The Implementation of Word Games to Improve Students' English Vocabulary Proficiency

Fakhri Khusaini[1*], Nurul Fauziah[2]

[1] Pend. Bahasa Inggris, STKIP Taman Siswa Bima, Bima town, Indonesia
[2] Pend. Guru Sekolah Dasar, STKIP Taman Siswa Bima, Bima town, Indonesia

Abstract: This research aims to identify the influence of using word games on students' proficiency of English vocabulary. The method used was an experiment with a quasi-experimental approach, involving two groups of students in the 6th semester of the Primary School Teacher Education Study Program at STKIP TAMAN SISWA BIMA. A total of 40 students were randomly selected and divided into two groups: an experimental group that used word games and a control group that used conventional learning methods. The research instrument is a vocabulary proficiency test (pre-test and post-test). The results showed that the average post-test score of the experimental group increased significantly compared to the control group. The average increase in score in the experimental group was 12.7 points, while in the control group it was 8.75 points. Statistical analysis using the paired sample t-test shows a significant value. (two-tailed) = 0.000, which means there is a significant difference between the two groups with a confidence level of 95%. Based on these results, it is recommended that educational institutions consider integrating word games into the English language learning curriculum to increase the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. This research makes an important contribution to the field of language education by showing that word games can be an effective and enjoyable learning method.

Keywords: English Learning, Vocabulary Understanding, Word Games.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh penggunaan permainan kata terhadap penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris mahasiswa. Metode yang digunakan adalah eksperimen dengan pendekatan quasi eksperimen, dengan melibatkan dua kelompok mahasiswa semester 6 Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar STKIP TAMAN SISWA BIMA. Sebanyak 40 mahasiswa dipilih secara acak dan dibagi menjadi dua kelompok yaitu kelompok eksperimen yang menggunakan permainan kata dan kelompok kontrol yang menggunakan metode pembelajaran konvensional. Instrumen penelitian adalah tes penguasaan kosakata (pre-test dan post-test). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata skor post-test kelompok eksperimen mengalami peningkatan yang signifikan dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol. Rata-rata peningkatan skor pada kelompok eksperimen sebesar 12,7 poin, sedangkan pada kelompok kontrol sebesar 8,75 poin. Analisis statistik menggunakan paired sample t-test menunjukkan nilai signifikan (two-tailed) = 0,000 yang berarti terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok dengan taraf kepercayaan 95%. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, disarankan agar lembaga pendidikan mempertimbangkan untuk mengintegrasikan permainan kata ke dalam kurikulum pembelajaran bahasa Inggris guna meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran kosakata. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting bagi bidang pendidikan bahasa dengan menunjukkan bahwa permainan kata dapat menjadi metode pembelajaran yang efektif dan menyenangkan.

Kata Kunci: Permainan Kata, Pemahaman Kosakata, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

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Email: indonesianlongman@gmail.com

Introduction

English is very important to be studied by students in various majors and by people of various ages (Khusaini, 2023). Learning English as a foreign language faces various challenges, one of which is vocabulary mastery (Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). Vocabulary is the initial capital for mastering English because it is a necessity, one way is of course to increase the number and expand understanding of English vocabulary (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Vocabulary is an important component of language skills that influences reading, writing, listening and speaking abilities (Amirzai, 2021). As Usman (2019) said, increasing the amount of vocabulary (vocabulary building and enrichment) supports mastery of the four English language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. In line with this, Fatmawati (2021) emphasized that the limited amount and understanding of English vocabulary affects students' difficulties in learning skills in English.

Mastery of vocabulary is very important for a language learner. Mastering vocabulary will make it easier for students to understand the target language (Kulsum, 2020). David Wilkins said "without grammar we get little, but without vocabulary we can get nothing."

However, many students experience difficulty in mastering English vocabulary. Learning methods that are less interesting and monotonous are often one of the causes of low vocabulary understanding (Sakinah & Melani, 2024; Isro'Hidayatullah, et al., 2024). In fact, Ulfah (2021) said that vocabulary mastery is one of the linguistic competencies that must be mastered in learning a language, because learning a language is as same as learning the vocabulary of that language. So, when teaching vocabulary, teachers need to think about appropriate teaching models, media or teaching materials because learning English vocabulary will be a more enjoyable in process and effective in results if it is supported by appropriate and fun teaching materials, media and learning models (Irawan, 2022).

The good news is, in recent years, the use of learning media and learning models in education has grown rapidly. One of the innovations used is games. Games not only provide entertainment, but can also be an effective learning tool. Games are one of the most important components in learning a foreign language. In games there are activities that have goals and rules which are also fun at the same time.

Games are very useful in learning language as explained by Gorcu and Caganaga (2016) that Games are very useful for teachers and students. Games support target language learning when learners engage in games and have fun without realizing that they are learning the target language, and moreover it is a pleasure for the teacher when he presents the language in a pleasant atmosphere that makes his work successful. With games, students also learn several skills and components of English at once. Students can improve their understanding of written and spoken English through games. Games help them learn vocabulary and structures in context using correct pronunciation and spelling (Constantinescu, 2012).

Learning many skills and language components is of course also boring, but Wright et all (2006) explain that games can help and encourage students to maintain their interest and learning activities. Especially in learning vocabulary, as explained by Bakhsh (2016) that games can help students learn vocabulary effectively.

It can be concluded that the benefits of games are not only for cognitive development, but also psychomotor and affective (Sinulingga, 2021). Rao (2014) also stated that games are a learning medium that can help or facilitate teachers in conveying learning material so that it is easily digested by students. Even better, games involve students in healthy competition and can help them learn more without forcing their participation (Mitchell, et al., 2020). Therefore, selecting the right games can support healthy competition in the classroom (Vernon, 2009).

Previous research shows that the use of games can increase motivation, engagement, and understanding of concepts in various disciplines. However, research on the influence of games on English vocabulary learning is still limited, especially among university students. Based on the explanation above, this research focuses on finding out the effectiveness of word games in improving students' English vocabulary proficiency.

Method

Research design

This research uses an experimental design with a quasi-experimental approach. This design involves two groups: an experimental group that uses educational games and a control group that uses conventional learning methods. Then compare the data from the two groups calculated using SPSS.

Research subject

The subjects of this research were sixth semester students of the Primary School Teacher Education Study Program at STKIP TAMAN SISWA BIMA. A total of 40 students were selected randomly and divided into two groups, each consisting of 20

students: 20 students in the Experimental Group: Using word games in vocabulary learning. And 20 students in the Control Group: Using conventional learning methods. Researchers chose semester 6 because in this semester they taught English courses as their initial capital to learn more about English.

Research procedure

The researcher made preparations in the form of preparing a learning plan and selecting word games that were relevant to the vocabulary material. The games chosen are *category, shiritori and taboo*. Then the researcher compiled a research instrument in the form of a vocabulary comprehension test (pre-test and post-test) and validated the instrument by a linguist and education expert.

The implementation carried out included Pre-Test: Conducted to measure initial understanding of English vocabulary in both groups. This test includes 20 multiple choice questions covering a wide range of vocabulary, given to the experimental group and the control group.

Then the Experimental Group treated by learning vocabulary using word games for 1 month. The word games applied include: *category, shiritori and taboo*. These three are word games that are easy and fun to apply in the classroom for language learning, especially English vocabulary. Each week, students play games designed to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary.

Meanwhile, in the control group, researchers carried out vocabulary learning using conventional methods for 1 month. Learning involves lecture methods by lecturers and class discussions.Then the final implementation stage is Post-Test: Carried out after 1 month of treatment to measure changes in vocabulary understanding in both groups. The test used is the same as the pre-test to ensure consistency of measurement results.

Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this research was a vocabulary comprehension test consisting of 20 multiple choice questions. This test is designed to measure students' ability in recognizing and using English vocabulary.

Data analysis technique

Data obtained from the pre-test and post-test from the experimental class and control class were analyzed using SPSS. Analysis steps include:
Normality Test: Uses the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to ensure the data is normally distributed. The homogeneity test uses a 1-way-anova test to ensure that the sample comes from a homogeneous variant. Hypothesis Testing: Using paired sample t-test to test significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The significance level used is $p < 0.05$.

Result and Discussion

This research aims to determine the effect of using educational games on students' understanding of English vocabulary. A total of 40 students from STKIP TAMAN SISWA BIMA participated in this research. They were divided into two groups: an experimental group taught using word games and a control group taught using conventional methods.

Pre-Test: Experimental Group: The average pre-test score was 74.70. while in the Control Group: The average pre-test score was 74.50.

Post-Test: Experimental Group: The average post-test score was 87.40. while in the Control Group: The average post-test score was 83.25.

Score Improvement: Experimental Group: Average score increase of 12.7 points. Meanwhile in the Control Group: The average score increased by 8.75 points.
Statistical Analysis: Paired sample t-test was carried out to determine the significance of differences between the experimental and control groups. The t test results show a sig value. (two-tailed) = 0.000, 0.000<0.05 which means there is a significant difference between the two groups with a 95% confidence level.

The research results show that the use of word games has a significant positive influence on students' proficiency of English vocabulary. The increase in the average post-test score in the experimental group was higher compared to the control group, which shows that word games are more effective in improving vocabulary proficiency.

Motivation and Engagement: Word Games increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. The more enjoyable interactions and challenges provided in games make students more interested and active in learning vocabulary.

Repetition and Reinforcement: Word Games often provide repetition and reinforcement mechanisms that help students remember vocabulary better. Repetition of words in different contexts helps students understand and remember the meaning of words more effectively.

Contextual Learning: Word Games often present vocabulary in the context of real situations, which helps students understand the use of words in various contexts. This is different from conventional methods which tend to teach vocabulary separately from the context in which it is used.

Instant Feedback: Word Games usually provides instant feedback to users. This feedback helps students to immediately recognize their mistakes and correct them, thereby speeding up the learning process.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that word games are an effective method for improving students' understanding of English vocabulary. The use of games in language learning can significantly increase student motivation, involvement and understanding. It is hoped that these findings can become the basis for developing more innovative and effective language learning methods.

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