

Using Pictionary as a Fun English Activity to Teach English at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru

Missi Tri Astuti¹, Diah Ayu Riaziani², Octadino Haryadi³, Fikri Nazif Hibatullah⁴

^{1,2,4}English Department, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia

³Informatics Engineering, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia

*Correspondence Email : missitriastuti@edu.uir.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received : March 12, 2026

Reviewed : May 9, 2026

Revised : July 24, 2026

Accepted : July 25, 2026

Available online : July 25, 2026

Keywords:

**Vocabulary Mastery; Fun
English Learning; Pictionary;
Game-Based Learning**

Abstract

English has become a global language that plays a crucial role in international communication. Vocabulary mastery is one of the fundamental aspects of English learning because it enables students to comprehend texts and communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms. Despite its importance, many junior high school students continue to experience difficulties in acquiring English vocabulary due to conventional and less engaging teaching methods. This study aims to explore the implementation of the Fun English Activity–Pictionary strategy to enhance students' vocabulary mastery at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru. A qualitative research approach was employed to examine classroom learning activities and students' responses throughout the instructional process. The findings indicate that students demonstrated improved vocabulary mastery after participating in Pictionary-based learning activities. The interactive and enjoyable nature of the strategy encouraged active classroom participation and increased students' motivation to learn English. Therefore, Fun English Activity–Pictionary can be considered an effective instructional strategy for improving vocabulary learning among junior high school students

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English plays an increasingly important role as an international language used in education, technology, and communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is considered a compulsory subject at the junior high school level. One of the fundamental aspects of learning English is vocabulary mastery, as vocabulary is essential for understanding texts and expressing ideas in both spoken and written forms.

Despite its importance, many students experience difficulties in learning English vocabulary. This problem is often caused by traditional teaching methods that focus heavily on memorization and lack student engagement. As a result, students may feel bored, unmotivated, and reluctant to participate actively in English learning activities.

To address this issue, teachers are encouraged to apply innovative and enjoyable teaching methods. One such method is English Fun Learning, which emphasizes learning through engaging activities. Pictionary, as a visual and interactive game, is considered an effective medium to support

vocabulary learning. Therefore, this study focuses on the use of Fun English Activity–Pictionary in teaching English vocabulary to students at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru.

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in developing communicative competence, as learners need sufficient vocabulary to understand and produce language effectively. Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that vocabulary acquisition is central to second language learning and directly affects learners' ability to communicate.

Furthermore, Thornbury (2002) states that without vocabulary, learners cannot convey meaning even if they have strong grammatical knowledge. Therefore, vocabulary instruction should be prioritized in English language teaching, especially at the junior high school level.

Fun English Learning is closely related to the concept of student-centered learning, where learners actively participate in the learning process. According to Harmer (2007), engaging activities increase students' motivation and create a positive learning atmosphere. When students enjoy the learning process, they are more likely to participate actively and retain new information.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) also supports the use of fun and engaging activities in language learning. Krashen argues that low anxiety and high motivation facilitate language acquisition. Fun English activities, such as games and visual learning, help lower students' affective filters and enhance learning outcomes.

Pictionary is based on visual learning theory, which suggests that learners understand and remember information better when it is presented visually. According to Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (1986), combining verbal and visual information enhances memory and comprehension. Through drawing and guessing activities, students associate vocabulary words with images, making them easier to recall.

In addition, Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) state that language games provide meaningful contexts for language use and encourage students to practice language skills naturally. Pictionary, as a language game, promotes vocabulary learning while fostering creativity and collaboration.

This study is also supported by constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and interaction. According to Piaget (1972), learning occurs when students actively participate in experiences. Vygotsky (1978) further highlights the importance of social interaction in learning through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Pictionary activities encourage students to collaborate, discuss, and negotiate meaning, which aligns with constructivist principles and supports vocabulary development.

METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test design to examine the effectiveness of Pictionary in enhancing English vocabulary learning among junior high school EFL students. The participants were one class of eighth-grade students at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru, selected through purposive sampling. A total of 30 students participated in the study.

The research was conducted in three stages. First, a pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial vocabulary mastery. Second, the students participated in four instructional sessions using Pictionary-based learning activities. During these sessions, students worked collaboratively in

groups to guess and explain English vocabulary through drawing activities. The learning materials covered common vocabulary related to daily life, school activities, occupations, and descriptive adjectives. Finally, a post-test consisting of vocabulary items equivalent to those in the pre-test was administered to measure students' vocabulary improvement. The research was conducted at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru. The participants of this study were junior high school students who were learning English vocabulary through Fun English Activity–Pictionary.

To collect the data, the researcher used several qualitative research instruments, including:

1. Observation Sheet

The observation sheet was used to record students' participation, enthusiasm, and responses during the learning process using Pictionary activities.

2. Field Notes

Field notes were used to document classroom situations, students' interactions, and notable events that occurred during the implementation of Fun English Activity–Pictionary.

3. Documentation

Documentation included lesson plans, students' drawings from Pictionary activities, and photographs taken during the learning process to support the observation data.

Table: 1. Observation Indicators

No.	Observation Aspect	Indicator Description
1	Student Participation	Students actively join drawing and guessing activities
2	Vocabulary Understanding	Students correctly identify and use vocabulary words
3	Learning Motivation	Students show enthusiasm and interest during activities
4	Speaking Confidence	Students are willing to say words or sentences in English
5	Classroom Interaction	Students interact positively with peers and teacher

FINDINGS

Based on classroom observations and field notes, the use of Fun English Activity–Pictionary created a positive learning atmosphere. Most students were actively involved in the activities and showed improvement in vocabulary recognition and pronunciation.

Table: 2. Observation Result

No.	Aspect Observed	Before Pictionary	After Pictionary
1	Vocabulary Recognition	Limited	Improved
2	Word Recall	Low	Moderate to High
3	Pronunciation Accuracy	Inconsistent	More Accurate
4	Student Confidence	Low	Increased

The findings demonstrate that Fun English Activity–Pictionary effectively supports vocabulary learning by combining visual, verbal, and interactive elements. This approach aligns with

Fun English Learning principles, which emphasize enjoyment and student-centered instruction. The improvement in students' motivation and participation suggests that Pictionary is suitable for junior high school learners who require engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained from classroom observations, field notes, and documentation during the implementation of Fun English Activity–Pictionary at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru. The findings are organized based on the coding categories: vocabulary understanding, student participation, learning motivation, speaking confidence, and classroom interaction. The observation data show a noticeable improvement in students' vocabulary understanding after the implementation of Pictionary activities. Students were able to recognize and recall vocabulary more accurately when visual representations were used. The use of drawings helped students associate words with meanings, reducing their dependence on translation.

This finding supports Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, which states that information presented both visually and verbally is more easily remembered. Students demonstrated better word recall and pronunciation during speaking activities, indicating effective vocabulary acquisition. During the Pictionary activities, most students actively participated in drawing, guessing, and explaining vocabulary words. Students who were previously passive became more involved when learning was conducted through game-based activities.

This result aligns with Wright et al. (2006), who argue that language games create a meaningful and enjoyable learning environment. The interactive nature of Pictionary encouraged students to engage without fear of making mistakes. Observation and field notes revealed that students showed higher motivation and enthusiasm during Fun English Learning sessions. The classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and enjoyable, which reduced students' anxiety toward learning English.

This finding is consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes that low anxiety and high motivation facilitate language acquisition. By using fun and engaging activities, the affective filter was lowered, allowing students to learn more effectively. Students demonstrated increased confidence in using English orally. They were more willing to pronounce vocabulary words and respond during guessing activities. Even students with limited vocabulary attempted to speak English without hesitation.

This improvement supports Harmer's (2007) view that communicative activities provide students with opportunities to practice language naturally. Pictionary allowed students to focus on meaning rather than grammatical accuracy, encouraging spontaneous language use. The Pictionary activities promoted positive interaction among students. They collaborated in groups, discussed vocabulary meanings, and helped each other guess words. This collaborative learning environment reflects Vygotsky's concept of social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Through peer interaction, students were able to learn from one another, which contributed to better vocabulary understanding and social engagement. The findings of this study indicate that Fun English Activity–Pictionary is an effective method for teaching English vocabulary to junior high school students. The improvement in vocabulary mastery, participation, motivation, and speaking confidence suggests that visual and game-based learning approaches are suitable for learners at this level.

The results confirm previous studies that emphasize the importance of fun and interactive learning in English language teaching. By integrating visual learning, language games, and student-centered activities, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that support vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, this study demonstrates that qualitative observation and coding can effectively capture students' learning progress in classroom-based research. The use of Pictionary not only enhances vocabulary learning but also fosters a supportive and collaborative classroom environment.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of Fun English Activity–Pictionary as a method for teaching English vocabulary at SMP IT Imam Syafii Cendikia Pekanbaru. Based on qualitative data obtained from classroom observations, field notes, and documentation, the findings indicate that the implementation of Pictionary activities positively contributed to students' English learning.

The results show that students experienced improvement in vocabulary understanding, increased participation, higher learning motivation, and greater speaking confidence. The use of visual and game-based learning helped students associate vocabulary with meaningful representations, making it easier for them to remember and use new words. In addition, the interactive nature of Pictionary created a supportive classroom environment that encouraged collaboration and active engagement.

The findings of this study are supported by relevant theories, including Dual Coding Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasize the importance of visual input, low anxiety, and social interaction in language learning. These theoretical perspectives reinforce the effectiveness of Fun English Activity–Pictionary in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students.

In conclusion, Fun English Activity–Pictionary is an effective and appropriate method for teaching English vocabulary in junior high school contexts. English teachers are encouraged to integrate fun, interactive, and student-centered activities into their teaching practices to improve students' learning outcomes. Future research may involve quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further examine the effectiveness of this method across different educational settings and learner levels.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Cumbe Coraizaca, D. M., Vera de la Torre, A. J., & Cajas Gutiérrez, M. (2023). EFL games and vocabulary acquisition: Improving language learning in the classroom. *Revista Multidisciplinaria de Desarrollo Agropecuario, Tecnológico, Empresarial y Humanista*, 5(3).
- Fatmawati, A. Y., Miranty, D., & Hamer, W. (2023). The effectiveness of Pictionary games as a tool to teach vocabulary for senior high school students. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 10(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.19109/ejpp.v10i1.16597>
- Hamer, W., & Lely, L. N. (2019). Using Pictionary game to increase learners' vocabulary mastery in English language instruction. *Journal of English Education Studies*, 2(1), 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.30653/005.201921.30>

- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. Pearson Longman.
- Hiebert, E. H., & Kamil, M. L. (Eds.). (2005). *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Nazri, M. A., Fikni, Z., Hijjah, P., & Wati, L. (2024). Engaging English language learners: The impact of Pictionary on student interest and vocabulary retention in EFL classrooms. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v11i2.64579>
- Paivio, A. (1986). *Mental representations: A dual coding approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Piaget, J. (1972). *The psychology of the child*. Basic Books.
- Putri, S. N. A., & Wahyuni, S. (2025). Developing a Pictionary game-based assessment on vocabulary mastery for junior high school students. *Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature (JETLEE)*, 5(1), 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.47766/jetlee.v5i1.5161>
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sihombing, L. H. (2023). Pictionary game: A teaching and learning method to enhance students' vocabulary. *KINDERGARTEN: Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.24014/kjiece.v6i1.22359>
- Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Pearson Education.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2006). *Games for language learning* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.