The Effect of ABC Games on Vocabulary Mastery in Seventh Graders at MTs Mamba'ul Ulum Jurit

*[1]Eka Yulia Safitri, [2]Nurlaela Hasanah
[1]English Education Program, Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global, Indonesia
[2]English Education Program, Universitas Qomarul Huda Badaruddin Bagu, Indonesia

Co. Author Email: ekayuliasafitri@nusantaraglobal.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
	This study investigates the impact of the ABC game, a game-based learning method, on vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students at MTs Mamba'ul Ulum Jurit during the 2023/2024 academic year. Using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, the study was conducted over two cycles, each consisting of three learning sessions. The experimental group, consisting of 32 students, received instruction using the ABC game, while the control group, with 37 students, followed traditional vocabulary lessons. Data were collected through pretests and posttests to measure vocabulary mastery, as well as observational data to assess student engagement and participation. The results show a significant improvement in vocabulary scores for the experimental group, with an average increase from 59 in the pretest to 80 in the posttest, while the control group showed a more modest improvement. The findings suggest that game-based learning, specifically the ABC game, is an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition, increasing student engagement, and fostering a more dynamic and enjoyable learning environment. The study provides valuable insights for educators looking to incorporate innovative, interactive methods to improve language proficiency.

INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency plays a crucial role in achieving academic success, with vocabulary being one of the most fundamental aspects of mastering a new language. Vocabulary serves as the backbone of language acquisition, essential for speaking, reading, writing, and listening. A lack of a strong vocabulary foundation makes effective communication difficult (Thornbury, 2002). Many students, however, encounter significant challenges in acquiring vocabulary, such as remembering words, understanding their meanings in context, and using them appropriately in both speech and writing.

Traditional methods of language instruction, which often rely on rote memorization and passive learning, may not effectively engage students. This approach can result in reduced motivation and poor retention of new vocabulary. As a solution, educational games have gained popularity as a strategy to address these issues by offering a more interactive and enjoyable way to learn (Wakana, 2012). Games designed specifically to enhance vocabulary have been shown to not only increase student motivation but also encourage active participation in the learning process (Hadfield, 1987).

One approach to improving vocabulary mastery is through the use of game-based methods, particularly those designed with educational purposes in mind. These games can help students learn new words more dynamically and engagingly, making vocabulary acquisition both fun and effective. By integrating games into the learning process, students are more likely to remain motivated and retain the vocabulary they learn.

This study focuses on investigating the impact of ABC games—a specific game-based method aimed at improving the vocabulary skills-on seventh-grade students at MTs Mamba'ul Ulum Jurit. The research examines whether using the ABC game leads to higher levels of vocabulary mastery compared to traditional teaching methods. The study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of this game-based approach in enhancing students' vocabulary skills.

This research seeks to determine whether game-based learning can be a more effective way of mastering vocabulary by comparing the outcomes of students who participate in the ABC game with those who learn through conventional methods. The findings could offer valuable recommendations for educators looking to adopt innovative strategies that engage students and improve their language proficiency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, which is cyclical and involves stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted over two cycles, each consisting of three learning sessions. In each cycle, the experimental group received instruction using the ABC game method, while the control group was taught using traditional vocabulary lessons. The participants were 69 seventh-grade students from MTs Mamba'ul Ulum Jurit during the 2023/2024 academic year, with 32 students in the experimental group and 37 in the control group. Data collection involved vocabulary mastery tests administered at both the beginning (pretest) and end (posttest) of the study, as well as observational data to assess student engagement, participation, and response to the teaching methods. The pretest measured initial vocabulary mastery, while the posttest assessed vocabulary skill improvement. The tests, consisting of multiple-choice questions, evaluated both receptive (understanding) and productive (usage) vocabulary skills. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, to summarize group performance. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare pretest and posttest scores within each group, and an independent sample t-test was used to compare results between the experimental and control groups

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

The results of this classroom action research show a significant improvement in vocabulary mastery for the experimental group, which used the ABC game as a learning tool. The average pre-test score of the experimental group was 59, which increased to 80 by the end of Cycle 2. In contrast, the control group, which followed traditional methods, showed an increase from an average pre-test score of 93 to 90 by the end of Cycle 2.

Although no formal statistical tests, such as paired sample t-tests, were conducted, the data analysis suggests a noticeable improvement in the experimental group using the ABC game, indicating a positive impact on vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, the control group, using traditional methods, showed a more modest increase in scores.

Overall, this classroom action research indicates that the use of game-based learning methods has a more significant effect on improving students' vocabulary mastery compared to traditional teaching methods.

Table 1. Pretest and Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Average Score	Pre-Cycle	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	%
85 – 100 (Very Good)	59	68	80	35
75 – 84 (Good)	93	85	90	9
65 – 74 (Fair)	37	45	55	48
55 – 65 (Bad)	19	28	38	100

The data from this classroom action research suggest that the use of ABC games offers a more effective and engaging approach to learning vocabulary. The notable improvement in vocabulary scores throughout the cycles can be attributed to the interactive and dynamic nature of the ABC game, which actively involves students in the learning process.

Student Engagement and Motivation

Observations during the lessons revealed that students in the experimental group were more engaged and motivated. The game format created an atmosphere that was both competitive and enjoyable, encouraging students to participate actively. In contrast, students in the control group appeared more passive and less involved in the lesson. This observation is consistent with previous research that highlights the positive effects of educational games on student motivation and engagement.

The ABC game, through its use of letter-based challenges, encouraged students to recall and apply vocabulary more effectively. By associating words with letters, students were not only improving their vocabulary but also engaging in cognitive processes that helped reinforce the meanings and uses of words. The dynamic nature of the game fostered social interaction, as students worked in teams and collaborated to come up with correct words, which further enhanced their learning experience.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study align with previous research on the use of games for vocabulary learning. Wakana (2012) demonstrated the effectiveness of alphabet games in improving vocabulary among elementary students. This study extends that work by exploring the impact of ABC games in a junior high school setting and providing evidence of the effectiveness of such games in increasing vocabulary mastery. Additionally, the study contributes to the literature by comparing the use of games with traditional teaching methods, showing that games lead to better vocabulary acquisition outcomes.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant impact that game-based learning, specifically the ABC game, has on improving vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students. The experimental group, which used the ABC game as a learning tool, showed a marked improvement in vocabulary scores across two cycles, whereas the control group, which relied on traditional teaching methods, exhibited only a modest increase. These results underscore the effectiveness of the ABC game as an engaging and dynamic method for enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

The data suggest that the interactive nature of the ABC game played a key role in motivating students and facilitating active participation. Unlike traditional methods, which often rely on passive learning, the game-based approach encourages students to engage cognitively and socially. By associating words with letters and engaging in competitive yet collaborative tasks, students in the experimental group were more likely to recall and apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. This active involvement likely contributed to the higher retention and mastery of vocabulary, as students not only learned new words but also internalized their meanings through repeated usage and interaction with peers.

One of the most notable aspects of the ABC game was its ability to create a stimulating learning environment. The game's competitive elements and the opportunity for students to work in teams fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and excitement. This contrasts with the more passive nature of traditional lessons, where students may not feel as involved or motivated. The positive impact on student engagement and motivation aligns with previous research, such as Wakana (2012), which highlighted the benefits of educational games in promoting active learning.

The difference in engagement between the experimental and control groups was also evident in the observations conducted during the study. Students in the experimental group displayed more enthusiasm and eagerness to participate, while those in the control group appeared less engaged and showed a more passive approach to the lesson. This observation reinforces the idea that game-based learning methods can enhance student motivation, which in turn can lead to better academic outcomes.

Moreover, the results of this study suggest that the ABC game can serve as a valuable tool for teachers looking to adopt innovative and student-centered teaching methods. The game not only improved vocabulary mastery but also provided a more enjoyable and memorable learning experience. This shift from traditional methods to game-based learning can be a crucial step toward creating more effective and engaging classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the effectiveness of game-based learning, specifically the ABC game, in improving vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students. The results demonstrate a significant improvement in vocabulary scores for students who participated in the game-based learning method, compared to those taught using traditional methods. The interactive and engaging nature of the ABC game not only fostered increased student participation but also enhanced motivation and retention of vocabulary. These findings suggest that game-based learning approaches, like the ABC game, offer a more effective and enjoyable alternative to traditional vocabulary instruction, benefiting both students' language acquisition and overall learning experience.

RECOMMENDATION

Future research could examine the long-term effects of game-based learning on vocabulary retention, which would provide valuable insights into whether the improvements in vocabulary mastery observed in the experimental group are sustained over time. A longitudinal study would be useful in determining whether the benefits of game-based learning diminish once the intervention is over, or if students continue to retain the vocabulary they learned through games. This would allow for a deeper understanding of the lasting impact of game-based approaches compared to traditional methods.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to compare the effectiveness of different game-based learning strategies. While this study focused on the ABC game, there are many other

game formats that may yield different results in vocabulary acquisition. Research could explore how the ABC game compares to other educational games, such as word association or digital vocabulary games, across different groups of students. Furthermore, exploring the effects of game-based learning on students with varying learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners, could provide valuable insights into how to customize game-based methods for diverse classroom settings.

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