Kristianto (2016) explains the advantages of using games based on the teacher's perspective. The researcher has not found the specific game used in the Kristianto research, so this research will focus on one game, namely crossword puzzle games. The second relevant study by Istinaropah (2021) explains the process of students' perception of crossword puzzle games and the benefit of crossword puzzle games. The researcher has not found from Istinaropah's research about the types of crossword puzzles, the challenges of using crossword puzzles, and the different participants. The third is the research written by Profita (2012) explains students' learning process when learning vocabulary using crosswords and the improvement of students using crosswords in learning vocabulary. But, this research identifies the use of crossword puzzles from the teacher's point of view. The researcher only examines teachers who used the crossword puzzle in teaching vocabulary. The fourth is the research by Sari (2017) explains the effectiveness of crossword puzzles in students' vocabulary mastery in junior high school. The researcher wants to identify the

teacher's point of view of using crossword puzzles to improve students' vocabulary in secondary schools.

After finding several studies that are relevant to this research, the researcher is interested in researching crossword puzzle games by focusing on the point of view of teachers who have used crossword puzzles during vocabulary learning. Another reason for choosing this title is that the researcher has personal experience in improving students' vocabulary. It can be concluded that students needed to have a more extensive vocabulary when the researcher did an internship at a high school. Because of that, they found it difficult when asked to communicate with other students. Another reason is that the researcher once saw a teacher using a crossword puzzle game to improve students' vocabulary. The students in the class easily acquired and memorized new vocabulary. With this experience, the researcher wants to know the types of crossword puzzle games used by English teachers, the advantages of using crossword puzzle games, and the challenges of using crossword puzzle games for English teachers.

## **METHODS**

In this study, the researcher conducted qualitative research. Using qualitative data, people can keep a chronological flow, discover which events caused the effects and obtain valuable explanations. Qualitative data focuses on events that usually occur naturally in the surrounding environment. This study used a narrative approach. The data obtained is then arranged in narrative and chronological reports. This approach studied an individual to get data relating to the history of an individual's life journey. Furthermore, the data obtained is then arranged in narrative and chronological reports.

The participants are five high school teachers in Mojoagung and Mojokerto, consisting of 4 female teachers and one male teacher. Sampling in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling, is the technique employed by the researcher to rely on her judgment while selecting population members to participate in the study. The requirements for the participants selected by the researcher are as follows: first, teachers who have used crossword puzzles in teaching. Second, they come from the same pedagogical background, namely English educators.

In collecting data, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews. For the questionnaire the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire because an open-ended questionnaire cannot be answered using only "Yes" or "No" but must be given additional words or opinions. The questionnaire in this study will be given through Google Forms. Using a questionnaire, the researcher will be able

to find out the teachers' responses about their views or experiences of using crossword puzzle games to improve students' vocabulary. For the interview, the researcher used a semi-structured interview because, with this interview, the researcher found problems more openly, where the interviewees would be asked for their opinion or ideas. This interview was conducted to clarify the data in the questionnaire if the data is not clear to the researcher. This interview used chat via WhatsApp.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

According to the teacher's point of view, crossword puzzles are games that can make the learning process interesting and funny and provide opportunities for students to practice and repeat sentence patterns and vocabulary. The participants in this study used crossword puzzles in teaching. They used crossword puzzles because crossword puzzles can make students fun and interested in thinking about vocabulary. With this, crossword puzzles are expected to improve students' vocabulary. One participant said that before she used the crossword puzzle, the students did not know much about the material at that time. After the teacher gave the crossword puzzle, the students could quickly remember and add to their vocabulary about the material at that time. Some participants took crossword puzzles from online sources, while others made them independently. And the most important thing is that they have adjusted the crosswords that will be given to students related to student material. Participants apply crossword puzzles for 5 to 30 minutes twice a week or 2 to 3 times in 1 semester.

### **1. Types of crossword puzzle games used by English teachers.**

Crossword puzzles are games that can make the learning process exciting, funny and provide opportunities for students to practice their vocabulary. Crossword puzzle has several types. The first is an oral crossword puzzle, the second is a picture crossword puzzle, and the last is an object crossword puzzle. Meanwhile, all participants used all types of crossword puzzles. Each teacher used different types of crossword puzzles depending on what the teacher needed to use in teaching.

#### **a. Oral crossword puzzle**

An oral crossword puzzle is a crossword game in which the teacher gives verbal instructions, and students only get blank crosswords and give puzzles to students without any clues. I got the data from five participants; two of them used an oral crossword puzzle. According to their experience, oral crosswords used verbal instructions, so students became more serious and focused on answering the crosswords the teacher gave. It followed the statement by Teacher D and Teacher K said:

Teacher D: "I used an oral crossword puzzle in teaching to improve students' vocabulary. I used an oral crossword puzzle because verbal instruction is easier for students to understand."

Teacher K: "I used oral crossword puzzles in teaching and learning English because oral crossword puzzles use verbal instructions so that students can be more serious in learning English, and students will try to find a new vocabulary for their answers in the dictionary."

#### **b. Picture crossword puzzle**

Picture Crossword puzzle is a crossword game where the clues are pictures, the instructions in the crossword game are in the form of pictures, and the teacher only gives puzzles to students without any clues because the clues are already in the pictures. One out of five participants used picture crossword puzzles in teaching. Based on their experience, picture crossword puzzles can help students make it easier to do the crossword puzzles given, and students could guess vocabulary answers quickly through picture crossword puzzles. The teacher used pictures crossword puzzles will be explained below:

Teacher R: "I used picture crossword puzzles in teaching and learning English because picture crossword puzzles suit with my students, and I think it will be easier and faster for them to determine answers in the crossword puzzle I have given."

#### **c. Object crossword puzzle**

An object crossword puzzle is a crossword puzzle in which the clues are written on the object. The instructions for the crossword are written on the object or thing. The teacher only gives students blank puzzles without any clues. For example, place items in a room and number them according to the squares in a crossword game. After that, students will know the vocabulary of the clue. Teachers who used this type are two of the five teachers the author studied. Based on their experience, object crosswords are easy to apply in teaching, and object crosswords force students to read the clue so that students can answer the puzzles correctly. The statements from Teacher S and Teacher F is explained below:

Teacher S: "I used object crossword puzzles when I gave students crossword puzzles in learning. I used that type because that type can force students to read through the clues."

Teacher F: "I used object crosswords because object crosswords are easy to apply in learning."

### **2. Advantages of using crossword puzzle games.**

The researcher concluded that crossword puzzles have many advantages for students and teachers. As for the advantages that all teachers said related to their

experience: Crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary, make students motivated in learning, help students understand learning material, help students in their thinking skills, and finally make students not feel bored in learning. It will be explained below:

- a. Crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary.

According to all participants' experiences, the first advantage when using crossword puzzles in teaching and learning English is that crossword puzzles can improve student vocabulary. Crossword puzzles can improve student vocabulary in a fun way so that students feel fun when adding to their vocabulary by using crossword puzzles. It follows with all participants' statements, which will be explained below:

Teacher D: "I used crossword puzzles to improve students' vocabulary, and students could add their vocabulary in a fun way."

Teacher K: "I used crossword puzzles in teaching to improve students' vocabulary, and using these games, students can learn vocabulary well."

Teacher S: "I used crossword puzzles to improve students' vocabulary in learning English."

Teacher F: "The advantage of using crossword puzzles in teaching is that crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary."

Teacher R: "The advantage of using crossword puzzles in teaching is that crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary."

- b. Crossword puzzles can make students motivated in learning.

The second advantage related to all participants' experiences is that crossword puzzles can motivate students to learn English because they use games and motivate students when working on crossword puzzles. After all, students can find words from random letters so that a student more easily remembers and understand about word's the meaning of the crossword puzzle given by the teacher. The statements from all participants will be explained below:

Teacher D: "The advantage when I used a crossword puzzle in learning is students can be motivated to learn English, and students are motivated to find words from random letters."

Teacher K: "Using crossword puzzles in learning can improve student motivation."

Teacher S: "The advantage of using a crossword puzzle in learning is that it can motivate students to remember or understand the word's meaning in the crossword puzzle that I have given."

Teacher F: "*The advantage of using crossword puzzles is that they can improve students' motivation in*

*learning vocabulary because they use games in learning.*"

Teacher R: "The advantage of using a crossword puzzle is that it can make students motivated by learning. Because crossword puzzles are games, students usually like games in learning, so they are motivated to learn English."

- c. Crossword puzzles can help students understand learning material.

The third advantage of using crossword puzzles based on the participants' experiences is that students can understand learning material in a fun way. It is related to the statement by Teacher D and Teacher F:

Teacher D: "*Using crossword puzzles in learning can make students understand the English material at that time.*"

Teacher F: "The advantage when I used a crossword puzzle is that it can make students learn the material in a fun way."

- d. Crossword puzzles can help students in their thinking skills.

The fourth advantage when using crossword puzzle games in teaching based on the participants' experiences is that they can make students interested and help students in thinking skills quickly and precisely. Even though they are playing but it is very helpful in learning. It is followed by the statements of 2 participants in this study, namely teacher D and teacher K. It will be explained below:

Teacher D: "The advantage of using crossword puzzles in learning is it can help students in thinking skills quickly and precisely."

Teacher K: "Crossword puzzles can make students interested in thinking without realizing that students are playing and learning."

- e. Crossword puzzles can make students not feel bored in learning.

The fifth advantage of using crossword puzzles based on the participants' experiences is that students do not feel bored when learning English and become excited about learning. With this, it can make students focus on learning English, more precisely in English vocabulary. It is in following with the statement by Teacher R.

Teacher R: "Using crossword puzzles can make students not get bored when learning English. I can use this technique to improve students' enthusiasm when learning about vocabulary. So they feel excited, which makes them focus on learning."

### 3. Challenges of using crossword puzzle games by English teachers

Teachers who use crossword puzzles in learning must have challenges when using crossword puzzles. The challenges of using crossword puzzles can come from internal and external challenges. Any explanation will be explained below:

#### a. Internal challenges

Internal challenges come from within a person or individual. These challenges are usually in the form of attitudes and traits that are inherent in a person. This internal challenge comes from the teacher or students. Internal challenges are influenced by time and materials. It will be explained below:

##### 1) Time

Implementing crossword puzzles takes time, both the time before learning and the time about implementing crossword puzzles. It will be explained below:

###### a) Time-related to preparation before learning

The time related to preparation before learning is that the teacher needs time to make a crossword puzzle before giving it to students. The statements of the four participants follow it:

Teacher D: "The challenge that I got when I used crossword puzzles was that I needed a lot of time to do puzzles."

Teacher K: "The challenge for me was that I had to prepare crossword puzzles."

Teacher S: "I had a challenge when I used crossword puzzles. It needed a long time to prepare crossword puzzles before giving them to students."

Teacher R: "My challenge is about the time before I gave the students crossword puzzle games because it took a long time to do the puzzles."

###### b) Time-related to implementation

The time related to this implementation is challenging for students based on teachers' experiences. Students need time related to implementing crossword puzzles because they have a minimal vocabulary, so they have to look for vocabulary that they don't know. Of course, that makes working on crossword puzzles long. It is related to the statements of the four participants:

Teacher D: "The challenge for students was that student vocabulary was minimal, so it took a long time to arrange random letters into words related to the topic."

Teacher S: "The challenge for students was students also need a long time to do crossword

puzzles because they have a minimal vocabulary."

Teacher F: "The challenge for students was that they needed a lot of time to do the crossword puzzles that I provided because they had a minimal vocabulary."

Teacher R: "The challenge for students was that they needed time to think about answers, and they had to find new vocabulary because they had a minimal vocabulary. It takes a long time for students to complete their crossword puzzles."

##### 2) Material

Material is one of the internal challenges that come from the teacher. The teacher must adjust the crossword puzzle according to the student material at that time. It is related to the statements of the four participants:

Teacher D: "I have to make a crossword puzzle related to the material I would give students."

Teacher K: "The challenge for me was preparing crossword puzzles related to the material."

Teacher R: "My challenge is I have to do puzzles based on the topic."

Teacher F: "My challenge is making a crossword puzzle related to the material at the time."

#### b. External challenges

External challenges are outside factors affecting a person or individual. The surrounding environment is included in this factor. Tools and time influence the external challenge. It will be explained below:

##### 1) Tools used during learning

Tools are one of the external challenges teachers face, and teachers must prepare tools for learning. It followed the opinion of one participant:

Teacher F: "The challenge when using crossword puzzle games in learning is that I need some tools to play the games, such as a projector and laptop, which are sometimes unavailable in the classroom."

##### 2) Time-related to preparation before learning.

The time related to preparation before learning on these external factors is the time when preparing the tools to be used in learning. It is related to the statement by Teacher F:

Teacher F: "I have to prepare the tools that will be used to play the game, and this takes time to install the tools."

In the findings, there are three crucial points: types of crossword puzzles, advantages, and challenges of using crossword puzzles by English teachers. For the types of crossword puzzles that have been explained in the

findings, the teacher used different types of crossword puzzles. The types that the teacher used in teaching and learning English are oral crossword puzzles, picture and object crossword puzzles. This finding supports the statement from Pangestu (2017), which stated that there are three types of crossword puzzles, namely oral, picture, and object crossword puzzles. Picture crossword puzzles also follow the opinion of (Dhand, 2008). He says that crossword puzzles can be made from words that have been discussed in class by using clues in the form of definitions and pictures.

The advantages of crossword puzzles related to the teachers' experience it is supported by the statement by Sukirman & Ningsih (2016) that crossword puzzles can improve student vocabulary, make students not feel bored when learning, and help students in their thinking skills. Meanwhile, the crossword puzzle can improve student vocabulary; it is related to statements (Dhand, 2008). Crossword puzzles in teaching activities can improve students' vocabulary and make students motivated to learn English. It is supported by the previous study by Profita (2012), which explains that in her research, using crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary in teaching and learning English and motivate them to learn.

The crossword game used by the teacher in teaching certainly has challenges, while the challenges based on the teachers' experiences are divided into two, the first is an internal challenge, and the second is an external challenge. Internal challenges are influenced by time and materials. As for the time related to preparation before learning and material, the teacher needs time to make crossword puzzles according to the material to be taught. This finding supports the statement from Njoroge et al. (2013) that teachers who want to teach using this game must prepare games and materials before entering class. The teacher needs time to work on the puzzles and adapt them to the material taught to students. Therefore the time related to implementation comes from students. They need time to do crossword puzzles. It is related to the statement by Tambaritji & Atmawidjaja (2020), which explains that students find difficult keywords to answer crossword puzzles. Students have minimal vocabulary, so guessing the vocabulary in crossword puzzles is difficult. Tools and time influence the external challenges when using crosswords. It supported the statement by Dashela (2017) that teachers need time to prepare before being given crossword puzzles. Teachers must prepare laptops, projectors, and dictionaries.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and the discussion in the previous chapter, teachers can use games in teaching. Crossword puzzles are games that can make the learning process

exciting and funny and provide opportunities for students to practice their vocabulary; crossword puzzles can help students improve their vocabulary. Before the teacher used the crossword puzzle, the students did not know much about the material at that time. After the teacher gave the crossword puzzle, the students could quickly remember and add to their vocabulary about the material at that time. Crossword puzzles have three types. That is an oral crossword puzzle, a picture crossword puzzle, and an object crossword puzzle. Meanwhile, all participants used all types of crossword puzzles. Each teacher used different types of crossword puzzles depending on what the teacher needed to use in teaching.

The advantages of using crossword puzzles can be seen from the point of view of teachers. There are five advantages of using crossword puzzles in teaching and learning English: crossword puzzles can improve students' vocabulary, make students motivated to learn, help students understand learning material, help students in their thinking skills, and finally make students not feel bored in learning.

Crossword puzzles have challenges when applied to teaching. Based on teachers' experiences, the challenges can be seen from internal and external challenges. Internal challenges come from teachers and students. Internal challenges are divided into two, the first is the internal factor regarding time, and the second is regarding the material. Time is divided into time related to preparation before learning and time related to implementation. And the material in the internal challenges is the material that the teacher must adapt to the crossword puzzle that is made. The external challenges come from the tools used during learning and time. So teachers need a time to prepare the tools used in crossword puzzle games, like laptops and projectors.

## **Suggestions**

The researcher would like to give suggestions to the following parties:

1. For the teacher

The researcher hopes that teachers can use crossword puzzles to teach English so students become interested and motivated to learn English, especially vocabulary. With crossword puzzles, students can find new vocabulary so that students can add to their vocabulary. Second, teachers can create crossword puzzles independently instead of taking them from online sources so that the crossword puzzles given to students will be more optimal than those from online sources.

2. For future researchers.

The researcher hopes that this study can be a reference for future researchers. Second, future researchers should look for a new way of crossword puzzle game technique

in learning with the other language components, such as grammar, spelling, pronunciation, etc. Third, future researchers can find a solution to the challenge of using crossword puzzle games. And the last, future researchers can use other subjects, for example, junior high school teachers.

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