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Games And Interactive Activities To Improving The Vocabulary Of SMP N 2 Bandar Students

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Abstrak

Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kosakata bahasa Inggris siswa di SMP N 2 Bandar melalui penggunaan permainan dan kegiatan interaktif. Dilaksanakan selama dua hari dengan 40 peserta, program ini menggunakan berbagai metode yang menarik, termasuk Permainan Mencocokkan Kata, Bingo Kosakata, Asosiasi Gambar-Kata, dan Permainan Bermain Peran, untuk membuat pembelajaran kosakata menjadi lebih menyenangkan dan efektif. Hasil pre-test dan post-test menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penguasaan kosakata siswa, dengan peningkatan rata-rata 25% pada nilai post-test. Umpan balik kualitatif dari para siswa mengungkapkan bahwa belajar melalui permainan mengurangi kecemasan, meningkatkan motivasi, dan menumbuhkan sikap yang lebih positif terhadap belajar bahasa Inggris. Kegiatan interaktif memberikan konteks untuk penggunaan kosakata, membantu siswa menginternalisasi kata-kata baru secara lebih efektif dibandingkan dengan teknik menghafal tradisional. Studi ini menyoroti potensi pembelajaran berbasis permainan dalam meningkatkan retensi dan keterlibatan kosakata, dan menunjukkan bahwa strategi serupa dapat digunakan dalam konteks pendidikan lainnya untuk meningkatkan hasil pembelajaran bahasa.

Kata Kunci: *Kosakata, Bahasa Inggris, Permainan, Aktivitas Interaktif, Pembelajaran Bahasa*

Abstract

This community service project (PkM) aimed to improve the English vocabulary of students at SMP N 2 Bandar through the use of games and interactive activities. Conducted over two days with 40 participants, the program employed a variety of engaging methods, including Word Matching Games, Vocabulary Bingo, Picture-Word Association, and Role-Playing Games, to make vocabulary learning more enjoyable and effective. Pre- and post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition, with an average increase of 25% in post-test scores. Qualitative feedback from students revealed that learning through games reduced anxiety, boosted motivation, and fostered a more positive attitude toward learning English. The interactive activities provided context for vocabulary use, helping students internalize new words more effectively compared to traditional memorization techniques. This study highlights the potential of game-based learning in enhancing vocabulary retention and engagement, suggesting that similar strategies can be employed in other educational contexts to improve language learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Vocabulary, English, Games, Interactive Activities, Language Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary serves as one of the foundational pillars in mastering a language, Herdi & Ningsih (2018). Receptive vocabulary is defined by Nation (2001) cited in Susanto (2018), to bring idea that learners receive language input from others through listening or reading and try to comprehend it. For students at the junior high school level, like those at SMP N 2 Bandar, building a strong vocabulary is vital to ensure their progression in English language proficiency.

However, traditional vocabulary teaching methods, which focus heavily on rote memorization and repetitive drills, are increasingly criticized for their ineffectiveness in promoting deep and sustained learning. Research by Brown (2007) indicates that while these methods may offer short-term benefits, they often fail to engage students and do not foster long-term retention. Students may memorize vocabulary for tests, but they frequently forget the words soon after, with little ability to use them effectively in conversation or writing.

In response to these challenges, educators have shifted toward more interactive and student-

centered methods of teaching. Games and interactive activities are increasingly being recognized as effective strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition, particularly in language learning contexts. According to Garris et al (2002) cited in Andriani et al (2024), games create a less intimidating, more enjoyable environment for students, reducing anxiety and boosting motivation. They also provide meaningful contexts for language use, making it easier for students to internalize new words and apply them in various situations.

The effectiveness of game-based learning is supported by numerous studies. For instance, Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) cited in Saputra et al (2021), argue that games enhance language learning by promoting active participation and repeated exposure to vocabulary in ways that are both engaging and memorable. When students are immersed in a game, they are more likely to recall vocabulary because the learning experience is associated with fun and interaction, rather than mere memorization (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

This community service project (PkM) seeks to explore how the use of games and interactive activities can help overcome the vocabulary learning challenges faced by students at SMP N 2 Bandar. The goal is to not only enhance vocabulary retention but also to increase students' ability to use new words in various linguistic contexts. The study will evaluate the types of games most suitable for this age group, assess their impact on motivation and engagement, and analyze their overall influence on students' language learning outcomes.

This shift towards interactive methods is essential given the increasing recognition of the limitations of traditional vocabulary teaching. Experts like Fatimah and Ardiani (2018) emphasize that in the current globalized world, English is more than a foreign language—it's a key tool for communication. As Indonesia embraces English as its first foreign language, it is crucial to introduce and teach it effectively from an early stage. According to Rahmawati (2022) highlights how mastering English not only opens up job opportunities but also builds self-confidence and broadens horizons.

This project aims to demonstrate how interactive and game-based learning can transform vocabulary acquisition into a dynamic, engaging, and more effective process. By fostering a learning environment that promotes both interest and active participation, this approach has the potential to greatly improve vocabulary acquisition among students and provide a model for other educational contexts.

METHOD

Here is the method section for this community service project (PkM) titled "Games and Interactive Activities To Improve the Vocabulary of SMP N 2 Bandar Students" :

a. Target Audience

The target audience for this community service project consists of students from SMP N 2 Bandar. The participants will be from different grade levels, with a focus on students who need vocabulary improvement in English.

b. Preparation Phase

The preparation phase will involve the following steps:

1. Needs Analysis : A pre-assessment will be conducted to evaluate the current level of vocabulary knowledge among the students. This will be done through a simple vocabulary quiz or short interview sessions with students and English teachers.
2. Material Preparation : Based on the pre-assessment results, a set of interactive activities and games will be designed to match the students' proficiency levels. The games will focus on improving vocabulary through engaging and fun exercises.

c. Implementation Phase

This phase will consist of several sessions where students participate in interactive activities designed to enhance vocabulary learning. Each session will be approximately 60-90 minutes long and will include a variety of games and interactive exercises such as:

1. Word Matching Games : Students will match new words with their meanings.
2. Picture-Word Association : Students will match images with appropriate vocabulary to reinforce understanding.
3. Word Formation Games : Through group work, students will create new sentences using target vocabulary.
4. Vocabulary Bingo : A fun bingo game where students must match words or definitions to win.
5. Role-Playing Games : Students will use target vocabulary in real-life scenarios, helping them practice in context.

d. Evaluation Phase

At the end of each session, students will complete a short quiz or exercise to assess their understanding of the vocabulary introduced. Additionally, a final post-assessment will be administered at the conclusion of the program to measure the overall improvement in students'

vocabulary. Both students and teachers will be asked to provide feedback on the activities to gauge the effectiveness and engagement levels. This feedback will be used to refine future sessions or similar projects.

e. Follow-Up and Sustainability

After the completion of the program, teachers will be provided with the materials and guidelines used in the activities, allowing them to continue incorporating games and interactive activities into their English lessons. Additionally, periodic check-ins will be conducted to see if vocabulary retention has been maintained.

This method ensures that vocabulary improvement is achieved through a fun and interactive approach, making learning enjoyable for the students at SMP N 2 Bandar.

RESULTS

The community service program (PkM) was conducted over two days, from October 18 to 19, 2024, at SMP N 2 Bandar. A total of 40 students, divided into two groups, participated in the activities. The focus of the program was to assess the impact of using games and interactive activities on English vocabulary acquisition.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

The pre-test and post-test were administered to evaluate the students' vocabulary improvement. The results indicated a significant increase in post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. Specifically, students' average scores improved by approximately 25%, demonstrating that the interactive and game-based learning strategies positively influenced vocabulary retention and understanding.

Student Motivation and Engagement

Interviews conducted with the students after the program revealed that learning through games helped reduce stress and increased motivation. The students reported feeling more comfortable and less anxious when participating in vocabulary activities. Additionally, they enjoyed the competitive yet collaborative nature of the games, which made learning more engaging. Students mentioned that they found traditional vocabulary learning methods dull, whereas the games provided them with a fun, dynamic learning experience. Games such as Word Matching Games, Picture-Word Association, Word Formation Games, Vocabulary Bingo and Role-Playing Games were particularly effective in helping students internalize new words through repeated exposure and practical use. The variety of game formats helped cater to different learning styles, ensuring that each student could benefit from the activities.

Discussion

The outcomes of this program validate the effectiveness of game-based learning as an instructional strategy, particularly for vocabulary acquisition. This approach proved beneficial for several reasons, outlined as follows:

1. **Engagement and Active Learning:** Research consistently highlights that students engage more deeply in language learning when it is presented in a participatory, enjoyable format. The interactive nature of games encourages active involvement, as students are not passive recipients of information but are instead actively using and internalizing vocabulary. By presenting language as an engaging, memorable experience, games transform vocabulary learning into a process that students look forward to, enhancing both motivation and retention. This aligns with research by Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006), who emphasized that game-based learning supports repeated vocabulary exposure and active use, which are crucial for memory consolidation.
2. **Benefits of Game-Based Learning:** This activity supports the idea that vocabulary acquisition is most successful when students are actively engaged. Games, by providing real-time language use in an enjoyable setting, reduce learning anxiety, a common barrier in second-language learning. Furthermore, the interactive nature of games encourages peer learning, where students support each other's language development through collaboration.
3. **Reduction of Language-Learning Anxiety:** One of the most significant barriers in language acquisition is anxiety, often exacerbated in traditional learning environments where the fear of mistakes can stifle student participation. Games alleviate this pressure by framing learning as an exploratory, trial-and-error experience, making students feel more at ease and confident. By reducing anxiety, students become more willing to experiment with new words, reinforcing vocabulary without the apprehension often associated with language tasks.
4. **The Role of Context in Vocabulary Learning:** One of the key advantages of game-based learning is that it provides contextual learning. Unlike rote memorization, which often leads to short-term retention, games allow students to see how words function in sentences, scenarios, and real-world situations. This context-driven approach helps solidify vocabulary learning by making connections between words and their meanings more intuitive and natural for students.

5. Sustained Vocabulary Retention: While the immediate post-test results were promising, future assessments will be necessary to determine the long-term impact of the activities. Teachers have been provided with materials and guidelines to continue incorporating games into their regular lessons, which will help maintain and further improve the students' vocabulary retention.
6. Peer Learning and Social Interaction: Games inherently promote social interaction, providing opportunities for peer learning and collaborative problem-solving. Through team-based games or group activities, students not only learn vocabulary but also support one another's language development. Peer support enhances engagement and allows students to learn from each other, making vocabulary acquisition a collective, rather than solitary, process. This social aspect of learning was evident in the feedback from students, who reported enjoying the collaborative and supportive environment fostered by the game-based approach.
7. Contextualized Vocabulary Use : Unlike rote memorization, where vocabulary is often presented in isolation, game-based methods place vocabulary within meaningful contexts. Students encounter new words through scenarios, visual associations, and practical applications, making it easier to understand and remember their meanings and usages. Contextual learning is particularly important in vocabulary acquisition, as words become embedded in memory when students can connect them to specific situations or visual cues. By repeatedly encountering target vocabulary across different games and contexts, students develop a stronger, more versatile command of these words, enhancing both their comprehension and their ability to use vocabulary effectively in real-life scenarios.
8. Variety of Learning Styles and Needs: The diverse range of games employed catered to different learning styles, ensuring that all students could engage with the material in ways that best suited their preferences. For example, visual learners benefited from Picture-Word Association, while kinesthetic learners responded well to Role-Playing Games and Vocabulary Bingo. This diversity not only made the activities more inclusive but also ensured that each student was able to learn vocabulary in a way that resonated with their individual needs. This variety is crucial, as it allows educators to reach a broader spectrum of students and makes vocabulary acquisition more inclusive and adaptable.

The use of games and interactive activities in teaching vocabulary to SMP N 2 Bandar students yielded positive results. Students not only showed improved vocabulary test scores but also demonstrated increased enthusiasm for learning English. This approach proves to be an effective strategy for making vocabulary learning both enjoyable and productive. The program also highlights the potential for these methods to be adapted in other educational contexts where vocabulary acquisition is a challenge.



Pictures of Activity of the Community Service Program (PkM) at SMP N 2 Bandar

CONCLUSION

The community service program aimed at improving the English vocabulary of SMP N 2 Bandar students through the use of games and interactive activities yielded highly positive results. The findings clearly indicate that this method is a viable and effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students. The use of interactive activities and games, such as Word Matching, Vocabulary Bingo, Role-Playing Games, and others, provided students with a more engaging and enjoyable way to learn, breaking away from the traditional, memorization-based approach to vocabulary teaching.

The pre-test and post-test scores provide concrete evidence of the program's success, showing an average improvement of approximately 25%. This significant rise in vocabulary test scores highlights how well students responded to the more dynamic, context-driven learning activities. Games not only promoted active learning but also helped in reducing the stress typically associated with language acquisition. Students reported feeling more motivated, enthusiastic, and less anxious during the lessons, which further contributed to their improved performance. The social and interactive nature of these activities also fostered peer-to-peer learning, as students collaborated, communicated, and supported each other's learning efforts.

In addition to the quantitative improvements in test scores, qualitative feedback from students revealed that they enjoyed this approach to learning English. Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction, which rely on rote memorization and repetition, were seen as monotonous by the students. In contrast, games and interactive activities provided a sense of excitement and novelty, making the learning process feel more like a series of enjoyable challenges rather than tedious tasks. By incorporating elements of competition and collaboration, the activities stimulated student interest and sustained engagement throughout the program. The variety of activities ensured that different learning styles were accommodated, helping each student to absorb new vocabulary in a way that was most effective for them.

Another key takeaway from this project is the role of contextual learning in vocabulary retention. Unlike traditional methods, where students often memorize vocabulary in isolation, the use of games and interactive activities allowed students to encounter and use new words in context. By situating vocabulary in meaningful scenarios and real-world applications, students were better able to grasp the nuances and practical usage of new words. This contextual learning approach is especially important in language acquisition, as it helps to embed words more deeply into students' memories, making them easier to recall and apply in future language tasks.

Furthermore, the collaborative and competitive dynamics introduced by games promoted a healthy sense of achievement and increased motivation. Students worked together, supported each other, and in doing so, developed a sense of camaraderie that enriched the learning experience. The program also demonstrated how games can act as a vehicle for repeated exposure to new words, which is a critical factor in vocabulary acquisition. The repetitive, yet varied, nature of these activities ensured that students encountered target vocabulary multiple times in different contexts, thus reinforcing their understanding and retention.

However, while the immediate results of the program were promising, it is important to note that continued efforts will be necessary to sustain these improvements over time. Teachers at SMP N 2 Bandar have been provided with the materials and guidelines needed to integrate games and interactive activities into their regular curriculum. This will help maintain the momentum generated by the program and ensure that students continue to build on the vocabulary they have acquired. Future assessments and periodic evaluations will be needed to monitor the long-term effectiveness of this approach and to ensure that the gains in vocabulary retention are sustained.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that games and interactive activities are a highly effective tool for improving vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students. The program at SMP N 2 Bandar resulted not only in substantial improvements in vocabulary test scores but also in enhanced student engagement, motivation, and overall enjoyment of the learning process. By transforming vocabulary learning into a fun, interactive, and collaborative experience, the program addressed several key challenges faced by students in acquiring new vocabulary. These findings have important implications for language instruction, particularly in contexts where traditional methods have failed to engage students or produce lasting vocabulary retention. The success of this approach at SMP N 2 Bandar suggests that it could be replicated in other educational settings to similarly positive effect, making vocabulary learning both enjoyable and effective for students.

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