

# The Use of Pictionary Games to Enhance Young Learners' Vocabulary Mastery in ESL Classroom

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**Abstract**— This study explores the effectiveness of integrating Pictionary games into English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms for young learners, focusing on vocabulary acquisition. The aim is to investigate the impact of Pictionary games on young learners' vocabulary learning through pre-test and post-test assessments, and secondly, to examine the perceptions of young learners regarding the utilization of Pictionary games in ESL classrooms. The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of Pictionary games as a pedagogical tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among young ESL learners. Furthermore, it seeks to shed light on students' perspectives on the use of interactive and game-based activities like Pictionary in ESL classrooms. Students enjoy playing Pictionary in the ESL classroom. Implementing Pictionary shown to boost the success rate of vocabulary learning among ESL learners and provides educators with evidence-based recommendations to implement Pictionary to optimize language learning experiences.

**Index Terms**— English, ESL classrooms, Pictionary, vocabulary, young learners

## I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the English language is evident in the current globalisation period (Hadi & Guo, 2020). It is a result of its status as a lingua franca and worldwide language. Fundamental proficiency in English is an absolute necessity for many professions, including scientific research, engineering and technology, teaching, medicine, and communication. In order to become proficient in any language, one must acquire a vast vocabulary. The ability to comprehend and compose text depends on vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that vocabulary serves as a basic foundation that is required to communicate our ideas and thoughts, exchange knowledge, and comprehend one another. Thus, the initial area that young learners of English need to focus on mastering is vocabulary, as having a large vocabulary will help them speak effectively.

Tan et al., (2020) findings emphasise the importance of vocabulary in language competency which are becoming more prominent in language acquisition studies, particularly for second and foreign languages. It is very crucial to provide broad vocabulary exposure to the students while they are still young. There may be different opinions on the most successful methods of language teaching and learning, but

this doesn't diminish the importance of vocabulary knowledge in acquiring language competence. Young learners often bring diverse linguistic backgrounds to the ESL classroom, and these differences can impact the development of their English vocabulary. The syllabus, while comprehensive in its coverage, grapples with the need to bridge the gap between learners' initial language competencies and the proficiency required for successful communication in English (Susanti et al., 2023). Moreover, the curriculum places a significant emphasis on creating a foundation for language skills that extend beyond the classroom. The goal is to equip young learners with practical language capabilities that can be applied in real-life situations.

The Malaysian education system requires students to complete their primary and secondary schooling before they can enroll in pre-university or Diploma courses. Kids attend school as early as seven years old and primary education consists of six years of schooling. Primary education provides kids with a sturdy beginning for lifelong learning. In the 21st century, technological and educational advancements have led to a broader range of learning options. Language learners can use several platforms, including social media, games, collaborative projects, and mashups. English is taught as a second language for all levels of students. The Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education Malaysia, has established the need to incorporate environmental education in primary school education in the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP), in which the present-day curriculum content is intended to develop an understanding of the surroundings in the everyday lives of the students. (Ministry of Education, 2012). Environmental education is incorporated into the curriculum of English language courses, with some of the subjects covered including environmental awareness.

The use of games for educational purposes in a language-learning classroom is very common and used widely by numerous language educators around the globe. Educators applied various methodologies, strategies, and approaches to significantly improve second language teaching and learning in the classrooms over the years. Digital gamification has emerged and been used in EFL/ESL teaching and learning in recent years. (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019). The teaching of languages may be approached in a variety of different ways. Nevertheless, educators should take into consideration the variables that may practically lead to the achievement of learning goals. To help their students learn English better, English teachers need to be creative and imaginative. They also need to be able to create a supportive environment to make the students feel happy. One of the duties of an English teacher is to encourage the quality of educational media or

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techniques. Among the visual tools is the guessing game Pictionary, which was created by Robert Angel and Gary Everson. It was first published by Angel Games Inc. in 1985. Pictionary is a game involving words that help students develop vocabulary by letting them identify the image. Darmawan and Fatmawati (2019) The rules of Pictionary will help students develop their creativity and problem-solving abilities. Players must be imaginative and creative in order to choose sketches that effectively express their relationships with the other members of their team.

## A. Problem Statement

The English proficiency of Malaysian students was found to be lacking, underscoring the mandatory necessity of having proficient English language abilities even if their status has been disputed since our independence (Hazita, 2016). One significant factor is the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the learners, as they bring varying levels of exposure to English prior to entering the ESL classroom. Malay is the predominant first language, serving as the primary means of communication for the majority of the population. Malay is the language of instruction in schools and the language spoken in daily life. English is designated as the second language in Malaysia. In daily life, young learners may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. It may be difficult to learn a new language, particularly for young students. Differences in first language structures, phonetics, and lexical systems can pose obstacles to the smooth assimilation of English vocabulary. Insufficient practice and real-life application hinder vocabulary development. Schmitt (2008) recognise the significance of vocabulary increase for enhancing language proficiency. The distinct syntactical rules may lead to errors in usage and hinder effective communication. Differences in grammatical structures between students' mother tongue and English languages can complicate the acquisition of English vocabulary. Additionally, inadequate exposure to authentic language usage, both within and outside the classroom, can limit learners' contextual understanding and hinder the application of newly acquired vocabulary in practical scenarios.

Existing research suggests that ESL learners often face difficulties in acquiring and mastering vocabulary, and several factors contribute to these challenges (Anisah, 2023). Many ESL learners may find traditional vocabulary teaching methods monotonous or disconnected from their real-life communication needs, leading to a diminished interest in the learning process. Moreover, Susanti et al., (2023) studies highlight a lack of engagement and motivation as additional hurdles in vocabulary acquisition). In light of these challenges, it underscores the crucial need for innovative and effective teaching strategies to address vocabulary-related issues among ESL learners. By exploring the underlying reasons for vocabulary difficulties, educators can tailor their instructional approaches to enhance engagement, relevance, and applicability of vocabulary learning in the diverse and dynamic ESL classroom environment (Muryani & Yunus, 2023). This understanding becomes particularly essential when designing interventions, such as the integration of Pictionary games, to foster a more interactive and engaging vocabulary learning experience for young ESL learners.

## B. Research Objectives

This study aims:

- i. To investigate the effectiveness of Pictionary games on young learners' vocabulary learning.
- ii. To examine young learners' perceptions on using Pictionary games in ESL classroom.

## C. Research Questions

The following are some of the questions that are hoped to be answered by this research:

- i. Are there any significant differences in vocabulary scores among young learners after employing Pictionary games in ESL classroom?
- ii. What are the young learners' perceptions on using Pictionary games in ESL classroom?

## D. The Significance of Study

This research holds significant implications for both educators and learners of English as a second language (ESL). Second language learners must apply various strategies to acquire vocabulary to master a target language (Prichard & Atkins, 2020). In particular, this research could shed light on how well Pictionary games enhance vocabulary skills in a second language learning classroom among young learners. This research can explore the potential of games in creating inclusive learning environments for students with varying learning styles and abilities. This may provide efficient administration of the classroom as well as boost the degree of motivation felt by students while they are engaged in the instructional process.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Importance of Vocabulary

The foundation for each language is its vocabulary (Harmer, 2019). A wide vocabulary serves as a foundational element for students to proficient in the English language. One of the four parts of language is vocabulary; the other three are spelling, grammar, phonology, and vocabulary. Mastering vocabulary is a crucial skill that students should possess. Learning additional words and ways to express yourself will yield the greatest results (Anisah, 2023). Grammar allows you to express very little, but words allow you to say practically anything. One may argue that since words allow us to express anything, mastering vocabulary comes first in improving our language skills. Therefore, if we are proficient in vocabulary, we can communicate. Learning a language requires having a solid vocabulary, especially for students. Teaching vocabulary is essential to teaching English because without it, students cannot convey their own ideas or comprehend those of others. Grammar is not as crucial as vocabulary (Catrián, 2023). To a limited extent, students are able to converse in English without employing grammar. Students without a sufficient vocabulary will prevent us from communicating. Teaching vocabulary can improve their ability to comprehend and interact with English speakers. To address language learners' requirements as well as specific elements of teaching and studying the English language, the Malaysian government introduced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2013. Effective communication is

hampered by a second language's restricted vocabulary. Many times, people consider vocabulary to be one of the most important tools for second language learners. In other words, vocabulary is the collection of terms that pupils are familiar with and use in normal speech. Students' vocabulary will increase, which will help them become more fluent in English (Mutiara, 2023).

### B. Teaching Vocabulary

In the realm of ESL instruction, particularly for young learners, the acquisition of vocabulary plays a pivotal role in language development. Given that the kids' first language is English, the instructor must be imaginative. By using efficient teaching strategies or by bothering students' interest in the teaching and learning process, it is necessary to develop approaches to assist students in acquiring more vocabulary. Among the numerous methods for teaching vocabulary is the use of games. Games may help students feel language rather than merely study it, claims Susanti et al. (2023). According to Kartini (2021), games can pique students' attention and encourage more participation in their English language study. Acquiring knowledge of vocabulary is a challenge for students due to its vast array and diversity, encompassing words, phrases, collocations, strategic vocabulary, grammatical patterns, idioms, and fixed expressions (Catrián, 2023). By teaching vocabulary through games, teachers may have a better understanding of their students' personalities, as well as how they collaborate to form relationships and have more fun while practicing new abilities. Educational theory by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory posits that learning occurs within the ZPD, an area between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with support. In the context of this study, the use of Pictionary Games may represent a form of scaffolding or support, guiding learners to enhance their vocabulary within their ZPD. Additionally, the initial vocabulary level serves as a starting point, and the study seeks to explore how targeted interventions, such as Pictionary Games, can elevate learners to a higher level of vocabulary mastery within their ZPD. This application of Vygotsky's theory underscores the significance of social and contextual factors in the language learning process, particularly with interactive tools like Pictionary Games.

### C. The Concept of Pictionary Games

The Pictionary board game was invented in 1985 by Rob Angel, a part-time waiter from Seattle, Washington (Sihombing, n.d). This study delves into an innovative approach utilizing Pictionary games to enrich the vocabulary mastery of young ESL students. Pictionary, a drawing and guessing game, injects dynamism into the learning process by prompting active participation and communication. The objective of this game is to see how quickly a pupil can think of a term. In other words, one student draws the word "description" in this game, and the other students have to guess what it is. During these activities, students illustrate vocabulary words without verbal clues, fostering creativity and critical thinking. It is up to the teammates to guess the word based on the drawing presented. (Yelvia et al., 2023).

Group dynamics come into play, as collaborative learning and friendly competition enhance the overall engagement. Each team member takes turns acting as the "artist" in this cooperative game. When guessing words from artwork, kids are encouraged to be creative and active learners. They also need to communicate well with their team (Susanti et al., 2023). This game is intended to keep students interested by providing them with a list of vocabulary words that will be utilized in the following lesson plans. In other words, a Pictionary game forces kids to think more quickly in order to understand a word (Yelvia et al., 2023). One of the numerous strategies' teachers employ to include children in the learning process and raise student accomplishment is the Pictionary game.

### D. Past Studies on the Pictionary games

The provided data outlines findings from three different research studies that explore the effectiveness of using the Pictionary Words Game to enhance students' vocabulary mastery in various educational setting.

The first study, "Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery through Pictionary Board Game at Grade IV B of Elementary School 36 Pekanbaru" is the title of the other research conducted by Dwi in 2017. Pre- and post-tests were employed for the test, and classroom action research was used for the research design. This research's substance is a term. The pre-test average score was 66.66, whereas the post-test average score was 79.33. Overall, the significance of the post-test exceeded that of the pre-test. Thus, the Pictionary games can aid in the students' acquisition of language.

The study by Rianti (2018) found that Pictionary games effectively improve students' vocabulary and help them memorize it. Nouns were included in the study design together with action research conducted in classrooms. Grida (2019) split children into two classrooms, with the experimental class playing Pictionary and the control group using conventional media. The experimental group scored higher on pre-test and post-test, concluding that Pictionary can enhance children's vocabulary proficiency.

Following next is a study conducted by Tahmit and Nastiti in 2019, employed observation and interviews to collect data from fifth-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Tarbiyatul Athfal Sumurber. The study focused on nouns, and the results indicated that students perceived the Pictionary game as instrumental in increasing their vocabulary mastery, while also making the learning process more engaging.

Additionally, another research was conducted by Ferdinandus and Rahayaan in 2020, utilized the Class Action Research methodology and concentrated on nouns as well. The outcomes revealed that students exhibited excellent vocabulary mastery after the implementation of Pictionary games, suggesting a positive impact on their overall learning outcomes.

Finally, Kartini and Kareviati's (2021) study employed a descriptive research design, focusing on nouns in a junior high school in Cimahi. The results from this study indicated a significant improvement in students' performance following the incorporation of Pictionary games as a tool for vocabulary learning. Collectively, these studies suggest a consistent positive correlation between the use of Pictionary games and enhanced vocabulary acquisition across different grade levels and educational settings.

In summary, those papers only show a positive correlation between the use of Pictionary games and enhanced vocabulary mastery. Students across different grade levels and institutions reported increased interest and improvement in their vocabulary skills when exposed to Pictionary as a teaching tool. The research designs varied, including observation, interviews, class action research, and descriptive approaches, providing a multifaceted understanding of the impact of Pictionary games on vocabulary acquisition. However, some things are different. All the study includes this uses the Pictionary game but, in the past studies, it all focused on teaching nouns. This study is a bit different because of the usage of verbs as the material. This helps to fill the knowledge gap about teaching vocabulary.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aims to investigate how effective the utilization of the Pictionary game is in improving the vocabulary proficiency of young learners in an ESL classroom. To address the research question one, a quantitative approach will be adopted while implementing quasi-experimental, utilizing a cross-sectional survey questionnaire for data collection to investigate the second research question. The sample includes standard six English language students from a Malaysian school, which had a total enrollment of 50 students who have been exposed to English as a second language for over five years. Convenience sampling will be used for practicality and ease of access, ensuring a sufficient number of participants within time and resources. The SPSS statistical software employed for the data analysis, examining pre and post-test scores of vocabulary test comprising 23 questions. The study also uses a multi-faceted approach to analyze the questionnaire, focusing on young learners and emojis for expression. Quantitative analysis of closed-ended questions allows us to gauge the frequency and distribution of emoji usage among participants. By assigning numerical codes to specific emojis, we can quantify responses and identify prevalent emotive trends. The ultimate goal is to paint a vivid picture of young learners' perceptions and expressions through the playful and dynamic medium of emojis, enriching our understanding of their experiences and responses in the research context.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

A. Pre-Test

The pre-test was applied to investigate the success rate of utilizing Pictionary games to acquire vocabulary by addressing research question 1 (Are there any significant variations in vocabulary scores among young learners after playing Pictionary games in the ESL classroom?). The Course Leader produced the synonym assessments for the students, which were then certified by two educators. The questions concentrated on introducing new words, and synonyms with a total score of 10 questions. The pupils took this test in the early of the year. The completed test was marked and validated by the researchers. The pupils' lexical competence levels were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics offer an overall picture of the student's performance. The mean, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum values have been evaluated using descriptive statistics. All the

findings were computed as percentages in the below table with a total of 50 students took the pre-test.

Table 1: Pre-Test

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Test	50	47	22.42903	30.00	100.0

Based on the table above, a low percentage mean shows 46.17 with a standard deviation of 18.874. The highest mark was 100% while the lowest mark scored was 30%. The result shows that the students didn't perform well in their pre-test.

B. Post-Test

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the post-test. The percentage mean was 86.4 with a standard deviation of 7.762. Minimum mark obtained is 80% while the maximum mark was 100%.

Table 2: Post-Test

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Test	50	86.4	7.494215	80.0	100.0

C. T-test

Table 3: T-test

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Error
Pre-test	50	47	22.430	3.172
Post-test	50	86.4	7.494	1.060

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test (M = [47]) SD = [22.42903]) and post-test (M = [86.4]) SD = [7.494215]);  $t=14.921411$ . The value of p is  $< .00001$ . The result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The t-test produced a strong result, with a computed t-value of 14.921411. This suggests a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. Furthermore, the p-value was less than .00001, indicating a very low likelihood of seeing such severe outcomes if the null hypothesis was correct. Consequently, we may certainly reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there exists a statistically significant difference between the young learners' vocabulary mastery after playing Pictionary games in their English class. Even at a strict alpha threshold of p-value of  $< .05$ , the observed impact remains significant and reliable in improving or changing the measured result. Thus, we can conclude that using Pictionary games does improve the vocabulary mastery among the young learners.

D. Questionnaire

Next, all 50 students were instructed to complete the provided questionnaires. These surveys included seven questions designed to examine learners' views about the usage of the Pictionary game in ESL classes, on a five-point Likert scale. The scale varied from one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree). Questions with a mean score below 2 were deemed to indicate low agreement and were assessed positively, while

those with a mean score above 2 were considered to reflect high agreement and were evaluated negatively. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each statement in the questionnaires. The descriptive statistics, including percentages on the level of agreement, mean, and standard deviation, were compiled and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses of students to questions on the use of Pictionary game.

Questions	Strongly Agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Standard Deviation
	😊		🙂		😐		😞		😡			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I enjoyed playing the Pictionary game in English class.	49	98	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.02	0.141
Pictionary games help me to understand and remember new words better.	45	90	5	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.10	0.303
I'm able to guess the words or phrases drawn by my classmates easily.	45	90	4	8	1	2	0	0	0	0	1.14	0.405
Pictionary games make learning in English class more fun and interesting for me.	48	96	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.04	0.198
I feel more confident using English words after playing Pictionary.	44	88	4	8	2	4	0	0	0	0	1.16	0.468
Pictionary games allow me to practice and improve my communication skills.	45	90	5	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.10	0.303
I feel very motivated and engaged during the English class when playing Pictionary.	47	94	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.06	0.240

As stated in the table above, the students' feedback to all seven questions was rated positively with a mean of 2 or fewer points. Students answer variously to each question provided. According to descriptive data, for question 1, 98% of students strongly agreed and 2% agreed with the assertion that they loved playing Pictionary in English class. This led to the

conclusion that all the pupils in the class like playing Pictionary during English class. Question 1 has an average score of 1.02 and a standard deviation of 0.141. As for question 2, 90% students strongly agreed with 10% agreeing the statement that Pictionary games help them to understand and remember new words better. The mean score is 1.10 with a standard deviation of 0.303. Addressing question 2, 90% of students strongly agreed, with 10% agreeing that Pictionary games help them understand and remember new words better. The average score is 1.10, with a standard deviation of 0.303. Question 3 shows that 90% students claims that they can guess the words or phrases drawn by their classmates easily. 8% agreed and 2% is uncertain. The mean score for question 3 is 1.14 while the standard deviation is 0.405. With regards to the question 4, 96% of the students strongly agreed and 4% agreed that Pictionary games make learning English in class more fun and interesting. The mean score is 1.04% with a standard deviation of 0.198. Question 5 were strongly agreed by 88% of students, agreed by 8% of students and 4% of students were uncertain. The mean score for question 5 was 1.16 with a standard deviation of 0.468. For question 6, 90% students strongly agreed and 10% agreed that Pictionary games allow them to practice and improve their communication skills. Thus, the mean score for question 7 was 1.10 with a standard deviation of 0.303. The last question also was rated positively which is 94% of students strongly agreeing and 6% agreeing that they feel motivated and engaged during the English class when playing Pictionary games. The mean score is 1.06 with a standard deviation of 0.240. Overall, there are up to 96% of students who strongly agreed and agreed that the Pictionary game does provide positive perceptions on using Pictionary games in English class.

*E. Discussion*

This section describes the outcomes of the analyses conducted to address research questions 1 and 2. The first study question was answered using descriptive statistics, which were evaluated using a pre- and post-test. The results suggest that students did not perform well in the pre-test, indicating that their vocabulary level was poor, and they struggled to acquire unfamiliar words. The post-test results demonstrate improvement, indicating that students perform well following the effects of Pictionary games. The t-test results support the notion that Pictionary games helped students enhance their language skills. There are 3 students that manage to get full mark which is 100% during the pre-test. However, all the students show significance improvement despite not achieving full marks.

Furthermore, Table 6 summarizes the student's perspectives on the utilization of Pictionary games based on their questionnaire responses. The descriptive data were analysed to address research question 2 on students' attitudes towards utilising Pictionary games in the English classroom. All seven questions were rated good, indicating that students responded positively to the implications of Pictionary games in the classroom. Students often find that playing Pictionary games makes their classroom learning more enjoyable and fascinating.

V. CONCLUSION

The questionnaire conducted to evaluate the impact of integrating the Pictionary game into English vocabulary learning yielded insightful results. Firstly, the analysis revealed a noticeable enhancement in students' performance, as evidenced by the improvement in their scores from the pre-test to the post-test. This suggests that the interactive and engaging nature of the Pictionary game effectively facilitated learning and retention of vocabulary among the students.

Furthermore, students expressed predominantly positive sentiments regarding the incorporation of the Pictionary game into their English classroom experience. This indicates that they perceive the game as a valuable and enjoyable tool for vocabulary acquisition, fostering a favorable attitude towards learning English vocabulary through interactive means. Importantly, when examining the responses to all seven questions in the questionnaire, it becomes evident that students consistently rated their feedback positively. With a mean score of 2 or fewer points across the questions, students conveyed a high level of satisfaction and agreement with various aspects related to the Pictionary game and its integration into their learning environment.

These findings underscore the effectiveness of the Pictionary game in enhancing vocabulary learning outcomes and highlight students' positive reception towards its inclusion in the English classroom. The study reinforces previous research advocating for the use of the Pictionary game as a pedagogical strategy, confirming its effectiveness in improving vocabulary acquisition among young learners. Consequently, educators are encouraged to proactively integrate translanguaging into reading comprehension exercises as a pedagogical approach.

This study not only establishes the effectiveness of Pictionary games in enhancing vocabulary mastery among young learners in ESL classrooms but also paves the way for future research and pedagogical considerations. The implications of these findings resonate across educational domains, advocating for the integration of interactive tools to create dynamic and engaging language learning environments. Educators are encouraged to leverage the positive correlation between Pictionary games and vocabulary mastery, recognizing the potential for tailored approaches to accommodate learners' diverse proficiency levels.

Future research endeavors could delve deeper into young learners' perspectives, unraveling their attitudes and experiences with Pictionary games. Qualitative investigations, such as interviews or focus group discussions, could provide richer insights into the nuanced dynamics of game-based language learning. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore the long-term effects of incorporating interactive tools in ESL classrooms, shedding light on sustained vocabulary development and overall language proficiency. In conclusion, this study serves as a steppingstone in the exploration of effective pedagogical strategies for young ESL learners. The positive correlations and reliability of measurements affirm the potential impact of Pictionary games, urging educators to consider the integration of interactive tools in their language teaching practices. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, understanding the intersection of technology, engagement, and language acquisition becomes increasingly crucial for fostering.

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