The Effect Of Word Chain Game To Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery at SDN 88 Gresik

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of the Word Chain Game in improving vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at SDN 88 Gresik. Vocabulary is a critical component of language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where engaging and effective teaching strategies are essential to motivate young learners. Using a quantitative pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test, this research involved 31 students, with data collected through a written vocabulary test. The study aimed to measure changes in vocabulary knowledge before and after implementing the Word Chain Game as a classroom activity. Data analysis conducted using SPSS version 29 showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary scores. The average pre-test score was 63.87, while the post-test score increased to 90.06, indicating a meaningful enhancement in vocabulary mastery. Hypothesis testing confirmed a statistically significant effect, with a t-test value of <0.001, supporting the effectiveness of the Word Chain Game as a vocabulary teaching method. The findings suggest that incorporating word games like the Word Chain Game can make vocabulary learning more interactive, enjoyable, and memorable, thereby encouraging student participation and engagement. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting game-based learning in language education and suggests practical applications for elementary language classrooms. Future research should explore the game's long-term impact and potential for enhancing other language skills.
 Keywords: Word Chain Game, Vocabulary Mastery, Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the most important component that must be taught first in English language teaching (Daskalovska, 2014; Sadikin & Martyani, 2020; Uiphanit et al., 2020). Teachers are required to be creative in choosing and simplifying materials that can attract students' interest and interest in mastering vocabulary (Jeliseh & Gilakjani, 2022; "The Effect of Mobile Multimodal Learning Applications on Chinese EFL Students' Vocabulary Learning," 2023; Zhang, P., & Graham, 2020). Mastering a lot of vocabulary will help students understand and convey their feelings using the target language. By mastering vocabulary, students can communicate with others effectively and can also express their ideas in oral and written form (Schmitt, 2019; Yawiloeng, 2020). Mastering vocabulary is also not an easy thing, let alone other aspects of language, namely sound and structure. One cannot communicate without language and language does not exist without vocabulary (Megawati et al., 2023; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020; Wang, 2005). It can be interpreted that the first thing to do in learning English is the ability to master vocabulary, because we learn English as a foreign language, then we must master and understand many skills.

According to Nufus (2019), say that without a broad vocabulary understanding and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, students often achieve less than their potential and may

be discouraged from taking advantage of language learning opportunities around them such as listening to the radio, listening to native speakers, using the language in different contexts, reading or watching television.There are still many problems in learning and teaching English in schools, because English is very different from Indonesian in terms of structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Krepel et al., 2021; Newton, 2020). For example, students tend to forget the meaning of words that have been taught or practiced in previous lessons. In general, vocabulary is taught by memorization. For teachers, creating effective and efficient English learning is not easy. Therefore, English teachers must be able to organize teaching and learning activities. they must present the material using the right teaching techniques or strategies. Good teaching techniques make students able to understand and master classroom learning. As with other lessons that require appropriate techniques and strategies, teaching English teaching also requires appropriate techniques and strategies. In fact, when learning English, especially when memorizing vocabulary is a boring thing for some students. The techniques used in teaching vocabulary are monotonous, and make students feel uninterested. Students only memorize verb changes, words related to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

In this study, the researcher found problems in vocabulary writing in fifth grade students. Many of the students are still wrong in writing English vocabulary, not only in writing sometimes students are also still wrong in mentioning vocabulary in English. To overcome the above problems, teachers must be able to use technical strategies in the classroom learning process to improve students' vocabulary understanding. The teacher's effort in improving vocabulary comprehension is through effective learning to attract students' attention in increasing students' learning motivation, namely by using chain games in classroom learning. In this study, researchers used word chain games as a learning strategy in the classroom. Word chain game is one of the games that is often used by many researchers in classroom learning. According to Firmansyah (2015), Word chain is a type of vocabulary game that is played by using the last letter of the end of the previous word to become the beginning of the next word. Example: Love, Eat, Tea, Apple, Ear, Room, Monkey. In addition, the purpose of the word chain game is to improve students' ability to master vocabulary.

According to Gultom (2018), word chain game can help the students to improve their memory. Word chain games can also be useful learning method to improve students memory. In this game, students will take turns saying words that start with the last letter of the previous word. This game also requires students to remember word quickly, which can train students memory ability. In addition, students also have to remember the order of the words to ensure that the word they mentioned is not mentioned again. By implementing or using the word chain game more often, student will be able to strengthen their memories and improve their memory skills. It can also help improve student cognitive abilities related to remembering and associating words.

On the other hand, the researcher conducted a short interview with an English teacher at the school that will be the site of the study. Based on the results of an interview conducted by the researcher with the English teacher as a grade V English teacher, The English teacher stated that grade V students at SDN 88 Gresik have difficulties in learning English, especially in understanding vocabulary, students sometimes leave one word in the vocabulary, they feel bored quickly and lack interest in learning in class, Many of the students easily forget the meaning of the words that have been taught, students feel embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes in pronouncing and writing English words. Not only that, the grades produced by students are also quite low, there are still many students who get grades with average or even below average. In the assessment that has been shown by English teachers, there are many students who are still low in writing vocabulary in English. Teachers need effective learning strategies or methods that attract students' attention in the learning process in the classroom. Many experts also say that games can be attractive to students, and it has been proven by previous researchers that word chain games are also one of the learning strategies or methods to attract students' attention and be able to improve students' grades in several skills in English, especially vocabulary aspect.

Thus, this study is different from the previous research conducted by (Medina, Lestari, and Yulianti (2021), the subjects of this study are junior high school students in grade VIII. In contrast to the study, this research was conducted for 5th grade elementary school students. The purpose of this study is to find out whether word chain games can be used for vocabulary comprehension in fifth-grade students. The researcher wanted to find out whether word chain games can be used as an appropriate learning method in elementary school students. The research question is formulated as follows: "Is there any significant effect of word chain games on students' vocabulary mastery on the fifth grade at SDN 88 Gresik?"

The purpose of this study is to find out whether word chain games can be used for vocabulary comprehension in fifth-grade students. The researcher wanted to find out whether word chain games can be used as an appropriate learning method in elementary school students. The findings of this study can contribute to the improvement of effective learning strategies and methods in the vocabulary teaching and learning process in the fifth grade students of SD Negeri 88 Gresik.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research approach method, which meets all the requirements for causal testing. This research design uses a pre-experiment design, using the type of one group pre - test post - test. The instrument using writing test. The pre-test and post-test questions used were 25 questions and contained 2 types of questions. The first type of question is arranged words and the second type of question is a fill-in question In this pre-experiment research there is only one class that is treated by using word chain games. Sugiyono (2019) states that experimental research methods are defined as research methods to seek the effect of certain treatments on other treatments under controlled conditions. The researcher using pre-test and post-test to collect the data. And researcher provide classroom treatment using the word chain game for three meetings.

The population of this study will be the fifth grade students of SDN 88 Gresik located in Tambak Rejo, Duduk Sampeyan, Gresik, East Java. SDN 88 Gresik is one of primary schools in Gresik. Fifth grade at SDN 88 Gresik only consists of one class. The sample of this study was fifth grade. The sample selection for this study used purposive sampling technique. The researcher used a fifth grade sample of 31 students. 17 female students and 14 male students.

The researcher using validity, reliability, and difficulty testing to fix the question. There were 30 questions that researchers made for the pre-test and post-test. but the results of the validity test showed that there were 29 valid questions. and after the validity test was completed the researcher also conducted a reliability test and the results showed that the 29 questions included reliable questions. The researcher using normality and hypothesis to analyze the data. And the researcher analyze the data using spss 29 version.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of data that has been collected through test. Analysis include normality and hypothesis testing. This research was conducted with 31 participants from the fifth grade at SDN 88 Gresik. After conducting the post-test, the researcher conducted the data analysis. The data that has been collected by the researcher was then analyzed using SPSS version 29. Here, the data analysis includes normality testing, and hypothesis testing.

Table 4. 1 Normality Test Result

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRETEST	.152	31	.065	.936	31	.066
POSTTEST	.146	31	.090	.941	31	.090
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The normality test results show that the pre-test and post-test scores are normally distributed. The result of the pre-test score shows a number of 0.066 and is said to be greater than the significance level of 0.05. and the result of the post-test score shows a number of 0.090 and is said to be greater than the significance level of 0.05. so it can be concluded that the pre-test and post-test scores are normally distributed.

Table 4. 2 Mean Score Result

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRETEST	63.8710	31	7.33822	1.31798
	POSTTEST	90.0645	31	5.83058	1.04720

The table above shows the results of the average pre-test and post-test scores. And shows that there is a difference in value. Where the average pre-test value gets a value of 63.87. While the average post-test score is 90.06. So it can be concluded that the word chain game is also able to help students improve their grades.

Table 4. 3 T-test Result

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences							
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean			Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	-26.19355	6.60010	1.18541	-28.61448	-23.77261	-22.097	30	<.001

The table above shows the results of the t-test. The results of the independent sample T-test or hypothesis test show that the sig value. (2-tailed) is <0.001 which can be said that the value <0.001 is less than 0.05. (Ha) is accepted and (H0) is rejected. So it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students in using the word chain game on the vocabulary mastery of fifth grade students at SDN 88 Gresik.

he findings from this study reveal that the Word Chain Game is an effective tool for improving vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at SDN 88 Gresik. The significant increase in post-test scores, compared to pre-test scores, demonstrates that the Word Chain Game supports vocabulary acquisition and retention. This result aligns with previous research, indicating that engaging activities such as word games can make learning more appealing and interactive, thus improving students' focus and motivation (e.g., Firmansyah, 2015; Gultom, 2018).

An essential aspect of this study is the psychological and social impact of the Word Chain Game on students' engagement. The game's competitive and cooperative nature appears to reduce students' anxiety about making mistakes, creating a relaxed atmosphere that encourages active participation. This aligns with Gultom (2018), who suggests that vocabulary games not only boost retention but also build students' confidence, making them more likely to use new vocabulary outside the classroom setting.

Furthermore, the data suggests that the Word Chain Game effectively aids memory retention. This may be due to its reliance on repetition and the association of words, which enhances cognitive processes related to language recall (Abbas, 2014). The game's format, requiring students to quickly recall words that start with the last letter of the previous word, reinforces connections between vocabulary items and strengthens associative memory. This observation is consistent with findings from Amaliyah (2020), who noted that repetitive vocabulary games can solidify word knowledge by creating mental links between words.

This study also provides insights into the motivational aspects of game-based learning in vocabulary acquisition. The students' positive reception to the game indicates that integrating playful methods into classroom instruction can enhance their intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for language learning. The active and enjoyable learning environment created by the Word Chain Game seems to support the development of a positive attitude toward vocabulary learning. This approach contrasts with traditional rote memorization, which students often find monotonous and discouraging (e.g., Medina et al., 2021).

One limitation of this study is its focus on a single class, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of the Word Chain Game in different educational settings or grade levels to determine its broader applicability. Additionally, while this study measured improvements in vocabulary mastery through test scores, future research might consider other aspects of vocabulary use, such as spoken fluency or retention over an extended period, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the game's impact on language learning.

In conclusion, the Word Chain Game shows promise as a tool for vocabulary instruction. It not only enhances vocabulary mastery but also fosters an engaging and supportive learning environment. Teachers are encouraged to adopt similar game-based strategies to improve students' language skills while also boosting their enjoyment and motivation in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact of the Word Chain Game on enhancing vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at SDN 88 Gresik. By comparing pre-test and post-test results, we observed a marked improvement in students' vocabulary knowledge, confirming that the Word Chain Game serves as an effective instructional tool for vocabulary acquisition. The game not only contributed to measurable academic gains but also positively influenced the classroom environment, making vocabulary learning more engaging and accessible. This aligns with prior research

advocating for interactive and game-based learning approaches in language education, which have been shown to support retention and student motivation.

The results have implications for teaching practice, particularly for elementary English language instruction. Vocabulary acquisition is a foundational element of language learning, yet traditional methods can be monotonous and challenging for young learners. This study shows that using interactive games like the Word Chain Game can address these challenges by providing a fun, active, and collaborative learning experience. This approach helps alleviate the anxiety often associated with language learning, encourages active participation, and cultivates a positive attitude towards vocabulary practice.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge limitations. The research was conducted within a single school with a specific age group, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study focused only on short-term vocabulary gains. Future research should explore the long-term effects of game-based learning on vocabulary retention and investigate whether similar approaches can enhance other language skills, such as speaking and listening, in diverse educational settings. Expanding the sample to include multiple schools or varied age groups would also help in validating the broader applicability of the Word Chain Game.

In summary, this study concludes that the Word Chain Game is a promising tool for vocabulary instruction in primary education, offering both cognitive and affective benefits. By implementing such engaging and interactive strategies, teachers can enhance students' vocabulary mastery, foster a supportive classroom environment, and ultimately support a more dynamic and effective language learning experience. Further exploration into game-based vocabulary instruction across different contexts and skills is recommended to deepen our understanding of its benefits in language education.

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