

## EXAMINING THE STUDENTS' VOCABULARIES IMPROVEMENT BY USING SCRAMBLE CARD

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### ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at whether using scramble cards improves the students' vocabulary. It is also aimed at the enrichment of the students' achievement in teaching learning process using scramble cards. The materials used in this research were scramble cards. Some steps in this research start from identifying the problems, planning the action, implementing the action, observing or monitoring the action, reflecting the result of the observation, and research findings. The research was conducted in four meetings. A meeting for pre-test, 2 meetings for treatments and a meeting for post-test. The sample of this research was 35 first-year students of a polytechnic in Indonesia. The technique in collecting the data was quantitative method. In the quantitative method, the researcher used tests to examine the students' achievement. The test consisted of the pre-test and post-test. The technique to analyze the test result was by comparing the mean score of pre-test and post-test. Besides that, this research also used descriptive statistics and the t-test of non-independent. The research result shows that scramble card can enhance the students' vocabulary mastery, it can be seen from the aspect of the vocabulary mastery, such as the students could understand, grasp, remember, pronounce, write about 80 until 90 % of the words correctly and use the words in some sentences appropriately. Second, the improvement also can be seen from the pre-test and post-test of the students' score. The mean score of the pre-test improves from 5.67 to 8.85 in post-test. Then, the scores of the pre-test and post-test show that there is also an improvement in students who achieve the minimum standard score, that is 60. They are from 3.2% to 100% of students. As the conclusion of this research that the use of scramble cards improves students' vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** vocabulary, scramble card, classroom action-research, improvement

### INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized society, mastering a foreign language is crucial. Language serves as a vital tool for effective communication. Its significance is evident in various aspects of life, including job requirements. Competence in both spoken and written language is essential. Additionally, many educational materials are available in foreign languages. Therefore, mastering a foreign language is essential for personal and professional survival.

To enhance all language skills, particularly English (listening, speaking, writing, and reading), students must take specific actions. First and foremost, they need to grasp word

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meanings, which essentially refers to vocabulary. In other words, vocabulary is a crucial element in all language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Lim et al., 2022). For beginners, mastering vocabulary is fundamental in English learning. According to Coady and Huckin (2018), vocabulary is central to language and critically important for young learners. It underpins all English language skills and should not be overlooked by language learners. Knowing words is the key to comprehension and effective communication. In summary, vocabulary plays a crucial role in mastering English as a foreign language. Expanding one's English vocabulary facilitates mutual understanding and effective expression.

Recognizing the significance of vocabulary competence, it is advisable to introduce new vocabulary to students early on. This approach enables them to acquire and comprehend a wide range of words. However, teaching English to young learners, such as junior high students, presents challenges. Teachers often encounter difficulties in developing students' vocabulary mastery. This is because their lack of mastery and knowledge of vocabulary and words that are not familiar, so the goal does not achieve well (Nurdini, 2017). McKay (2006) explains one key challenge that arises from the characteristics of young learners is their learning attention. Moreover, Cameron (2011) also tries to explore more about the key challenge of young learners, they are:

1. Quick Forgetting: Young learners tend to forget information rapidly. Without repetition, words learned easily may slip from their memory. Repetition is essential.
2. Boredom: Young learners easily become disinterested. Teachers must identify suitable techniques and materials for teaching vocabulary. Engaging methods can lead to better results in English learning, particularly vocabulary acquisition.
3. Playful Nature: Young learners prefer play over study. They engage in discussions while playing. Therefore, it's crucial to find appropriate techniques and materials that not only entertain but also address relevant topics.

In summary, effective vocabulary instruction for young learners requires creativity, repetition, and engaging content.

According to Coulson et al. (2017), mastery encompasses skill, practical use, and knowledge. Essentially, mastery represents the ability to effectively apply acquired knowledge. In an educational context, mastery involves harnessing both skill and knowledge within a specific domain. This domain typically corresponds to a lesson taught, which adheres to curriculum and syllabus standards, covering various aspects such as topics and assessments. Vocabulary consists of words in a foreign language that convey meaning through symbols or letter combinations. These words can represent physical objects or abstract ideas and may be composed of a single word or multiple words. Based on these definitions, vocabulary mastery involves the skill or knowledge to effectively use words to express meaning, whether related to physical objects or abstract concepts, using symbols formed by letters in a single word or more.

Vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to skillfully use words to express meaning, whether related to physical objects or abstract ideas. According to Thornbury (2002), several factors make vocabulary learning challenging for second language learners. When these factors are addressed, an individual can be considered to have achieved vocabulary mastery. For instance, an Indonesian student encountering English as a second language in school may struggle to understand lessons. This difficulty arises because the student must grasp appropriate words, spelling, pronunciation, meanings, and more to express subject-related ideas. Thornbury identifies various aspects of words—such as pronunciation, spelling, length, complexity, grammar, meaning, range, connotation, and idiomatic usage—as indicators of vocabulary mastery.

Following preliminary research involving teacher interviews and classroom observations at a polytechnic in Indonesia, the researcher discovered that students' vocabulary proficiency remains inadequate. Several indicators highlight this issue. Firstly, students exhibit reduced interest in the teaching-learning process. This lack of engagement may stem from inadequately designed and unappealing teaching materials.

The teaching-learning process for English vocabulary primarily relies on textbooks and student worksheets. Unfortunately, there is a lack of diverse materials from other sources such as the internet or magazines. Consequently, students exhibit reduced interest and fail to actively engage in the learning process. Additionally, the teaching techniques employed lack creativity, often centered around the teacher delivering content. Most materials originate from teachers, leading to students' diminished concentration during lessons.

Furthermore, students encounter difficulties in vocabulary acquisition. They struggle to remember and grasp word meanings when presented with English terms. Translating words also poses challenges due to the absence of appropriate learning resources. Additionally, writing words correctly proves problematic, especially when dealing with words containing double letters. For instance, the word "suddenly" is often misspelled as "sudenly." Moreover, jumble word exercises result in errors, as seen with the arrangement of "n-t-w-i-r-e" into "writen." Overall, student performance remains below the passing grade based on the mentioned indicators.

Considering the challenges, the researcher aims to enhance students' vocabulary proficiency by incorporating scramble cards as a learning media into the teaching process. Scramble Cards are teaching resources used to help beginning readers practice reading simple sentences. Each card contains a jumbled sentence with CVCe (Silent e) words. Students unscramble the words to form the correct sentence (<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?search=sentence%20scramble%20cards>). Word scramble game needs multiple players with scrambled words on cards. The players should unscramble words on cards to earn the points. The game ends when a player reaches a set of scores (Lackey, 1996).

The use of scramble card is intended to pique students' interest. These media serve as engaging materials that address the difficulties faced by students. It is also supported by the various activities in using scramble cards. It provides keys for remembering and understanding numerous new vocabulary words. In line with Nur's (2016) research that demonstrates the teaching vocabulary through word games like scramble can improve students' vocabulary mastery, making learning enjoyable, motivating, and fostering competition and cooperation among students. Dewi & Kurniawan's (2017) research, incorporating scrambled word games leads to enhanced student vocabulary. Additionally, these games contribute to increased student enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, students find it easier to write down correct words or word groups since they encounter them within the context of these scramble cards.

## METHODS

This research was held at four meetings in the academic year of 2023/2024. The details are the pre-test, two treatments, and the post-test. The pre-test was done on the first meeting. It was done for knowing the students' basic ability of the first-year students of a polytechnic in Indonesia in the academic year of 2023/2024. Next, the treatments were done on the second and three meeting. The aim was to master vocabulary by using scramble cards. Last, the post-test was done on the four meeting. It was done for knowing the students' improvement after using short texts in teaching learning process. The subject of this research is the first-year students of academic year 2023/2024 which consist of 35 students which consists of 11 boys and 24 girls.

According to Kemmis (1983) as cited in Hopkins (2010), action research involves self-reflective inquiry conducted by participants within social (including educational) contexts. The goal is to enhance the rationality and fairness of 1) Their own social or educational practices; 2) Their comprehension of these practices; 3) The specific situations where these practices occur. Collaborative participation among individuals is the most empowering approach for action research, although it is sometimes undertaken individually or in cooperation with external parties.

Moreover, according to Wiersma (2010), action research represents a type of applied research conducted by teachers, administrators, or other educational professionals within local schools. Its purpose is to inform decision-making processes. Action research specifically targets day-to-day challenges at the local level. Unlike other educational research, action research tends to be less stringent in terms of design and methodology. Often, intact groups are involved, although in some cases, only a single group or individual participates in the study.

From the definition provided, it can infer that action research involves systematic study and self-reflective inquiry carried out by participants within educational contexts. Unlike external researchers, these participants aim to address specific problems and enhance students' abilities. By actively engaging in this research, educators hope to discover solutions for improving students' vocabulary mastery.

The model of classroom action research used in this study is based on the model developed by Hopkin (2010). According to the model, the implementation of the classroom action research includes four steps in the following:

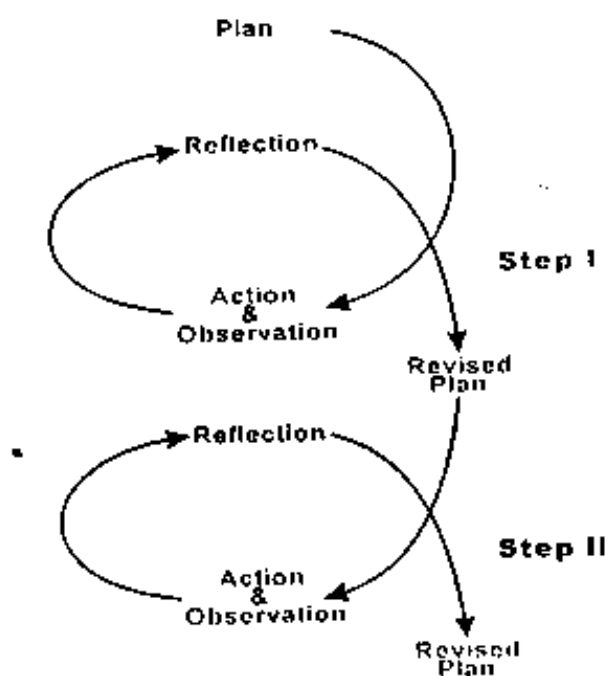


Figure 1. Action research cycle

1. Planning. Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.
2. Action. Act to implement the plan.
3. Observation. Observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs.
4. Reflection. Reflecting process on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed and so on, through a succession of a stages. (Kemmis & Taggart, 2014)

In quantitative method, a test technique is employed. Specifically, the chosen technique is the achievement test. An achievement test evaluates students' abilities after they have learned specific content (Arikunto, 2014). In this case, the test focuses on vocabulary. The vocabulary test aims to gauge students' mastery of vocabulary. For both the pre-test and post-test, the researcher utilized essay and pronoun test types. The test comprised 30 items, all

related to the vocabularies taught to the students. The test results were analyzed to assess students' vocabulary achievement.

Then, qualitative method uses observation. Observation technique involves researchers physically attending a classroom, where they observe the teaching and learning process conducted by both the teacher and the students. According to Burns (1999), observation is a crucial activity in action research. It allows researchers to systematically document and reflect upon classroom interactions and events as they genuinely unfold, rather than relying on assumptions about how they might occur.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research action plan was executed over four meetings, each lasting 100 minutes. The implementation occurred between April 1st and April 30th, 2024. During this research, the researcher utilized scramble cards as teaching materials. The research followed a sequence of steps, including:

1. **Planning the Action: Initial preparation and design.** The action plan was developed in response to the problems identified in the introduction. To address these issues and enhance student engagement during the teaching-learning process, the researcher carefully selected engaging learning materials. Specifically, scramble cards were chosen as the teaching tool. The researcher believed that scramble cards could boost students' vocabulary and ignite enthusiasm in the classroom. These visually appealing cards introduce students to a wealth of new vocabulary.  
By using scramble cards, students were expected to easily grasp the meanings of new words. Additionally, they would improve their ability to write down words or word groups accurately. The teacher also planned to reinforce students' pronunciation skills using the prepared vocabulary. Ultimately, these efforts aimed to complete the indicators of vocabulary mastery. Before implementing the action, the researcher administered a pre-test during the first meeting. This initial test aimed to assess students' abilities related to the upcoming material. Specifically, the pre-test took place on April 1, 2024. In addition to preparing the pre-test, the researcher organized teaching materials, lesson plans, students' worksheets containing various tasks, and relevant teaching equipment aligned with the planned action.
2. **Implementing the Action: Carrying out the planned activities.** During this phase, the teacher divided the students into two groups. Each group engaged in discussions to address the question and identify the correct words. Finally, the teacher encouraged students to articulate their rationale for selecting the words logically. In this step, the students also tried to enhance their understanding and grasp of meaning. It means that students can easily comprehend and remember word meanings. Second activity in form of correcting students' Pronunciation. The students learn how to accurately pronounce words. Third, accurate writing. The students write words correctly, even when rearranging jumbled letters. The last, Contextual Usage. The students asked to use the vocabulary in an appropriate context.
3. **Observing or Monitoring the Action: Collecting data during the implementation.** During the second meeting, observations revealed that students appeared happy and enthusiastic to participate in class. They attentively followed the lesson, with no distractions. The conducive environment was free from external noise. Several students actively responded to the researcher's questions and engaged in exercises. Overall, students performed well in completing tasks. However, despite increased motivation, some students remained passive. They hesitated to speak up when questioned by the researcher. Additionally, many students were shy about speaking loudly, fearing they might provide incorrect

answers. To address this, the researcher reassured students that it was merely a practice, encouraging them to participate more confidently.

In the third meeting, the students exhibited high levels of engagement. Their active participation was evident throughout the teaching-learning process. They attentively listened to the researcher's pronunciation and accurately wrote down the correct words they heard. Most students actively participated, and everyone paid attention to the lesson. During material review, all students were actively working to understand the meaning of each word.

4. Evaluating and Reflecting on the Results: Analyzing the outcomes based on observations. Drawing from the observation field notes, the researcher observed the following outcomes: a) Previously passive students became more active and interested when reading and comprehending the story, b) Students successfully grasped the meaning of new vocabulary introduced by the researcher, c) They demonstrated the ability to write words correctly and use them in context. Additionally, students pronounced words correctly during the study. Furthermore, the test scores from the first and fourth meetings demonstrated improvement. The pre-test mean increased from 5.67 to 8.85 in the post-test. Notably, the percentage of students achieving the minimum standard score (60) rose significantly, from 3.2% to 100%.
5. Revising the Plan: Adjusting the approach based on evaluation findings. Because there is a significant improvement, the activities are now concluded.

The research findings were derived from both observations and test scores. The observations revealed improvements in students' vocabulary mastery and motivation. Initially, students easily understood, grasped, and remembered word meanings. They also correctly pronounced and used the words in writing. This progress resulted from step-by-step practices in understanding, pronunciation, spelling, and application. Students had their own worksheets enriched with short texts, allowing for additional vocabulary practice through engaging stories. It is essential to recognize that the human brain has limitations in absorbing new information, and memory capacity has its bounds ([www.ksmumail/human\\_brain.edu](http://www.ksmumail/human_brain.edu)).

In line with previous literature, Palupi (2016) also stated that there are two techniques in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery, they are direct and indirect technique. The appropriate technique in this research is the direct technique. It consists of some interactive media such as games, language books, poetry etc. Another research also suggests by using games to teach vocabulary effectively, in this study is scramble game, as it enhances students' retention and engagement, making the learning process enjoyable and beneficial (Sakinah, 2022).

Moreover, Saiya (2023) mentions in their research that the scores of the students in the post-tests are higher than the pre-tests. This result comes from the experimental design which was conducted in examining the effectiveness of using Spelling Bee game in teaching vocabulary.

Regarding student motivation, young learners became more active and enthusiastic during the teaching-learning process. This heightened engagement resulted from the use of new materials. Additionally, students demonstrated improved concentration. According to Ur (1998), young learners' attention in class is drawn from pictures, stories, and games. They particularly enjoy reading and listening to interesting stories.

In addition to introducing new materials, various engaging techniques were employed to teach vocabulary. These techniques made the learning process enjoyable and kept students actively participating. Linse (2005) emphasizes that English teachers for young learners should be well-versed in practical teaching methods, such as "listen and repeat," "read and write," "listen, say, and write," and "question and answer." Petty & Jensen (1980) also highlight the need for special techniques when teaching English to children. Ultimately, providing diverse and interesting experiences is the best way to enrich a young learners' vocabulary.

Based on this research, it is demonstrated clearly that using games to practice vocabulary improves learners' ability to memorize the new words effectively and enhanced students' enthusiasm to learn new vocabulary of scientific English (Al-Shawi, 2014).

Before implementing the action, the classroom situation was characterized by some students being preoccupied, especially those at the back. They engaged in unproductive activities like chatting with peers or disrupting others. However, after the action was introduced, the class environment became more active and enthusiastic. Students focused on the materials presented through short texts. In this regard, that vocabulary within stories benefits from clear context and amusing situations. The engaging scenarios fostered student enthusiasm. In this case, student activity during the teaching-learning process is a key indicator of success. Active participation occurs when students find the teacher's techniques suitable and feel free from pressure. The result of this research is strongly supported by Jeni's research (2021) which states that the authors showed that there is a strong relationship and there is an influence between the Scramble model and learning outcomes on learning outcomes. Another research also states that to teach vocabulary using a scramble game, educators can create engaging activities where students unscramble jumbled words to reinforce word knowledge effectively and make learning enjoyable (Rasuan, 2018). One more conclusion by Dita & Zaki (2023) which also support this research is that teach vocabulary using scramble game by having students arrange jumbled letters to form meaningful words, engaging both brain hemispheres to enhance learning speed and vocabulary knowledge in secondary students.

## CONCLUSION

After conducting research on teaching vocabulary using scramble cards among first-year students at a polytechnic in Indonesia, the researcher concludes that this method effectively enhances students' vocabulary. The conclusion is drawn from factual evidence aligned with the results of the implemented action aimed at addressing the stated problems. The outcomes of this research related to understanding and grasping meaning where students easily comprehend and remember word meanings. In addition, students accurately pronounce the words. Besides, students also write words correctly, even when rearranging jumbled letters. Moreover, students effectively use words in contextual situations. Furthermore, the mean score improved from 5.67 (pre-test) to 8.85 (post-test). Additionally, more students achieved scores above the minimum standard (60).

According to the study's findings, using scramble cards for teaching new vocabulary and improving pronunciation has led to significant enhancements in students' vocabulary and learning activity. These cards serve as effective materials for enhancing vocabulary mastery and promoting active learning during the teaching process. By engaging with scramble cards, students gain a better understanding of word forms and meanings, while also practicing their reading, writing, and pronunciation skills.

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