

# **THE USE OF WORD ASSOCIATION GAME TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**SKRIPSI**



Presented to  
**IKIP PGRI BOJONEGORO**  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Sarjana in English Education

**By:**  
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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
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**IKIP PGRI BOJONEGORO**  
**2025**

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2025**

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In order to uphold academic integrity, sincerely and without coercion from any parties, I hereby declare that the thesis entitled:

### **The Use of Word Association Game to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Junior High School**

Is the result of my own original work, and all sources of information used have been clearly cited in the reference list according to the scientific and academic code of ethics. I am aware that if any violations of scholarly ethics regarding to the authenticity of this work are found. **I personally** accept the consequences in accordance with the applicable regulations and am prepared to bear legal sanctions.

Bojonegoro, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2025



Diva Roviandy Arnita  
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## **MOTTO**

And ﷻ found you lost and guided [you]

*Q.S Adh Duha 93:7*

“ A busy life makes prayer harder, but prayer makes a busy life easier.”

*Azima Riyana*

## **DEDICATION**

After completing my skripsi for several months, this skripsi is ultimately dedicated to:

1. My most glorious God, Allah SWT, who has been my guide and source of never-ending mercy.
2. My advisors, who have provided guidance and support throughout the completion of this skripsi.
3. My grandmother, Mrs. Lis, whose enduring care and endless encouragement supported the completion of this skripsi
4. My parents, Mrs. Nina and the late Mr. Bagiyo, whose presence has shaped the roots of my journey.
5. Mrs. Yuanita, for her calm presence and the perspective she offered along the way.
6. The researcher herself for staying resilient and committed during the ups and downs of completing this skripsi.

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3. Ayu Fitriyaningsih, M.Pd., as Head of the English Language Department
4. Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd., as the Advisor I, provided patient guidance and continuous support for this skripsi.
5. Chyntia Heru Woro Prastiwi, M.Pd., as Advisor II, for valuable and insightful suggestions during the development of this skripsi.
6. Slamet, S.Pd., M.Pd, as the Headmaster of SMPN 1 Kalitidu, for permitting the author to conduct the research.
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8. All students who participated actively as research subjects in this study.

Acknowledging its scope and boundaries, this study remains receptive to constructive academic feedback.



## ABSTRACT

Arnita, Diva Roviandy. 2025. The Use of Word Association Game to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Junior High School. Skripsi, English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Art Education IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Lecturer: 1) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd., 2) Chyntia Heru Woro Prastiwi, M.Pd.

**Keywords:** Word Association Games, Vocabulary Mastery, Student Engagement.

Students' ability to understand and use English is highly influenced by their vocabulary mastery. Without adequate vocabulary, students would encounter difficulty in comprehending and using English properly. Many students in SMPN 1 Kalitidu have limited vocabulary, rely on word examples instead of producing the words independently, and have low vocabulary retention. Conventional teaching methods, such as lectures and written task, were less contextual. Therefore, the participatory technique in improving vocabulary learning is essential in language learning.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the word association game technique can increase the vocabulary mastery of the eighth graders at SMPN 1 Kalitidu. This research method uses classroom action research, conducted in one cycle in three meetings. The participants in this study are thirty-two students in VIII-A, eighth-graders. The data were collected using tests, questionnaires, observation, and interviews. Tests were focused on adjectives, while questionnaires were used to assess the students' attitudes and engagement toward vocabulary learning. Furthermore, observation and interview were used to complement the results of this study.

The findings of this study show a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the Word Association Game technique. The average score has improved by 32.19 points from pre-test to post-test, with thirty-one students reaching the Minimum Passing Grade. The students are also showing better engagement and enthusiasm in the learning process.

This study concludes that the Word Association Game is considered an effective technique in improving students' vocabulary mastery and can be implemented as an alternative technique to make English vocabulary learning more engaging and purposeful.

## ABSTRAK

Arnita, Diva Roviandy. 2025. The Use of Word Association Game to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Junior High School. Skripsi, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Dosen Pembimbing: 1) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd., 2) Chyntia Heru Woro Prastiwi, M.Pd.

**Kata kunci:** permainan asosiasi kata, penguasaan kosakata, keterlibatan siswa.

Kemampuan siswa dalam memahami dan menggunakan bahasa Inggris sangat dipengaruhi oleh penguasaan kosakata mereka. Tanpa kosakata yang memadai, siswa akan mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami dan menggunakan bahasa Inggris dengan baik. Banyak siswa di SMPN 1 Kalitidu yang memiliki kosakata terbatas, lebih mengandalkan contoh kata daripada menyebutkan kata secara mandiri, dan memiliki retensi kosakata yang rendah. Metode pengajaran konvensional, seperti ceramah dan tugas tertulis dinilai kurang kontekstual. Oleh karena itu, teknik partisipatif dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata sangat penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa.

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki bagaimana teknik permainan asosiasi kata dapat meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa kelas delapan di SMPN 1 Kalitidu. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian tindakan kelas, yang dilakukan dalam satu siklus dalam tiga pertemuan. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah tiga puluh dua siswa di kelas VIII-A, kelas delapan. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan tes, kuesioner, observasi, dan wawancara. Tes difokuskan pada kata sifat, sedangkan kuesioner digunakan untuk menilai sikap dan keterlibatan siswa terhadap pembelajaran kosakata. Selanjutnya, observasi dan wawancara digunakan untuk melengkapi hasil penelitian.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penguasaan kosakata siswa setelah penerapan metode Word Association Game. Nilai rata-rata meningkat sebesar 32,19 poin dari pra-tes ke pasca-tes, dengan tiga puluh satu siswa mencapai Nilai Kelulusan Minimum. Para peserta didik juga menunjukkan keterlibatan dan antusiasme yang lebih baik dalam proses pembelajaran.

Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Word Association Game dianggap sebagai teknik yang efektif dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa dan dapat diterapkan sebagai teknik alternatif untuk membuat pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris lebih menarik dan bermakna.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of Study**

Vocabulary is the most fundamental component of the four English language skills. Students cannot master listening, speaking, reading, and writing without having a sufficient vocabulary. English learners must understand vocabulary, which is a crucial element of English learning. This is in line with Rochmadhoni et al., (2022) learning vocabulary is the first step toward making it simple for learners to understand and use English.

According to Alizadeh (2016) vocabulary is defined as a word list compiled from a certain alphabet with its meaning. It refers to the words used to convey meaning and comprehend language skills. Syarifudin et al (2014) assume that vocabulary mastery is essential for EFL students' English learning since it allows them to understand a word in context. Knowing the meanings of words is one process to have a comprehensive understanding of a sentence.

Therefore, to achieve comprehensive language skills, students' vocabulary mastery must be improved and expanded (Almeida et al., 2016). Teachers should be able to provide diverse teaching methods to assist students in expanding their vocabulary. As a result, vocabulary teaching must be enhanced and reinforced because deep English comprehension is generated through good vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, good vocabulary mastery can be achieved through games. In particular, games are one way to teach vocabulary. As supported by



Fatmasari et al., (2024), learning English vocabulary requires more than just conveying material and having students listen to it. Therefore, students must be involved in the learning process. Various media such as songs, movies, books, videos, and games are all good ways to learn English vocabulary (Prastiwi & Meiga, 2021).

Notably, through games students can participate more actively in the material learned. Moreover, the use of games in the educational process can facilitate simultaneous learning and play for students (Andri et al., 2024). Furthermore, games can enhance students' motivation and facilitate vocabulary reinforcement. Consequently, it can be stated that game-based vocabulary education requires learners to be more energetic while enriching their understanding of English vocabulary. Since game-based vocabulary teaching has several advantages, teachers can create a supportive learning environment for their students by integrating it.

As emphasized by Blake & Guillen, (2021) game activities not only create a joyful environment in the class but can also refresh the students' minds. In addition, it can relieve the stress of learning a language, primarily when it comes to vocabulary. This positive atmosphere encourages students to engage more willingly with the learning material. As a result, vocabulary acquisition is facilitated in a more natural and effective manner during the learning process.

As stated by Gozcu & Caganaga (2016), game-based vocabulary learning is advantageous since it demonstrates that language learning is not necessarily monotonous. Learners are less worried when playing vocabulary

games, which motivates them to learn more intensely. Students who are bored with their learning initially will be encouraged to actively participate in vocabulary games. This suggests that combining games in vocabulary acquisition is one teaching approach that improves high motivation. When students experience enjoyment in studying the target language, their vocabulary expansion becomes easier.

Therefore, the researcher analyzed the literature and conducted a study on improving eighth graders' vocabulary mastery at SMPN 1 Kalitidu. The researcher observed several issues. The following issues are: 1) Students have limited vocabulary mastery, 2) Students tend to rely on provided examples rather than producing new words independently, and 3) Students' vocabulary retention is still low. Therefore, the researcher believes engaging techniques will help students improve their vocabulary effectively.

Based on observations, teachers' teaching methods are still conventional, such as lectures and individual written tasks that are less contextual to help students enhance their vocabulary knowledge and mastery. Even though the teacher applies storytelling and follow-up exercises based on images, students still have limited vocabulary. It means that these methods are not fully effective. It indicates that the interactive and contextual method is needed so that the students become more motivated to learn English vocabulary and effectively master the vocabulary. As a solution, contextual learning strategies, such as Word Association Games, must be explored to promote students' vocabulary mastery efficiently.

Merging educational gamification and language learning can encourage students to participate more actively, making vocabulary acquisition engaging through precise educational instructions, several repetitive activities, word contextualization, and profound word meaning (Kingsley & Hagen, 2018). This approach not only captures students' attention but also makes the learning process more dynamic.

Among the various game-based techniques, word association games emerge as a particularly effective technique for vocabulary improvement. This technique prompts students to recall, associate words and helps them reinforce previously learned vocabulary. Games allow students to explore word connection through engaging tasks (Prince 2018). Applying word association games helped students expand their vocabulary. Students respond positively to this method and find it useful in the learning process Terasne et al (2018).

Moreover, vocabulary mastery through word association game exercises can help students enhance a variety of cognitive skills, including listening, memory, recall, and thinking skills, in a brief period (Akdogan, 2017). Furthermore, word association games are simple to apply as they require little preparation and equipment. This game requires students to compete with other teams to win by answering rapidly, and the vocabulary mentioned is interconnected. The use of creative techniques such as games in vocabulary instruction can help students improve their word knowledge and expand learners' vocabulary.

Based on the supporting data presented, the Word Association Games are effective for improving students' vocabulary mastery in eighth-grade secondary schools. Furthermore, to solve this problem, the researcher plans to implement word association games into the English language learning process.

Based on the background, the researcher is interested in strengthening students' vocabulary mastery through techniques such as word association games. This technique was selected because it energizes students to improve their vocabulary mastery. The researcher expects the teaching and learning process when students advance their vocabulary mastery through engaging and collaborative techniques, particularly as EFL learners. In this case, the researcher is conducting action research under the title "The Use of Word Association Games to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Junior High School" (Classroom Action Research on the Eighth Graders of SMPN 1 Kalitidu)

## **B. Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the study's background, the writer formulates the following problem statements: How can the word association game technique increase the vocabulary mastery of the eighth graders at SMPN 1 Kalitidu?

## **C. Objective of the Study**

As stated in the research problem, the purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of the word association game technique in enhancing the vocabulary mastery of the eighth graders at SMPN 1 Kalitidu.

## **D. Significance of the Study**

This research can provide several advantages, including:

### **1. Theoretical Significance**

In general, the findings of this study are expected to guide current instructors in an eighth-grade class at SMPN 1 Kalitidu in particular. Specifically, this study has the potential to improve the academic outcomes of adjectives of eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Kalitidu.

### **2. Practical Significances**

#### **a. For Researchers**

The researchers can utilize this research as a reference approach in future studies to enhance vocabulary mastery through word association games.

#### **b. For Educators**

- 1) This study can assist educators in enhancing their students' vocabulary mastery by implementing word association games.
- 2) The educators can utilize this method as a suggestion to help students enhance their vocabulary mastery by using word association games.

### **3. Pedagogical Significances**

This study is expected to assist teachers in implementing the most effective teaching strategies for their students, particularly by utilizing word association game techniques to enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

## **E. Definition of Terminologies**

### **1. Word Association Games**

Richards & Schmidt (2010) define word association as how multiple linked words occur in human memory while hearing a specific vocabulary and influence language acquisition. The word association game is one of the techniques used to help students enhance their vocabulary mastery by allowing them to make associations with previously provided words. Akdogan (2017) conveys that this game enhances listening abilities, recognition of patterns, memory, and the capacity to think fast when presented with new vocabulary.

### **2. Vocabulary Mastery**

As stated by (Rahmah et al., 2023) Vocabulary mastery refers to an individual's skill to comprehend and master words in a language. Yunisah, as cited in Suryanto et al., 2021 claimed that vocabulary mastery is demonstrated when an individual understands a language's vocabulary and can use it both orally and in writing.

Romrome & Mbato (2022) state that vocabulary is the most fundamental part that EFL students must acquire, memorize, and master to generate targeted communication in processing foreign languages. In this study, vocabulary mastery is defined as students' ability in receptive vocabulary in spelling and meaning.

### **3. Student Engagement**

Student involvement in learning can be interpreted as the extent to which they actively participate in class activities (Yu et al., 2022). In a more

practical sense, students' engagement comprises various aspects such as student interest, behavior, and learners' self-confidence in learning (Suharti et al., 2021).

Furthermore, students' engagement includes students' participation in the thought process, their persistence in completing learning assignments, and their determination to reach expected learning results (Zou et al., 2025). It can be concluded that student engagement refers to their actual participation in classroom learning.