

## EMERGING WORD GAMES TO IMPROVE YOUNG LEARNERS' VOCABULARY SKILLS IN AMBONESE ISLAMIC SCHOOL

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### ABSTRACTS

This study aims to determine the implementation of word games and their impact on student learning outcomes in learning new vocabulary in grade VII Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon academic year 2020/2021. This research was conducted in three cycles. Using word games as a methodology in teaching English vocabulary starts with the preliminary activities of the teacher opening the class, preparing word game activities, and conveying the objectives of the material. Then in the core activity, the teacher applies the word games. The teacher gives instructions about the rules and activities of word games. In the closing activity, the teacher asks students to express their difficulties and problems when doing word games. The subsequent finding is that student learning outcomes increase each cycle, wherein only five students, or 20%, have completed the pre-cycle using conventional methods. During the first cycle, learning was carried out using word game methodologies. The number of students who achieved completeness threshold rose to 16 people or 64%. In the last cycle, all students can complete the post-test with the same methodology. It shows that using the word games methodology to deliver vocabulary learning materials has significantly improved student learning outcomes.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has determined that junior high school is a level where students must study a foreign language such as English or Arabic for the first time. For this reason, the English curriculum at the junior high school level is structured by giving more portions to teaching basic vocabulary as capital towards advanced language skills.

One of the critical language component skills is mastering the target language vocabulary. It needs to be managed by language students at every educational institution in Indonesia. They would face difficulty using English when they do not have enough range of vocabulary. Vocabulary is a collection of lexical elements of a language, written or spoken, with cultural meanings used by individuals or communities to connect and mingle within society (Krundysheva and Gubareva, 2020). Additionally, learning could be defined as transforming behavior for the better and is an effort to develop better associations as an outcome of understanding.

English vocabulary teaching makes students active in learning and memorizing new lexical resources, which can be strengthened when they produce to display personal and relevant senses. Students' participation in vocabulary learning activities could provide them

to be active and memorize words better. Teaching English vocabulary must also involve knowing its form and meaning (Hutz, 2018). Therefore, there are a couple of critical arguments for understanding an utterance at the most basic level in teaching target language vocabularies.

According to Narzullayevna and Jamshidovna (2021: 73) the following factors would cause some difficulties in learning new English vocabulary. Firstly, some words that difficult to be articulated are harder to learn. Some groups of students do not recognize the word's sound. For instance, some groups of students could carry out some words with consonant fragments such as strength, chips, or breakfast. The second is spelling. On most occasions, the pronunciation of a word sounds like a spelling imbalance, which is likely the major problem in either pronunciation or spelling and could lead to learning difficulties. The next factor is words' length and complexity. Long words do not appear more challenging to be mastered than shorter ones. However, as a sufficient method for an immediate goal, high-frequency words are likely to be short in English, so learners often tend to understand them. Another difficulty is grammar, mainly if it differs from the same first language. Then means that it often confuses students because language translation is often related to context, and most of it is not absolute. Some rare notions also could contribute to challenges for a student in the learning process.

Games have a position as critical points in teaching English. As stated by Lazizbek, Setora, and Sardor (2022: 139), a game is defined as an activity consisting of rules, goals, and fun. Games are fruitful for both the English teacher and students. Games make it possible to create pleasurable activities for students to motivate them to participate in classroom activities. It is revealed that Students learn a language without boredom in a class by organizing games. Students would react positively to using games for anxiety and nervousness and get drastic learning outcomes (Mihaljević & Nikolov, 2019). A game touches students' motivation to become a player. It is an alternative way to encourage students to snowball their interest in learning. In this way, they drop the burden of learning another language. Games in language classes make students more comfortable following activities and not feel anxious in the teaching and learning process.

There are a number of motivations why teacher should deploy games in foreign language learning. Summarized from Howell, Harris, and Zakrajsek (2015: 124), games are beneficial in foreign language learning for some reason. To begin with, games encourage students to remain engaged in the learning process and help active students become active students who may not have been active students earlier. The second benefit of playing in the classroom is fostering a more positive and welcoming environment. Thirdly, because students need to practice their English proficiency, games are a wonderful method that can be used to help students develop their abilities. Fourth, students' English can be found in various contexts thanks to the games they play, which allow them to investigate their own experiences and broaden their perspectives. Fifth, the game is an effective method for instructing students of all ages on various topics, and students of any age may use it.

In addition, there are some game-related benefits associated with English teaching. According to Jones (2020), Jassim & Dzakiria (2019), and Klimova (2015), some of the benefits of using games in language instruction include increasing student motivation and fulfilling self-development goals; using challenges and competency systems to attract students' attention and encourage them to complete their assignments; Students' material on the ability to understand English is developed through the use of games; the game provides clear rules and objectives; games improve students' thinking, the way they solve problems, and the way they imagine; Learning in groups is facilitated by games, and teachers can distribute games to students as rewards or prizes in the classroom.

The first step in the right direction toward motivating students to follow the game's rules is to create an enjoyable learning environment. In addition, if the class has characteristics that make learning possible, then classroom game activities can be considered fun learning. According to Kumar et al. (2016: 33) the idea that education can also be enjoyable is a potent one that can be used to develop an approach to teaching and learning in the classroom. When learning is enjoyable, students are more likely to participate, smile, and feel at ease in class. It is easy to tell when students are having a good time learning simply by observing the expressions on their faces as they play educational games. Next, the authentic learning sensation, curiosity, collaboration, discussion, and fun are all provided by learning in a fun way. The learning process is called fun learning, when students can describe the activity as fun. Therefore, students will be more engaged and enthusiastic in their work if given fun learning activities.

Word games are a type of spoken game or board game that is frequently designed to test a player's language skills, most notably their command of the English language. Word games can include puzzles or word search games (Tasneem, 2019). Word games are played for entertainment purposes the vast majority of the time, but they also have educational applications. Students can naturally develop essential language skills like spelling while playing games like Hangman, which they can enjoy. Researchers have discovered that adults who play word games frequently, which require comprehension with a greater vocabulary, have improved brain function later in life. Spelling Bee and Wheel of Fortune are just two examples of the popular word-based game shows broadcast on radio and television throughout the entirety of the medium's history.

There are various types of word games available for both children and adults. Tasneem (2019: 1) has created a list of word games. The first is letter arrangement games. In this type, players must form meaningful words from the words given. This game has two objectives, namely vocabulary testing and lateral thinking skills. The second is paper and pencil games. As the name suggests, this type of game requires a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. The goal is simple: to have to write words depending on different parameters. Thus, different games have different sets of rules and parameters. For example, the player must fill the blocks or grid with the appropriate words based on the clues. It could be said as the most popular word game in history, including in English learning classrooms almost all over the world. The last one is semantic games, which are word games that require participants to think in higher order than average. This game focuses on the semantics or meaning of words. Player knowledge of particular languages is tested extensively.

It has become a nature where students, especially children, really like game activities. Thus, the smart move is to encourage them to play a constructive and non-violent game. For this reason, word games have several important reasons for students to improve their vocabulary skills (Tasneem, 2019). The main reason is as a tool to sharpen students' cognition. Physical exercise is vital for the human body.

Nevertheless, brain training is just as necessary. The main benefit of word games is a cognitive exercise. The more often students play these word game puzzles, the more polished their brains will be. The second reason is for vocabulary enrichment. Most word games require strong skills in vocabulary. The more words students know, the better their scores.

Moreover, they will most likely collect new words while playing the game. So, playing these games indirectly would help students build a more substantial vocabulary base. The following reason is to test the vocabulary and spelling skills to be more accurate. When students play Crosswords, Scrabble, or Hangman, they must have strong spelling skills. They provide many great ways to learn spelling words. Various spelling quizzes can appeal to many players and have even been made available on social media platforms. The last reason is to fight boredom with more productive things due to monotonous learning. In conclusion,

games are always a fun activity for students of all ages. Instead of pressuring students to learn, the teacher should facilitate them to learn with word games.

The use of word games in the classroom to teach students English vocabulary has many advantages for teachers and students, but it also might be challenging for them (Naderiheshi, 2022). Students will be more interested in the content they are being taught if this strategy or game is used throughout the instruction process. Because playing can lead to the unintentional acquisition of knowledge, the second benefit of incorporating the game into the teaching and learning process is that it provides students with increased possibilities to comprehend the content presented to them. On the other hand, the first downside of incorporating games into the teaching and learning process is that it piques the students' attention to the game, even when they are all busy and boisterous. There are instances when they babble and move about an excessive amount. When students are in such a state, it is challenging for teachers to maintain control. The second disadvantage is that the teacher does not have enough time to supply some more terminology and clarify the content. Therefore, there is no longer time for the teacher to explain anything more or assist the students in learning the new language.

Based on the observations and the background above, the researchers found a negative phenomenon in delivering English lessons to the seventh-grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Mts – Islamic junior high school ) Hasyim Asyari Ambon. Their difficulty in mastering a range of lexical resources makes their learning outcomes relatively underrated. Of the 25 students who will be the research object, only 20% of students can exceed the minimum completeness threshold at 70 points in the pre-cycle process. In the end, it was found that the average class in pre-cycle learning was at number 50. This result was far from the minimum threshold for class completeness. The observations showed that the teacher did not use the learning media with the correct methodology under the previous explanation.

From the results of pre-cycle observations conducted by researchers, it was found that the facts were that the English teacher still used conventional methods and lacked the motivation to make improvements and use methods and techniques. All language teachers should mind that they cannot apply a couple of strategies to deliver language materials at various levels. Thus, Hattie, Bustamante, Almarode, Fisher, and Frey (2020: 4) suggests that teachers can recognize students' character and choose suitable strategies. Teachers should accommodate students' needs, interests, and learning styles to make the lesson more enjoyable. So that every time a teacher teaches, a certain strategy to introduce a learning material needs to be figured out. An effective teaching strategy could be fruitful for both teacher and student to achieve instructional goals within a joyful learning process.

After strategies, various teaching technique is the implementation of teaching method in the level of procedure which is take place in the classroom, especially common nouns. One of them is to use the method suggested by Yusufvna (2021: 3), Widiastuti et al. (2021: 41), Humaidan & Martin (2019: 223), and Gunderson et al. (2019: 89) namely word game. Word games, among other teaching methodologies, are believed to bring advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways (Yusuf, 2018). Games could reduce students' anxiety and entertain students. Another reason is that games usually would strengthen class members' bonding and teach students how to build collaboration. With the explanation of the facts and problems described previously, the researchers conducted a classroom action research study (CAR).

Related to the background, problem identification, and alternative problem solving, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows:

1. How to implement word games in learning new vocabulary for grade VII students of Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon in the 2020/2021 academic year?

2. What are the impacts of implementing the word games have on student learning outcomes related to learning new vocabulary in grade VII Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon for the 2020/2021 academic year?

This research is expected to benefit students, teachers, academic units, and researchers. To begin with, it is expected that the results are worthwhile for students to enjoy learning English within games content. Firstly, teaching vocabulary by deploying word games would put students' psychology in better condition and parallel students' vocabulary skills. Secondly, teachers who work at Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon can teach vocabulary to get better results regarding the methodologies, strategies, and approaches teachers to use in teaching vocabulary. Thirdly, Classroom Action Research would help researchers increase their knowledge through experience to internalize positive values as both teacher and researcher. The action research has cycles that provide learning cycles that emphasize systematic reflection to make sure practical learning abilities. Finally, this work could benefit schools, including achieving the vision and mission of the madrasah. It would increase the quality of learning to obtain the final result in human resources who are more competent in every field of knowledge taught to teachers and students.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

The purpose of this research is to investigate the use of word games for young learners and the impact that these games have on students' ability to learn new vocabulary. The research was in a form of descriptive qualitative which was carried out in three separate cycles within Classroom Action Research framework. The methods of using word games to teach English vocabulary begin with the preliminary actions of the instructor, which include opening the class, planning word game activities, and communicating the goals of the subject to the students. After that, the instructor incorporates the word games into the main activity. The instructor explains the rules of the word games and the various activities that are involved. The final activity is for the teacher to ask the students to talk about any problems they may have had when playing word games.

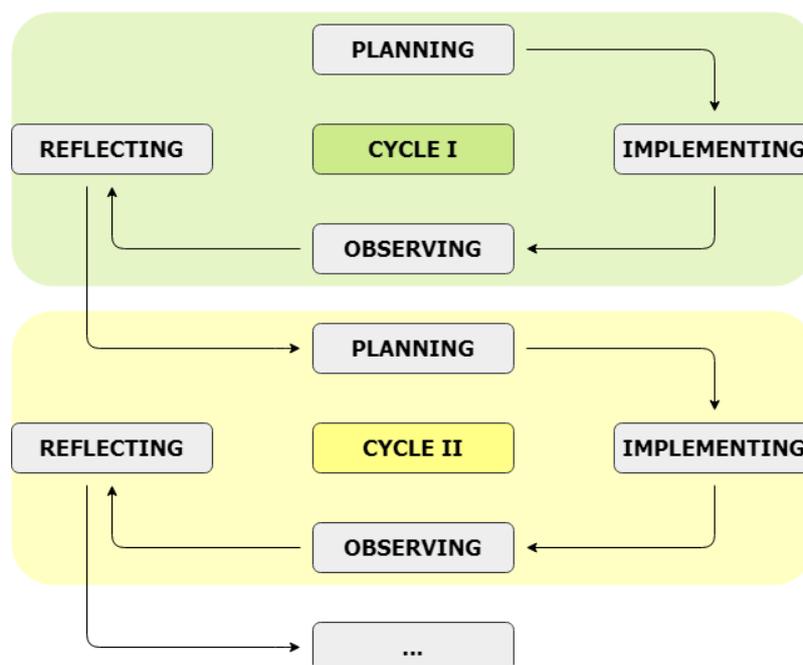


Figure 1. Research Scheme  
(Source : Arikunto, 2021: 42)

The researcher of this Classroom Action Research intends to carry out two cycles via the use of word games in vocabulary instruction. Each cycle will consist of four parts, which are as follows: planning, carrying out the plan, observing the action, and reflecting on the experience. In a way resembling a spiral, the four steps of the class action cycle are carried out in an integrated manner.

### **Population and Subject**

The study took place at Mts Hasyim Asyari, Ambon City. This study studied word games' procedure to teach students English vocabulary. The main subjects of this study were students of grade VII Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon City in the even semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. They numbered 25 people; 13 of them were female, and the remaining 12 were male students. They presented word games as a medium for learning vocabulary with the theme "It is my world" in English subjects. Mts. Hasyim Asyari is located on Jalan Mujahidin Wara Air Kuning in Batumerah Village in Ambon City, Maluku Province. This school was selected as the location for the research because it serves as a model for using a variety of strategies in the teaching and learning process. The primary focus of the curriculum is on the instruction of English vocabulary learning strategies, such as word search games and crossword puzzles based on the subject matter of English.

### **Instruments**

In collecting the data, the researcher employed instruments that referred to various pieces of equipment. The researcher utilized instruments for testing and observation during this investigation. An individual is presented with the exam as a provocation to obtain an answer or score from them (Johnson, 2019). A written exam was employed for the assessment in this research. A quick entry will serve as a kind of test. The test was conducted since it is straightforward both in its execution and in explaining its results. The researcher performed a preliminary examination on the testing apparatus and then used the results from that examination in the comprehensive examination. Following the instruction and learning process, students are evaluated using a post-test to assess how much their level of knowledge has improved. The test scores of the students are used to find out if their level of achievement went up or down after they were taught using word games. Observation allows the researcher to record any information, especially related to the preparation and performance of the researchers so that the implementation of the word games follows the expected learning procedures. The subject teacher observes researchers in the teaching and learning process, including problems that may arise during the implementation of activities in the classroom. The researcher used an observation checklist to examine the researcher's teaching methods and apply the methodologies.

### **Data Analysis**

In this qualitative study, the data are evaluated using Creswell's theory as the foundation (2018: 267). Because there are many different kinds of information involved in gathering and organizing data, the data need to be as detailed as possible. Using word games to teach English vocabulary is the first step in this process, which begins by classifying the data into many groups based on all of the procedures. The interpretation of the data is the first step in the study that is being presented here. The research findings include the results of the research that was reported by the researcher, the procedure for utilizing the word games, and the experiences and responses of students in learning by using the word games methodology in teaching English vocabulary. After all of the processes described earlier have been carried out, it is finally possible to draw some conclusions. At the final session of the lesson, students are given a post-test in the form of a short objective test. The test is given to students on a

paper containing pictures as a clue to complete incomplete sentences. The assessment indicators presented in the questions are related to vocabulary and the use of proper grammar in completing the sentences given to each item.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

The first research question addresses an issue that relates directly to the implementation of word games in a given situation. The steps that need to be taken in order to set up the word search game. It begins with apperception and ends with a feedback session.

Table 1  
Procedures in Implementing Word Search Game

No	Teacher Activities	Student Activities
1.	The teacher introduces the subject matter before starting teaching.	
2.	The teacher introduces the new material and learning objectives.	Students pay attention to the teacher.
3.	The teacher divides the students into groups. Each group consists of four students.	Students gather in groups with their friends.
4.	The teacher distributes paper with collection of letters and pictures of animals. They contain vocabulary from animal pictures serves as vocabulary clues.	
5.	The teacher presents an example, after which the students are asked to find vocabulary based on the instructions.	
6.	The teacher provides time for the students to discuss with the group.	Students discuss the answers with the group.
7.	The teacher rewards the group that finds the words as quickly as possible correctly.	Students mark the placed words, horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.
8.	The teacher gives feedback to the students.	Students get some reinforcement.

Table 2  
Procedures in Implementing Word Search Game

No.	Teacher Activities	Student Activities
1.	The teacher introduces activities related to <i>crosswords</i> .	Students pay attention to the teacher.
2.	The teacher distributes a paper containing a set of crossword puzzles related to the vocabulary to be studied.	
3.	The teacher displays examples of answering the questions filled in the puzzle boxes.	
4.	The teacher gives time for the students to do it.	Students answer on the worksheet.
5.	The teacher offers rewards to the students who finish first.	Students check their work according to the answer key.
6.	The teacher provides feedback to the students	Students get some reinforcement.

In order to provide a response to the second research question posed by this Classroom Action Research, the researcher intends to make use of word games as a means of assisting in the instruction of vocabulary over the course of two cycles. Each cycle will consist of four stages: planning, putting the plan into action, watching the activity, and reflecting on what transpired during the cycle. The researcher began by doing a cursory examination of the

testing apparatus, and then utilized the findings from that examination as the basis for a more comprehensive examination. At the conclusion of the teaching and learning process, students take a post-test that measures how much their knowledge has expanded since the beginning of the process. After adopting word games as a learning strategy, students' test results are analyzed to see whether or not they saw an improvement in their level of achievement.

Table 3  
Students' Achievement Comparison

No	Student Name	Pre-cycle		Cycle I		Cycle II	
		Point	Title	Point	Title	Point	Title
1.	Student 1	80	Pass	70	Pass	100	Pass
2.	Student 2	30	Failed	40	Pass	80	Pass
3.	Student 3	50	Failed	50	Failed	80	Pass
4.	Student 4	100	Pass	90	Pass	100	Pass
5.	Student 5	40	Failed	50	Failed	100	Pass
6.	Student 6	50	Failed	90	Pass	100	Pass
7.	Student 7	40	Failed	90	Pass	80	Pass
8.	Student 8	40	Failed	50	Failed	80	Pass
9.	Student 9	80	Pass	70	Pass	80	Pass
10.	Student 10	40	Failed	80	Pass	100	Pass
11.	Student 11	30	Failed	40	Failed	80	Pass
12.	Student 12	40	Failed	90	Pass	100	Pass
13.	Student 13	30	Failed	70	Failed	100	Pass
14.	Student 14	40	Failed	80	Pass	80	Pass
15.	Student 15	40	Failed	50	Failed	80	Pass
16.	Student 16	50	Failed	60	Failed	100	Pass
17.	Student 17	90	Pass	100	Pass	80	Pass
18.	Student 18	40	Failed	50	Failed	100	Pass
19.	Student 19	50	Failed	70	Pass	100	Pass
20.	Student 20	30	Failed	60	Failed	100	Pass
21.	Student 21	30	Failed	80	Pass	100	Pass
22.	Student 22	60	Failed	70	Pass	80	Pass
23.	Student 23	90	Pass	80	Pass	100	Pass
24.	Student 24	50	Failed	80	Pass	80	Pass
25.	Student 25	30	Failed	90	Pass	80	Pass
	Avarage	50		70		90.4	
	Highest Score	100		100		100	
	Lowest Score	30		40		80	

The teacher uses the lecturing methodology to explain the material in class. He uses blackboards and school books as his medium. Students are asked to open a few pages of their book. He reads the textbook to show students the content they are learning. The teacher then asks two to three students to read aloud some texts. He then asked the students what the text was talking about. Lastly, he gives students an assignment to work on.

The class situation was quite conducive at the beginning. Students behave well and pay attention to the teacher. When the teacher asks several questions to get answers from students, only a few students answer the questions. Teachers praise them and encourage others to provide feedback, such as their friends. Most of the students seemed nervous and unresponsive in that class. However, students seemed more relaxed when given assignments and talked with their friends.

The teacher conveys the material, not in a hurry, and the material taught that day is vocabulary related to the objects around them. The teacher uses words that are at the right level for the students. The topic is familiar to students, so they can understand the material

more quickly and not feel pressured to guess the meaning of words. The teacher also uses daily activities as examples applied to vocabulary learning.

The students' learning outcomes after the lesson was completed, out of 25 students, only five students were able to exceed the minimum completeness score of 70. Apart from these five people, they could only get scores below the minimum requirements. The average grade in pre-cycle learning is 50. This result is far from the minimum threshold for class completeness.

## Discussion

Based on the findings from cycle I and cycle II, the comparison is that student learning outcomes increase in each cycle, whereas in the pre-cycle using conventional methods, only five students, or 20%, completed. During the first cycle, the learning was carried out using the word games, and the number of students who achieved completeness rose to 16 or 64%. In the last cycle, 100% of students could do the post-test with the indicator value passing the minimum threshold score. A similar trend occurs in a range of values obtained by students. The pre-cycle shows a reasonably extensive range of values where the smallest value obtained by students is 30, and the most considerable value is 100. The student learning outcomes range in the first cycle decreased to around 40 and 100. Better results occurred in the second cycle, where students only received scores of 80 and 100. In short, it shows a consistent increase, starting at 50 in the pre-cycle, followed by 70 in the first cycle, and finishing at an average of 90.4 in the second cycle. The comparison can be seen in the table above. These results show that what has been done by researchers in the delivery of vocabulary learning materials using the word games methodology in grade VII English subjects has improved student learning outcomes so that students can understand the material being taught.

It is unequivocal that implementing word game methods for young learners in Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon effectively boosts students' performance. Fun and enjoyable environments in producing target language in learning vocabulary motivate them to engage in classroom activities related to notions that have been elaborated in the earlier sections. Word games are versatile enough to be incorporated into various activities for individuals and groups. Word games come in a wide variety, each calling for a unique set of activity guidelines to be followed in the classroom. The students were following those guidelines carefully. Therefore, when the teacher asks the students to write some new English vocabulary, they compose various sentences to practice the terms they have acquired. In addition, the teacher emphasizes this point once more to the class. Students have the opportunity to acquire new vocabulary, and it is proven that learning vocabulary through game-based activities is more easily retained in long-term memory.

The findings show a particular pattern with previous studies that involve game-based learning. The patterns where teachers present games and the students' behavior are getting motivated without anxiety and confidence issues. Simultaneously, games have significantly impacted students' attitudes and performance so their language skills can develop more excellent. Syafrizal & Haerudin (2018), for instance, provides similar results not only in terms of games but also in some other factors that can help the students to fulfill learning objectives for identical subjects with this research. In addition, Mueller & Veinott (2018) reports that word games are beneficial to enhancing students' performance in academic affairs for students who suffer from cognitions issues such as delayed memory and poor retention.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the method of word games begins with the teacher providing directions to the class on the many activities and regulations associated with word games. After that, the teacher directs the word games, and the students increase their vocabulary by playing them. After that, the teacher will provide the students with comments, and then they will receive reinforcement. In addition, based on the comparison of student learning outcomes, it can be concluded that the implementation of the word games has a positive impact on student learning outcomes related to the learning of new vocabulary in grade VII at Mts Hasyim Asyari Ambon for the academic year 2020/2021. This conclusion was reached after looking at the comparison of student learning outcomes.

Suggestions for teachers are they have to get more creative in delivering lessons in the classroom. In addition, education units play a crucial role in managing students' skills through creative ways to learn, like using online or offline media. Thus, teachers and schools can work together to help students learn how to teach English. Eventually, the study looks at seventh graders who are just starting to learn English and focuses on their English vocabulary. So, it would be much better if other researchers came up with topics about different ways to learn or made changes to word games to help students learn English vocabulary and different levels of the language, just like higher-degree students do.

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