



## **PICTIONARY GAME FOR VOCABULARY MASTERY: BEST PRACTICE FROM A RURAL SCHOOL CONTEXT**

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### **Abstract**

While online gamification in education settings has spread worldwide in this digital era, its application gets confronted with massive opposition, especially in rural contexts. Several technologically inaccessible schools may find it unfavourable to apply such a model in learning. This study looks at redefining a simple application of particular Pictionary games to boost students' English vocabulary learning in a predominantly rural, private school setting. It aims at improving students' vocabulary mastery through the plain-sailing Pictionary game technique and re-establishing the teacher's best practices to apply. Two-cycle classroom action research was applied by collecting data through observation, questionnaires, interviews, and tests. The qualitative data analysis shows better-changing activities, attitudes, perceptions, and learning experiences leading to the positive outcomes of the game application. Quantitative data on students' vocabulary tests in two-prioritized skills (reading and listening) also show a remarkable improvement from cycle one to cycle two, with the class percentage passing the success criterion for reading and listening vocabulary mastery being 83.33% and 75%, respectively. In addition, the teacher's reflection on each cycle shapes profound insights into several contextual best practices: goal-oriented teaching, progressiveness, shift gears, differentiated learning, pace and variety, and encouragement.

**Key Terms:** *Pictionary game, vocabulary mastery, best practice*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The advancement of science and technology necessitates that students should be proficient communicators. Understanding important priorities from information is what communication means, including in English. English communication abilities are very beneficial for students to acquire knowledge and assist other skills. However, there are thousands of languages in this world, each of which has its peculiar nationwide language spoken and understood by its people in different regions (Nishanthi, 2018). Consequently, English can be the second and even the third or more entity in students' language acquisition and learning.

Concerning this, vocabulary mastery is a vital component of language proficiency, making it one of the basic elements of learning English through writing, speaking, reading, and listening (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Without vocabulary mastery,

students cannot understand the words they read and listen to, nor can they speak or write. Vocabulary, therefore, becomes the central component that assists students in learning and communicating. Nonetheless, teaching vocabulary is a challenging task today since it calls for teachers' imagination to make vocabulary learning more engaging so that students would be enthusiastic about studying it. Several scholars pinpoint that other activities should be considered in teaching vocabulary rather than just introducing and memorizing new words (Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002; Hiebert & Kamil, 2005; McCarten, 2007; Simpson, 2011; Webb & Nation, 2017). Students generally need to see, say, and write newly learned words many times before they can be said to have learned them.

One of the methods to develop students' vocabulary was playing games. Today's digital literacy and learning urge to promote new learning paradigms in schools, introducing it globally as gamification for technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) (as cited in Santosa et al., 2022; Wijayanto, 2022). Gamification offers opportunities for teachers to use game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage, motivate, and promote learning to solve issues. It incorporates game-related components, elements, and strategies to motivate the users emotionally (Kapp et al., 2014). However, applying this digital-type game may get confronted with massive opposition, especially in rural contexts. Several technologically inaccessible schools may find it unfavourable to apply such a model in English learning (Aryanti et al., 2022; Uran, 2022b). Therefore, a more context-based game model should be considered when applied in rural settings.

According to Shaptohvili (2002) and Simpson (2011), teachers should be encouraged to use games to help students practice new languages in class. The teacher can indirectly add a pleasant and relaxing element to vocabulary practice by playing games, making the subject matter more engaging, enjoyable, challenging, and practicable, especially in discovering new vocabulary. One of many games to develop vocabulary is Pictionary. The Pictionary game is a board game, a drawing-word-guessing game for groups of any age. Playing the Pictionary game can help students memorize the words taught by their teacher while reviewing the vocabulary, expecting that it will stay longer in students' minds and be used in the right context.

Many researchers from the Indonesian context have conducted studies using the Pictionary game as a teaching technique. To learn and reflect on different contexts, the authors discuss some of them. Daulay et al. (2021) through an experiment study argue that there is a significant effect on the senior high school students speaking skills after being treated by the Pictionary game. The related experimental study with significant effect was also conducted in junior high school contexts by Jumarthini et al. (2022) and Ayu et al. (2018). Certainly, these experiments should be discussed in more detail regarding the application and usage of the Pictionary game.

In that regard, Hamer and Lely (2019) and Fatmawati et al. (2022) review some literature and discuss in their conceptual research how to use the Pictionary game to increase learners' vocabulary mastery. They conclude that learners' imagination, classroom involvement, and fun language teaching, among others, are contributing factors in the application of the game. Nevertheless, detailed discussion on the application of the Pictionary game in action research in Indonesian journals is still rare. The authors come across an article from a study conducted by Dwi (2017). She reveals influential factors that change students' vocabulary mastery through the game: the suitable material, students' interests, and the teacher's guidance.

Concerning this study, the authors found many challenges and issues related to students' English vocabulary learning in the classroom, especially in terms of vocabulary retention and assignments. Because students' vocabulary is very lacking, they are very slow in answering or doing assignments given by the teacher. To cope with those problems, various methods can be used in the learning process to help students improve vocabulary mastery, especially in a similar, related context (i.e., Niga & Janggo, 2022; Tay & Uran, 2022). With that respect, the teacher as a facilitator must provide several alternatives, new ways or methods, and interesting exercises to stimulate students to increase their vocabulary mastery. Students will be more involved in class activities if games are used appropriately.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher, one of the authors, applied the Pictionary Game as a learning method in the classroom. She intends to apply this plain-sailing game to improve students' vocabulary mastery in the 11<sup>th</sup> Science Class at SMAK St. Petrus Kewapante in the academic year of 2022/2023. During and after the application, the authors reveal contextual best practices within the application of the Pictionary Game to achieve the intended goal.

## **METHOD**

This study applies the classroom action research method. Classroom action research begins with questions about classroom experiences, issues, or challenges. It is a reflective process that helps teachers explore and examine aspects of teaching and learning and take action to change and improve the student's achievement in the teaching and learning process (Burns, 2010; Harmer, 2001). Employing Kemmis and McTaggart's design (as cited in Burns, 2010), the research procedures consist of four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted in the first semester from August 8 to December 8, 2022, to the thirteen students in the 11<sup>th</sup> Science Class at a private catholic senior high school named SMAK St. Petrus Kewapante.

The researcher collected the data using observation, questionnaires, interviews, and tests. The main tools for analyzing qualitative data in this research are categorizing and analyzing talk (Burns, 2010). Categorizing and analyzing talks are done by sorting objects and information from qualitative data into logical groupings and themes to answer research objectives. On the other hand, the quantitative data are analyzed from the questionnaire and the average score of the student's vocabulary tests per action within one cycle.

To apply the Pictionary game, the collaborator teacher and one of the authors follow some procedures, such as 1) divide the class into teams, 2) explain that each team's objective is to be the first and earn a point in a round when they correctly identify vocabulary terms, 3) designate one student on each team to be the artist to draw pictures, 4) identify the time limit for the first round of words, 5) explain that the artist should look at the word to be illustrated, and 6) when the word is recognized by the group, the artist changes to another member and moves on to the next word. The students are required to sketch while thinking about retrieving, guessing the word, and competing with one another.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Findings**

#### *Pre-cycle*

In the pre-cycle, the researcher observed students' interaction in English learning, interviewed the English teacher and students about their experience and perception during the English teaching-learning process, and administered a pre-test to investigate students' prior English skills and problems, especially vocabulary mastery. The results of the observations show that students of the 11<sup>th</sup> Science Class at SMAK ST. Petrus Kewapante is less interested in learning English. They find the learning process in the classroom unpleasant and confusing as the English teacher only depends on reading books without any technique to assist them. The class atmosphere was not lively, and students did not participate in learning.

Moreover, in the interviews with the English teacher, she admitted that most of the students' abilities were very minimal because students did not like English lessons and considered English too difficult and unpleasant. As a result, students did not participate well when she explained the material. Meanwhile, the results of student interviews show that students had great difficulty in learning English because the teacher only focused on books without asking students. Also, their vocabulary knowledge is very lacking, making it difficult to respond to the teacher's questions and English exercises. As a result, the class atmosphere was less convivial.

From the data above, the researcher concludes that students of the 11<sup>th</sup> Science Class at SMAK St. Petrus Kewapante still lack vocabulary mastery. It can be noticed from the result of the vocabulary test in reading and listening, showing the low score both individually and in class. If referred to the passing grade, no one passed the success criteria. From the observation and interview the researcher notices that just asking students to learn harder is useless, they need more fun learning through games. Therefore, the researcher uses the Pictionary Game method to help increase students' vocabulary learning and mastery.

#### *Cycle 1*

In this phase, the researcher looked at implementing actions and observations results. Then the researcher-teacher made a way to modify the action by playing the Pictionary game. It aims at giving students time and space to define the English words having been studied, practice them, and retain them easily. In the end, it is expected that the student's vocabulary mastery in reading and listening could meet the success criteria. The results of post-test 1 show that the percentage of students who met the success criteria in reading vocabulary and listening vocabulary was only 8.33% and 16.67%, respectively. The researcher then considered revising actions that can be used to support the achievement of vocabulary mastery in listening and reading comprehension skills in the second cycle.

Regarding the reflection phase, the researcher must provide a good perception at the beginning of the activity to arouse students' interest in learning. Second, the researcher would ask students to use a dictionary. Third, she must clearly explain the material using the

Pictionary game technique. Fourth, the researcher should explain the material in a louder voice so that the class atmosphere is not noisy. Fifth, the researcher must provide opportunities for students to ask questions, and researchers must explain the learning objectives to be achieved. The researcher has taught according to the lesson plan but has not explained the material clearly and well using the Pictionary game technique. Therefore, based on the average value of students and the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires in cycle I, the researcher realizes that this action research must be carried out in cycle II.

### *Cycle II*

The meetings in this cycle went well as planned. Students have paid attention during teaching, actively participated in class activities, and started posing queries during discussion sessions. Due to the clear teacher's instructions on the Pictionary Game, the students were enthusiastic about participating. The teacher also goes around to see the class condition and explains the material in a clear, louder voice. The rules and vocabulary used by the researcher are regular, but she started using different words for each round. It seems that students' mastery of new words has improved, in the sense that they can identify those words and make them up in their sentences.

The researcher and the English teacher are satisfied because their efforts to improve students' vocabulary skills in reading and listening skills have been realized. The results of the second test showed that most students (83.33%) scored above the minimum completeness criteria for reading skills and third-four (75%) scored as well on the listening test. Moreover, the observation sheet, interview, and questionnaire prove that students are active, enthusiastic, and collaborative during the learning process through the game. Therefore, the second cycle has met the criteria for success reflecting on the research instruments provided. The researcher and the school English teacher decided to stop the classroom action research because it successfully improved students' vocabulary skills through the Pictionary game technique, and it is following the plan discussed beforehand by the researcher and the teacher.

### **Discussion**

The findings showed that this study meets the success criteria in two cycles. Based on the results of post-test 1, it is shown that only one student (8.33%) met the success criteria in reading vocabulary and two students (16.67%) in listening vocabulary. To cope with that, the researcher-teacher provided a very good perception at the beginning of the activity to arouse student learning interest, explained the material more clearly and loudly to rebuild a convivial class atmosphere, and provided opportunities for students to pose queries and achieve the learning objectives through game's goals. After about one month of applying this game, the researchers are satisfied because the efforts to improve students' vocabulary mastery in reading and listening skills have been realized. Ten out of twelve students (83.3%) passed the reading passing grade, and nine (75%) succeeded in listening skills.

In addition, observation sheets, interviews, and questionnaires also prove that students are active, enthusiastic, and collaborative during the learning process through games. It can be seen from the questionnaire result, showing that almost all students (91.66%) get interested in learning English through the Pictionary game, understand very well the given instructions, and perceive the Pictionary game as a helpful technique for vocabulary retention. The majority of

students (83.33%) also believe that the strategy improves their vocabulary mastery. The interviews also confirm that the Pictionary game provides students with an interesting way to learn English because it challenges them to work as a team. This game can be utilized as an effective teaching tool to foster creative thinking and communication skills. In addition to being creative, students like the way of selecting sketches that will help the rest of their team understand the association. Through the game, the class atmosphere becomes more active. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the Pictionary game helps improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Reflecting on productive actions in each cycle, the authors reveal several best practices following the Pictionary game application in the given context. The success story for the student's vocabulary improvement typically relies upon the teacher's efficient ways of teaching, among others are goal-oriented teaching, progressiveness, shift gears, differentiated learning, pace and variety, and encouragement.

Goal-oriented teaching requires teachers to have a reason and achievable objective for applying the Pictionary game in vocabulary learning. They should make students aware of this objective before learning. In this current research, the teacher realized the issues behind students' low achievement and reminded students to stay focused on the importance of vocabulary mastery in English comprehension. As every game has a purpose in playing, applying the Pictionary game also helps students achieve a target. It requires students to guess words or phrases from drawings, which allows them to work in teams and take turns to be the 'artist'. The game's components include more than just points, badges, and levels; they also include deeper entities like difficulty, mystery, sociability, and other components that can affect players emotionally and with a deeper sense of purpose.

Concerning progressiveness, the teacher has done her best through the technique to allow students to progress. Each instrument was assessed and discussed, allowing students to improve their language skills, especially vocabulary mastery in reading and listening. All lessons in each cycle end with the students feeling they are one step closer to their goal. The teacher also builds opportunities to test students' progress through practices, exercises, and tests.

Furthermore, a great teacher can "shift gears" and is flexible when a lesson is not working or has not met the goal (Davidson & Uran, 2022). Throughout the lessons in this action research, the teacher evaluates her instruction and comes up with fresh ways to present content to ensure that each student is aware of the important ideas. Although the Pictionary game is simple and common to almost all school settings, the teacher keeps adapting this game to her classroom due to the effectiveness of time and class conditions. Using pictures in class provides a focus that stimulates students' interest because they like to see pictures.

Moreover, English teaching and learning today should be appropriate for the student's level of comprehension. Almost every educator concurs that materials should be modified or "differentiated" whenever possible to fit learners with particular learning requirements, regardless of whether they are stronger or poorer in some areas (Niga & Janggo, 2022). In this action research, the teacher makes the lesson challenging and pushes students to achieve the

goal based on their needs as much as possible. Students take turns in several activities in the Pictionary game application to help them reveal their strengths and weaknesses.

Another facet to contemplate is pace and variety. A teaching best practice should not lose its pace and should have a range of activities (Uran, 2022a). The teacher in this research has been mindful of her students' ages and levels and therefore assign a technique appropriate for them. She keeps the class moving and is ready to rearrange the technique, add it to the action plan, and adapt to students' learning styles.

Last but not least, encouragement and praise or an overall upbeat attitude have become the teacher's way of inspiring students to learn. Students feel respected because, in each learning cycle, they find their teacher helpful and appreciative, guiding them in drawing pictures reflecting the words given and motivating them with simple gifts for the winner of each game. These encourage them to learn English, especially in retaining vocabulary and understanding its usage within reading and listening texts.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussion above, the authors draw the following conclusions. Online gamification in educational settings has become widespread in this digital age, but its implementation faces fierce opposition, particularly in rural settings. Applying such a model to learning may not be advantageous for some schools that lack access to technology. This study reexamines a straightforward method of using particular Pictionary games to enhance students' English vocabulary learning in a primarily rural, private school setting. It aims to restore the teacher's best teaching practices and enhance students' vocabulary mastery through the simple Pictionary game technique. Data is gathered in two-cycle classroom action research through observation, tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The analysis of qualitative data reveals that better-changing behaviours, attitudes, and learning experiences cause positive effects of the game application. The class presentation passed the success criterion for reading and listening vocabulary mastery with 83.33% and 75%, respectively, according to quantitative data on students' vocabulary tests in two-prioritized skills (reading and listening). Furthermore, the teacher's reflection on each cycle helps to shape profound insights into many best practices, including goal-oriented teaching, progressivism, shift gears, differentiated learning, pace and variety, and encouragement.

From the findings of the application of the Pictionary Game in the 11<sup>th</sup> Science Class at SMAK St. Petrus Kewapante, the authors would like to give some suggestions. The first one is for students. The results of this study can motivate students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Learning vocabulary through the Pictionary game can help students participate in teaching and learning activities, be motivated in English lessons, and retain more vocabulary. The second one is for EFL teachers. These findings can help EFL teachers use the Pictionary game based on their contexts to teach vocabulary so that students become more active and enthusiastic about the learned material. The EFL teachers also must master other techniques or methods in learning to create a fun and convivial classroom atmosphere. Lastly, for the next researcher, it is suggested that the results of these findings can be used as a reference and comparative data to research teaching vocabulary using Pictionary techniques or other

appropriate techniques. They are also expected to review and evaluate the result of this study to refer to other research methods.

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