

The Role of the Snakes and Ladders Game in Basic English Skills in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Early childhood education is an important stage in shaping character and basic skills, including English language acquisition. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the snakes and ladders game in improving basic English skills in early childhood. Using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) method involving two cycles, the snakes and ladders game was modified to include English elements. The results showed that the game not only helped children recognize new vocabulary, but also improved their speaking and listening skills. The social interaction during the game also provided opportunities for children to practice simple conversations in English. Thus, the snakes and ladders game can be a fun and effective learning tool in teaching English in early childhood

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education at an early age is a crucial stage in forming a child's character and basic skills. One important aspect that must be considered is language mastery, especially English. In this context, games can be an effective medium to facilitate learning. One of the games that is popular and much loved by children is Snakes and Ladders.

English is one of the subjects that must be taught in schools. According to Rahimmatussalisa (2021), learning English at an early age is the right time to give it to young children. Early childhood education is the most basic education before children enter the elementary school education stage, so it becomes a very strategic position in the development of human resources.

According to the Minister of Education Regulation (2006) concerning Content Standards for Primary and Secondary Education Units, early childhood is in the age range from birth to six years, which is a golden and strategic period in the educational process that can influence the educational process and results at the next stage. Education in early childhood takes place naturally by paying attention to aspects of maturity and giving children the opportunity to use all their senses.

The growth period in children occurs very quickly, so the development of the Snakes and Ladders Game, which is usually considered only as entertainment, turns out to have great potential as an English learning tool. With simple rules and game mechanics, Snakes and Ladders can be modified and adapted to introduce and hone basic English skills in early childhood Setiawati.

According to Riski Sulistyaningsih (2023) Through this game, children can learn about numbers, colors and basic vocabulary in English. Apart from that, the social interactions that occur during the game also help them practice simple conversations in English. In this way, Snakes and Ladders are not only a medium for playing, but also a fun and interactive learning medium.

However, it is important to remember that the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game as a medium for learning English is very dependent on how the game is presented and guided. Therefore, the role of parents and educators is very important in this process. With the right approach, Snakes and Ladders can be a powerful tool for helping young children learn English.

First, research of this type has been studied by several previous studies which show how important basic foreign language skills are in early childhood and learning methods that can increase early children's learning motivation. Rahimmatussalisa's research (2021), this study evaluates the effectiveness of using the snakes and ladders game media in increasing English vocabulary in early childhood. This research itself uses an experimental method with a one group pretest posttest design. The results of this research show that the snakes and ladders game is effective in improving children's ability to recognize English vocabulary.

Second, the use of game media in learning foreign languages in early childhood is a very useful method. A study by Tambunan (2019), this research shows that the snakes and ladders game is effective in improving students' English-speaking skills. An experimental method with a one group pretest posttest design was used in this research. The results of the research show that the media game snakes and ladders has succeeded in increasing English language competence, especially in describing a person's physical image to students.

Third, the use of game methods in learning has a great influence on increasing the foreign language vocabulary of young children. Descriptive Study Research on the Influence of the Snakes and Ladders Game on the Introduction of English Vocabulary in Early Childhood Suryana (2022). This research uses qualitative methods, with a literature study approach. The results of this research show that the Snakes and Ladders game has a good effect on introducing English vocabulary to young children.

Fourth, developmental disorders that are often encountered in preschool children are language development disorders. Language delays will be at risk until young adulthood because they will experience learning difficulties which will lead to less academic achievement. Using the snakes and ladders game method can help young children overcome language development difficulties. one of the studies on Snakes and Ladders Play Therapy to Improve Children's Language Development, Pramesti (2017), used a pre-experimental one group pre-posttest design. States that playing snakes and ladders has benefits for children's brain development, including recognizing numbers, counting steps, recognizing pictures, and memorizing pictures. This play method can be developed by health workers in providing therapy to children who experience speech/language delays. And this is proven in the language development of preschool children aged 5-6 years.

Fifth, the use of snakes and ladders game media in early childhood learning is one of the innovations and creativity in the world of education. There is one previous study that examined this innovation. Research by Ajeng, Febrianti, and Atoillah (2023) describes the use of the snake and ladder ladder game media in improving students' English-speaking skills. This research method is an advocacy method in the form of mentoring groups of children. The results of the study showed an increase in English speaking ability through the snake and ladder game as a medium.

Sixth, this research discusses the application or implementation of the snakes and ladders game in learning for early childhood. Meanwhile, there is previous research that examines the implementation of this game media, Prihatini's research (2022) explains the implementation of the Giant Snakes and Ladders Game in Developing Cognitive Early Childhood, which uses descriptive qualitative research methods. This research produced findings regarding the implementation of the giant snakes and ladders game in developing the cognitive abilities of young children.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This Classroom Action Research (PTK) uses a cycle model consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation and reflection Jarjani et al (2019). The research was conducted in three cycles,

with each cycle lasting two weeks and consisting of four meeting sessions. At the planning stage, researchers and teachers prepared learning tools and prepared snakes and ladders game media that had been modified with English elements. During the action stage, children are invited to play snakes and ladders in small groups, where they have to answer questions or complete tasks in English on each game box. Observations are carried out to record children's activities and skill development, while reflection is used to evaluate results and plan improvements for the next cycle.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research result

1. Vocabulary Improvement

The snakes and ladders game can be an effective tool for expanding children's English vocabulary. As they play, they are exposed to a variety of new words and phrases that may be written on game boxes or explained by playmates or teachers. This process helps children associate new words with play experiences, which can make it easier for them to remember and understand the vocabulary.

2. Improved Speaking Skills

The snakes and ladders game encourages children to speak and communicate in English. They may have to read instructions, ask questions, or answer questions during the game. These activities help children become more confident in speaking English, because they do it in a fun, non-stressful context.

3. Listening Skills Development

During the game, children must listen to instructions and explanations from the teacher or playmate. This gives them the opportunity to practice listening skills in English. They must understand and follow the directions given, which indirectly improves their ability to understand spoken language.

NAME	PRE-CYCLE	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
Aqil	BB	70%
Aurel	BB	65%
Ibrahim	BB	75%
Kinara	BB	75%
Rafif	BB	80%
Rara	BB	80%

Table 1 Pre-Cycle Value

NAME	CYCLE 1			CYCLE 2			PERCENTAGE INCREASE
	Meeting			Meeting			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Aqil	BB	BB	MB	MB	MB	BSH	70%
Aurel	BB	BB	BB	MB	MB	MB	65%
Ibrahim	BB	MB	MB	MB	MB	BSH	75%
Kinara	BB	MB	MB	MB	BSH	BSB	75%
Rafif	MB	MB	MB	BSH	BSH	BSB	80%
Rara	MB	MB	MB	BSH	BSH	BSB	80%

Table 2 Value Per Cycle

3.2. Discussion

1. Pre-cycle value

At the beginning of the observation, most children were at the "Not Good" level with a percentage of 30% in basic English skills, especially in recognizing the names of fruits. This shows that many of them do not have sufficient basic understanding.

2. Activities in cycles I and II

1) Aqil

- Cycle 1: At the first to third meeting, Aqil was still at the "Not Good" (BB) level. However, at the fourth to sixth meeting, Aqil showed improvement to the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth and fifth meetings, Aqil remained at the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level. At the sixth meeting, Aqil succeeded in reaching the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level.
- Increase Percentage: 70%

Description: In the pre-cycle, Aqil had difficulty recognizing the names of fruits in English. After 3 meetings in Cycle I, there began to be an increase in the recognition of fruit names. At the end of Cycle II (6 meetings), Aqil was able to understand and name fruits very well.

2) Aurel

- Cycle 1: In all meetings in Cycle 1, Aurel was at the "Not Good" (BB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth and fifth meetings, Aurel was at the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level. At the sixth meeting, Aurel reached the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level.
- Increase Percentage: 65%

Description: Aurel shows steady improvement. At the end of Cycle I, they began to show better understanding and at the end of Cycle II they were able to name fruits well.

3) Ibrahim

- Cycle 1: At the first to fourth meetings, Ibrahim remained at the "Not Good" (BB) level. At the fifth and sixth meetings, Ibrahim began to show improvement to the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth to sixth meeting, Ibrahim succeeded in reaching the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level.
- Increase Percentage: 75%

Description: Ibrahim had a better baseline at the start and showed rapid improvement, reaching the "Very Good" category by the end of Cycle II.

4) Kinara

- Cycle 1: At the first to third meeting, Kinara was at the "Not Good" (BB) level. At the fourth and fifth meetings, Kinara began to show improvement to the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level. At the sixth meeting, Kinara remained at the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth and fifth meetings, Kinara reached the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level. At the sixth meeting, Kinara managed to reach the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) level.
- Increase Percentage: 75%

Description: Kinara's improvement is stable but slower compared to other children. At the end of Cycle II, it had reached the "Very Good" category.

5) Rafif

- Cycle 1: At the first meeting, Rafif remained at the "Not Good" (BB) level. At the second to sixth meetings, Rafif began to show improvement to the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth and fifth meetings, Rafif reached the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level. At the sixth meeting, Rafif managed to reach the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) level.
- Increase Percentage: 80%

Description: Rafif showed quite good improvement each cycle, and at the end of Cycle II was able to understand and name fruits very well.

6) Rara

- Cycle 1: At the first and second meetings, Rara began to show improvement to the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level. At the third to sixth meeting, Rara remained at the "Starting to Develop" (MB) level.
- Cycle 2: At the fourth and fifth meetings, Rara reached the "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH) level. At the sixth meeting, Rara managed to reach the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) level.
- Increase Percentage: 80%

Description: Rara showed quite good improvement each cycle, and at the end of Cycle II was able to understand and name fruits very well.

3. Linkages to previous research

Activities carried out in cycles I and II showed an increase in children's ability to recognize and use fruit vocabulary in English. These results are consistent with previous research which shows the effectiveness of game methods in learning foreign languages in early childhood. This research confirms that the snakes and ladders game not only make learning more interesting but also increases children's motivation and learning outcomes.

By linking the findings from previous research with the results of this discussion, we can see that the approach of using educational games such as snakes and ladders in learning English in early childhood is an effective method and has a positive impact on the development of children's language skills.

Based on the results of implementing the snakes and ladders game in two activity cycles, several significant findings were obtained regarding improving basic English skills in early childhood.

1. Vocabulary Improvement

The snakes and ladders game has been proven to be effective in introducing and expanding children's English vocabulary. From the first cycle to the second cycle, there was a significant increase in the amount of vocabulary recognized and used by children. In the second cycle, children are able to make sentences and tell short stories using the words they have learned.

2. Development of Listening and Speaking Skills

Over two cycles, children showed improvements in listening and speaking skills. They are better able to understand instructions in English and are more confident in pronouncing words and forming sentences. Repeated practice and fun game contexts help them remember and use language better.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented, it can be concluded that the snakes and ladders game has a positive role in developing basic English skills in early childhood. By providing a fun and interactive learning environment, these games can be an effective tool for improving children's English while also strengthening their social skills. Therefore, the integration of snakes and ladders games in early childhood English learning can be a useful strategy in children's education.

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