

ENHANCING ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH CHAIN CARD GAMES FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT SMPN 7 MEDAN

| ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT | PRIMA INDONESIA UNIVERSITY |

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Chain Card Game strategy in improving the vocabulary of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Medan. The research method used Classroom Action Research. Classroom Action Research (CAR) with three cycles: Pre-cycle, cycle1, and cycle2 to assess the impact of this strategy on students' participation and performance. Data was collected through observation, grade scores, and documentation. The analysis of data demonstrated a notable enhancement in the students' vocabulary abilities following the implementation of the chain card game strategy. The studentshave achieved the minimum passing score (70), with 60.6% classified as Very Good and 39.40% as Good. These findings reinforce the significance of interactive and game-based learning methodologies in enhancing English language proficiency. This shows a significant improvement among all students from pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, indicating their success in achieving the minimum competency level and overcoming their self-confidence inimproving vocabulary. Further investigation could elucidate the long-term consequences of employing this strategy on students' language abilities.

Keywords: Chain Card game, Enhancing, Vocabulary mastery.



INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely used languages for international communication is English. "Language is a system of human communication using a structured arrangement of sound (or their written representation) to form a larger unit, e.g. morphemes, words, sentences"(Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are the four skills involved in learning English. These four competencies are demanded of students when they study English. To help students become proficient in the English language, vocabulary, and pronunciation must be mastered first. According to (Nurmahynuni Asrul, 2022), Pronunciation skills are aimed at intelligible pronunciation and teachers can productively motivate their students' skills in pronunciation. It is important because it shows someone's understanding. If students cannot correct their speech, definitely they cannot communicate effectively.

To support those skills, students need to master component skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Chiriana, 2015). One of the most crucial elements of learning English and being able to comprehend the content being taught in the language is having a solid vocabulary. A lack of familiarity with the vocabulary required to comprehend the subject matter will present a significant challenge for students. "Vocabulary is a center segment of language capability and gives a large part of the premise to how well students talk, tune in, read, and compose" (Kartikasari, 2020).

Because vocabulary can reflect a learner's comprehension of the language, mastery of vocabulary is essential to learning a second language. Each student must possess a substantial vocabulary in the target language to facilitate the English language learning process within the classroom. It is incumbent upon the teacher to develop a new and innovative plan of action, in addition to selecting the most efficacious pedagogical methodology. Teaching vocabulary needs creative and innovative techniques because it plays an important role in the student's success in mastering vocabulary. It also makes the students able to learn better (Astuti et al.,



2018).

Due to a lack of vocabulary awareness, students often struggle to understand the information being taught in English classes. Students who acquire a new language are more equipped to offer input on the topics presented. Scott (2002) stated without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. Only with sufficient vocabulary one can express his ideas effectively, can understand the language task and foreign language conversation. In both mother tongue and foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role when learning a language. According to Kamil & Heibert (2007), they broadly define vocabulary as knowledge of words and word meanings.

In the reality of daily activities, the researcher observed that only humans can use verbal communication and learn it (Dewi et al., 2014). Thus, a person will not be able to communicate in the target language if the vocabulary mastery is poor. Students who have good ability in vocabulary are easier to communicate in daily life. If students lack vocabulary knowledge, they will struggle to produce utterances in both speaking and writing. In contrast, if students have a rich vocabulary, they will find it easier to organize and arrange words into sentences.

According to the results of observations made by researchers while carrying out internship activities at SMP Negeri 7 Medan, there are still many students who were unable to achieve the Standard Minimum Score. The minimum score required to pass at SMPN 7 Medan is 70. However, according to the school's English teacher, there are still many students who have not yet reached the required standard. This is evidenced by the examination results for Semester 1, which indicate that a significant proportion of students performed poorly in the English examination. Nevertheless, there are still students who have achieved scores below 60. The reasons for this phenomenon are manifold. Firstly, the learning of English is less diversified than that of the other languages, which causes students to be sluggish and appear bored. Secondly, students' vocabulary skills remain low. Thirdly, students lack confidence in creating and speaking English. One of the factors is the





limited vocabulary of the test-takers. Students who lack English vocabulary proficiency struggle to articulate their opinions, feelings, thoughts, suggestions, inquiries, and replies. As a result, individuals prefer to remain mute rather than express their emotions and thoughts in the classroom when learning English.

Based on the above problems, the researchers used the game method to teach in improving students' vocabulary. One of the game methods that is relevant and follows the material used by researchers in teaching students is a chain card game. According to Kuzu and Ural (2010), "When games and education are combined, it can be educative and education environments can be entertaining." The learners who learned with the use of games, gain positive attitudes and can be more motivated while learning. The researchers chose to use chain card games based on the needs or problems found by the researchers, where using chain card games can improve students' vocabulary by arranging word by word to form sentences. Hornby (2000:203), the chain can be defined as a series of connected things or people. The definition of a card is the thick paper of a piece of stiff or plastic with information on it (Hornby, 2000: 187). Chain cards game is a free translation from "Permainan Kartu Berantai" (Carrier, 2009: 2). Buzan & Buzan (1994:210) also advocate the use of Chain card game in various daily activities, including vocabulary, as it can develop students' creativity vocabulary skills and help remove memorizer's block. The characteristic of the chain card game which generates ideas from general to specific can help the students to generate their ideas into vocabulary.

Not only that, Buzan, T. (2009:60) also stated that chain card games can stimulate our brains by using pictures, color, and imagination (right brain) with words, numbers, and logic (left brain). It will be good for the students. In addition, Tony Buzan is credited with the invention of mind mapping in 1960. This learning method is designed to enhance the brain's capacity for creative thinking. A learning method that facilitates the optimal functioning of the brain to enhance the capacity for brilliant thinking. The use of lines, colors, letters, numbers, symbols, images, photographs, or keywords, among others, to correlate and integrate, visualize the



acquired concept, and optimize brain capacity is known as mind mapping.

Chain Card Game is a game that helps students quickly construct sentences. The participants play just like they would with cards. In this game, players are tasked with arranging the cards in a sentence or playing cards to continue an incomplete sentence against rival players, which can be at the beginning or end of the card arrangement. Before the game begins, participants get five minutes to inspect all of the cards containing words. They also have the right to use a dictionary to determine the meaning of any words that they do not understand.

According to the background of the study above, the researchers need to find the answer to the problems on how the students' vocabulary mastery before using the chain card game, and how the students' vocabulary mastery after using the chain card game. Based on the problem above, this research intends to find out the students' vocabulary mastery before using the chain card game and the students' vocabulary mastery after using the chain card game.

The scope of this study is limited to VIII grade students in SMP Negeri 7 Medan, with a focus on vocabulary enhancement through a chain card game strategy. This research examines the specific context of language difficulties related to a lack of vocabulary acquisition in the classroom.

The value of this research stems from its potential to provide significant insights, both theoretical and practical, that can benefit both students and fellow researchers.

a. Theoretical Significance

The objective of this study was to assess the efficacy of the chain card game strategy in enhancing English vocabulary among junior secondary school students. In addition to the existing knowledge on teaching methodology, this study aimed to contribute a new perspective by exploring the distinctive impact of the chain card game strategy on vocabulary enhancement.

- b. Practical Significance
- 1. For the students



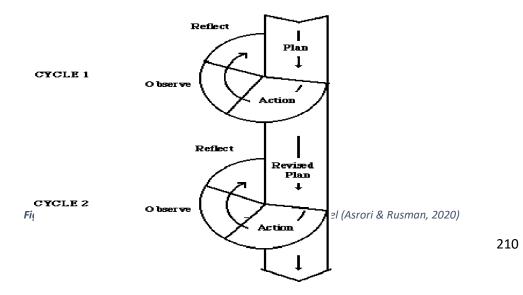
The findings of this study offer students a practical approach to vocabulary improvement. By evaluating the effectiveness of the chain card game strategy, students can gain insights that will enhance their confidence and fluency in English learning.

2. For educators and researchers

Educators and researchers might profit from the findings of this study as they seek creative methods to enhance English vocabulary in educational settings. The result of this study can inspire the integration of the chain card game strategy into teaching practice and serve as a basis for further exploration of effective strategies to improve English vocabulary.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Garpersz and Uktolseja (2020) state that Classroom Action Research (CAR) is reflective research by taking certain actions aimed at improving learning practices in the classroom professionally and has an essential role in scientific research because it determines the quality of research results (Marsevani & Habeebanisya, 2022). This research adopts the action research model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of Pre-cycle, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2. The Pre-cycle phase involves the researcher making preparations to identify problems and issues. Each cycle 1 and 2 consists of 4 stages: (1) Planning, (2) Action, (3) Observing, and (4) Reflecting (Asrori & Rusman, 2020).





In this research, the subjects consisted of two classes of eighth-grade students from SMP Negeri 7 Medan, which consisted of 33 students. The topic was selected by the researchers to examine how the chain card learning media enhances students' language learning capacity. Researchers employ data collection methodologies to gather information for their research. As cited in (Azizah Husda, 2022) The instruments that the researcher must understand are planning, action, observation, and reflection. After that, the researcher made a report. Within this methodology, researchers utilize a variety of techniques to acquire data, using the words organization assessment, Observations, and Documentation.

1. Word Organization Assessment

Word organization is an assessment tool to measure students' vocabulary. word organization can be used to assess students' abilities or to provide feedback on students' achievement or progress in language learning.

2. Interview

In this particular case, the researchers observed the process of students' English language proficiency when using the chain card game. The interviews were conducted after each cycle. They were conducted in writing. The students who were selected from each group will be given a paper containing questions that were provided by the researchers. The purpose of this interview is twofold: firstly, to ascertain the students' interest in this chain card game; secondly, to provide a record of the students' responses.

3. Documentation

Document and note-based research employs data that is already in existence for research. During the study, the researchers will record field notes that include the students' attitudes, their responses, and the researcher's reflections during English classes. The aforementioned notes will assist in elucidating the alterations in the students' vocabulary abilities and the



impact of the chain card game on said abilities. Furthermore, the researchers will employ photographic documentation to record significant occurrences during the lesson.

The data analysis technique employed in the research is based on the theory proposed by Kemmis and Taggart (2012), conducted over two cycles. Each cycle involves stages such as planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Asrori & Rusman, 2020). Planning involves the steps to be taken to improve, enhance, or change behaviors and attitudes expected as solutions to existing problems. In the Action phase, this concerns the researchers' efforts to make improvements, enhancements, or changes guided by the action plan. The process of gathering data for a study involves observation, in which the researchers see the effects of the activities they perform on the pupils. The Reflection phase, involves the researcher observing, analyzing, and evaluating the effects or consequences of the activities performed to conclude the processes and outcomes that take place, including any changes brought about by the actions taken.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The researchers presented the insights and results gained from the study process. In the pre-cycle activity, students were not introduced to any teaching methods or learning strategies. Instead, the researcher directly assessed the student's vocabulary skills by giving a simple test of arranging random words into a regular sentence. The text instructed students to arrange random words found in their English textbooks, according to their curriculum. Each student is instructed to arrange the random words. The purpose of this activity is to evaluate each student's vocabulary.

N		Dener		Percentage (%)
No	Qualification	Range	Students	

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			(14 Students)	
1	Excellent	80 - 100	0	0%
2	Good	70 – 79	1	3%
3	Average	60 - 69	2	6.1%
4	Poor	40 - 59	15	45.45%
5	Very Poor	0 - 39	15	45.45%
	Total		33	100%

Based on the table above, it is evident that among the 33 students, the average score of all 33 students is below 70, with 32 students failing to reach or surpass the minimum passing score (70). Of these 32 students, 15 are male and 17 are female. Based on the observation data collected, it can be seen that students are less focused and seem less interested due to their lack of knowledge of word meanings. In addition, students sometimes felt confused and embarrassed due to hesitation or fear of making mistakes when working on word order tasks. It can be concluded that none of the students achieved excellent grades, which indicates a lack of motivation and enthusiasm, as well as a lack of clarity in completing their tasks, failure to pay attention to the instructions given, and preferring to play rather than focus on learning.

In addition to the participation factor, student motivation in learning is also a concern. A lack of motivation may be attributed to an unsupportive environment, both at school and at home. It is uncommon for students to engage in English interactions daily, both at school and at home. In addition, the majority of the media they access are mostly in Indonesian. This situation can harm students' ability to actively speak and understand English.

Cycle 1

Planning

- a. Examine the student curriculum to tailor the material in such a way that it can be taught during the Cycle I activity.
- b. Subsequently, the researcher develops a teaching plan that aligns with the



student curriculum.

- c. Making and equipping educational game tools, and chain card games.
- d. Prepares observation sheets to monitor student activities during the learning process.
- e. Prepares a sheet containing random words to be arranged into correct sentences to assess students' learning outcomes.

Action

Researchers carried out learning activities following the previously prepared plan, by implementing alternative solutions that had been designed. This activity was carried out in one meeting, namely 3 meetings, each of which lasted 45 minutes.

In the introductory stage, the researcher began by making apperceptions of the subject matter. This activity included saying greetings, praying, greeting, and asking how students were doing. After that, the researcher conveyed the learning objectives to the students and introduced the subject matter. During the core activities, the researchers distributed some cut-cut pictures of objects to the students, instructing them to read and find out about the meaning of the objects in the English dictionary based on their curriculum-appropriate English textbooks. Next, the researchers introduced an educational game tool called chain cards to the students and demonstrated the activities to be carried out. The researchers then instructed the students to form a group and take a piece of the prepared chain card that contained a subject, and a description of the place. After the cards are shuffled, each student will get 6 cards, then they are expected to arrange the cards containing the word into a coherent or composed sentence. Moving on to the closing activity, the researchers provided motivation, guidance, and advice to students regarding the learning process. Then, together with the students, the researchers summarised the learning material that had been learned at the meeting. In addition, the researchers conveyed the material that would be discussed at the next meeting.



Observe

In this observation stage, the researcher assessed the implementation of the intervention by using the speaking assessment rubric sheet through the mystery box strategy. After conducting observation in Cycle I, the researcher found that out of 33 students tested, 28 students passed and met the minimum standard score (70) for speaking among them 12 male students and 16 female students, mostly achieved the "good" grade (70-79). However, 5 students did not meet the minimum standard score (70), consisting of 1 female and 4 male students. Among them, some got scores categorized as "less" and "medium" as described below.

No	Qualification	Range	Number of Students (33 Students)	Percentag e (%)
1	Excellent	80 - 100	0	0%
2	Good	70 – 79	28	85%
3	Average	60 - 69	2	6%
4	Poor	40 - 59	3	9%
5	Very Poor	0 - 39	0	0%
Total			33	100%

Table 3. 2. Presentation of students' speaking scores in Cycle I based on brown (2012)

Based on the table, further investigation was needed in the second cycle as only 28 passed and demonstrated proficiency in speaking, while 5 students did not meet the KKM passing standard (70). This shows that the use of the chain card game still requires improvement by the researcher.

For example, student SF was one of the five students who did not pass, as explained. Through the observations made, it was seen that SF often experienced doubts and difficulties in interpreting every word found. In addition, SF also showed disinterest in learning English. Based on the observations made, the researcher identified several factors that influenced SF's unachieved scores, such as students' lack of understanding of learning materials, students' lack of attention to teacher explanations, prioritizing playing over learning, and low learning motivation.

When compared to students AFS, who passed with a score of 75, as described.



AFS showed proficiency in vocabulary acquisition, which varied. However, several factors contribute to SF's imperfect score. One of them is the lack of confidence when completing long random sentences. In addition, AFS seemed to lack enthusiasm control, giving little opportunity for the other person to actively participate. This can reduce the quality of communication interaction in real-life situations.

When compared to SF's previous low score, AFS excelled in vocabulary. However, SF still needs to improve vocabulary diversity and flexibility in communication interaction to achieve better proficiency.

Reflect

After all activities in the first cycle were completed, the researcher reflected based on the results of observations to identify weaknesses and shortcomings encountered during the initial cycle. In the initial implementation of the chain card learning strategy, the results were deemed unsatisfactory by both researchers and students. From the researcher's side, there were still shortcomings in classroom management, unclear articulation of learning materials, and a lack of understanding of students' potential and desires. From the students' side, some students seemed to pay less attention during the explanation of the learning material, while others made distractions during the learning activities. Therefore, the researcher decided to return to learning and improvement through the second cycle.

Cycle II

Action

The implementation of Cycle II consisted of 3 sessions, each lasting 45 minutes in one meeting, following the same learning steps as the previous cycle. However, given that not all students achieved the minimum passing score (70) in Cycle I, with only 28 students achieving the "good" qualification, in Cycle II, the researcher gave clearer instructions to students and was more assertive in delivering the subject matter. This aimed to improve students' concentration and foster a more comfortable learning atmosphere, to overcome students' hesitation in

improving their English vocabulary.

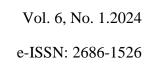
Observe

During this observation stage, the researcher assessed the implementation of the intervention using a student exercise sheet containing random words that had to be arranged into a coherent sentence through the chain card strategy. In this observation stage, the researcher observed the implementation through the chain card game strategy. After conducting observations in the second cycle, the researcher obtained observation results which are outlined in the following table:

No	Qualification	Range	Number of Students (14 Students)	Percenta ge (%)
1	Excellent	80 - 100	20	60.6%
2	Good	70 – 79	13	39.40%
3	Average	60 - 69	0	0%
4	Poor	40 - 59	0	0%
5	Very Poor	0 - 39	0	0%
Total			33	100

 Table 3. 3. Presentation of students' vocabulary

Based on the table provided, it is evident that in Cycle II, all 33 students achieved the minimum passing grade (70). Out of these, 20 students reached the "excellent" criteria, comprising 60,6% of the total, while 13 students met the "good" criteria, representing 39,40%. Notably, no students fell under the categories of "average", "poor", or "very poor". Thus, it can be concluded that all students demonstrated a notable enhancement in their academic performance during Cycle II, ultimately attaining the requisite minimum passing grade. After making observations during this cycle, the researcher noted a positive evolution in students' behavior patterns, characterized by increased focus during learning sessions. In addition, students began to show increased interest in the learning materials provided, with a marked improvement in their comprehension skills during the 217





research period.

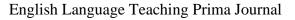
Based on the above observations, it was noted that all students had successfully achieved the minimum passing score (70). However, some factors influenced students to achieve the "excellent" level, while others received the same designation as in the previous cycle. For example, student AA achieved a score of 75 in the category "Good", as explained below:

It can be observed that student AA obtained standard scores but met the minimum completeness standard (70), not much different from the scores in the previous cycle. The observations yielded several factors that were found to affect AA's grades. These included a lack of seriousness in paying attention to the teacher's explanations during classroom learning, with occasional instances of engaging in conversation with classmates. In addition, the lack of motivation to actively participate in classroom learning and the lack of response to feedback given during class sessions also contributed to this situation.

When compared to GK's score, one student showed an improvement from an "average" level in the previous cycle to "excellent" in the second cycle with a score of 95, as described. Student GK showed interest in learning even though at the beginning GK did not get very satisfying scores. GK also showed seriousness in following the learning in class and looked earnest and excited until at the end of the cycle GK showed very good achievement.

Reflect

Upon completing all activities in Cycle II and analyzing the percentage distribution table, it was found that all students had reached the minimum proficiency criteria. Furthermore, the comparison between the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II showed significant progress in students' learning outcomes, as evident in the table below:



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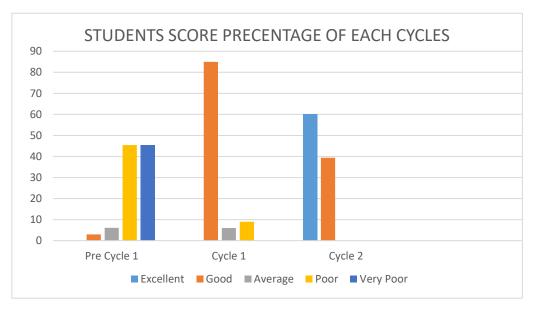


 Table 3. 4. Student Grade percentage in pre-cycle, cycle I, cycle II

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there was a significant increase in students' scores in each cycle, where all students reached the minimum passing score. Through observation and reflection, the researcher found better development among students in terms of motivation, ability, understanding, and willingness to improve English vocabulary. However, there are shortcomings and difficulties experienced by the students in some aspects where the vocabulary is quite difficult to pronounce and thus difficult to memorize, which still dominates the challenges in improving their vocabulary.

Discussions

The results of the reflection carried out on the actions of cycle II showed encouraging results. The results of observations conducted by researchers show that learning by applying chain card games in vocabulary learning has obtained better results. Based on the results of observation and evaluation, it was concluded that the research stopped at cycle II, this is following theplanning at the beginning before conducting the research, the indicators of success in this study, meaning that the researcher's goal has been achieved, namely improving vocabulary skills by using the chain card game model in 8th grade students of



SMPN 7 Medan.

Based on the table above, it can be seen that in the second cycle, all students have achieved the minimum passing score (70), with 60.6% classified as Very Good and 39.40% as Good. This shows a significant improvement among all students from pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, indicating their success in achieving the minimum competency level and overcoming their self-confidence inimproving vocabulary. Therefore, this study was considered sufficient until Cycle II.

CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

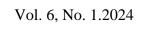
Based on the conducted research, it is concluded that:

- Students can overcome their hesitation in speaking through a chaincard game where which game can increase the sense of enthusiasm tocollect as many points as possible and spur students' enthusiasm to compete with group friends. Overall, the chain card game serves as an effective tool to improve students' ability to remember and learn new vocabulary and promote a positive learning atmosphere in theclassroom.
- 2. Factors that contribute to students' lack of vocabulary are the low-interest students have in learning a foreign language. In addition, the fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers can prevent students from expressing themselves fluently and confidently. The students' lack of courage to ask questions to the teacher and the unsupportive atmosphere of the classroom is enough to affect thestudents in learning English in class.

Suggestion

To increase the validity of the research, it must be recognized that this study still has limitations that need to be addressed. Expanding the samplesize and using more comprehensive evaluation methods could provide a deeper understanding of the impact of chain card games on students'vocabulary skills. In addition, using various measurement instruments can provide a more holistic perspective. In the 220

implementation of vocabulary learning using the chain card game model in grade 8 SMPN 07 Medan, the teacher introduced the concept of the game, taught students about the vocabulary used daily, gave examples of new vocabulary, practiced the technique of writing vocabulary correctly, gave feedback, and created an inclusive learning atmosphere. This process developed students understanding of the importance of vocabulary learning in improving English language skills in the classroom.



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