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Improving the Grade 8 Students' Vocabulary Skill through Localized Game-Based Activities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve the Grade 8 students' vocabulary skill through localized game-based activities. The participants of the study were the 35 Grade 8 students who were officially enrolled at the Mariano Marcos State University – Laboratory High School, Batac Campus, for the School Year 2021-2022. The data on students' level of vocabulary performance were determined based on the students' scores in the pretest and posttest, respectively, using a 20-item teacher-made test. Frequency distribution, means and mean difference were used to treat the data. Findings reveal that the Grade 8 have varied levels of vocabulary skill before and after the application of the intervention. Likewise, there is a significant change on the students' pretest and posttest scores. Moreover, this study found that the use of localized game-based activities such as Pinoy Henyo and Bugtong Bugtong was effective in improving the students' vocabulary skill.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary skill is one of the fundamental skills that students need to become competent in using the English language in all communication contexts. In fact, vocabulary skill is focused in every grade level of the English curriculum. However, with the massive transition from traditional learning to an exclusively online learning setup brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, developing students' vocabulary skill became a challenge to every learner because of the limited non-verbal communication. Online learning has somehow decreased social relations which is one of the contributory factors in developing their vocabulary skills. This is because it is part of the online learning in which students choose not to speak or share their insights during online discussions. Considerably, many high school students experience difficulty in using the English language and one of the significant factors is poor vocabulary skill. This problem was also noted when we observed classes in different grade levels as part of our Field Study courses such as Observation of Teaching-Learning in Actual School Setting and Participation and Teaching Assistantship. We noticed that the students have difficulty in unlocking difficult words. More so, the teacher incorporated an activity to help the learners widen their English vocabulary through individual sharing of a word and its meaning to the class. These observations prove that there is a need to improve the students' vocabulary skill.

In the Philippines, game-based activities are used specifically in basic education. However, there are only limited studies concerning the effectiveness of using games in improving students' vocabulary skill. Likewise, despite those researches and recommendations in improving vocabularies, there are still struggling learners in terms of their vocabulary skill. This is one of the reasons why learners could not learn unfamiliar words and understand word meanings independently which can

impede their vocabulary development, thus, can result to limited vocabulary. This prompted us to improve the Grade 8 students' vocabulary skill using localized game-based activities. Specifically, this research sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the students' level of vocabulary skill before the implementation of the intervention?
2. What activities can be used to improve the students' level of vocabulary skill?
3. What is the students' level of vocabulary skill after the implementation of the intervention?
4. Is there a significant change on the students' level of vocabulary skill before and after the implementation of the intervention?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Game-based Activities in Teaching

Keshta & Al-faleet (2013) claimed that having a wide range of vocabulary knowledge helps the learners understand the meaning of new words and analyze the set of ideas that they may encounter. Likewise, Darfidal (2015) regarded vocabulary as the most important part, but the most challenging skill in language learning. This implies that vocabulary is needed to consider in the second language acquisition to develop proficiency, express oneself, and comprehend the meaning of ideas (Kavvadia, 2016).

Consequently, students' vocabulary skill is affected. The study of Andrici (2012) claimed that students who lack vocabulary, are students with a low capacity to understand the words and express herself using the language. This proves that having limited words leads for poor vocabulary skill.

With this, there is a need to find strategies to develop the learners' vocabulary skills. Ketola (2019) contended that if learning vocabulary is at the core of learning English, teachers should give special attention to how it could be

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most effectively taught to their students.

One of the strategies which has been effective in teaching and modifying the student's vocabulary skill is using game-based activities. Games have an important role in the lives of children and adolescents nowadays and these games can also be used to develop the vocabulary skill of learners.

Based on the study of Taheri (2014), he confirmed that language games are effective and suitable techniques in helping the students' vocabulary retention to have a long-term memory in English vocabulary. Furthermore, Shabaneh and Farrah (2019) study claimed that the efficiency of utilizing games could help the students retain unfamiliar vocabulary, associate new information with their surroundings, and help them develop their language and communicative skills.

Relatedly, games can be localized in order to meet the needs of the learners in improving their vocabulary skill. It was mentioned in the Language Network Blog (2020) that localization refers to the adjustment of a specific resource or product to fit the demands of one locale. Localizing instructional materials involves necessary changes to existing content to ensure that an audience in a targeted locale could understand it. Likewise, localizing game assures that learners can relate as it is known and understandable. More so, it makes sense to the target learners because the content maintains the intended message of the game. To be more specific, vocabulary can be taught to the learners through a localized game-based activities and provide the students with excitement about learning words in a playful context.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Strategy or Intervention

The intervention used in this study is a lesson inspired by game-based approach. It incorporated localized game-based activities with the topic "Using Appropriate Strategies in Unlocking the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words and Idiomatic Expressions." These activities are believed to be helpful in improving the students' vocabulary skill. In this study, the vocabulary skill to be measured is the students' ability to unlock unfamiliar words since this is the most basic way of understanding terms being described and defined through the description and clues about the words. This could lead to widening their vocabulary building.

The localized games used in this study are Pinoy Henyo (Pinoy Genius) and Bugtong Bugtong (Riddle Game). Pinoy Henyo is a popular guessing game in the Philippine that people started playing at homes, parties, and even in corporate team buildings. Pinoy is a colloquial word for Filipino and Henyo means genius. The aim of the game is for an individual to guess a word correctly by narrowing down the possibilities using different categories. The most common categories used in the game include "tao," "bagay," "lugar," and "pagkain" but it is up for individuals' cunning and own strategy to come up with the words that can narrow down the possibilities.

This localized game-based activity was implemented

before introducing the lesson. We chose 5 students as guessers and other members of the class as responders. After choosing 5 guessers, we clearly gave the instructions of the activity. We explained that the guesser needs to cover his/her eyes with blindfold. Before starting, the guesser needs to choose the setting of the word. It can be in the school, house, or hospital. In the count of three, a word that needs to be guessed is flashed in the Google. Each student guesser has 3 minutes to guess the words as many as they can. They can use the "pass card" if they could not guess the given word and proceed to the next one until the time is over. We also facilitated and monitored the game in case the responders answer with another word other than Yes, No, and Maybe or Possible, so that they can proceed to the next word as a penalty. In the next meetings, other students assumed the role as a guesser. Therefore, all of them had the chance to become a guesser and responder.

Another game incorporated in the lesson is the Bugtong Bugtong which is shown in Figure 2. A riddle, or bugtong in Filipino, is a statement or a question that directly requires a concrete answer whose hidden meaning has to be deciphered. Inventing and answering riddles are among top hobbies for early Filipinos with much spare time at their disposal, marking their liking towards activities that hone the mind. Bugtong consists of two-liner statements, questions or phrases that has double or hidden meaning. The description may seem straightforward, but sometimes, you need to think outside of the box to solve them. Thus, this game can be a good activity for the learners to practice context clues. Through context clues, they can easily guess the correct answer. Playing riddles allows them to know and understand something that most other people do not, giving them an opportunity to repeat them and teach them to others. With this, learners are not just able to learn words but have the assurance of long retention. This game was implemented after the discussion of the lesson. In this game, we gave 30 seconds to the students to guess the correct answer. After flashing the answer, the meaning of the words are presented to the learners. We gave them "Hint" if the learner could not guess the correct answer. Aside from hints, we gave 5 "pass card" and proceed to the next riddle or bugtong.

Research Instrument

We constructed a 20-item pretest-posttest which was taken from the Grade 8 Learner's Material of the K-12 curriculum. Some of the items of the test were modified to align with the purpose of the study. The 20-item pretest checked the vocabulary skill of the students before carrying out the intervention. It was administered to determine the students' level of vocabulary skill before executing the treatment. On the other hand, the 20-item posttest served as evidence whether the intervention was able to improve the vocabulary skill of the students. Both the pretest and posttest were facilitated through the use of Google Forms.

Sources of Data

This study used the results of the pretest and posttest

as the source of data. The pretest and posttest were administered to the Grade 8 students who were officially enrolled at the Mariano Marcos State University, Laboratory High School, Batac Campus, in Ilocos Norte, Philippines, for the school year 2021-2022. The data were gathered from the 35 Grade 8 students in terms of their scores in the pretest and posttest, respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of this study, we followed a definite procedure in gathering the data needed. First, we sought permission from the principal of MMSU-Laboratory High School to conduct the study. Next was the administration of a 20-item pretest. This was done to determine the students' level of vocabulary skill before the application of the intervention. After analyzing the results of the pretest, we selected the intervention. They considered several strategies and approaches to select from. Consequently, local game-based activities were chosen as the intervention to be utilized. We constructed lesson plans aligned with the content of the Grade 8 English curriculum. Gamified approach was used as the methodology in the lessons. In the lessons, localized game-based activities such as the Pinoy Henyo and Bugtong Bugtong were used in our online class discussions. These games are related to different types of vocabulary building. We engaged the students to the said localized game-based activities. These activities act as strategies for the learners to scrutinize and learn unfamiliar words to improve their vocabulary skill. After implementing the localized game-based activities, we administered a 20-item posttest to determine the improvement on students' vocabulary skill. The posttest is the same as the pretest with the same context. This test served as an evidence whether the intervention was able to improve or not the vocabulary skill of the students. Finally, the students' scores in the pretest and posttest, respectively, were interpreted, analyzed and compared.

Data Analysis

The students' level of vocabulary skill in the pretest and posttest was interpreted using frequency counts and means. Their level of vocabulary skill was described using the range of scores with their corresponding descriptive interpretation as follow:

To determine the significant change on the students' level of vocabulary skill before and after the application of the intervention, mean difference was used. To support the findings of the study, the students' responses about their perceptions on the localized game-based activities were

Range of Scores

16-20

11-15

6-10

0-5

also interpreted and analyzed.

Descriptive Interpretation

Very Satisfactory

Satisfactory

Fair

Poor

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings of the study on improving the Grade 8 students' vocabulary skill through localized game-based activities. It includes the pretest and posttest mean scores, frequency, percentage and mean difference, which were used to measure vocabulary skill.

Students' Level of Vocabulary Skill Before the Implementation of the Intervention

The first concern of the study is to determine the Grade 8 students' level of vocabulary skill before the implementation of the intervention based on the results of their pretest. Table 1 shows the distribution of the students according to their pretest scores.

The pretest result shows that 18 (51.43%) of the students obtained scores ranging from 6-10 interpreted as Fair. It can be deduced from the same table that 9 (25.71%) of the students got scores ranging from 11-15 marked as Satisfactory while 8 (22.86%) of them got scores ranging from 16-20 interpreted as Very Satisfactory. Interestingly, no students got a score ranging from 0-5 marked as Poor. The result shows that the majority of the students have Fair level of vocabulary skill before the implementation of the intervention. This can be attributed to the students' difficulty in using the English language. As what Encarnacion and Viviana (2019) claimed in his study, students' low and fair vocabulary skill is affected by their difficulty in understanding and using English as their second language. It could also be gleaned from the table that the students obtained a mean score of 12.62 interpreted as Satisfactory. Although most of the students have Fair vocabulary skill before the implementation of the intervention, their mean score yielded to the Satisfactory level.

Localized Game-Based Activities as Intervention in Improving the Grade 8 Students' Vocabulary Skill

This study also determined the intervention that can be applied to improve the students' vocabulary skill. The intervention used is a lesson inspired by game-based approach. It incorporated localized game-based activities

Table 1: Distribution of the students according to their pretest scores (n=35)

Scores	Description	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
16-20	Very Satisfactory	8	22.86
11-15	Satisfactory	9	25.71
6-10	Fair	18	51.43
0-5	Poor		
TOTAL		35	100.00
MEAN			12.62

such as Pinoy Henyo and Bugtong Bugtong with the topic “Using Appropriate Strategies in Unlocking the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words and Idiomatic Expressions.” These activities are believed to be helpful in improving the students’ vocabulary skill.

After the games were applied, the students were interviewed about their perceptions on the games. The following are some of the responses of the students:

(Student A) *“Both games are good. Especially the Pinoy Henyo because through the characteristics that I gave, I eventually guess the word.”*

(Student B) *“The activities are very engaging, specifically the Pinoy Henyo because everyone in the class actively participated all throughout the discussion.”*

(Student C) *“Through Bugtong Bugtong, it gives me the opportunity to analyze the text and look for clues on the given text in order for me to come up with the right answer or word.”*

(Student D) *“Honestly there are words that are not familiar to me and I was not able to clearly define or describe it. However, with the help of its definition, the picture, and the responses of my classmates I was able to enjoy the game and finish it.”*

(Student D) *“It’s a bit challenging in my part since there is a timer but what made it more significant was the experience and lesson that I’ve learned throughout the games.”*

As reflected in the statements of the Grade 8 students about the localized game-based activities, it can be said that the activities were helpful for the students to learn new words. Like in Pinoy-Henyo, through giving

characteristics and features about the category, the students were able to gain clue and recognize the word. With such practice, they have gained insights of the meaning of the word. Thus, it gave them the opportunity to widen their vocabulary. In terms of Bugtong Bugtong, the students indicated that this localized game-based activity is a good intervention to build their vocabulary because the students were able to analyze the text and find clues within the text. With this, the students were able to practice context clues and learn a word through understanding meaning found in the text. Considerably, the students were actively engaged in the game-based activities. Playing the games contributed to their learning in terms of reinforcement and using the words in context. Likewise, the activities were fun and challenging as presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 was taken during the implementation of Pinoy-Henyo. The picture shows that the students enjoyed the intervention. Likewise, it is reflected in the picture that the guesser is excited to give the characteristics of the given category and guess the word. Consequently, the students were participative and they were all excited for the guesser to get the correct answers. This made the other members of the class to listen carefully and respond to the characteristics of the word that the guesser was telling and eventually learning new words.

Interestingly, the students also showed positive attitudes toward the game Bugtong Bugtong as reflected in Figure



Figure 1: Pinoy Henyo Game During the Synchronous Discussion

2. The picture shows that one of us is facilitating Bugtong Bugtong. It is evident that the localized game-based activity was enjoyed by the students because it gave them the chance to guess the word through carefully analyzing the text and find meaning within the text. Since all of them were given the chance to answer, it prompted them to compete with one another and challenge them to think deeper to score in the game. With this, the Grade 8 students became active in giving answers and were able to give the right ones. This also led them to learn new words and widen their vocabulary. This claim can be linked to what Alevli (2020) posited that by asking and finding

clues, the students can have on their minds the concepts, the descriptions that are related to the word. This is a way of making them think critically at the same time engage in exciting and activity. Thus, this could help them widen their thinking as well as their vocabulary.

Students’ Level of Vocabulary Skill After the Implementation of the Intervention

Another concern of the study is to determine the students’ vocabulary skill after the application of the intervention through the administration of the posttest. Table 2 shows the distribution of the students according to their pretest scores. The posttest result shows that the majority of

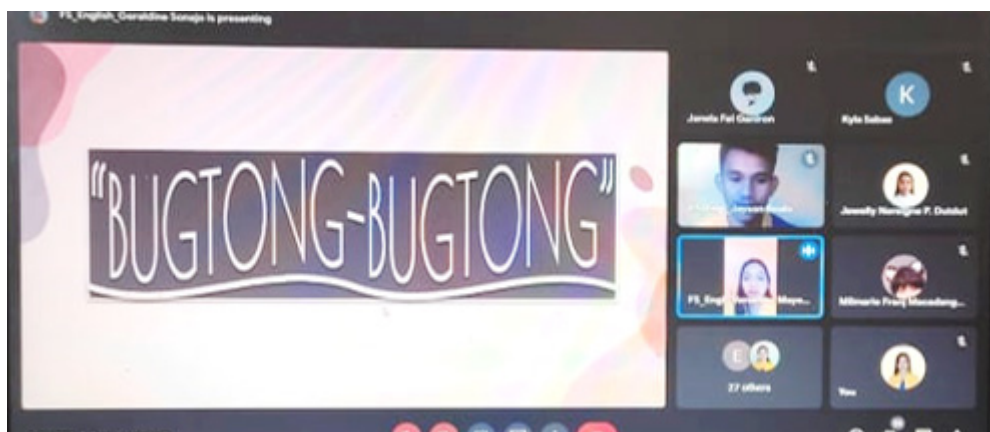


Figure 2: Bugtong Bugtong Game During the Synchronous Discussion

Table 2: Distribution of the students according to their posttest scores (n=35)

Scores	Description	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
16-20	Very Satisfactory	32	91.43
11-15	Satisfactory	3	8.57
6-10	Fair		
0-5	Poor		
TOTAL		35	100.00
MEAN			19.05

the students (91.43%) got scores within 16-20 range of scores marked as Very Satisfactory. This means that most of the students have very satisfactory vocabulary skill after the application of the localized gamed-based activities. It can also be deduced from the table that 3 (8.57%) of students obtained scores from 11-25 which is labeled as Satisfactory. Interestingly, none of the students scored ranging from 6-10 which is interpreted as Fair and 0-5 which is marked as Poor, respectively. This can be attributed to the students' interest and motivation to engage themselves in the localized game-based activities which helped them attain very satisfactory vocabulary skill.

Likewise, this study supports the research of Al-Masri & Najar (2014) concerning the impact of using word games on students' vocabulary knowledge. The findings of their study showed that games are very useful for teaching vocabulary to learners. These claims are a manifestation that games are useful in improving students' vocabulary skill like the use of game-based activities in the present study.

Significant Change on the Students' Level Vocabulary Skill

Before and After the Implementation of the Intervention
The last concern of the study is to determine the significant changes on the students' vocabulary skill before and after the application of the intervention as reflected in Table 3. It could be gleaned from the table that the students obtained an overall mean score of 14.49 described as Satisfactory in the pre-test, while they obtained an overall mean score of 19.05 interpreted as Very Satisfactory in the post-test. Likewise, it can be

deduced from the table that the overall mean of the students in the post-test is 4.56 higher than their overall mean score in the pre-test. This implies that the students' vocabulary skill was improved using the localized game-based activities. This can be attributed to the features of the activities which are based on gamified approach. Since the activities were engaging and exciting, the students became more participative in the discussions and more eager to learn, leading them to better grasp the concepts of the lessons. This finding can be associated to the study of Efendi (2013) on using games to improve students' vocabulary learning. The results of the study represented that utilizing games improved students' vocabulary learning achievement.

Likewise, this study supports the research of Al-Masri & Najar (2014) concerning the impact of using word games on students' vocabulary knowledge. The findings of their study showed that games are very useful for teaching vocabulary to learners. These claims are a manifestation that games are useful in improving students' vocabulary skill like the use of game-based activities in the present study.

Table 3: Mean difference on the students' pretest and posttest scores

	N	Mean Score	Description	Mean Difference
Pre-test Scores	35	12.62	Satisfactory	6.43
Post-test Scores	35	19.05	Very Satisfactory	

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Grade 8 students have varied levels of vocabulary skill before and after the implementation of the intervention. Likewise, there is a significant change on the students' level of vocabulary skill before and after the implementation of the intervention. This study further concludes that the use of localized game-based activities such as Pinoy Henyo and Bugtong Bugtong was effective in improving the students' level of vocabulary skill. Since the study found that localized game-based activities improved the vocabulary skill of Grade 8 students, it is recommended that high school teachers should design lessons that are game-based in nature. The study was only limited to one group, therefore, it is recommended to conduct similar study with experimental and controlled groups to further validate the effectiveness of localized game-based activities in improving students' vocabulary skill and other areas in language. Likewise, it is recommended that the intervention be used in a larger group with a longer time period. Moreover, future studies may investigate teachers' perspectives on these localized game-based activities as part of their instructional methods that they can use inside the language classrooms to teach vocabulary. May this study serve as an awareness to highlight the importance of localized game-based activities as a strategy in improving the vocabulary skill of the students.

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