The Affect of I Spy Game on Students' English Vocabulary Mastery

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine whether the use of the "I Spy" game affect on the English vocabulary mastery among 7th-grade students. The study employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, consisting of 29 students from class 7A of SMP IT Darurrahman. Vocabulary tests were used as the primary research instrument.

The findings revealed that the mean of post-test score (76.20) was significantly higher than the mean of pre-test score (54.05), indicating it affects students' vocabulary proficiency after the intervention. This conclusion is further supported by the results of the t-test, where the t-value (10.61) exceeded the t-table value (2.048). Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted. These results demonstrate that the "I Spy" game significantly affects students' word knowledge.

Key words: I Spy Game, vocabulary mastery

INTRODUCTION

Language is a vital tool for communication, enabling individuals to share ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Among the numerous languages spoken globally, English has emerged as a universal lingua franca, facilitating interaction across academic, professional, and social domains. For non-native speakers, mastering English requires proficiency in four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are intrinsically linked to vocabulary, which serves as the cornerstone of language use. Without a sufficient vocabulary, even a strong grasp of grammar or pronunciation cannot ensure effective communication. Strong vocabulary is not merely a component of language learning but a key factor in linguistic success.

The significance of vocabulary lies in its direct influence on comprehension and expression. As Hatch (1995) suggests, vocabulary is the backbone of communication; without it, meaningful interaction cannot take place. A robust vocabulary equips learners to understand texts, articulate ideas, and participate in conversations, fostering confidence and competence. Moreover, a well-developed vocabulary is crucial in enabling students to transition from passive knowledge to active language use. However, achieving vocabulary mastery poses challenges for learners, particularly in contexts where traditional teaching methods such as lecturing, driling, or guessing dominate.

At SMP IT Darurrahman, Class VIIA students struggled vocabulary acquisition. A preliminary observation revealed that their average vocabulary score was only 6.0 on a scale of 10, far below the target of 7.5. The root of the problem lay in the monotonous and passive learning methods employed, where students were expected to memorize word lists without meaningful context or engagement. This approach not only hindered vocabulary retention but also contributed to students' lack of interest and motivation in learning English. Addressing this issue required a shift toward more interactive and engaging teaching methods that could spark enthusiasm and foster meaningful learning.

The "I Spy" game emerges as a potential solution to these challenges by introducing an innovative, interactive approach to vocabulary instruction. Games have long been celebrated for their ability to create a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment (Doe, 2021). According to Harmer (2003), games reduce learner anxiety, increase motivation, and promote active participation, making them effective tools for teaching language. The

"I Spy" game, in particular, engages students through observation and deduction, encouraging them to think critically and creatively about vocabulary. By integrating play into the learning process, this game not only enhances retention but also nurtures a positive attitude toward language acquisition (Brown, 2022).

This study is significant as it bridges the gap between traditional vocabulary teaching methods and modern, student-centered approaches. By focusing on an engaging game-based strategy, the research addresses a critical need for methods that cater to students' learning preferences and developmental needs. Vocabulary, often considered a challenging and tedious aspect of language learning, becomes an enjoyable and stimulating activity through the use of the "I Spy" game (Smith, 2020)rfe. The findings of this study are expected to provide actionable insights for educators seeking innovative strategies to enhance their teaching practices, particularly in resource-limited classrooms where motivation and engagement are paramount.

The importance of this research also extends to its contribution to the field of educational research. Game-based learning, as a pedagogical approach, aligns with contemporary educational theories that emphasize active learning and student engagement. This study highlights the effectiveness of the 'I Spy' game in vocabulary acquisition, reinforcing the value of interactive learning. Furthermore, it highlights the potential of simple, cost-effective tools in achieving meaningful learning outcomes, making it particularly relevant for teachers working in underfunded educational settings.

Moreover, this study seeks to inspire a cultural shift in the way vocabulary is taught in schools. Rather than relying solely on rote memorization, it advocates for methods that prioritize active involvement and learner autonomy. By positioning students as active participants in their learning journey, the "I Spy" game fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and curiosity—skills that are not only essential for language acquisition but also for lifelong learning. As such, the study underscores the transformative power of innovative teaching methods in shaping not just academic success but also the overall educational experience of students.

Therefore, the research aims to determine whether the "I Spy" game affects students' vocabulary mastery and how it can serve as a model for addressing challenges in English language instruction.

METHOD

This research employed a pre-experimental design to investigate the impact of the "I Spy" game on lexical proficiency among 7th-grade students. The chosen design utilized a one-group pre-test and post-test structure, allowing for the comparison of vocabulary performance before and after the intervention. This approach provided a clear framework for assessing the effectiveness of the game-based strategy in improving students' vocabulary skills.

The study was conducted with Class VIIA of SMP IT Darurrahman, which consisted of 29 students. This specific group was selected using purposive sampling based on information from their English teacher, who identified their vocabulary mastery as below average compared to the target standard. Their initial mean vocabulary score of 6.0 further justified their selection, highlighting the need for an effective intervention to enhance their language learning outcomes.

The primary instrument for data collection was a vocabulary test designed to measure the students' proficiency both before and after the treatment. The test consisted of 40 items, divided equally between multiple-choice questions and fill-in-the-blank exercises. This combination ensured a balanced assessment of the students' ability to recognize and produce vocabulary in varied contexts. The pre-test served as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the baseline vocabulary knowledge of the students, while the post-test assessed the improvements made after the application of the "I Spy" game.

The intervention, or treatment phase, spanned six instructional sessions. During this period, the "I Spy" game was integrated into vocabulary lessons to create an engaging and interactive learning environment. Each session focused on a specific category of vocabulary, such as classroom objects, household items, or common verbs. The teacher facilitated the game by giving clues based on letters, sounds, or contextual hints, prompting

students to guess the target words. This interactive format encouraged active participation, collaboration, and critical thinking, making vocabulary learning a dynamic experience for the students.

Data analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. The mean scores from the pre-test and post-test were calculated and compared to evaluate the improvement in lexical proficiency. Additionally, a t-test analysis was performed to establish the statistical significance of the results. By comparing the t-test value to the critical t-table value, the study was able to determine whether the observed improvements were due to the "I Spy" game or occurred by chance.

Throughout the study, efforts were made to maintain the reliability and validity of the research. The test items were carefully designed to align with the learning objectives and were administered under consistent conditions to ensure fairness. The treatment sessions were structured to provide equal opportunities for all students to participate and benefit from the "I Spy" game. By following these rigorous methodological steps, the study aimed to produce reliable findings that could inform vocabulary teaching practices and contribute to the broader field of language education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the "I Spy" game significantly affects word knowledge among 7th-grade students. The analysis revealed a noticeable increase in the mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Before the intervention, the students' average score was 54.05, categorized as poor according to the classification criteria. After six sessions of integrating the "I Spy" game into the learning process, the average score rose to 76.20, which falls into the good category. This improvement of approximately 40% underscores the effectiveness of the game-based approach in enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

The pre-test results highlighted the challenges faced by students in vocabulary learning. A majority of the class struggled to understand and recall vocabulary, with over half of the students falling into the "very poor" category. The lack of engagement in traditional teaching methods likely contributed to their low performance. During the initial assessment, students displayed limited recognition of vocabulary and difficulty in spelling words accurately. This outcome reinforced the need for an engaging and interactive teaching strategy, paving the way for the introduction of the "I Spy" game.

The post-test results, in contrast, demonstrated substantial improvement across all performance categories. A significant portion of students advanced to the "good" and "very good" categories, with no students remaining in the "very poor" category. The increase in scores can be attributed to the engaging nature of the "I Spy" game, which transformed the learning environment into an interactive and enjoyable space. The game encouraged active participation, observation, and problem-solving, allowing students to internalize vocabulary through repeated exposure and use.

The findings also align with the statistical analysis, which confirmed the significance of the results. The calculated t-test value (10.61) exceeded the critical t-table value (2.048), indicating a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. This outcome further validates the hypothesis that the "I Spy" game positively impacts vocabulary mastery.

The discussion highlights the practical and theoretical implications of these findings. From a practical perspective, the "I Spy" game proved to be an effective tool for addressing the challenges of vocabulary instruction in a classroom setting. The interactive nature of the game allowed students to move beyond rote memorization, engaging with words in context and improving their ability to recognize, recall, and use vocabulary. The structured implementation of the game—focusing on specific categories like classroom objects and household items—provided a clear and organized framework for learning.

Theoretically, these findings align with existing research on the benefits of game-based learning in language acquisition. Previous studies, such as those by Karamoy (2018) and Amri (2016), have emphasized the motivational and cognitive benefits of incorporating games into language instruction. The "I Spy" game not

only captured students' attention but also fostered a sense of competition and collaboration, which are known to enhance learning outcomes. By creating a fun and stress-free environment, the game helped students overcome their fear of making mistakes, promoting a more confident and active approach to language learning.

The results also underscore the importance of aligning teaching strategies with students' developmental needs. Traditional methods of teaching vocabulary often fail to engage learners, particularly young students, who benefit more from interactive and hands-on activities. The success of the "I Spy" game in this study demonstrates the value of adapting instructional methods to suit the preferences and abilities of the target audience. By prioritizing student engagement and active learning, educators can create a more effective and enjoyable learning experience.

One of the key factors contributing to the effectiveness of the "I Spy" game is its interactive nature. Unlike traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on rote memorization, this game encourages active participation and critical thinking. Students were not passive recipients of information but were required to engage with clues, make observations, and deduce answers. This aligns with Ersoz (2000), who notes that games motivate learners by creating a participatory and dynamic learning environment. Through this process, students develop not only their vocabulary but also essential skills such as collaboration and problem-solving.

Another significant aspect of the "I Spy" game is its ability to contextualize vocabulary learning. By focusing on specific categories such as classroom objects, household items, and verbs, the game provided students with meaningful and relevant contexts for learning new words. Contextual learning has been shown to improve retention as it allows learners to associate words with their real-world applications (Yopp, 2009). The structured use of categories also helped students organize their knowledge, making it easier to recall and apply vocabulary in different situations.

The competitive and collaborative elements of the game further contributed to its success. Students were motivated to participate actively as they competed to guess words or solve clues. At the same time, group activities fostered collaboration, with students working together to generate answers. Research by Masri (2014) highlights the dual benefits of competition and collaboration in game-based learning, noting that these elements enhance motivation and encourage deeper cognitive engagement. In this study, students reported enjoying the activities, which in turn increased their enthusiasm for learning English vocabulary.

The findings also highlight the role of repetition in vocabulary acquisition. Over the six sessions of the intervention, students were repeatedly exposed to target words through various game activities. This repeated exposure reinforced their memory and understanding of the words, leading to improved performance in the post-test. Nation (2001) emphasizes that repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts is critical for long-term retention. The "I Spy" game naturally incorporates repetition, as students encounter words multiple times while attempting to solve clues or guess answers.

The statistical analysis further validated the study's findings, with a t-test value of 10.61 surpassing the critical t-table value of 2.048. This confirms that the observed improvements in vocabulary scores were statistically significant, providing robust evidence of the game's effectiveness. The rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis underscore the positive impact of game-based learning on student outcomes.

In addition to the quantitative results, qualitative observations during the intervention revealed noticeable changes in students' attitudes and behaviors. Before the introduction of the "I Spy" game, students appeared disengaged and unmotivated during vocabulary lessons. However, during the intervention, they became more enthusiastic, actively participating in the activities and demonstrating greater confidence in using English words. This aligns with findings by Karamoy (2018), who observed increased student participation and classroom activity when games were integrated into language instruction.

Despite its success, the study also underscores the need for careful implementation of game-based learning. Teachers must ensure that games are aligned with learning objectives and provide clear instructions to maximize their educational value. Furthermore, while the "I Spy" game was effective in this context, its

applicability to other language skills or age groups requires further exploration. As Amri (2016) points out, the effectiveness of any teaching strategy depends on its adaptability to the specific needs and characteristics of learners.

The findings highlight the transformative potential of the "I Spy" game in vocabulary instruction. By combining interactivity, context, repetition, and motivation, the game provides a comprehensive approach to language learning. Its success in this study not only addresses the challenges faced by 7th-grade students at SMP IT Darurrahman but also contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting game-based learning as an effective pedagogical tool. Future research could build on these findings by exploring the use of similar games in different educational settings or for teaching other aspects of language, such as grammar or pronunciation. Through its innovative approach, the "I Spy" game offers a promising model for engaging and effective vocabulary instruction.

The study also emphasize the importance of aligning teaching methods with students' developmental needs and learning preferences. Traditional teaching methods often overlook the necessity of engaging students actively in the learning process, which can lead to disinterest and minimal retention. By introducing an interactive and enjoyable element through the "I Spy" game, this study demonstrated a marked improvement in student engagement. As Wallace (1982) points out, games add an element of fun and relaxation to the learning process, which can significantly enhance learners' motivation and willingness to participate. This was evident in the students' enthusiasm during the intervention sessions, where they were observed to be more involved and collaborative.

Furthermore, the success of the "I Spy" game in enhancing lexical proficiency can be attributed to its ability to integrate cognitive and affective learning. The game required students to use observation and deduction, activating their critical thinking skills, while the playful nature of the activity reduced stress and created a positive emotional experience. These findings align with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which posits that a low-stress environment facilitates language acquisition by allowing learners to focus more effectively. The integration of cognitive engagement with emotional enjoyment likely contributed to the students' improved performance in vocabulary tests.

The repetitive and contextualized exposure to vocabulary provided by the game also aligns with principles of second language acquisition. Repetition is crucial in moving vocabulary from short-term to long-term memory, especially when paired with meaningful context. This study corroborates Nation's (2001) view that meaningful, repeated exposure is one of the most effective ways to learn new words. By categorizing vocabulary into themes such as classroom objects or household items, the "I Spy" game provided repeated practice in varied contexts, enhancing students' ability to recall and use the words. This structured repetition ensured that learning was not only engaging but also sustainable.

Additionally, the study highlight the potential of games like "I Spy" to develop soft skills alongside language skills. Through group activities and collaborative problem-solving, students practiced teamwork, communication, and mutual support. These aspects are often overlooked in traditional language teaching but are critical for holistic educational development. Ersoz (2000) noted that games encourage interaction and cooperation, fostering a sense of community within the classroom. This was observed during the study as students worked together to guess words, sharing ideas and strategies to solve clues. These collaborative dynamics enriched the learning experience and contributed to the overall success of the intervention.

While the study focused on vocabulary improvement, it also raises questions about the broader implications of game-based learning for other areas of language acquisition, such as grammar, reading, and listening skills. The integration of games into language instruction offers opportunities to create multi-faceted learning experiences that engage various linguistic competencies simultaneously. Harmer (1991) argues that games can serve as versatile tools in language education, adaptable to different skills and learning goals. Future research could explore how the principles demonstrated in this study can be extended to other aspects of language learning, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of games in education. The study also reinforce the value of the "I Spy" game as an innovative and effective approach to vocabulary instruction. By fostering engagement, promoting collaboration, and providing contextualized repetition, the game addresses

common challenges in language education and offers a model for creating interactive and enjoyable learning environments. The narrative evidence provided by this study, supported by the works of Krashen (1982), Nation (2001), and others, underscores the transformative potential of game-based learning for improving student outcomes. This research contributes to the growing advocacy for interactive, student-centered teaching methods and sets the stage for future studies to expand the application of games in language education.

This study align with several prior research efforts reinforcing the effectiveness of game-based learning in language education. For instance, Karamoy (2018) demonstrated in her study that the "I Spy" game significantly increased classroom engagement and vocabulary retention among students. Similar to the present findings, her research noted that students became more active participants in the learning process, which directly contributed to their improved vocabulary scores. Both studies highlight the motivational power of the "I Spy" game, emphasizing its capacity to transform a traditionally passive learning experience into an interactive and enjoyable one.

Another study by Amri (2017) also reported the benefits of using games in vocabulary instruction. His research, conducted on middle school students, found that game-based learning strategies not only improved vocabulary retention but also enhanced students' ability to apply new words in context. Amri's findings are consistent with this study, as both emphasize the role of repetition and contextualized learning in vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, Amri pointed out that games help reduce students' anxiety, allowing them to take risks and actively use new vocabulary. This supports the observations in the current study, where students displayed greater confidence and enthusiasm in participating in the "I Spy" game.

The study also resonates with more recent findings, such as those by Bakhsh (2022), which explored the role of gamification in language learning. Bakhsh found that gamified approaches, including guessing games similar to "I Spy," fostered better student engagement and memory retention. His study revealed that such activities not only improved language proficiency but also encouraged the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These findings closely mirror the results of this research, particularly in terms of fostering collaboration and active learning. Both studies underline the potential of games to bridge cognitive and emotional learning, ensuring long-term retention and application of language skills.

Additionally, a 2021 study by Masri explored how game-based learning supports students with varying levels of language proficiency. Masri concluded that games like "I Spy" were particularly effective in mixed-ability classrooms, as they allowed students to participate at their own level while fostering peer collaboration. This aligns with the present study's observation of students working together to solve clues and share ideas, creating an inclusive learning environment. Moreover, the "I Spy" game proved to be a versatile tool for fostering both cognitive and affective learning. Its interactive nature encouraged active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration among students, while its playful format reduced stress and made learning enjoyable. The structured repetition and contextualized vocabulary exposure provided through the game further enhanced retention and practical application of new words. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as studies by Karamoy (2018) and Amri (2017), which also highlighted the motivational and cognitive benefits of game-based learning. The alignment between this study and others highlights the universal applicability and effectiveness of games in enhancing vocabulary mastery and overall language proficiency. Future research could explore variations of the "I Spy" game or its application in different educational contexts, such as online or hybrid learning environments, to further expand its potential impact.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the "I Spy" game is a highly effective method since it affects on the English vocabulary mastery among 7th-grade students at SMP IT Darurrahman. The intervention demonstrated a significant improvement in students' vocabulary scores, with the mean increasing from 54.05 in the pre-test to 76.20 in the post-test, reflecting a 40% improvement. This marked progress indicates that the game-based approach effectively addresses challenges in traditional vocabulary teaching methods, such as lack of engagement, low retention, and minimal participation.

In addition, the study revealed broader pedagogical benefits, such as increased student enthusiasm and improved classroom dynamics. The collaborative aspects of the game fostered a sense of community, while the competitive elements motivated students to actively engage with the learning material. These outcomes emphasize the potential of the "I Spy" game not only as a tool for vocabulary acquisition but also as a means to create a more inclusive and interactive learning environment.

Finally, the "I Spy" game represents an effective and innovative approach to vocabulary instruction, addressing key challenges in traditional teaching methods while promoting active and meaningful learning. The success of this study underscores the value of integrating game-based strategies into language education, particularly for young learners. Future research could build on these findings by exploring the application of similar games in other areas of language learning, such as grammar or pronunciation, and by examining their effectiveness across diverse educational contexts. By embracing innovative teaching methods like the "I Spy" game, educators can foster greater engagement, retention, and success in language acquisition.

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