

Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery of Third-Grade Students Through Educational Games at SD Negeri 064025

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Abstract

This community service activity was carried out at the Satu Kasih Orphanage in Medan, with the aim of improving the basic English language skills of children aged 10–15 through a fun and communicative approach. The activity was conducted over two days, using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method on the first day and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method on the second day. The first day focused on mastering vocabulary related to "body parts" through visual media, games, and physical activities. The second day focused on speaking skills with the theme of "everyday conversations" using dialogues, role play, and the game of truth or dare. Observations and field notes showed that the approaches used were effective in increasing the children's enthusiasm, courage, and understanding in using English. The results indicated that participatory and interactive learning is highly effective when applied in non-formal settings like orphanages. In addition to enriching vocabulary and speaking skills, this activity also helped build the children's self-confidence and interest in learning English.

Keywords: *Vocabulary; Educational Games; Third-Grade Students; Elementary School; Learning Motivation.*

Introduction

Vocabulary is the entire set of words used in a language or the wealth of words owned by an individual, which can also be referred to as vocabulary. Vocabulary is an important foundation that social beings must possess in their lives in order to communicate with society. It becomes essential as the basis for learning used in the education system. Mastery of vocabulary is a crucial foundation in the language learning process, especially for elementary school students. A broad vocabulary allows students to understand the lesson material, communicate effectively, and develop other language skills such as reading and writing (Yanah Mulyanah &

Iqbal Firdaus, 2018). However, in practice, many students, particularly at the elementary school level, still face challenges in mastering Indonesian vocabulary. This issue is often rooted in the learning methods that lack innovation and tend to be monotonous, leading to a decrease in student motivation and hindering the improvement of their vocabulary mastery (Sari et al., 2021a).

The importance of vocabulary mastery for elementary school students has been emphasized in various studies. Field identification results indicate that the lack of mastery of Indonesian vocabulary among students becomes a significant obstacle in their learning process (Sari et al., 2021a). A similar condition is also found in English language learning, where limited vocabulary mastery hinders students' ability to engage in learning. Therefore, there is a need for teaching strategies that can motivate students and effectively improve their vocabulary mastery.

In this context, the use of educational games has attracted attention as a promising method. Educational games offer an interactive, fun, and developmentally relevant learning approach for elementary school students' cognitive growth (Hariadi et al., 2023a). This indicates that a learning process combined with educational game media can lead to improved vocabulary mastery, as seen in the introduction of vocabulary related to objects in English. This can also be collaborated with innovative methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR), which has also been proven to improve motivation and vocabulary mastery in elementary school students. Based on the background of the issues and the great potential offered by educational games, this study aims to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of using educational games to enhance vocabulary mastery among third-grade students at SD Negeri 064025. This research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of more engaging and effective vocabulary learning strategies, ultimately improving the quality of language education at the elementary school level.

Literature Review

Vocabulary mastery is an essential competency in language learning, serving as the main foundation for reading, writing, speaking, and understanding lesson material as a whole (Yanah Mulyanah & Iqbal Firdaus, 2018). The importance of vocabulary applies not only to the native language but also to foreign languages. However, the reality on the ground shows that many elementary school students still face difficulties in mastering vocabulary, which often leads to barriers in the teaching and learning process (Sari et al., 2021a). The lack of vocabulary mastery can hinder students in expressing ideas, understanding instructions, and actively participating in learning activities, both in the context of Indonesian and English (Hariadi et al., 2023a).

One cause of low vocabulary mastery is the conventional teaching and learning methods, which tend to be less interactive and monotonous, leading to low student motivation. Therefore, innovation in teaching methods is needed to increase student interest and engagement. In this context, the use of educational games has been widely researched and shows great potential as an effective solution.

Educational Games as an Innovative Solution in Vocabulary Learning

Educational games offer an enjoyable, interactive approach that is relevant to the psychological and cognitive characteristics of elementary school students who enjoy playing activities. The success of educational games lies in their ability to reduce boredom and increase student interest in the teaching and learning process (Amir, Utary Rustam, et al., 2023). The learning environment created through games tends to be more relaxed and stimulating, encouraging students to learn actively without feeling burdened.

Various studies have confirmed the effectiveness of educational games in improving vocabulary mastery:

1. **Increased Motivation and Student Engagement:** The application of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which is based on active and fun learning principles, has shown an increase in learning motivation and the ability to master English vocabulary among elementary school students (Yanah Mulyanah & Iqbal Firdaus, 2018). Although TPR is not purely an educational game, the interaction and enjoyment principles it offers are highly relevant. In line with this, teachers can develop good and essential learning media, especially in teaching English vocabulary, due to its popularity and high appeal among students. Game-based learning will also be very effective in improving students' understanding and engagement in history learning, which can be applied to vocabulary learning.
2. **Types of Educational Games and Their Impact:**
 - 2.1. **Conventional Games (e.g., Anagram):** Specifically investigating the anagram game, it was found that this method is highly effective in improving the mastery of Indonesian vocabulary in third-grade students. The anagram game trains students to recognize word structures, spelling, and meanings through the activity of arranging letters, which directly enriches their vocabulary (Sari et al., 2021a).
 - 2.2. **Technology-Based/Digital Games:** The use of technology-based educational game media can significantly improve the ability to master object vocabulary in English among students. This shows that adapting vocabulary learning to technological developments can yield positive and tangible results. In their systematic review, they also concluded that educational games are essential learning media in the 21st century for elementary school students, showing a trend of increased use and acceptance of digital games in education (Istiq'faroh et al., 2024). Specifically, it also demonstrates that the use of educational games can develop students' vocabulary mastery, with pre-test and post-test results showing significant improvement in junior high school students.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore the effectiveness of educational games in enhancing vocabulary mastery among third-grade students at SD Negeri 064025. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a rich and contextual understanding of the phenomenon being studied in its natural setting. The primary object of this research is the third-grade students at the school, who are the subjects of vocabulary teaching activities through educational games. Participant selection was conducted in a manner that ensured they possessed characteristics appropriate for the research objectives (Rahardjo, 2011).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection in this study was carried out through participatory observation and documentation.

1. **Participatory Observation:** The researcher was actively involved in the learning activities in the field for a full day. Observations were made to directly observe student interactions with the educational games, the level of participation, motivation, and their responses to the applied teaching methods. The researcher noted non-verbal behaviors, emotional expressions, and group dynamics during the game sessions.

2. **Documentation:** Supporting data, such as photos or videos taken during the learning and educational game sessions, were collected to complement the observation notes and provide a visual representation of the activities.

On the day of implementation in the field, the researcher actively accompanied and participated in each game session. The researcher's role was not only as an observer but also as a facilitator who helped students understand the game rules, provided encouragement, and ensured that the learning process proceeded smoothly and interactively. The games chosen were specifically designed to target the improvement of Indonesian vocabulary. For example, when the anagram game was used, the researcher assisted in explaining how to play and guided students in finding new words. This collaboration allowed the researcher to collect direct data on the dynamics of student interactions with the games and how effectively the games stimulated vocabulary mastery.

Findings

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the research activities conducted at SD Negeri 064025, followed by a discussion that connects the findings with relevant theories and previous research.

1. **Student Responses and Interaction with the Material and Visual Media**

The vocabulary teaching activity began by introducing the material "Part of Body" and "School Thing" using relevant images. Field observations revealed that third-grade students at SD Negeri 064025 displayed a very high level of interactivity. The students not only received the information but actively responded, pointed, and named the new vocabulary presented. The use of visuals, such as images, proved to be a highly effective medium in facilitating understanding and retention of new vocabulary. The students were enthusiastic about associating words with concrete objects visualized, in line with the cognitive development characteristics of elementary school children who tend to learn concretely.

This finding is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the importance of visual media in learning. For instance, Hariadi et al. (2023b) in their study on the introduction of vocabulary related to objects in English also implied that the use of engaging and relevant media can improve students' vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Mulyanah et al. (2018), while focusing on the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, showed that learning involving visual and kinesthetic senses significantly enhances motivation and vocabulary mastery. In other words, visualizing the material helps bridge abstract concepts (words) with representations that are easily understood by third-grade students.

2. **Effectiveness of Educational Games in Vocabulary Memorization and Motivation Enhancement**

The core of this research intervention was the application of educational games. The results of the activities showed that educational games were highly effective in helping students memorize the new vocabulary introduced. Through games, the memorization process did not feel burdensome but became an enjoyable and motivating activity. Students were able to recall and mention the new vocabulary taught, demonstrating that

the playful atmosphere supported short-term retention. The students' ability to answer questions related to vocabulary during and after the games affirmed that the vocabulary mastery goal was significantly achieved.

This finding is strongly supported by various relevant literatures. It explicitly states that the anagram game is effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery in Indonesian. Games that involve word arrangement, such as anagrams, train students' cognition in recognizing letters, syllables, and word structures, all of which contribute to vocabulary enhancement (Sari et al., 2021b). Furthermore, Hariadi et al. (2023a) found that teachers regarded games as crucial and "good" media for teaching English vocabulary, indicating professional consensus about the effectiveness of this method. Similarly, empirical studies show that educational games can reduce boredom and increase students' interest in learning, which in turn significantly improves their vocabulary mastery (Amir, Rustam, et al., 2023). Research by Istiq'faroh et al. (2024) through systematic reviews also concluded that educational games are essential learning media in the 21st century for elementary school students, reinforcing the argument about their relevance and effectiveness in modern learning contexts.

Additionally, observations showed that the classroom atmosphere became very active, conducive, and interactive due to the implementation of educational games. This environment directly created high motivation and enthusiasm for learning among the students. They appeared more eager, willing to participate, and showed initiative in learning. These findings align with research by SUCANDRA et al. (2022), which identified that one solution to the difficulty of vocabulary mastery is to create a conducive learning environment. It was also found that the use of online educational games is effective in reducing and eliminating student boredom during the learning process because of their enjoyable, motivating, and entertaining qualities, which can enhance interest in learning Indonesian. This underscores that affective aspects (motivation and enjoyment) play a crucial role in the success of vocabulary learning. When students are motivated, they are more likely to engage cognitively in learning tasks, which ultimately improves learning outcomes (Wahyuningsih et al., n.d.).

3. **Implications for Indonesian Vocabulary Learning in Elementary Schools**

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the use of educational games, combined with relevant visual media, is a highly effective learning strategy to improve Indonesian vocabulary mastery among third-grade students. This method not only addresses common challenges related to learning motivation and memorization difficulties but also creates a supportive and stimulating learning environment. These findings have practical implications for teachers at SD Negeri 064025 and other elementary schools to consider integrating educational games as an integral part of the vocabulary learning curriculum, especially at the lower grade levels.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of educational games, supported by the use of visual media, is highly effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery among third-grade students at SD Negeri 064025. The students showed very positive and interactive responses to the material presented with relevant images, which significantly facilitated the understanding of new vocabulary. Furthermore, educational games proved to be effective in helping students memorize vocabulary and create an active,

conductive, and interactive classroom atmosphere. This condition directly contributed to increased motivation and enthusiasm for learning among the students. This study emphasizes that innovative and enjoyable learning approaches, such as educational games, can be the right solution to address vocabulary mastery challenges at the elementary school level and promote a more engaging and productive learning environment.

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