

The Effectiveness of Using Word Adventure Game in Improving Students' English Vocabulary Mastery in Fifth-Grade at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar

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<https://doi.org/10.31004/jerk.in.v5i1.6598>

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received: 1 Juli 2026

Revised: 8 Juli 2026

Accepted: 17 Juli 2026

Kata Kunci

Penguasaan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris, Word Adventure Game, Desain Kuasi-Eksperimen, Pembelajaran Muda, Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar,

Keywords

English Vocabulary Mastery, Word Adventure Game, Quasi-Experimental Design, Young Learners, Elementary School Education.



Siswa sering menghadapi kesulitan dalam menguasai kosakata bahasa Inggris akibat metode menghafal konvensional dan pembelajaran pasif, sebuah masalah yang juga teridentifikasi pada siswa kelas lima di MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui efektivitas penggunaan Word Adventure Game dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris siswa. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain kuasi-eksperimen non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group, dua kelas utuh dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling; kelompok eksperimen yang diajar menggunakan permainan tersebut dan kelompok kontrol dengan metode konvensional. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes penguasaan kosakata yang valid berbasis topik "A Lot of Stories", dengan analisis data menggunakan Uji-t Sampel Independen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada nilai rata-rata kelas eksperimen dari 56,25 menjadi 85,00, sedangkan kelompok kontrol meningkat dari 53,33 menjadi 71,11. Analisis statistik mengonfirmasi perbedaan yang signifikan ($p = 0,001 < 0,05$). Kesimpulannya, Word Adventure Game merupakan strategi pembelajaran efektif yang menyediakan lingkungan belajar interaktif, kolaboratif, dan bermakna, serta berhasil meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata pembelajar muda.

Students often face difficulties mastering English vocabulary due to conventional rote memorization and passive learning, a problem also observed among fifth-graders at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using the Word Adventure Game in improving students' English vocabulary mastery. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design, two intact classes were selected via purposive sampling: an experimental group taught using the game and a control group taught through conventional methods. The research instrument was a validated vocabulary mastery test based on the topic "A Lot of Stories," with data analyzed via the Independent Samples t-test. The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental class's mean score, rising from 56.25 to 85.00, compared to the control group's increase from 53.33 to 71.11. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). In conclusion, the Word Adventure Game is an effective instructional strategy that provides an interactive, collaborative, and meaningful learning environment, successfully enhancing young learners' vocabulary acquisition.



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How to Cite Novi Nur Hidayati et al (2026) The Effectiveness of Using Word Adventure Game in Improving Students' English Vocabulary Mastery in Fifth-Grade at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar
<https://doi.org/10.31004/jerk.in.v5i1.6598>

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English has become the dominant language for international communication, education, science, business, and technology. The increasing use of English worldwide has encouraged many countries, including Indonesia, to introduce English learning from an early age in order to prepare students for global competitiveness. English has become one of the most essential international languages used in education, science, technology, and global communication. In Indonesia, English is introduced from the elementary school level to help students develop basic communication skills and prepare them for future academic challenges. At the primary education level, English learning should emphasize meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences because young learners tend to learn more effectively through interactive activities rather than conventional memorization (Cameron, 2001).

In Indonesia, English has been introduced in many elementary schools as an extracurricular or local content subject to equip students with basic English competence. However, many elementary students still experience difficulties in mastering English vocabulary due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and the use of less interactive teaching methods. Vocabulary mastery is one of the fundamental components of English language learning. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners experience difficulties in understanding spoken and written texts and expressing ideas through speaking and writing. According to Schmitt (2000), vocabulary knowledge includes both receptive and productive knowledge, enabling learners to understand and appropriately use words in different communicative situations. As stated by Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge is the foundation of language proficiency because learners cannot communicate effectively without adequate vocabulary. Similarly, Thornbury (2002) argues that vocabulary is not merely a collection of words but includes knowledge of word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical functions, and appropriate use in different contexts. Therefore, vocabulary mastery plays a significant role in supporting students' overall English language competence.

Despite its importance, mastering English vocabulary remains a major challenge for many elementary school students in Indonesia. Young learners often have difficulty remembering new words, distinguishing word meanings, pronouncing vocabulary correctly, and applying vocabulary in meaningful contexts. These difficulties become more apparent when learning activities rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction, translation exercises, and rote memorization. Such conventional approaches frequently reduce students' motivation and participation during classroom activities, resulting in low vocabulary retention and limited language development.

This phenomenon was also identified at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar. Based on preliminary classroom observations and discussions with the English teacher, many fifth-grade students still demonstrated limited English vocabulary mastery. Most students experienced difficulties in identifying vocabulary related to the topic "A Lot of Stories", remembering newly introduced words, and using vocabulary appropriately during learning activities. Furthermore, English instruction was still dominated by textbook-based explanations and memorization practices with minimal use of interactive learning media. Consequently, students tended to become passive, less motivated, and easily bored during English lessons.

Considering the characteristics of young learners, English instruction should incorporate learning activities that are enjoyable, meaningful, and actively engage students. Cameron (2001) emphasizes that elementary school students learn languages more effectively when they participate in meaningful activities involving games, stories, and social interaction. Likewise, Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) explain that language games create enjoyable learning environments that encourage learners to practice vocabulary naturally while increasing motivation and classroom participation. Therefore, integrating educational games into vocabulary instruction provides opportunities for students to learn through exploration, cooperation, and meaningful practice rather than simple memorization.

One learning medium that has the potential to improve vocabulary learning is the Word Adventure Game. This game-based activity encourages students to discover, identify, arrange, and use English vocabulary through adventure-themed challenges. Instead of passively receiving vocabulary lists, students actively solve language tasks, identify words from contextual clues, and collaborate with classmates to complete each stage of the game. Such activities stimulate curiosity, increase engagement,

and strengthen long-term vocabulary retention because students repeatedly encounter vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Several previous studies have reported positive effects of educational games on English vocabulary learning. Research has shown that game-based learning significantly improves vocabulary achievement, students' motivation, classroom participation, and learning enjoyment among elementary school learners. This is in line with Fajria (2026), who reported that the implementation of the Word Adventure Game encourages students to participate actively, enhances confidence, and creates meaningful English learning experiences through adventure-based activities. However, most previous studies focused on digital games, Wordwall, Hangman, Crossword Puzzles, or Guessing Games. Only a limited number of studies have specifically investigated the effectiveness of the Word Adventure Game as an instructional medium for improving English vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students in Islamic elementary schools. In addition, previous studies rarely integrated vocabulary learning with thematic materials such as "A Lot of Stories", leaving opportunities for further investigation.

Based on the identified research gap, the novelty of the present study lies in the implementation of the Word Adventure Game as an instructional medium to improve English vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at an Islamic elementary school. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses specifically on vocabulary mastery rather than speaking ability, employs the topic "A Lot of Stories" as the learning material, and applies a quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of the intervention. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of game-based English language teaching for young learners and provide additional empirical evidence regarding the use of the Word Adventure Game in elementary school contexts.

Based on these conditions, this research attempts to fill the existing research gap by examining the effectiveness of using the Word Adventure Game in improving students' English vocabulary mastery. Unlike previous studies that mainly explored general educational games, this research applies an adventure-based vocabulary game designed to increase students' active participation, contextual vocabulary acquisition, and meaningful learning experiences. It is expected that the findings of this research will contribute to English language teaching, particularly in providing an innovative learning strategy that supports vocabulary development among young learners. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the effectiveness of using the Word Adventure Game in improving the English vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental research design with a non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design. This design was selected to examine the effectiveness of the Word Adventure Game in improving students' English vocabulary mastery by comparing the learning outcomes of students who received the treatment with those who learned through conventional instruction. Since the participants had been assigned to existing classes by the school, random assignment was not feasible. Therefore, a quasi-experimental design was considered the most appropriate for this research. The research design can be illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Research Design

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment	01	X1	02
Control	03	X2	04

Information:

01 = Pre-test results from the experimental class

02 = Post-test results from the experimental class

03 = Pre-test results of the control class

04 = Post-test results of the control class

X1 = TGT learning model for experimental class

X2 = Conventional learning model for control class

The research was conducted at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of fifth-grade students divided into two intact classes. One class served

as the experimental group and received English instruction using the Word Adventure Game, while the other class acted as the control group and was taught using the teacher's regular instructional method. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the recommendation of the English teacher and the similarity of students' academic characteristics.

The research instrument was an English vocabulary mastery test developed according to the learning objectives of the topic A Lot of Stories. The test measured students' ability to recognize word meanings, identify vocabulary based on context, match words with pictures or definitions, and use vocabulary appropriately in simple sentences. Before being administered, the instrument was validated by experts to ensure its content validity. Furthermore, the instrument was piloted to examine its validity, reliability, item difficulty, and discrimination index. Only valid and reliable items were used in the pre-test and post-test.

The research procedure consisted of four stages. First, both the experimental and control groups were administered a pre-test to determine their initial vocabulary mastery. Second, the experimental group received English instruction using the Word Adventure Game, whereas the control group was taught using conventional learning activities. The treatment was implemented over several meetings using vocabulary materials related to A Lot of Stories. During the game, students worked collaboratively to complete adventure-based vocabulary tasks, identify target words from contextual clues, solve language challenges, and apply newly learned vocabulary through interactive activities. Meanwhile, students in the control class learned the same material through explanation, textbook exercises, and teacher-led discussions. Third, after all instructional sessions had been completed, both groups took a post-test to measure students' vocabulary achievement after the treatment. Finally, all collected data were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe students' pre-test and post-test scores by calculating the mean, maximum score, minimum score, and standard deviation. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were examined through normality and homogeneity tests to ensure that the assumptions for parametric analysis were fulfilled. The research hypothesis was tested using the Independent Samples t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, the N-Gain test was employed to identify the level of improvement in students' English vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the Word Adventure Game. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 with a significance level of 0.05.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the statistical analysis, it is important to describe the implementation of the Word Adventure Game in the experimental class. The treatment was conducted during the English learning sessions on the topic "A Lot of Stories". Students were randomly divided into three groups and were provided with three levels of adventure worksheets containing different vocabulary challenges. They were allowed to decide which level to complete first, encouraging collaborative learning and group decision-making.

Level 1 consisted of three vocabulary activities, namely matching words with pictures, identifying vocabulary related to story elements, and recalling action verbs commonly found in stories. Level 2 required students to arrange jumbled sentences into meaningful sentences, while Level 3 challenged students to construct simple sentences using the Present Continuous Tense. After successfully completing each level, students received colored badges as rewards, namely a red badge for Level 1, a yellow badge for Level 2, and a blue badge for Level 3. The reward system was intended to increase students' motivation, participation, and enthusiasm throughout the learning process.

To provide an initial overview of students' English vocabulary mastery, descriptive statistical analysis was first conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. The analysis includes the highest score, the lowest score, and the mean score achieved by the students. The results are presented in Table 2. The results of the pre-test and post-test data analysis for each class are presented in Table 2. The results of the average scores as well as the highest and lowest score categories are as follows:

Table 2 Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test Data Analysis

Indicator	Experimental Class	Control Class
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	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Highest score	90	100	80	90
Lowest score	30	90	10	50
Mean score	56.25	85.00	53.33	71.11

The findings showed that both the experimental and control groups experienced an improvement in their English vocabulary mastery after the learning process. The experimental group obtained a higher increase in the mean score, rising from 56.25 in the pre-test to 85.00 in the post-test. In comparison, the control group showed a smaller improvement, with the mean score increasing from 53.33 to 71.11.

In this research, normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The purpose of the normality test is to determine whether the research data are normally distributed or not. If the Shapiro-Wilk significance value is >0.05 , then the research sample is considered to be normally distributed.

Table 3 Normality Test Results

Class	Data	Sig. value	Description
Experimental Class	Pretest and Posttest	0.117*	Normal
Control Class	Pretest and Posttest	0.052*	Normal

Table 3 presents the results of the data normality test conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, which obtained a significance value of 0.117. The table shows that all sample data from the pre-test and post-test results of English vocabulary mastery had a significance value >0.05 , therefore the data were normally distributed.

The researchers used a test called Levene's statistical homogeneity test in this research. The purpose of the homogeneity test is to determine whether the two sample data groups come from the same variance or not. If the sample significance value is >0.05 , then it is considered homogeneous.

Table 4 Homogeneity Test Results

Data Tested	Sig. Value	Description
Post-test Scores	0.518	Homogeneous

Table 4 presents the results of the homogeneity test calculation conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, which obtained a significance value of 0.518. The table above shows that both data have a significance value >0.05 , therefore it can be concluded that both data are homogeneous.

Table 5 Results of the Independent Sample t-Test

Data	Result	Description
Post-test Scores	0.001	Significant difference exists

From the test conducted, the significance result (2-tailed) was 0.001 and it can be concluded that there is a significant difference because it shows a significance value <0.05 . Therefore, it is proven that the Word Adventure Game affects the English vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students and there is a significant difference between the experimental class and the control class.

The statistical analysis revealed a significant effect of the Word Adventure Game on students' English vocabulary mastery. Students who learned through the Word Adventure Game achieved greater improvement in vocabulary scores than those who received conventional instruction. The game encouraged students to participate actively in classroom activities, collaborate with their peers, and practice vocabulary in a more enjoyable and meaningful learning environment. These findings indicate that game-based learning can effectively enhance students' vocabulary mastery, engagement, and motivation during English lessons.

The findings are consistent with the theoretical perspective of Nation (2001), who emphasizes that vocabulary learning is more effective when learners encounter words repeatedly in meaningful contexts. During the implementation of the Word Adventure Game, students were exposed to target vocabulary through interactive activities and collaborative problem-solving, enabling them to practice vocabulary in contextual situations. This finding is also supported by Fajria (2026), who reported that the implementation of the Word Adventure Game encourages active student participation, improves learners' confidence in using English, and creates an engaging learning atmosphere through interactive game-based activities. Such learning experiences provide meaningful opportunities for students to acquire and reinforce new vocabulary naturally during classroom interaction. Likewise, Cameron (2001) argues that young learners benefit from enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences, while Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) state that language games promote students' motivation, participation, and confidence in learning English.

The significant improvement has been influenced by several factors, including the interactive nature of the Word Adventure Game, students' active participation during learning activities, and repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts. The game encouraged students to collaborate with their classmates, solve language-related challenges, and apply newly learned vocabulary in communicative situations. These learning experiences not only enhanced students' understanding of vocabulary but also increased their confidence and enthusiasm for participating in English lessons. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which suggest that educational games effectively improve students' vocabulary mastery, learning motivation, and classroom engagement through meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences.

Overall, the findings provide empirical evidence that the implementation of the Word Adventure Game significantly improves students' English vocabulary mastery. The results suggest that game-based learning offers meaningful learning experiences that promote vocabulary acquisition, increase students' motivation, and encourage active participation during English instruction. Therefore, the Word Adventure Game may serve as an effective instructional learning model for teaching vocabulary to elementary school students and contribute to the implementation of student-centered English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using the Word Adventure Game in improving the English vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar. The findings revealed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher improvement in vocabulary scores than the control group after receiving the treatment. Statistical analysis indicated that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant, as the significance value was below the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, indicating that the implementation of the Word Adventure Game significantly improved students' English vocabulary mastery.

The findings also demonstrated that the Word Adventure Game created a more engaging and meaningful learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively, collaborate with their peers, and practice vocabulary in contextual activities. These findings are consistent with Nation (2001), who emphasizes that vocabulary is acquired more effectively through repeated exposure and meaningful language use. Furthermore, Fajria (2026) reported that the implementation of the Word Adventure Game promotes active participation, enhances students' confidence in learning English, and creates an enjoyable classroom atmosphere that supports language development through interactive game-based learning. Likewise, Cameron (2001) suggests that young learners benefit from enjoyable and interactive learning experiences, while Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) highlight that language games can increase learners' motivation, participation, and confidence during classroom instruction.

Therefore, the findings provide empirical evidence that the Word Adventure Game is an effective instructional strategy for improving students' English vocabulary mastery. The implementation of this game not only enhances students' vocabulary achievement but also promotes active participation, motivation, and meaningful learning experiences in the English classroom. Consequently, the Word Adventure Game is recommended as an alternative teaching strategy for English vocabulary instruction at the elementary school level. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving larger sample sizes, longer treatment periods, and different learning contexts or instructional materials to further validate and expand the findings of this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, the researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to Allah SWT for endless blessings, mercy, and guidance, which have enabled the researcher to complete this research entitled "The Effectiveness of Using Word Adventure Game in Improving Students' English Vocabulary Mastery of Fifth-Grade Students at MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar."

The researcher would also like to express sincere appreciation to all individuals who have provided valuable support, encouragement, and assistance throughout the completion of this research. Special gratitude is addressed to Miss Zulfa Nabila, M.Pd., as the research supervisor, for her invaluable guidance, constructive suggestions, continuous encouragement, patience, and insightful feedback

throughout every stage of this research. Her dedication and support have been essential to the successful completion of this research.

The researcher would also like to extend sincere thanks to the Headmaster, English teacher, and fifth-grade students of MI Hidayatussibyan Lancar for their cooperation, participation, and willingness to support the implementation of this research.

Finally, the researcher would like to express heartfelt gratitude to her beloved parents, family, friends, and everyone who has provided endless prayers, motivation, and encouragement throughout the research process. Their unwavering support has been a source of strength and inspiration in completing this research.

The researcher realizes that this research is still far from perfect. Therefore, constructive criticism and valuable suggestions are highly appreciated for the improvement of future research. Hopefully, this research will contribute to the development of English language teaching, particularly in improving students' vocabulary mastery through interactive game-based learning such as Word Adventure Game.

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