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Increasing Vocabulary Mastery Through Kahoot: A Classroom Action Research at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa melalui pemanfaatan Kahoot! sebagai alat pembelajaran interaktif di SMP Bhakti Pertiwi. Masalah pokok yang mendasari penelitian ini adalah tingkat penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris yang rendah, yang berdampak negatif pada kemampuan komunikasi siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) berdasarkan model Kemmis dan McTaggart, yang meliputi empat tahapan utama: perencanaan, pelaksanaan tindakan, observasi, serta refleksi. Subjek penelitian melibatkan 26 siswa kelas VIII. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kosakata, observasi terhadap aktivitas belajar siswa, dan kuesioner respons siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan nilai rata-rata penguasaan kosakata. Nilai tersebut naik dari 58,2 pada pra-siklus menjadi 72,6 pada siklus I. Selanjutnya, nilai tersebut meningkat lagi menjadi 84,1 pada siklus II. Di samping itu, motivasi dan partisipasi siswa dalam proses pembelajaran mengalami peningkatan yang signifikan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa implementasi media Kahoot! efektif untuk memperkuat penguasaan kosakata. Lebih lanjut, media ini juga mampu menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang lebih aktif dan menarik. Oleh karena itu, implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa media pembelajaran berbasis permainan seperti Kahoot! dapat diintegrasikan secara efektif ke dalam kurikulum bahasa Inggris di jenjang sekolah menengah. Integrasi ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan retensi kosakata.

This study aimed to increase students' vocabulary proficiency by utilizing Kahoot! as an interactive learning tool at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi. It addressed the core issue of inadequate English vocabulary mastery, which impeded students' effective communication skills. The research employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model by Kemmis and McTaggart, conducted across four phases: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Participants included 26 eighth-grade students. Data collection involved vocabulary tests, classroom activity observations, and student feedback surveys. Results demonstrated a marked increase in average vocabulary scores, rising from 58.2 in the pre-cycle to 72.6 in Cycle I and further to 84.1 in Cycle II. Additionally, students' motivation and participation exhibited substantial enhancements. These outcomes indicated that Kahoot! integration effectively bolstered vocabulary acquisition and created a more dynamic and engaging English learning atmosphere. Consequently, the findings suggest that game-based educational platforms, such as Kahoot!, can be seamlessly incorporated into middle school English curricula to promote greater student involvement and enhance vocabulary retention.

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INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in the English language holds a crucial position in navigating the demands of globalization and technological progress in the 21st century. A key element in achieving English mastery is vocabulary acquisition, which serves as the cornerstone for the four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing Nation (2022). However, vocabulary proficiency among Indonesian students continues to be suboptimal. The EF English Proficiency Index EF EPI (2024) places Indonesia at 73rd out of 113 countries, classifying it as a nation with low proficiency. This underscores persistent challenges in school-based English instruction, especially regarding vocabulary development.

Several contributors to this low vocabulary proficiency include diminished learning motivation, repetitive teaching methods, and insufficient use of digital tools that promote active student involvement Devitriana & Wijirahayu (2025). Educational approaches reliant on rote memorization frequently lead to disinterest and passive classroom behavior among students (Ashar, Khartha, Abin, & Suryadi, 2022). Therefore, innovative strategies are essential, incorporating play, collaboration, and technology to boost active participation.

Kahoot!, an interactive quiz platform accessible through mobile devices or computers, emerges as an effective tool for game-based learning. It merges competitive and entertaining elements, fostering a more vibrant and inclusive learning atmosphere Penton (2025). Prior research has shown that Kahoot! implementation can markedly elevate learning achievements and student drive Shofiana et al. (2025). Moreover, this gamified method prompts rapid thinking, contextual vocabulary comprehension, and interaction within an enjoyable setting Afandi et al (2025).

Classroom action research by Widiyanti & Maulana (2025) indicated heightened student involvement and enthusiasm after integrating educational gaming in language teaching. Comparable results were reported by (Patmala, K., & Wisran, 2025), who found that activity-oriented RAFT strategies could improve engagement and motivation in EFL learners at the madrasah level. These insights affirm the promise of game-based tools like Kahoot! in facilitating efficient, cooperative, and pleasurable English learning.

Preliminary observations at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi reveal persistent deficiencies in students' English vocabulary proficiency. Many students struggle with grasping word meanings and their proper application in sentences. This issue is compounded by traditional teacher-centered methods that emphasize memorization, leading to passive attitudes and reduced motivation for active English engagement. In response, adopting an innovative and interactive learning strategy is imperative to elevate motivation and involvement in vocabulary mastery.

Nevertheless, existing studies have largely concentrated on elementary or senior high school contexts, with limited exploration of Kahoot!'s efficacy in junior high school English instruction, particularly in semi-urban settings. To fill this void, this study utilized the Kemmis and McTaggart Classroom Action Research (CAR) model to enhance vocabulary proficiency via Kahoot! at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi.

Specifically, the research objectives were to: (1) delineate the implementation process of Kahoot! in advancing vocabulary mastery; and (2) assess shifts in student motivation and participation throughout the learning activities. Theoretically, these outcomes are anticipated to advance more impactful and pertinent technology-integrated English teaching approaches for junior secondary learners.

METHOD

This study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach with the objective of enhancing students' English vocabulary mastery through the implementation of the interactive learning medium Kahoot!. The CAR design is adapted from the spiral model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), encompassing four sequential core components: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted over two cycles, with each cycle consisting of two sessions, each lasting 2 × 40 minutes.

The participants in this study comprised 26 eighth-grade students at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi for the 2025/2026 academic year. Subject selection was based on initial observations indicating relatively low levels of English vocabulary mastery among the students. Research activities were carried out

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collaboratively between the English subject teacher and the researcher, with a primary focus on refining the learning process and improving learning outcomes through the utilization of the interactive medium Kahoot! as a supportive tool for teaching and learning activities.

Research Procedure

This research procedure adapts the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), consisting of four cyclical stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

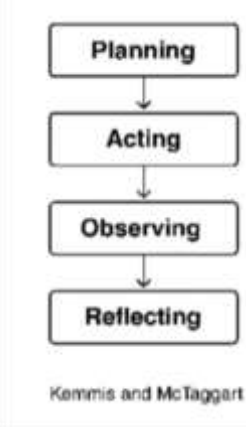

Figure 1. Stages of Classroom Action Research according to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988)

1. Planning: In the initial stage, the researcher collaborates with the subject teacher to formulate a learning design to be implemented using the interactive medium Kahoot!. Planning encompasses the development of teaching materials and the creation of digital quizzes based on Descriptive Text Vocabulary content. The quiz consists of 20 multiple-choice questions designed to assess comprehension of meaning, usage, and context of vocabulary in descriptive sentences.
2. Action Implementation (Acting): The teacher executes the learning process in accordance with the prepared plan. Students participate in Kahoot! activities using their respective devices, either individually or in groups, to answer the provided questions in real time.
3. Observation (Observing): During the activities, the researcher conducts systematic observations of student engagement, enthusiasm, and emerging forms of interaction among learners. Observations also record how Kahoot! influences classroom dynamics and student responses to the material.
4. Reflection (Reflecting): After the completion of learning activities, the researcher and teacher analyze the test results, observation sheets, and student response questionnaires. The reflection stage aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented actions and identify necessary improvements for subsequent cycles to enhance learning outcomes and student participation.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study encompass several methods, namely:

1. Learning outcome tests, in the form of pretest and posttest, are employed to measure improvements in students' vocabulary mastery abilities before and after the implementation of actions.
2. Observation sheets are utilized to record student engagement, enthusiasm, and participation during learning activities using the Kahoot! medium.
3. Student response questionnaires are distributed to obtain data regarding students' perceptions, motivation, and learning experiences with the application of digital game-based learning.

Instruments and Data Analysis Techniques

The test instrument was developed based on vocabulary mastery indicators aligned with the basic competencies of the junior high school English curriculum. The test consists of 20 multiple-choice items with a maximum score of 100.

Quantitative data from the test results were analyzed using formulas for mean scores and learning mastery percentages as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \Sigma x / N$$

Explanation:

1. $\bar{x}$ = mean value
2. Σx = sum of all student values
3. N = total number of students

The percentage of mastery is calculated using the formula:

$$P = (F / N) \times 100\%$$

Explanation:
1. P = percentage of learning mastery
2. F = number of students achieving a score ≥ Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM)
3. N = total number of students

The Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) for the English language subject is set at 75. Learning is deemed successful if there is a minimum increase of 10 points in the average score between the pre-cycle and Cycle II, and at least 80% of students achieve a score ≥ 75.

Meanwhile, data from observations and questionnaires are analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as described by Miles, Matthew B.; Huberman, A. Michael; Saldaña (2004).

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study employs methodological triangulation, involving the comparison of results from three data sources: learning outcome tests, observations, and student questionnaires. All instruments have been validated by experts in English language teaching at the junior high school level to ascertain the appropriateness of content, language, and context to the characteristics of the learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, each comprising four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Research data were obtained through vocabulary mastery tests, observation sheets of student learning activities, and student response questionnaires to the use of the interactive learning media Kahoot!.

Observation Results for Each Cycle

Pre-Cycle

The initial observation activities were conducted to ascertain the extent of the vocabulary mastery abilities of eighth-grade students at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi prior to the implementation of any interventions. The findings revealed that the majority of students were not yet capable of optimally comprehending and utilizing vocabulary. The learning process remained predominantly unidirectional, with the teacher serving as the central figure in the instructional activities, while students merely received explanations without substantial participation.

This situation adversely affected students' abilities to recognize word meanings, recall word forms, and employ them accurately in sentences. Most students memorized vocabulary lists without grasping the contextual usage, leading to rapid forgetting and difficulties in applying them during speaking or writing activities. Furthermore, the instructional media employed were limited to textbooks and written exercises, thereby failing to maximize student interest and engagement.

Table 1. Pre-Cycle Observation Results

Category	Total Students	Percentage (%)
Students capable of comprehending and utilizing vocabulary effectively	5	19
Students adequately comprehending vocabulary but not yet employing it accurately	6	23
Students experiencing difficulties in understanding vocabulary meanings	8	31
Students struggling to recall or pronounce new vocabulary	7	27

Based on these results, it can be concluded that students' vocabulary proficiency remains relatively low. The average score obtained during the pre-cycle phase was 67.3, with 11 out of 26 students (42.3%) successfully attaining the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). This condition underscores the necessity for innovative instructional strategies that can captivate student interest while facilitating better comprehension and retention of vocabulary. Consequently, interventions in subsequent cycles were

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designed to incorporate the interactive learning media Kahoot! as an endeavor to enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

Cycle I

In Cycle I, the teacher commenced the implementation of the digital learning media Kahoot! as a tool for vocabulary practice to render the learning process more engaging and challenging. The utilization of Kahoot! was anticipated to assist students in augmenting their vocabulary proficiency through interactive quiz activities that promote active involvement among all learners. The activity stages in this cycle encompassed:

1. Planning: The teacher prepared a Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP) incorporating the use of Kahoot! media for the Descriptive Vocabulary material. Quiz questions were formulated at a moderate difficulty level and aligned with the previously studied topics.
2. Acting: Activities were conducted over two sessions. Students participated in vocabulary quizzes using their respective devices, either individually or in groups. The teacher assumed the role of facilitator, guiding the quiz proceedings and providing feedback on each response.
3. Observing: Throughout the activities, the teacher documented student participation levels, their ability to answer questions, and common errors in understanding word meanings or usage.
4. Reflecting: The observation outcomes indicated an increase in student enthusiasm and activity, although certain technical challenges persisted, such as internet connectivity issues and variations in response speeds.

Table 2. Cycle I Observation Results

Category	Total Students	Percentage (%)
Students capable of comprehending and utilizing vocabulary effectively	10	38
Students adequately comprehending vocabulary but not yet consistent in its application	9	35
Students experiencing difficulties in understanding vocabulary meanings	5	19
Students struggling to recall or pronounce new vocabulary	2	8

The formative test results at the conclusion of Cycle I demonstrated a reasonably significant improvement compared to the pre-cycle phase. The class average score rose to 75.8, with 19 out of 26 students (73.1%) successfully attaining the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). These data indicate that the implementation of Kahoot! was effective in enhancing students' comprehension of vocabulary and encouraging greater active participation in the learning process. Nevertheless, further refinements are required in aspects such as time management and support for students encountering technical difficulties to optimize learning outcomes in subsequent cycles.

Cycle II

Cycle II was implemented as a follow-up to the reflection outcomes from Cycle I. Primary improvements were made in time management, assistance for students facing technical challenges, and adjustments to the difficulty level of questions to align with students' abilities and developmental progress. Additionally, the teacher incorporated small-group discussion activities to reinforce comprehension of the studied vocabulary through peer collaboration. The activity stages in this cycle encompassed:

1. Planning: The teacher revised the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP) by adding peer discussion activities following the Kahoot! quiz sessions to enable students to collectively discuss word meanings and usage. Quiz questions were also updated with more challenging contextual variations while remaining pertinent to the learning topics.
2. Acting: The learning process spanned two sessions. Each session commenced with the introduction of new vocabulary through group activities, followed by Kahoot! quizzes to directly assess student comprehension.
3. Observing: The teacher recorded enhancements in student engagement, abilities to employ vocabulary in sentences, and accuracy in answering questions. Nearly all students were able to participate effectively without significant technical impediments.

4. Reflecting: Based on the observations and analyses, there was evident consistent progress in vocabulary mastery as well as increased student confidence in utilizing English.

Table 3. Cycle II Observation Results

Category	Total Students	Percentage (%)
Students capable of comprehending and utilizing vocabulary effectively	18	69
Students adequately comprehending vocabulary and able to apply it with contextual assistance	4	15
Students experiencing difficulties in understanding vocabulary meanings	2	8
Students struggling to recall or pronounce new vocabulary	2	8

The formative test results at the end of Cycle II indicated significant improvements compared to the previous cycle. The class average score reached 82.6, with 23 out of 26 students (88.5%) successfully attaining the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). This signifies that the application of Kahoot! media, combined with group discussions, was effective in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. Students not only demonstrated the ability to recognize vocabulary meanings but also to employ them appropriately in sentences and relevant contexts. Overall, Kahoot!-based learning proved capable of fostering a more active, collaborative, and meaningful learning environment.

Recapitulation of Observation Results for Each Cycle

The observation results reveal consistent improvements from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. The implementation of Kahoot! proved effective in enhancing student activity, motivation, and self-confidence during English vocabulary learning at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi. These positive shifts in learning behavior were accompanied by advancements in student achievement, as evidenced by the following test results. The test results demonstrate consistent enhancements in students' vocabulary mastery from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle II. The average scores and percentages of learning mastery among students are presented in the following table.

Table 4. Average Scores of Student Vocabulary Mastery

Research Stage	Average Score	Number of Students Achieving Mastery	Mastery Percentage (%)
Pra - Cycle	67.3	11 out of 26	42.3%
Cycle I	75.8	19 out of 26	73.1%
Cycle II	82.6	23 out of 26	88.5%

Figure 2. Improvement in Average Scores of Student Vocabulary Mastery from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II

Based on the data in Table 4, the average student scores exhibited an increase of 8.5 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle I and 6.8 points from Cycle I to Cycle II. Overall, the improvement reached 15.3 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. The percentage of learning mastery also demonstrated a substantial rise, from 42.3% in the pre-cycle to 88.5% in Cycle II. These results indicate that the implementation of

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Kahoot! media had a positive impact on enhancing students' vocabulary mastery and fulfilled the research success indicators (≥80% of students achieving a score ≥75). In addition to score improvements, the observation results of learning activities revealed a tangible increase in student engagement during the learning process. In the pre-cycle stage, the majority of students appeared passive, with only a few actively participating in answering questions. Following the implementation of Kahoot! media, student participation increased to over 85% actively engaging in quizzes and interacting enthusiastically. Learning motivation also visibly improved, reflected in a more vibrant classroom atmosphere and students' desire for healthy competition during activities.

Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that the implementation of the interactive learning media Kahoot! proved capable of significantly enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. This improvement aligns with the primary research objective of refining the vocabulary learning process through gamification-based strategies within the framework of Classroom Action Research (CAR) Kemmis, Stephen; McTaggart (1988).

Kahoot! media proved effective in fostering a participatory, competitive, and enjoyable learning environment, thereby encouraging students to interact actively throughout the learning process. These results are consistent with the findings of Devitriana & Wijirahayu (2025) which explain that the integration of game-based learning enhances student motivation and learning performance due to the gaming elements that stimulate emotional and cognitive engagement.

The research findings also indicate that the application of game-based learning via the Kahoot! platform was able to significantly elevate the average scores of students' vocabulary mastery compared to conventional teaching methods. The use of Kahoot! not only strengthened students' retention of new vocabulary but also improved their ability to apply vocabulary contextually in sentences.

From a theoretical perspective, these research results can be elucidated through the social constructivism approach, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through direct experiences and social interactions during the learning process Vygotsky (1978). Quiz game-based activities such as Kahoot! also support the principles of active learning, as they promote emotional engagement, cognitive participation, and collaboration among students Shofiana et al. (2025).

Furthermore, the reflection results indicate that the implementation of Kahoot! facilitated immediate feedback, enabling students to recognize their errors in real-time and promptly rectify them. This feature represents an advantage over traditional methods, which typically provide delayed evaluations. Additionally, collaborative activities during gameplay further bolstered self-confidence, improved interpersonal communication, and enhanced social relationships among students in the classroom.

Thus, this study affirms that the integration of interactive digital learning media such as Kahoot! in English language instruction at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi is effective in:

1. Enhancing students' vocabulary mastery.
2. Increasing learning motivation and engagement.
3. Creating a collaborative and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Overall, these findings reinforce the view that the application of gamification-based digital media can serve as an effective strategy for improving the quality of English language learning in the modern era, particularly in the context of junior high schools.

CONCLUSSION

The results of the classroom action research conducted at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi demonstrate that the implementation of the interactive learning media Kahoot! effectively enhances students' vocabulary mastery. Through two action cycles based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, significant improvements were observed in the average vocabulary scores from the pre-cycle to Cycle II, accompanied by increases in student motivation, enthusiasm, and active participation in the learning process. Scientifically, this study contributes to the development of gamification-based learning strategies that integrate cognitive, affective, and social aspects in English language instruction. The utilization of Kahoot! not only assists students in enriching vocabulary contextually but also strengthens active learning through immediate feedback and collaboration among learners. These findings reinforce previous research outcomes indicating that interactive digital media can improve learning outcomes and

long-term knowledge retention. Furthermore, this research opens avenues for broader technology-based learning developments, such as integrating Kahoot! with Learning Management System (LMS) platforms or applying similar approaches to other aspects like grammar and reading comprehension. Subsequent studies are recommended to test the effectiveness of Kahoot! in more diverse contexts, involving larger participant numbers, and combining quantitative and qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of interactive learning media on academic performance and student learning motivation.

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The author hopes that the results of this research can provide positive contributions to the development of English language teaching practices in schools and serve as a reference for future studies in the field of interactive technology-based education.

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