# An English Vocabulary Learning through Word Games: Serendipitous Community Service

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## ABSTRACT

*Mastering English vocabulary is something mandatory in learning integrated English language skill for EFL learners as this could enhance their English competence and performance. This community service was conducted in a serendipitous way in which it was aimed to apply games in teaching English vocabulary. Thirteen female participants were taken conveniently as the sample during the intervention. One orphanage in Southern region of Sumatera, Palembang was accordingly selected for this activity. To assess the EFL participants' English vocabulary score, a well-designed English vocabulary test was finely administered before and after game-based intervention. The findings showed that using games gave a significant impact on the EFL learners' English vocabulary mastery as the result of t obtained value was much higher than the t table (10.645 > 2.179) and the p value gained was much lower than .05 (.000 < .05). Overall, some meaningful implications were made to the near future facilitators, relevant researchers, and other EFL learners to integrate games in English vocabulary learning as this creates a more relaxing atmosphere of learning English words.*

***Keywords***: *English vocabulary learning, word game, community service*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English vocabulary mastery is generally seen as one of vital parts in English language learning particularly on the learning receptive skills and productive skills. Having many English vocabulary stocks and practicing them in English language acquisition are the key factors to the success of English language learning. Apart from that, students consider vocabulary acquisition to be one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. Nonetheless, vocabulary is regarded as one of the language's subskills **(Orfan, 2020)**. However, there is not much focus on making it easier and simpler to improve learners' vocabularies. Additionally, vocabulary knowledge enhances a student's social potential and communicative abilities. Different approaches and strategies can be useful for helping learners improve their vocabulary. However, there are no explicit guidelines that permit learners to acquire vocabulary. Each student develops their vocabulary in a different way. Numerous studies have demonstrated that using games to learn new vocabulary can improve vocabulary retention and make language learning enjoyable and motivating **(Hoa & Trang, 2020; Ma & Yodkamlue, 2019; Selvi & Çoşan, 2018)**.

On the other hand, there were some barriers faced by English language learners in acquiring English vocabulary. When learning English in an EFL classroom, young learners in particular tended to become bored and inattentive since the EFL materials were not interesting or creative. They were also proficient in speaking and spelling English words and letters. Another problem was their lack of interest in the situation and condition of the class because of the inadequate media provision. Furthermore, a number of research have demonstrated that poor vocabulary retention and knowledge hinder language development **(Wright et al., 2021).** Additionally, many learners have difficulties memorizing and even understanding English vocabulary, so it is vital to apply a solution to solve this widespread problem **(Ankawi, 2022; Hasan, 2024)**. Moreover, learners frequently struggle to commit new English vocabulary to memorize **(Rosyada-AS & Apoko, 2023; Tsuraya & Awaliah, 2022)**. Despitefully, many language learners believe that acquiring vocabulary is tedious and difficult, and they frequently get disappointing results because of memory loss. This causes them to become frustrated and want more efficient techniques **(Zou et al., 2021).** Thus, it could be further asserted that the English language learners still have English vocabulary learning problems which hamper their road to the English learning success.

Concerning on the EFL learners' problems hindered the learning to acquire English vocabulary, the instructor needs to have an interactive instructional media, material and a proper instructional technique to get them more motivated and enthusiastic in English vocabulary learning. Besides, by using an engaging teaching strategy, educators can help learners grasp the subject matter. Therefore, using efficient and captivating English teaching techniques will significantly help students become more enthusiastic about learning and to understand the course with high motivation **(Chen & Hsu, 2020)**. In line with that, teaching young students with instructional media can improve language acquisition by making learning engaging, creative, and communicative **(Petina et al., 2023)**.

Games or plays are very beneficial and useful for learning new vocabulary. It will foster a welcoming situation in the classroom where all students are engaged in an enjoyable and competitive style of learning. In this manner, when working in a group, the students will be able to help one another with problems. Additionally, they will foster students' creativity and improve their capacity to learn the language in an enjoyable way **(Akramy, 2020; Rasti-Behbahani & Shahbazi, 2022)**. In line with that, **Prabha & Abdul Aziz (2020)** stated that games should offer students a relaxing and enjoyable educational experience. After learning and applying new terminology, students can utilize language in a stress-free manner. Even yet, students focus more on the meaning than the language when learning vocabulary. Having the similar mind, by mixing enjoyment, competition, and teamwork, playful learning enhances vocabulary memory more effectively than rote memorization **(Loor, 2025)**. Additionally, there are two types of playful activities: digital and non-digital. Digital activities include computer, mobile, or video-based games, whereas non-digital activities use physical or visual aids like boards, cards, and tangible teaching materials **(Naderi & Moafian, 2023)**. In line with that, learning vocabulary using games has been increasingly common in recent years **(Lai & Chen, 2023)**. Teachers and academics have increasingly concentrated on digital game-based vocabulary acquisition to increase interest and motivation in education because of their capacity to engage and motivate students **(Zou et al., 2021)**. A particular type of game designed especially to be played on digital devices is known as digital game-based learning, or mobile game-based learning **(Wati et al., 2020).** In association with the description above, it could be then stated that games or plays both digital and non-digital potentially enhances the EFL learners' English vocabulary mastery as this playful activity involves engagement, creativity, and teamwork in a joyful manner.

Some recent investigations were previously done pertaining to game-based instruction in English vocabulary enhancement. For many years, games have been a popular way to teach and acquire vocabulary. Students' enthusiasm and active participation in the classroom are encouraged during the learning process **(Helingo, 2022)**. According to **Hanafie et al. (2022),** a web-based game is a software program that is housed on internet servers and can only be accessed by players using a web browser and an internet connection. Besides, using entertaining materials in English classes both traditional and digital games—improves language attitudes, lowers anxiety, and increases vocabulary acquisition **(Loor, 2025).** Although academic interest in digital game-based vocabulary learning is expanding, there are still few empirical investigations **(Zou et al., 2021)**. In addition, the academic world has paid close attention to digital game-based learning in recent decades. According to some relevant research, adding educational content to video games boosts students' engagement, motivation, and performance **(Yang et al., 2020)**. Additionally, it is crucial to grab students' interest and establish a more engaging and interactive learning environment. Using multimedia resources like instructional games, interactive applications, and movies, students can engage with the material more dynamically, keeping them motivated and focused **(Guo, 2022)**. Furthermore, **(Syakir, 2020)** stated that the use of word game could expand the EFL learners' English vocabulary acquisition. Besides, this result is also in association with research findings of **Teng (2023)** which revealed that multimedia applications enhance vocabulary acquisition by offering a contextualized and captivating educational experience. Additionally, examining the efficacy and efficiency of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) approach in English language training to improve the caliber and interactive nature of classroom learning was another goal of its adoption **(Pan et al., 2021).** For that reason, it could be clearly said that using games is potentially impactful on the EFL learners' English vocabulary acquisition.

In association with the narrated rationale, encountered problems, and prior research above, the researchers, who acted as the facilitator, was strongly intended to get the gap filled by carrying out word game as an educational game by combining two games simultaneously in instructing English vocabulary to the EFL participants. This was done to track whether or not using word games were significantly beneficial for EFL learners to promote their English vocabulary mastery. This was also exceedingly expected to get the EFL learners more engaged and relaxed in English learning particularly on English vocabulary acquisition.

## 2. METHOD

This serendipitous community service was carried out to facilitate the EFL learners with English vocabulary game, word game, to way up the English vocabulary mastery. This used one group pretest-posttest design as displayed in diagram 1. One group was taken as the sample conveniently. This comprised of thirteen female participants with 13 – 18 years old. This community service was conducted in one orphanage in Palembang, Southern Region of Sumatera. The English vocabulary test administration was utilized before and after treatment to eye the English vocabulary achievement.

**Diagram 1. One group pretest-posttest design**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **O₁** | **X** | **O₂** |
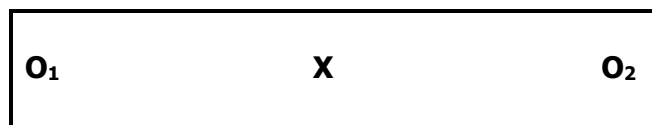
Note:

O₁ = Pretest administration        X   = Treatment/Intervention        O₂ = Postest administration

Additionally, a well-structured procedure in using word game in English vocabulary acquisition were employed as follows: (1) the instructor gave a pretest and attendance list to fill in, (2) the instructor asked the English learning problems encountered by the participants, (3) the problems were itemized and discussed one by one particularly on English vocabulary problems, (4) Two games, shooting the balloon and word generating game (Word Shake), and its rule were explain properly to the participants, (5) Before playing the game, the participants were asked to form a group consisting of four persons and were exposed with two themes, action and birthday, and its pictures, (6) then one member was chosen to come forward to match the English words and the displayed pictures and after that they have to shoot the balloons based on the matched English words, this ran simultaneously., (7) afterwards, the theme-based English words then were spelled out and pronounced chorally and individually, if they still mispronounced the words, there were asked to repeat them individually, (8) Another game to play that is word generating game (Word Shake) in which the participants worked in group to gain English words as many as possible they could get based on the time limited by arranging the letters into a meaningful words, this was done as a supporting game to enrich the participants' English vocabulary. (9) the English words generated were practiced individually and chorally, gentle correction was given if they made a word mispronunciation., (10) the winning group was given a present as they succeeded to run the game smoothly., (11) To check whether they have a good and proper pronunciation, some English vocabulary words displayed on the board were proposed to the participants to have individual practice., (12) After the treatment was done, posttest administration was undergone to attain their English vocabulary achievement. Figure 1 and 2 showed community service performed by the facilitator in the orphanage of South Sumatera, Palembang.



**Figure 1. Exposing the Games Intervention**



**Figure 2. Incorporating the Games**

Despitefully, after gaining the participants' score attainment, the pretest and posttest were marked and tabulated in a well manner. Besides, their English vocabulary attainment was taken into statistical analysis descriptively by using SPSS program. This was for finding out the scores attained in pretest and posttest before receiving a proper treatment. Some relevant descriptive analyses were taken into consideration to compute such as the highest and lowest score, mean score, mode, median, standard deviation, t-obtained, degree of freedom, and p value. To compute those aspects of statistical analyses, descriptive statistics and paired samples t test were properly used in SPSS program. Above all, a well-structured and a thorough interpretation or discussion was written accordingly, systematically and meticulously.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having finished collecting and analyzing the participants' score data accordingly from the community service, it was gained that the attained lowest score attained in the pretest was 50 and the attained highest score was 80. Furthermore, the mean score gained was 66.15, the median score gained was 70, the gained mode score was 70, and the obtained standard deviation was 11.209. On the other side, it was also revealed that the lowest score generated was 90 and the generated highest score was 100. Furthermore, the mean score generated was 97.69, the median scored generated was 100, the mode score generated was 100, and the generated standard deviation was 4.385. Additionally, after having computed the participants' data with descriptive statistics analysis, a progressive analysis with paired samples t-test was done in order to find out the participants' progress after having intervened with word game. The findings revealed that as presented in table 1 the gained mean score was 31.538, the obtained standard deviation was 10.682, the t obtained was 10.645, the degree of freedom earned was 12, and the p value (2-tailed) was .000. As the t obtained value was much higher than the t table (10.645 > 2.179) and the p value gained was much lower than .05 (.000 < .05), therefore it could be further asserted that there was a significant improvement made by the participants after getting treated with word game in instructing English vocabulary.

**Table 1.  Paired Sample Test Computation**

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig.(2-Tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Standard Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| Pair 1 | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pretest-Posttest | 31.538 | 10.682 | 2.963 | 37.993 | 25.083 | 10.645 | 12 | .000 |

After finishing the computation of the two statistical analyses, it could be vividly seen from the results that there was a better achievement made by the participants in English vocabulary after being given a treatment with a word game. Besides, after gaining the results of pretest and posttest administration, it could be succinctly verbalized that learning English vocabulary with word game was significantly impactful on the participants' English vocabulary mastery.

This significant improvement might be caused by the various pictures exposed to the participants in which it attracted them to be more involved in learning English vocabulary through game played. Another plausible caused was that they participants were asked to

repeat the English vocabulary learnt from the games chorally and individually. Apart from that, simultaneous games, both shooting the balloon and word generated game, drove the participants work more collaboratively which allowed them to learn new English vocabulary among their peers. Furthermore, an enjoyable and fun learning through word games activated their learning motivation and interests in learning English vocabularies in a non-stressful way. This also got the participants' anxiety and fear reduced in learning English in particular. In other words, games-oriented learning could significantly improve the EFL learners' English vocabulary mastery and create a more relaxing atmosphere of learning English.

The current findings of the study are consistent with research by **Alhajaji et al. (2020), (Vásquez & Ovalle (2019)**, **Karaaslan et al. (2018)**, and **Miyazaki (2019)**, which found that educational games are essential for increasing vocabulary knowledge. Prior to this, they thought learning English was difficult, but when educational games were used in the classroom, the learners became more enthusiastic and eager to participate in the lesson. In addition, games foster a friendly situation in the classroom where all students are engaged in an enjoyable and competitive style of learning. In this manner, when working in a group, the students are able to help one another with problems. Furthermore, they will also foster students' creativity and improve their capacity to learn the language in an enjoyable way **(Akramy, 2020; Rasti-Behbahani & Shahbazi, 2022)**.

Apart from that, **Naderiheshi (2022)** suggested a two-step method for learning vocabulary through entertaining activities: putting students in groups and giving them precise directions and explanations. Additionally, vocabulary acquisition is the cornerstone of EFL learning and plays a significant role in the process, deserving of scholarly attention. In addition, according to **Li & Kangas (2024)** and **Ollonen & Kangas (2024),** incorporating more entertaining methods into the classroom promotes the development of creative and literacy abilities while also creating a favorable learning atmosphere. Additionally, **Sáez and Espinoza (2023)** pointed out that this game-based method can make learning less stressful and more pleasurable for learners, boosting their drive to learn and aiding in the retention of new vocabulary. Having similar findings, compared to teachers who teach their students using traditional language**, Hoa and Trang (2020)** found that teachers who utilized games to teach new English vocabulary to their students had a more enjoyable and pleasant environment. This conclusion is also supported by **Dindar et al. (2021)**, who concentrated on teaching students using educational games in which students can increase their engagement, learn new vocabulary, and explain it by playing instructional games. Having similar thoughts, students are more likely to get involved in class and successfully internalize new vocabulary when game-based learning is adopted **(Hasanah, Eviyuliwati, & Defianty, 2022)**.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Having completed the computation of statistical analyses and narrated research interpretation, the institutional purpose of the community service had been addressed by giving an intervention to participants especially on the use of word game in teaching English vocabulary. Furthermore, the findings of the participants' achievement before and after the community service conducted showed a significant improvement and progress viewed from statistical computation. Thus, it could be vividly stated that using word game enhances the EFL learners' English vocabulary significantly and progressively.

Regarding the research findings and interpretation, several implications were drawn to the EFL participants in learning English vocabulary by using word game so that they could enrich their English vocabulary mastery. Afterwards, when they get some new English vocabulary, the EFL learners could use it in a daily communication. Moreover, it is strongly advised that the near future researchers or other facilitators could utilize this instructional and interactive media equipped with the regular practice to gain a betterment in results orientation. At last, it is truly recommended to use the educational games in promoting the EFL learners' English vocabulary acquisition as this offers mental and physical involvement and more on learners-oriented learning. Also, this allows the EFL learners to learn English vocabulary in a fun and more structure way and promotes the learning engagement in English vocabulary mastery. Another combination of game playing, different instructional delivery and learning media implemented on dissimilar participants to grab much more insightful and thorough analyses were also highly recommended for others researchers or facilitators.

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