Developing UNO English Card Game and Its' Impact to the EFL Students' Descriptive Writing Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to develop a card game to scaffold the obstacles of EFL students to compose descriptive text. The research and development design were applied to achieve the UNO English card game through modifying the conventional UNO cards with the descriptive text English material. The participants were the eight students joining the Writing I course in Banking Department in a public Islamic university in Indonesia. The results showed that the application of the UNO English card through game-based learning model could minimize the EFL students' descriptive writing errors as well as increasing their interest joining the EFL class. Therefore, comparing the students works in both pretest and posttest, it was known that the EFL students' descriptive writing scores had increased due to the treatment of UNO English card application. This study unveils demand for EFL teachers' creativity to elevate the EFL class outcome through more interesting activity and material development.

Keywords: EFL, descriptive writing, game-based learning, UNO English card

INTRODUCTION

English is nowadays an international language that is used commonly in daily communication among people in the world. It means that EFL learners are expected to master English skills consisting productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (speaking and listening). Among those, writing is believed as the most difficult skill (Richard, 1990, as cited in Tuan, 2011; Zheng, 1999, as cited in Yan, 2005; Richard and Renandya, 2002). The difficulties are caused by some factors. First, low English proficiency makes learners unable to express their ideas in appropriate and correct English for they lack knowledge in both grammar and vocabulary (Hyland, 2003: 34). Second, there are differences between the rhetorical conventions of English

texts and L2 learners' texts (Leki, 1991, as cited in Yan, 2005). Therefore, learners often find it difficult to adjust from their native text convention into English text convention. Third, learners find it difficult to generate and organize their ideas and also to translate their ideas into readable text (Richard and Renandya, 2002: 303). Finally, learners also have to pay attention on things related to mechanics such as the use of correct punctuation, spelling and word choice and capitalization (Richard and Renandya, 2002: 303). Thus, L2 learners are often stressful when they have to face writing tasks.

The difficulties above are faced by a public Islamic university in East Java, Indonesia students majoring Banking. The students joined writing I class which is taught in the first semester, especially in writing descriptive paragraph. In writing descriptive, students tend to have difficulties in identifying the object by employing the correct adjective with the correct spelling. Sometimes, they still tend to ask the English translation to the lecturer and ask about how it is spelled which show they are not autonomous learners. On the other hand, though the lecturer has taught them about the basic tenses grammar through writing, they tend to have *Subject-Verb* agreement. Another factor that adds the students stressful is the lecturer's conventional way of teaching and learning writing descriptive by lecturing which creates boring class. A fact, the students have low in writing speed. Based on the interview with 8 students in writing class, within fifty minutes, the time is too limited to create around 200-300 words. As the result they just produce for around seventy-five words in a descriptive paragraph. So, it needs an effective strategy to deal with the difficulties.

Based on the fact above, it triggers the researcher as lecturer to seek breakthrough strategy of teaching descriptive writing which is able to handle the situations. The strategy must be able to overcome the students' difficulties, able to make the students to be active, and creates an autonomous learning. Then, the researcher proposes to teach writing descriptive trough games. Since, teaching and learning that employs game according to Lepper and Cordova (1992) that in game playing students goes through a type of learning engagement which refers to the phenomenon of intrinsic motivation (improves students' challenge, curiosity, control, and fantasy). Moreover, case study research conducted by Sung and Ching (2012) resulted that card game-based language learning has indeed provided the possibility of improving the students' TOEIC grades. So, the researcher wants to develop students' self-motivation to learn writing descriptive paragraph through fun activity which directs them to be autonomous learners in which in the activity learners can work together in groups as in cooperative learning strategy to

train themselves to deal with the difficulties in writing. According to Panitz (1983) that cooperative learning (CL) and the extent to which CL fosters student interest, behavioral and attitudinal change, and opportunities for success (motivates the students).

Due to the existed difficulties faced by the students in the present research context, as well as taking the benefits of game for EFL classroom, therefore, *UNO* English Card Game (English rule modified conventional *UNO* card) is preferable to be developed and tested as treatment through an experimental study. This attempt is done to be scaffold of the descriptive writing teaching and able subconsciously make students get used to with grammar (subject verb agreement and simple tenses) and vocabulary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Descriptive Paragraph

According to the syllabus of teaching writing in writing I first semester in the Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, lecturers must teach some types of texts, they are descriptive, narrative, and expository texts. Descriptive text is considered as the first text that must be taught to the students. It is because descriptive paragraph employs simple present tense which is considered as the simple tenses. The descriptive paragraph is coming from the definition of the word description. Based on the explanation on Chapter 3 of hand book published by Pearson highered **,** description shows a reader what a person, place, thing, or situation is like. It means that the writer try to show, not tell, about something. The writer wants to make the reader see that person, place, or situation, and then, perhaps, to make the reader think about or act on what you have shown.

The Materials

Designing suitable materials for the autonomous learner can be a challenge. Motteram (1997) wrote about the many years teachers spend developing materials for their classrooms and adapting their teaching styles to that environment. He wrote that when teachers switch to an independent learning environment, they might expect the immediate transferability of the previous skills to the new learner-centered environment. This never happens because the nature of independent learning materials is different. Consequently, teachers may feel threatened that they have lost the value of their hard earned skills. Motteram added that many

learners will feel cheated if they find that the material they are presented with in a so-called independent learning environment is the same as that presented in a regular class.

Autonomous Learning

Little in Benson (2001), the definition on learner autonomy is "a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfer what has been learned to wider contexts." In this research, by employing the UNO English card game, the learners will be more autonomy to produce the correct present tense grammar for descriptive writing, and better words spelling since their sentence production is based on written words on card and checked by their friends. Rice & Nash (2010) states that flash cards make a good self-assessment tool for students. In the end, this card game is able to improve writing descriptive paragraph speed since in the game they have to be competitive and correct.

Cooperative Learning

A primary benefit of CL is that it enhances students' self esteem which in turn motivates students to participate in the learning process (Johnson & Johnson 1989, in Panitz, 1998). Cooperative efforts among students result in a higher degree of accomplishment by all participants (Slavin 1987, in Panitz, 1998). Students help each other and in doing so build a supportive community which raises the performance level of each member (Kagan 1986, in Panitz, 1998). This in turn leads to higher self esteem in all students (Webb 1982, in Panitz, 1998)

Cooperation enhances student satisfaction with the learning experience by actively involving students in designing and completing class procedures and course content (Johnson and Johnson 1990, in Panitz, 1998). Effective teams or groups assume ownership of a process and its results when individuals are encouraged to work together toward a common goal, often defined by the group. This aspect is especially helpful for individuals who have a history or failure (Turnure & Zigler 1958, in Panitz, 1998).

Game Based Learning

A game is said to be an activity engaged in for diversion and fun (Game, 2011, in Sung and Ching, 2012). It is mentioned that game based learning utilizes the concept of competitive exercises; wherein students compete with each other or to make or getting them to challenge themselves in order to motivate them to learn better. Games often have a fantasy element that engages players in a learning activity through a storyline.

According to Tedd (2012) the features of game-based learning (GBL):

- GBL uses competitive exercises, either pitting the students against each other or getting them to challenge themselves in order to motivate them to learn better.

- Games often have a fantasy element that engages players in a learning activity through a storyline.

- In order to create a truly educational game, the instructor needs to make sure that learning the material is essential to scoring and winning

UNO English Game Cards

The original UNO cards, the deck consists of 108 cards which are consisted of number 0-9 red color cards (2 sets), 0-9 yellow color cards (2 sets), 0-9 blue color cards (2 sets), 0-9 green color cards (2 sets), 4 wild draw four cards, 8 skip cards, 4 reverse cards, 8 wild draw two cards, and 4 wild cards (both cards come from the same color).

The specifications of some cards above are:

1. *Skip*: When played, the next player in rotation loses their turn, and the following player then may play.

2. *Reverse*: When played, the rotation of play is reversed, i.e. clockwise play changes to counter-clockwise, and vice-versa. In a two-player game, this card functions as a "Skip" instead. If this card is the first card flipped after dealing, the dealer goes first and play continues counter-clockwise.

3. *Draw Two*: When played, the next player in rotation must draw two cards and skip the turn.

4. *Wild*: When played, the player may call a color (one of the four in the deck). Play continues with the next player obliged to play a card of that color. If this card is the first card flipped after dealing, the player who would play first gets to choose the color and then play a card.

5. *Wild Draw Four*: Like a Wild, but the next player draws four cards and loses their turn, play passes to the following player. This card may only be played when the holder does not hold a card having color matching the active color (top card or called color after Wild). If this card is the first card flipped after dealing, return it to the deck, shuffle, and flip a new one.

The rules of the UNO Cards game are:

1. Before playing, a dealer must be selected by drawing lots or by some other method. The Dealer shall deal seven cards to each player in rounds. The top card of the deck is flipped and laid to the side to start the discard pile. If the exposed card has a special ability (the "word cards"), it is treated as a regular card. If the exposed card is a "Wild Draw Four", however, it is returned to the deck and the next card is flipped.

2. The play begins clockwise (dealer's left), unless that player was skipped or play was reversed (see below). A player on their turn may play a card from their hand that matches either the color or rank (or both) of the top card of the discard pile.

3. The hand is over when one player has played all of their cards and is said to have "gone out". If the player does not have a playable card or chooses not to play one, that player must draw one from the deck. Once a player has drawn, they must either pass or play that card. Playing a card is always optional, but the choice may cause the player to increase the size of their hand.

4. When a player plays down to only one card, that player is required to say "UNO!" to warn other players. If the word is not said and another player points out the error before the next player takes their turn, the original player is busted and must draw two cards.

METHOD

Research Design, Participants, and Setting

This study employed two research designs, namely research and development and pre-experimental designs. The research and development design followed Borg and Gall (1983) steps including: First, the need analysis was done as the basic principle to develop teaching materials for students. In the second phase, teaching materials was tested, evaluated, revised, and socialized. In the third phase, try out was done for teaching materials, afterward the final revisions for both of them was conducted.

The pre-experimental research was conducted by having only one group as the object, the researcher did pretest, treatment, and posttest design. The treatment was the application of *UNO* English card game to the participants. The study participants were the eight volunteers (EFL students) who attended writing I class in Banking Department at a public Islamic University in East Java, Indonesia. Then, to obtain the participants' responses toward the *UNO* English card game application, the questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire results were used to confirm the experimental research result.

Research Procedures

The research is done based on the following steps:

1. Do the pretest by asking students to write a descriptive paragraph about their friend (a friend) in 50 minutes (half-time of a meeting in class)

2. Make the students familiar with the rule of the original UNO cards game by letting them enjoy playing the game in the rest of 50 minutes of the class. Step 1 and 2 are done in the first meeting.

3. Make the students familiar with the rule and look of the modified UNO English card game and propose the modified cards game to be played by the students. The students play the card game in 50 minutes.

4. Ask the students to write a descriptive paragraph about their classmates (a friend) in 50 minutes. Step 3 and 4 are done in the second meeting

5. In the end of the class students are asked to fill the questionnaire as their responses to the activity.

The roles of the researcher as the lecturer in the process of students' playing modified UNO English Cards game are:

1. Assist the students during the play of both original and modified UNO cards game.

2. Provide feedback on students' ungrammatical sentence production in the process of playing modified UNO English Card game.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Developing the Modified UNO English Cards Game and Rules

The game cards are created through two ways. The first way has been finished by employing the original UNO cards which are modified by using pictures. The order of modification trough:

1. The colored cards (yellow, red, blue, green) are modified with four categories (human, animal, building, thing) pictures which are stacked on the cards.

2. The numbers on the cards (number 0 – number 9) are changed with the adjectives which are matched with the categories. The adjectives are taken from a website: *www.Buzzle.com* (an article entitled *List of Descriptive Adjective*)

3. The draw four and draw two cards are given a rule (punishment for the next player) which insist the next player to create a part of the generic structure of descriptive text that is the general classification.

4. The reverse card is provided with a noun and an adjective which the dealer must create noun phrase when they deal the reverse card.

5. All the effect of cards will work if the sentence production is grammatically correct.

The second way is still in preparation which means that researcher wants to create the new UNO English cards using computer software which is downloaded from www.myUNOcreation.com. So, the lay out will be more attractive and original rather than sticking the picture and words on the cards just like in the first way of modification.

The game play was design and slightly revised in order to improve the learning process. The following are the finalized game playing rules:

1. There are 108 cards in the pile which consisted of 92 modified cards (the modifications are based on the 2 ways above)

2. The cards in the pile are shook and each player must hand 5 – 7 cards.

3. The dealer must open a card upside as the starter card of the game and the dealer will be the first player who put the first card on the deck.

4. If the dealer start with a card which has man picture ("he") and there are two adjectives such as "handsome" and "tall". The dealer must put the card on the deck while he creates a sentence such as "He is handsome and tall".

5. The game turn starts based on clockwise direction. The next player do the same thing just like the previous player did.

6. If one of the player do not have the same category card. Next, they have to look at their cards which have adjectives that can explain the category on the card that was last put on the deck. For example, the last card on the deck has man picture means human, and the next player does not have the card with same category. He must search the adjective on his cards which may describe about man or human. But, if there is not, he must draw a card from the pile.

7. If a player put wild draw four cards on the deck, the next player must create the opening part of descriptive text (general classification). For example, the last put card is wild draw four which allow the dealer to choose what category (human, animal, building, or things) as the theme to create the general classification in the form of single sentence, such as "I would like to tell you about my house".

8. When a player plays down to only one card, that player is required to say "UNO!" to warn other players. If the word is not said and another player points out the error before the next player takes their turn, the original player is busted and must draw two cards.

The Result of the Pre-Test

Mostly the eight students write their descriptive paragraph in around 40-50 words. Mostly, they did mistakes in the case of *Subject-Verb* agreement (20 mistakes in 20 sentences from whole descriptive paragraphs) such as "Samsul hair (…) very good", and "He have (has) face long". The two of them, did misspelling (3 mistakes in 3 sentences from two descriptive paragraphs) such as "Cully (curly)", "Brow (brown), and "Blek (black)". All the students did mistakes in creating noun phrase such as "face oval", "color skin", and "lips thin". It can be assumed that more or less the total sentences for the whole eight students' descriptive paragraph are around 360 words.

The Result of the Post-Test

The quantity of the sentence produced by the students increased around 100 – 150 words. The post-test showed that the words quantity of students' writing increased which might reflect the writing speed improvement in 50 minutes. Although, there are still mistakes in the case of *Subject-Verbs* agreement, the amount of the mistakes decreased. The mistakes are 14 mistakes in 14 sentences from whole descriptive paragraphs. It means that by playing modified UNO English Cards game made the eight students be aware on the *Subject-Verb* agreement in which the theory was taught by the researcher in the class before the research was conducted. However, the lecturer assistance is still needed in order to check the students' sentence production.

There was one student who did misspelling in using the adjective. The mistake was "Flate (Flat)". It shows that though it is not significant enough as the evidence of the effect of using UNO English Cards game to decrease misspelling, but it might be a sign as prove.

Referring to the students' mistakes on writing noun phrase, the researcher assisted the students during the UNO English Cards game play. Since, it was hard for the researcher to put the rule of noun phrase in every card in the game. So, the researcher did oral correction by directly correct students' mistake in creating noun phrase. The result showed that the quantity of NP mistakes decreased but still many.

The Result of the Questionnaire

This is the table of the result of students' questionnaires.

Student	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total	
						Yes	No
1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	0
2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	0
3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	0
4	Y	Y	N	Y	N	3	2
5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	0
6	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4	1
7	Y	Y	N	Y	N	3	2
8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	0
The Result						35	5

The short conclusions from the result in table above are: First, three students were not helped with the cards since the cards' picture is not directly matched with the meaning of the adjectives. Second, UNO English Cards game can be an alternative for the lecturer to help students to deal with difficulties to write descriptive paragraph. Since, UNO English Cards game provides fun, motivated, and collaborative learning situation.

CONCLUSION

According to the expert, writing is the most difficult skill among other three (speaking, listening, and reading). The second semester of English Department in UMM faced the fact that writing is the most difficult skill, including writing descriptive paragraph. Then, the researcher chose eight students as the representative of the class as the sample. Mostly, students do mistakes on grammar (Subject-Verb agreement and Noun Phrase), misspelling the words (in the discussion focus on the adjective). On the other hand, students' lack of vocabulary especially adjectives make them difficult to create longer descriptive paragraph. Then, students' need effective lecturer's teaching strategy to boost students' motivation trough cooperative learning, competition situation, and fun activity. Based on the discussion above, it is believed that the modified UNO English Cards game is able to overcome the descriptive writing mistakes and difficulties above, and motivate students' well.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for students

No	Items	Yes	No
1	Does UNO English cards game provide you a fun English activity?		
2	Are you motivated to win the UNO Cards English game?		
3	Does the UNO English cards game help you to understand adjectives?		
4	Do you learn from your and your friends' language mistakes during the play of UNO Cards English game?		
5	Does this activity help you to write descriptive paragraph?		