

The Effectiveness of Using Pictionary Game in Teaching Vocabulary at Junior High School Level

Nicky Shiela Indira Farma¹, Olyvia Revalita Candraloka²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia

211320000633@unisnu.ac.id, olyviarevalita@unisnu.ac.id

Abstract

The objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of Pictionary activities as a pedagogical tool for vocabulary acquisition among middle school learners. The investigative approach employed a quasi-experimental framework involving fifty-eight motivated seventh-grade pupils from MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging, who were systematically allocated into treatment and comparison cohorts. Information gathering was conducted using initial and final assessments consisting of multiple-choice vocabulary items to monitor learners' academic development precisely. The treatment cohort experienced instruction via dynamic and entertaining Pictionary activities, whereas the comparison cohort followed traditional pedagogical approaches throughout six instructional sessions. The results showed a significant difference between the groups ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), with the experimental group's average score (88.50) considerably higher than that of the control group (70.73). Both groups experienced significant improvement, but the experimental group showed greater overall improvement. The conclusion of the study clearly proves that the Pictionary game is significantly more effective than conventional methods in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords

Pictionary Game; Teaching Vocabulary; Junior High School



I. Introduction

In the language learning process, mastery of words is the main basis for understanding the meaning of sentences. The more words you master, the more effective learning can take place. Vocabulary is part of the language domain (content) and forms the basis for understanding and producing communication messages, so mastery of vocabulary is very important in a child's development. This is because good language skills support reading skills, improve reading comprehension, strengthen social skills, and train problem-solving skills, which ultimately contribute to academic achievement (Bruce & Bell, 2022). Vocabulary is generally recognised as the primary means of communication (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). The mastery of vocabulary serves as a fundamental component in developing literacy skills, particularly for students acquiring English as a second language, who encounter the complex task of simultaneously acquiring linguistic competence and comprehending scholastic subjects. A strong lexical foundation proves crucial not merely for advancing reading and writing abilities, but equally for facilitating meaningful interpersonal exchanges and enabling comprehension of sophisticated educational texts (Zeng et al., 2025). Inadequate vocabulary knowledge limits English language learners' ability to engage with academic texts, hindering both language fluency and content mastery. Vocabulary mastery has become a fundamental necessity for global students, including those in Indonesia, to achieve success in English learning.

However, in practice that numerous middle school learners continue to struggle with English lexical acquisition, evidenced by their restricted capacity to understand written passages, construct grammatically correct statements, and articulate thoughts through spoken communication. (Asyiah, 2017; Komalasari, 2022; Saridevita et al., 2022). This is supported by (Katemba & Br Barus, 2024) research, which states that the main obstacles to speaking include the habit of using the mother tongue in class, grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of opportunities to practise outside of school. In addition, the (Maransha Andrian & Ernati, 2023) Research indicated that these learners demonstrated insufficient foundational competencies and remained unacquainted with English fundamentals, creating barriers to their comprehension of instructional content throughout educational activities. This situation aligns with the discoveries of Cahya, Kusnadi, and Anggraeni (2018), who identified that inadequate motivation represents a primary factor contributing to Indonesian pupils' challenges in English language acquisition. Similarly, Wulandari (2020) emphasises that Indonesian students' motivation is often dominated by instrumental goals like passing national exams, which limits engagement and ignores affective aspects such as curiosity and interest.

This situation is further exacerbated by learning approaches that are still dominated by conventional methods such as lectures, structured exercises, and passive repetition, which do not allow for creativity and meaningful interaction (Utami, 2021; Pratama, 2019). Such a teacher-centred model often overlooks students' affective aspects, reducing their active participation and enthusiasm in learning (Sari & Putra, 2020). Educators in Indonesia rarely use context-based, visualisation, or play-based approaches that can support students' vocabulary recall and comprehension, as vocabulary teaching still relies heavily on text-based methods with limited systematic presentation of words (Radjab, 2017). Consequently, Indonesian middle school pupils encounter multiple obstacles when acquiring English vocabulary, including challenges in retaining lexical items, formulating proper sentence structures, comprehending polysemous terms, and articulating words with accurate pronunciation.

Therefore, innovative and enjoyable learning approaches are essential to help students develop vocabulary effectively, as learning is considered successful when it enables learners to achieve the intended goals (Maru'ao, 2020). Teachers need to design instructional strategies that match learners' characteristics and support the achievement of competencies, and as noted by Wulandari (2023), the use of varied teaching methods not only improves understanding and retention but also increases motivation and creates a more interactive classroom atmosphere. One effective way to realize this is through the integration of educational games, which are structured activities with clear rules and objectives that promote engagement and meaningful learning (Pratama & Ismawati, 2021). Educational games such as word games, role-play, puzzles, and simulations have been shown to enhance memory retention, foster active participation, encourage collaboration, and provide authentic contexts for vocabulary use (Rahman & Dewi, 2020; Yuliana & Wulandari, 2021). In this context, Pictionary can serve as a practical and enjoyable medium to improve students' vocabulary mastery through visual creativity and interactive play.

In the Pictionary game, students attempt to guess words or phrases from pictures (Darmawan & Fatmawati, 2019). Students work as "artists" in teams using cards, whiteboards, and markers in this interactive activity that enhances engagement and vocabulary recall. The game effectively increases students' enthusiasm and motivation in learning English vocabulary (Fatmawati, Miranty, & Hamer, 2022). In line with this, (Hamer & Lely, 2019) emphasizes that the use of games such as Pictionary can foster

creativity, reduce students' anxiety, and provide meaningful contexts that help them recall and apply vocabulary more effectively. In line with this, (Hamer & Lely, 2019) emphasise that games like Pictionary enhance creativity, reduce anxiety, and provide meaningful contexts for better vocabulary retention and application. Language games make learning enjoyable while creating opportunities for active participation and communication essential for vocabulary development. This activity not only fosters students' creativity but also enhances their active engagement through the integration of visual, kinesthetic, and collaborative elements (Pratama & Ismawati, 2021). By combining multiple sensory modalities, it aligns with dual coding and embodied learning theories, which emphasize that learning is strengthened when verbal information is paired with visual and physical actions (Paivio, 2014; Glenberg, 2017).

Based on this description, conducting research on the use of Pictionary games to teach English vocabulary at the junior high school level is essential. This study is urgent because there is a need for innovative, engaging, and student-centered learning strategies to overcome the challenges of vocabulary acquisition in the 21st century (Putra & Rahmawati, 2021). This study is urgent because its findings have important implications for English language education, particularly in developing effective strategies to enhance vocabulary mastery. As students' engagement and enthusiasm increases, so does their motivation to learn. An active and fun classroom atmosphere greatly influences the language learning process, especially in the aspect of vocabulary acquisition. This means that teachers should try to make learning more interesting and fun, so students can enjoy learning and remember new words more easily. For future researchers, it is suggested to investigate more deeply which specific types of engaging activities such as games, songs, or interactive media are most effective in helping students understand and remember vocabulary. They can also study how these activities influence students' learning outcomes over time, not just in the short term.

II. Research Methods

The quasi-experimental design represents a research methodology employed to examine treatment effects while lacking random participant allocation across different groups. The main goal is to find out if the treatment actually causes changes in the outcomes, even though the groups aren't randomly chosen. As Cook (1979) explains in Abraham and Supriyati (2022), this type of research involves giving a treatment and measuring its effects without random group assignment. It's commonly used in education research where randomizing participants isn't practical or possible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research seeks to assess the efficacy of implementing Pictionary activities as a pedagogical approach for English vocabulary acquisition among middle school learners. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because the researcher used existing classes and was unable to randomly assign participants to experimental and control groups. A quasi-experimental design constitutes a research framework characterized by the non-random allocation of subjects into different experimental cohorts (Hastjarjo (2019). This design is commonly used in educational contexts where randomization is not feasible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study was conducted in Mts Al-Muttaqin rengging Junior High School, involving two eighth-grade classes, Class A and Class B, selected through purposive sampling. Class B functioned as the treatment cohort and obtained vocabulary instruction through Pictionary activities as the intervention. Conversely, Class A operated as the

comparison group and received vocabulary education via traditional pedagogical approaches.

The data collection tool employed consisted of a vocabulary assessment featuring multiple-choice items administered across two phases: initial testing and final testing, designed to evaluate learners' lexical competence prior to and following the implementation of the intervention. According to (Agustin et al., 2023) a multiple-choice test is an objective evaluation that provides several alternative answers for students to choose from. It consists of three main components: first, the stem in the form of a question or statement to be answered; second, answer options that include one correct answer among several alternatives; and third, distractors in the form of wrong answer options that are made to appear reasonable and relevant to the question. The reason for using multiple-choice tests is that they provide an objective and reliable measurement of students' vocabulary mastery, minimize scoring bias, and enable the evaluation of a broad range of learning outcomes within a limited time. Moreover, multiple-choice tests are easy to administer and score, making them practical for both teachers and researchers in assessing students' achievement. Initial assessments were administered to both cohorts prior to intervention implementation, while final evaluations were conducted following the treatment group's participation in vocabulary instruction through Pictionary activities across multiple instructional sessions.

The collected information underwent quantitative analysis through descriptive and inferential statistical methods. To evaluate efficacy, investigators employed t-test procedures (independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test) to contrast mean initial and final assessment scores across treatment and comparison cohorts, while also examining the statistical significance of Pictionary activities' impact on learners' vocabulary proficiency. According to (Kim & Kim, 2019) Independent Sample t-test is a statistical method used to compare the averages of two groups that are not interconnected (independent), for example, male and female groups, or class A and class B. This test aims to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two averages. This test aims to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two averages. Before using this test, it is important to ensure that the data comes from a normally distributed population and has a homogeneous variance. Independent Sample t-test is often used in experimental research, such as comparing pretest-posttest results between two groups with different treatments.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Findings

The research was conducted with two eighth-grade classes at MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging Junior High School, with Class B (experimental group) receiving vocabulary instruction through Pictionary game and Class A (control group) taught using conventional methods. Information gathering occurred across a four-week timeframe, during which vocabulary education was provided through six instructional meetings for both cohorts.

a. Normality Test

The normality assessment seeks to establish the data distribution pattern within the investigation by employing the Shapiro-Wilk test, given that the participant count falls below 100 subjects. Decision making is based on the significance value (p-value) Information is deemed to follow normal distribution when the significance level

exceeds 0.05, whereas a significance level below 0.05 suggests non-normal data distribution.

Table 1. Test of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Kelas	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Hasil	Pre_Eksperimen	.115	28	.200*	.962	28	.394
	Posttest_Eksperimen	.174	28	.029	.941	28	.114
	Pretest_Kontrol	.170	30	.027	.943	30	.109
	Posttest_Kontrol	.167	30	.032	.953	30	.199

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test significance values for the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test were 0.394 and 0.114, respectively, while the control group obtained significance values for the pre-test and post-test of 0.109 and 0.199. Since all significance levels exceed 0.05, it can be determined that both initial and final assessment data from each cohort follow normal distribution patterns.

b. Homogeneity Test

Homogeneity test are employed to establish variance equivalence across data sets in the treatment and comparison cohorts.

Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Value	Based on Mean	.072	1	56	.790
	Based on Median	.080	1	56	.778
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.080	1	55.998	.778
	Based on trimmed mean	.076	1	56	.784

The homogeneity test outcomes yielded a significance level Based on Mean of 0.790. A significance level surpassing 0.05 demonstrates that data variance across treatment and comparison cohorts exhibits homogeneity.

c. Independent Samples T-Test

Hypothesis evaluation was performed utilizing the Independent Sample T-test through SPSS version 25 for Windows application at a 0.05 significance threshold. A significance level below 0.05 signifies H_0 rejection and H_1 acceptance, while a significance level above 0.05 denotes H_0 acceptance and H_1 rejection.

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Nilai	Equal variances assumed	.072	.790	12.790	56	.000	17.767	1.389	14.984	20.549
	Equal variances not assumed			12.788	55.678	.000	17.767	1.389	14.983	20.550

The Independent Sample T-test outcomes reveal a significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. Since this value falls beneath the 0.05 significance threshold, H_0 undergoes rejection while H_1 receives acceptance. These results demonstrate a statistically significant distinction between treatment and comparison cohorts regarding performance enhancement.

d. Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Paired Sample T-test with SPSS version 25 for Windows software at a significance level of 0.05. A significance value of less than 0.05 indicates rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_1 , whereas a significance value of more than 0.05 indicates that H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected.

Table 4. Experimental Class

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest Eksperimen Posttest Eksperimen	-18.357	9.677	1.829	-22.110	-14.605	-10.038	27	.000	

The Paired Sample T-test generated a significance level (2-tailed) of 0.000. Since this value remains beneath the 0.05 significance threshold, H_0 experiences rejection while H_1 gains acceptance. This demonstrates a statistically significant distinction between pre-intervention and post-intervention conditions.

Table 5. Control Class

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Kontrol Posttest Kontrol	-18.833	10.242	1.870	-22.658	-15.009	-10.072	29	.000

The Paired Sample T-test produced a significance level (2-tailed) of 0.000. Given that this value falls under the 0.05 significance criterion, H_0 undergoes rejection while H_1 receives acceptance. This signifies a statistically meaningful distinction between pre-treatment and post-treatment measurements.

3. Additional

Table 6. Paired Directly Becomes 1

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Eksperimen Posttest Eksperimen	-18.357	9.677	1.829	-22.110	-14.605	-10.038	27	.000
Pair 2	Pretest Kontrol Posttest Kontrol	-18.833	10.242	1.870	-22.658	-15.009	-10.072	29	.000

The Paired Samples Test outcomes demonstrated statistically meaningful distinctions between initial and final assessment scores across both cohorts. Within the treatment group, mean scores rose by 18.357 points with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the intervention positively influenced academic performance enhancement. Likewise, the comparison group exhibited an average improvement of 18.833 points with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, both treatment and comparison cohorts achieved substantial academic progress despite receiving distinct instructional approaches.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics
Descriptives

	Kelas		Statistic	Std. Error
Results	Pre_Eksperimen	Mean	70.14	1.438
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	67.19
			Upper Bound	73.09
		Minimum	57	
		Maximum	87	
		Posttest_Eksperimen	Mean	88.50
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	86.44
			Upper Bound	90.56
	Minimum		77	
	Maximum		97	
	Pretest_Kontrol		Mean	51.90
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	49.32
			Upper Bound	54.48
		Minimum	40	
		Maximum	70	
		Posttest_Kontrol	Mean	70.73
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound		68.76	
	Upper Bound		72.70	
Minimum	60			
Maximum	83			

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, the pretest mean score of the experimental class was 70.14 with a score range of 57–87, and increased in the posttest to 88.50 with a range of 77–97. Meanwhile, the control class obtained a pretest mean of 51.90 with a range of 40–70, then increased in the posttest to 70.73 with a range of 60–83. These data showed an increase in both classes, however the increase in the experimental class was higher compared to the control class.

3.2 Discussion

Effectiveness of Pictionary Game in Vocabulary Learning

The results conclusively establish that Pictionary activities prove substantially superior to traditional pedagogical approaches in English vocabulary instruction for middle school learners. Following normality and homogeneity assessments, the research data satisfied prerequisites for subsequent t-test analysis. The independent sample t-test outcomes revealed a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), signifying a statistically meaningful distinction between the treatment cohort receiving Pictionary-based instruction and the comparison group utilizing conventional teaching strategies. This distinction

suggests that implementing Pictionary generates more substantial beneficial effects on learners' lexical development.

Additionally, paired sample t-test findings revealed statistically significant distinctions between initial and final assessment results across both treatment and comparison cohorts. Nevertheless, superior improvement was evident in the treatment group, achieving a mean final assessment score of 88.50, contrasted with the comparison group's average result of 70.73. This evidence confirms that Pictionary activities surpass traditional instructional approaches in facilitating learners' vocabulary comprehension and retention.

These outcomes align with investigations conducted by (Nurul Mufarida & Zunrudiana, 2025) which similarly demonstrated Pictionary's efficacy in enhancing elementary students' vocabulary acquisition. During their study at SDN Gajah 2, observational data indicated that pupils exhibited favorable reactions, displayed increased engagement, and demonstrated progressive vocabulary enhancement throughout successive sessions. The paired sample t-test results further validate these discoveries, where the calculated t-value (2.810) exceeded the critical t-value (2.160) at a 0.05 significance threshold. This substantiates that implementing Pictionary activities produces statistically significant improvements in learners' lexical proficiency.

The results of this investigation correspond with research outcomes by (Pranata et al., 2022) who examined Pictionary activities' impact on elementary pupils' vocabulary proficiency. Their discoveries reveal that incorporating Pictionary games can boost learners' dynamic engagement within educational activities, reinforce lexical retention, and cultivate educational enthusiasm through students' eager and constructive reactions during word-guessing and illustration tasks. Statistical analyses also demonstrated substantial improvement between initial and final assessments, with mean final scores surpassing initial measurements. This additional evidence confirms that utilizing educational games such as Pictionary proves effective not merely for vocabulary enhancement but also establishes an enjoyable, participatory, and stimulating educational atmosphere that promotes more dynamic student involvement in English language acquisition.

Theoretically, this success can be explained through the dual coding theory (Paivio, 2014), which emphasises that information is easier to understand and remember when presented in both verbal and visual forms. Paivio asserts that humans have separate working memory systems for verbal and visual information, so that information processing in both channels runs independently. Both working memories have limited capacity to process incoming information, but when information is presented verbally and visually, a stronger mental code is formed in response to the stimulus. It is this mental code that facilitates the learning process and helps students remember the material they have studied (Teguh Handoyo et al., 2024).

Another important aspect revealed in this study is the role of Pictionary in increasing students' motivation and engagement in learning English. Motivation is a key factor that determines the success of language learning. As noted by (Ndayisenga & Laos Mbato, 2024) motivation is strongly linked to learners' willingness to participate, sustain effort, and overcome difficulties in the learning process. When students are motivated, they are more likely to engage actively, practice consistently, and develop positive attitudes toward the target language. The use of Pictionary, by making vocabulary learning enjoyable and interactive, aligns with this view because it reduces students' anxiety, stimulates curiosity, and promotes collaboration among peers.

Through this approach, Pictionary activities extend beyond vocabulary enhancement to cultivate internal motivation, which proves crucial for sustained achievement in language

acquisition. By participating in illustration and identification exercises, learners simultaneously practice lexical skills while establishing social connections with classmates, fostering a cooperative educational setting that promotes both intellectual and emotional growth. This finding is in line with (Ismayilli et al., 2025) who emphasizes that vocabulary plays a central role in mastering a foreign language and should therefore be taught through varied and engaging approaches. He further argues that a lack of sufficient vocabulary limits students' ability to communicate effectively, while interactive strategies such as games can make vocabulary learning more meaningful and sustainable.

Thus, the implementation of Pictionary responds to this challenge by combining visual creativity with collaborative learning, ensuring that students not only acquire new words but also develop confidence and motivation to use them in real communication contexts. Ultimately, the integration of Pictionary into vocabulary teaching demonstrates that learning can be both academically effective and emotionally supportive. It addresses common challenges in English learning among junior high school students such as boredom, lack of confidence, and low engagement by transforming the classroom into an interactive and motivating space.

IV. Conclusion

Drawing from the research outcomes and analysis, it can be determined that implementing Pictionary activities demonstrates superior efficacy compared to traditional instructional approaches in enhancing learners' vocabulary proficiency. This conclusion is supported by the statistically meaningful distinction between treatment and comparison cohorts, alongside the elevated mean performance scores attained by the group receiving Pictionary-based instruction. Additionally, this game not only reinforces vocabulary retention but also fosters intrinsic motivation, increases active participation, reduces anxiety, and creates a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers utilise Pictionary as an alternative vocabulary learning strategy, schools provide support for the use of innovative creative media, and future researchers can expand this study to other educational levels or language skills to test its effectiveness more broadly.

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