

The Use of Guess the Word Game in Learning English Vocabularies

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the use of the “Guess the Word” game in learning English vocabulary at public elementary school 25 Tambusai. Using a classroom action research design, the study involved 10 fourth-grade students who participated in two learning cycles over four weeks. Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests, class observations, as well as students’ interviews. The research analysis results in a better improvement in students, vocabulary mastery and pronunciation skills. The majority of students achieved better progress; five students in the range of 55-75 and four students in a high score in the area of 75-85. In addition, the use of the word game in learning activities also develops students’ confidence and active participation in comprehending new vocabulary. In short, this study concludes that the game “Guess the Word” was an effective strategy for improving vocabulary mastery and developing a fun learning activity.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human life, serving as a fundamental tool for communication and interaction with others. Therefore, acquiring proficiency in multiple foreign languages, particularly English, is highly beneficial. English holds a unique position as a global language, motivating people worldwide to attain proficiency in it (Suprayetno et al., 2022). English proficiency encompasses listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, as well as a rich vocabulary, which is essential for effective communication (Ardian et al., 2023). Mastering vocabulary is a cornerstone of English language learning, facilitating comprehension of spoken and written language and enabling fluent expression.

Learning English vocabulary is usually considered as an important part of achieving the purpose of learning in EFL classrooms. Mastering vocabulary facilitates EFL students to gain deep comprehension of spoken and written language (Antoni & Mustafa, 2024). In addition, mastering English vocabularies enables students to have fluent expression and understand written texts as to fulfilling their social and communicative needs (Bakhsh, 2016). However, learning vocabulary in classroom is a success when the students experience interesting activities of learning by their teachers. Therefore, they enjoy what the teacher teaches and they can give their feedbacks on the materials of learning (Alqahtani, 2015).

Based on the researchers’ preliminary observation to activities of learning at public elementary schools 25 at district Tambusai, there were some problems that students faced in learning

English vocabulary. In which, most students had problems in learning to practice pronouncing and memorizing the words. Students tend to stick to the existing practices such as writing words on paper, attempting to memorize them, or relying solely on the teacher's explanation, which hinders their ability to master new vocabularies. Consequently, there is a pressing need for students to alter their learning habits. On this study, an issue regarding to the teaching techniques applied by the teacher seems not to support student's better mastery. The teacher predominantly employs drilling and modelling techniques, which, while useful, may not fully engage students or facilitate comprehensive learning. Therefore, it becomes imperative for teachers to employ more suitable techniques tailored to the students' needs.

There are many ways to increase the learner's vocabulary but as a teacher we must be able to choose good technique to teach them (Bintz, 2011). To make the learners or students feel interest in learning vocabulary and make them easy to increase their vocabulary, one such effective technique is incorporating games into the learning process. Games, as noted by Morris & Whalen (2005), serve as an excellent strategy for teaching and learning as they foster enjoyment and cultivate a positive attitude towards learning. Integrating games into vocabulary lessons not only makes learning more enjoyable but also aids in enhancing students' retention of words and their pronunciation skills (Kumalasari, 2018; Meyer, 2022). By embracing game-based learning, students are more likely to actively participate in lessons and successfully internalize new vocabulary (Declercq & Kerremans, 2023; Hasanah, Eviyuliwati, & Defianty; 2022).

Previous research also supports that educational games can be effective tools in improving students' vocabulary (Gilakjani, & Ahmadi, 2011). The practical implications of those researches highlight the importance of incorporating engaging and meaningful games into teaching strategies to enrich students' learning experiences (Fahira, Syafitri, & Putri, 2024).

This research is important because incorporating the game "Guess the Word" into the activities of learning at public school 25 at district Tambusai. It holds significant promise for enhancing students' vocabulary skills. By engaging students in active participation and fostering a playful learning atmosphere, the game promotes improved retention of vocabulary, enhanced pronunciation, and deeper contextual understanding of words. Moreover, the element of competition inherent in the game can fuel students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning, while also fostering social interaction and collaboration among peers. Overall, integrating this game into the classroom offers a dynamic and effective approach to vocabulary instruction, ultimately contributing to students' overall language proficiency and enjoyment of learning.

METHOD

This study used a classroom action research design that involves four main stages: plan, action, observation, and reflection. The research is carried out by a pre-service teacher (PST) in three cycles which end in several weeks. This research design allows the pre-service teacher to implement specific interventions, observe results, and develop the necessary adjustments to improve learning outcomes continuously. The subject of this research is 10 fourth-grade students of public schools in district Tambusai. The selection of participants was based on the need to improve vocabulary mastery which has been identified as a challenge within this group. All students are between 9 and 10 years old and have a relatively uniform level of language proficiency. The instruments used in this study include pre-test and post-test, observation lists, as well as student questionnaires. Pre-tests and post-tests are used to measure student vocabulary knowledge before and after intervention. The list of observations was used by the pre-service teacher to record the level of participation, enthusiasm, and participation of students during the game sessions. Students' interviews serve to collect feedback about their experience playing "Guess the Word".

In the reflection phase, the pre-test and post-test results are analyzed to evaluate the

average scores of pre-tests and posts using simple statistical tests to determine the significance of improvement. Qualitative data from student observation lists and questionnaires are analyzed descriptively to gain insight into student involvement and the effectiveness of the "Guess the Word" game in improving vocabulary learning.

Through a cycle of plan, action, observation, and reflection, this study is expected to provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the "Guess the Word" game in improving student vocabulary, as well as identifying strategies that can be applied for more effective learning in the future.

FINDINGS

Based on the observation phase, this study discovered that when school kids actively participate in their vocabulary learning, a number of issues arise. They had never before utilized a guessing game to expand their vocabulary. It appears that after reading the description of the guess word game, everyone felt uneasy and perplexed about playing. In the first cycle of the game, the majority of pupils also played it passively. While the other players had to guess the word during the game, a group that appeared perplexed and uninterested in playing distracted some of the other groups during the game's preparations. While a group of opponents worked on their work, other pupils were preoccupied with their own assignments.

Furthermore, the activities of learning vocabularies through guess the word game were carried out as in the following cycle 1, 2 and 3

Cycle I

On the first meeting of the first cycle, it was found that students have trouble pronouncing words in their English vocabulary. Students struggled with accurately and correctly spelling words. The pre-service teacher began by taking a challenge to master all of the terminology associated with the position at that time. Subsequently, students were requested to identify a term related to the work. The unexpected thing that they experienced that day confused the students greatly. Next, the PST started teaching the students how to play the guessing word game. Concerning the game, student answers were really peculiar. Right now, the PST only tries to be daring by doing an introduction before moving on to a game simulation.

Then, on the second meeting of the first cycle, when students were playing games, most of them (half class) seemed embarrassed when asked by researchers to pronounce words in English. Only few students speak loudly. One of the reasons why students felt ashamed to say the vocabularies was because of their worriedness if the pronunciation sounded wrong. Consequently, this situation made them passive during the game. In addition, after they completed the game, they got a performance test through mentioning the name of the animal. And the result illustrated that the game contribute to their insufficient scores, their difficulties were still on the pronunciation. Although, the PST assisted them through modelling the vocabularies listed on the dictionary and asked students to pronounce it.

Finally, the performance test carried out at the end of first cycle illustrate that many students achieve the fair score. There gained seven students on the score of less than 70 points, two students gained 70 and a student gained more than 70. In the other hand, the use of guess the word game has changed students' interest to learn the new vocabularies.

Table 1. First cycle of students' vocabulary mastery

No	Name	Skor
1.	Student 1	65
2.	Student 2	60
3.	Student 3	70

4.	Student 4	53
5.	Student 5	50
6.	Student 6	70
7.	Student 7	67
8.	Student 8	59
9.	Student 9	78
10.	Student 10	45

The table 1 above, it illustrates that the use of guessing the word game on the first and second meetings of cycle 1 do not show better improvements yet on the students' vocabularies' mastery. But in the case of students' learning interest, PST could experience that students' interest to learn new vocabularies through the game increased better than the practices occurred before.

Cycle II

In the second cycle, for this third meeting, the PST invited the students to study the subject of words. All students were invited to write notes in paper, and then they remembered the words. After that the students were divided into groups that then the students guessed what their friends did in front of the classroom. At this meeting, the students started to be active in learning with the game, but some of the students who were not present the previous week still did not understand and tended to remain silent.

In the fourth week's study, students improved their pronunciation skills. During the game process, students had confidence speaking words in English louder when the researchers asked them to repeat their group answers. And when they did the test, most of them completed it with a good average. It could be seen from their oral test results. There were five students who scored more than 70 points and three students scored above 70 points, and one student scored less than 70. The score shows its fair from the first cycle to the second cycle. In the first cycle he got 70 points, while in the second round he only got 0 points. Based on a survey interview with a student about a decrease in grade on cycle 2 he obtained a survey of information that the student felt about the word introduced by the researcher was difficult to remember and the oral test was also more difficult than the first cycle.

Despite the decline in one student's score in the second cycle, overall there is a better improvement in student pronunciation and password mastery. This shows that the word guessing game is not only effective in improving word mastery, but also helps students practice the pronunciation of new words with more confidence.

In addition, the observation also shows the increase of motivation and enthusiasm of students in learning words through guessing. At first, most students seem hesitant and passive when playing, but as time passes, they become more engaged and participate actively. The classroom atmosphere became more lively and enjoyable, which created a learning environment that enabled students to learn new words. Through guessing games, students can interact with each other, collaborate in groups, and learn actively in a fun way. It provides a more meaningful learning experience and makes new words easier to remember by students. In addition, games also help create a more relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, reducing the fear and anxiety that students often experience when learning a foreign language.

Based on the positive results obtained, PST concluded that the game of guessing words is a highly effective learning strategy to improve student words and pronunciation skills. The game also increases the motivation and enthusiasm of students in learning English words. Therefore, it is recommended for teachers to use word games guessing as one of the fun and interactive learning strategies in teaching English grammar.

Finally, the pronunciation skills of most students are gradually improved during the game process and the test results. This ability is improved when comparing the first and second cycles over two cycles.

Table 2. Data on the Scores of 10 Students

No	Name	Achievement
1.	Student 1	75
2.	Student 2	71
3.	Student 3	70
4.	Student 4	69
5.	Student 5	77
6.	Student 6	90
7.	Student 7	76
8.	Student 8	78
9.	Student 9	86
10.	Student 10	50

The scores of ten different students are displayed in this dataset. From the lowest score of 50 to the highest score of 90, there is a wide variety of scores. With a score of 90, six students perform the best, and ten students have the lowest score of 50. Most of the kids received scores higher than 70, such as the student 9 and 6, stood out for their exceptional work with scores above 80. There are some students, meanwhile, whose scores are lower than 70, demonstrating the range of student abilities. Teachers can use this data to identify kids who are performing exceptionally well as well as those who may want extra support. The variance in scores sheds light on the performance of the class as a whole and may be helpful in customizing teaching methods to each student's requirements.

The comparison of students' vocabularies mastery between the cycles

The researchers can make inferences about cycle 1 and cycle 2 after seeing and analysing the two cycles of practices on using the guess the word game in improving students' vocabularies mastery.

In an effort to improve students' English language skills, a series of meetings with diverse topics and methods have been held. The first meeting focuses on job-related vocabulary, providing an essential basis for communication in a professional context. The second meeting discussed the names of animals in English, expanding student vocabulary in different themes.

In the second cycle, the third meeting invited students to learn new words with more interactive methods. Students were asked to make notes on paper, and then remember the words. Next, they were divided into groups to play guessing, where students had to guess what their friends were doing in front of the class. Although most students start active in learning through these games, some students who were not present in the previous week still seemed less understandable and tended to remain silent, indicating the importance of a consistent presence in the learning process. At the fourth meeting, the focus of learning shifted to improving pronunciation skills (pronunciation). During the game process, students showed a significant increase in self-confidence. They were able to pronounce English words more eloquently when asked to repeat their group's answers. This improvement is evident from their oral test results, which indicates progress in their ability to speak English.

Table 1.3. Distributions of Student Grades

Range Score	Frequency
45-55	1
55-75	5
75-85	4
Student	10

Based on the final of performance test carried out, the result of the test can be shown as in table 1.3 of distribution of students' grade. The majority of students (5 people) scored in the range of 55-75, indicating a fairly good understanding. Four students achieved a high score in the 75-85 range, indicating an excellent understanding of the material discussed. However, there was one student who scored within the minimum range of 45-55, which may require special attention and support.

This distribution of grades above describes that most students can follow and understand the vocabularies learned well, although there is still a part of improvement. These results can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods applied, especially the use of games and interactive activities in enhancing student participation and understanding. Furthermore, the data is also useful for planning future learning strategies, including providing additional help to students in need and enrichment material for high-performing students, thus optimizing each student's learning potential.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of using the "Guess the Word" game in improving students' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills. Initially, students exhibited hesitancy and confusion when introduced to the game, as it was a novel approach for them. However, as they became more familiar with the game mechanics and actively participated, their engagement and motivation increased significantly. In line with the finding explained above, students' confidence in pronouncing English words improved through interactive games, despite initial fear of incorrect pronunciation. This aligns with previous research suggesting games create a supportive learning environment (Meyer, 2022). The study found that game-based learning significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery, confirming previous research on its effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary acquisition (Zimmerman, 1997; Franciosi, 2017).

It is important to note that although most students shown significant improvement, one student's score decreased from the first to the second cycle. This emphasizes the necessity of on-going observation and specialized assistance to meet each student's unique learning demands. This result can have been influenced by elements like the evaluation format or the vocabulary words' perceived difficulty. Subsequent investigations may examine approaches to tackle these individual differences and provide fair educational experiences for every student. The "Guess the Word" game increased student engagement, which made the classroom a fun and energetic place. This upbeat environment probably made people more motivated and created a more favourable setting for learning language (Ramli, et al, 2023). The collaborative nature of the game also fostered social interaction and peer learning among students. By working in groups and actively participating in the guessing process, students had opportunities to learn from one another, reinforce their understanding, and build teamwork skills (Antoni, 2014).

Future research could explore the long-term retention of vocabulary learned through game-based methods, as well as the potential for integrating technology or multimedia elements into the game to further enhance its effectiveness. Additionally, investigating the impact of game-based

learning on other aspects of language acquisition, such as grammar and comprehension, could provide valuable insights for language educators.

CONCLUSION

Through a systematic implementation of the "Guess the Word" game over multiple cycles, students' comprehension, memory, and accurate pronunciation of the target vocabulary terms significantly improved after playing the "Guess the Word" game in a methodical manner across several cycles. Students were more motivated and experienced less fear when learning a language because of the game's dynamic and engaging features, which created a fun learning environment.

The study also found qualitative benefits, such as increased peer collaboration and a more positive attitude toward vocabularies mastery. In addition, the use of a game-based strategy in the classroom resulted in a friendly environment where students actively engaged. Individual performance may be impacted by elements which emphasize the need for tailored interventions and changes. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the relatively small sample size and the specific context of SDN 025 Tambusai.

In a conclusion, the "Guess the Word" game has proven to be an effective pedagogical tool for improving vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills in English language learners. By fostering a supportive and enjoyable learning environment, this game-based approach not only enhances academic outcomes but also promotes positive attitudes towards language learning. Pre service teachers are encouraged to incorporate similar interactive and engaging strategies in their classrooms to enhance the overall learning experience during the practicum

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