CHAPTER III

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC

3.1 The Characteristics of Children as Learners

As learners, children have some characteristics. Based on my observation at SDIT Cordova and SDIT Al-Kautsar, children are comfortable with routines. It means that they need habit to learn. Children learn in a variety of ways, for example: by listening, by imitating and by doing things. The teachers teach their students English using the video, so children learn English through what they see and hear in the video, and they usually imitate what they have seen and heard in the video. Because children only imitate what they see and hear, they do not understanding about the rule of language. Children will learn the concept of verb tense simply by hearing and using more speech as they grow and develop. Most children start out by generalizing the past tense rules they hear in some regular verbs for application to irregular verbs, which can lead to errors like using "taked" instead of "took". Therefore, in teaching English, the teachers need to know how to teach English for children.

Teachers must make learning English enjoyable and make sure children feel comfortable, and not afraid to take part. Based on my observation and interviewing, the teachers are fond of praising their students in class to make children feel comfortable in class. They also try to accompany their explanation with media in order to the children understand easily. It is needed many ways to make them understand what the teachers' mean. Teachers use pictures, games and

videos. However, sometimes the teachers have the difficulties in teaching English to their students.

Teaching English as a language is sometimes a hard job to perform because of the number of impediments the teacher may encounter. The difficulties that teachers meet are most of the time the lack of motivation for the students to learn English since they are not exposed to hear and practice English everywhere and all the time.

To take up this challenge, the teachers have recourse to games to enhance the children's desire to learn the language. In the whole process of teaching and learning by games, the students can take part widely and open-mindedly. To win the games each student or group competitively answers the questions addressed by the teacher or other students or groups.

Children learn better when they have the feeling that they are making progress. This happens when the atmosphere in the classroom facilitates it. The teachers use game to create this kind of atmosphere. They also use game to repeat the material. Children are bored when they learn by reading a text book, but they are happy when they learn by using games, so learning English should not really become children getting bored for children because educational games are easy ways of learning English with full of fun.

There are a great number of educational games. So teachers have a variety of choices. However, in deciding which game to use in a particular class and which games will be most appropriate and most successful with their students, teachers must take many factors into account.

Teachers should also be able to play and overact sometimes to help students feel comfortable and want to join the activity. This means that the teachers should thoroughly understand the game and its nature and be able to lead the game. Before teaching their students by using game, teachers explain the rules of game clearly until the students understand. Teachers also demonstrate the game because it can be very helpful to help students understand it and help them follow the rules.

In addition, they should consider when the game should be used. Teachers use game as short warm-up activities at the beginning of class and when there is extra time near the end of class, so game do not disturb their lesson. Teachers should consider the level of the game to fit their students' language level. Game that is used in the first class is different with the third class. In the first class, teachers use game that contains pictures. They should also choose the game that fits the purposes of that class or the content. Teachers use a language game in language class and they use math game in math class.

It is quite difficult to find a game that meets all of the teachers' requirements. Some games must be adapted in order to fit students' language level, natures, and characteristics. The most important factor is that games should be used when they can give students both fun and educational meaning, otherwise they will be a waste of time.

There is an educational game that can give students fun and educational meaning. The game is UniCard. UniCard is one of the language games. UniCard is an education game that can help children in learning English irregular verbs. UniCard shows the change of verbs to the form of the present participle, past and past participle. It can be played at home or school. Children can also play it with their friends. UniCard is created to make children learning irregular verbs easily because many irregular verbs are commonly used and they need to be memorized.

3.2 The benefits of using UniCard in teaching and learning irregular verbs

In the previous discussion, it is explained that UniCard can helps children in learning English irregular verbs, so it can be said that UniCard not only function as time filling activities but also it has a great educational value. UniCard can be a very useful teaching technique for the effective and joyful learning. There are many benefits of using UniCard in teaching and learning irregular verbs.

Teaching irregular verb tenses to children can be difficult because there is no system or formula to remember which verbs are irregular. Moreover, there are a large number of students who are not interested in English classes. The way of teaching commonly makes the students lazy and bored. The teacher needs something different to make students interested because mostly children are very easy to get bored. Therefore, teacher needs something interesting which can motivate them. Teachers can use UniCard to teach students irregular verbs. It can

motivate children to learn irregular verbs. Children can make memorizing irregular verbs fun using UniCard. Another benefit of using UniCard is increasing students' proficiency. Playing UniCard in the classroom can enormously increase students' ability in understanding irregular verbs and lower students' stress.

UniCard can lower students' stress in the classroom. In conventional classrooms, there is a lot of stress put on students trying to master the second language (English). Schultz (1988) said that

> "*...Stress is a major hindrance in language learning process. This process [Learning language in traditional way] is by its nature time consuming and stress provoking.....raise the stress level to a point at which it interferes with student attention and efficiency and undermines motivation.....one method has been developed to make students forget that they are in class....relax students by engaging them in stress-reducing task (games*)."

There is a high level of stress in the classroom because students have to face unfamiliar or unknown grammatical structures, words, texts and so forth. Therefore, students often feel uncomfortable and insecure in class, which inevitably affects their ability to learn. UniCard can help lower their anxiety, make them feel comfortable and want to learn irregular verbs. It is believed that when students play games, they relax and have fun. Since students know that they are playing games and want to communicate efficiently they do not worry about making mistakes. When students are free from worry and stress, they can improve their English ability.

Another advantage of using UniCard is that it involves "friendly" competition. When playing UniCard, students are trying to win or to beat other teams for themselves or on the behalf of their team. They are so competitive while playing because they want to win. In the class, students will definitely participate in the playing UniCard.

My observation and interviewing with the teachers who use UniCard as a teaching aid showed that by using UniCard, the students became more interested and motivated in the learning irregular verbs. The students learn irregular verbs using UniCard without being bored. As a result, their vocabulary (irregular verbs) increased. UniCard also helps the students in building a good relationship with their friends as well as increasing their achievement in learning irregular verbs.

In short, language games used in the classroom are very effective and supportive activities in contributing to students' language proficiency. Unfortunately, because of limitations of time and curriculum, teachers normally have to cover all the content and materials, which students will be tested on, and it is not always easy to incorporate games into the class.

Nevertheless, it can be seen that games are very useful and can be used to develop students' language learning and also provide the students an opportunity to practice communication. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers try some games that may be useful to their students in order to enhance students' proficiency and help them meet their goals, and at least to try new things in teaching.

3.3 Problems in The Using of UniCard

Based on my observation and interviewing, there are some problems that are faced in using of UniCard. First, children do not know how to play it at first. Second, they do not understand the rules of the games.

3.4 Solution of the Problems

There are some solutions to solve the problems that are faced in using of UniCard. For the first problem, teachers should demonstrate how to play UniCard because it can help students understand how to play it. For the second problem, to use UniCard in classroom, it is equally important that before playing it, the rules of UniCard are clearly explained and well understood by the students. It can help students follow the rules. Otherwise, they will misunderstand the purpose of the game and they may not get the benefits they should from the game.