

Enhancing Vocabulary Skills of Seventh-Grade Students Through Fun Learning

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to enhance the vocabulary knowledge of seventh-grade students at SMPIT AZ-ZAHRA Sragen through the Fun Learning method. The method was chosen due to a lack of public awareness regarding the importance of learning English. The researchers sought to use this approach to foster enthusiasm for learning English, particularly among female students. Fun Learning is designed to make it easier for students to memorize, spell, and pronounce words in an enjoyable way, ensuring they remain engaged and avoid boredom or drowsiness during lessons. The study was conducted in two cycles, both aimed at improving key areas in the school. The findings indicate that the Fun Learning method was successful, as each student showed progress in mastering vocabulary, and their interest in learning also increased.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Mastery, Fun Learning Method, EFL*

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Introduction

English is a global language used for communication between countries worldwide. In today's era of globalization, where culture and information from other nations can rapidly spread through social media, learning English has become crucial. In the Indonesian school curriculum, developing students' English communication skills is a key objective. This is because students will encounter learning resources in English, adding value to their overall skill set. Many institutions and universities already use English as the primary language for instruction and course materials. There are several reasons why English plays such an important role in Indonesia's education system. One key reason is that it serves as a gateway to global knowledge. With the rapid advancement of information and communication technology, many websites and resources are primarily in English. If someone lacks proficiency in English, they will struggle to fully understand and absorb the available information, limiting their access to vital knowledge.

Another important factor is that English is a critical requirement for pursuing higher education, both domestically and internationally. Many countries designate English as an official language, and many universities require English proficiency as a prerequisite for admission. As a result, students with stronger English skills have better opportunities to advance their education and compete globally by studying abroad. Given the growing importance of English, researchers conducted a study with seventh-grade students at SMPIT AZ-ZAHRA Sragen, a bilingual school. The research focused on assessing students' English skills, particularly their vocabulary mastery. It was observed that while students had a reasonable command of spoken English, the learning methods used were monotonous, leading to boredom, sleepiness, and passivity during lessons. To address this, the researchers introduced the Fun

Learning method. Fun Learning combines enjoyment with education, making the learning process engaging and enjoyable.

Previous studies on similar topics include Herwin Tri and Sarifuddin (2021), who implemented active and fun learning strategies to enhance elementary students' English skills, and Maria (2020), who used fun learning strategies to improve children's English speaking abilities. In this study, the researchers chose a learning system adaptable to children's needs by combining "fun learning" and "learning through play" strategies. This approach aims to engage students and encourage more active participation in English classes, particularly in vocabulary mastery. These methods not only help students stay focused but also create a more enjoyable learning environment. This study seeks to offer a more suitable approach for teaching English to children.

Literature Review

The word "strategy" originates from the Greek term *strategos*, which means an effort to achieve victory. Over time, the term has been applied in various fields, maintaining a similar core meaning, including its use in the context of learning, where it is referred to as a learning strategy. According to J.R. David, a learning strategy is a plan that outlines a series of activities aimed at reaching specific educational goals. Moedjiono defines learning strategies as the actions teachers take to ensure alignment among the components of the learning system, employing specific strategies to do so. Based on these perspectives, learning strategies can be understood in both narrow and broad terms. In a narrow sense, strategy is similar to method, as it refers to the means of achieving predetermined learning goals. In a broader sense, strategy encompasses all aspects related to achieving learning objectives, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Fun learning combines two different concepts: "fun," meaning joy and enjoyment, and "learning," meaning the process of gaining knowledge. According to Suyitno (2007), learning outcomes represent changes in an individual's behavior in areas such as logic, ethics, aesthetics, and practical work. The fun learning method seeks to create a warm and enjoyable environment in which the learning process can effectively bring about positive behavioral changes in individuals. A warm and friendly atmosphere encourages an effective and participatory learning process. The "fun" aspect of Fun Learning implies that whatever educators teach is easily and happily understood by students. When students readily grasp concepts in this enjoyable manner, they are more likely to make positive progress and behavioral changes.

Methods

The class follow-up research was conducted at Terpatu Az-Zahra Islamic Junior High School in April 2024. Classroom follow-up research is practical research that is intended to improve classroom learning. This research is one of the efforts of teachers or practitioners in various forms of activities carried out to improve and improve the quality of learning in the classroom. The population sample taken was 15 students in one class. The subject of this research is students of the English study program semester 4 of the 2023/2024 academic year will be carried out to examine how the condition and development of students in learning English. The object of this study includes all subjects, both researchers and people who are being studied. The object of this research aims to determine the extent to which students' English skills use fun learning methods. This researcher uses multiple choice as an instrument to get results from research. This multiple choice consists of 10 questions related to the material that the researcher has presented.

In collecting data, researchers make direct observations. The observation method is an activity on a process by directly observing the conditions and problems to be solved, especially when learning English. Researchers tried to observe with fun learning methods. At the end of the lesson, students are tested one by one about how much they have mastered vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery ability tests are used for data sources. After collecting the data, researchers analyzed the data. Data analysis techniques used by researchers are qualitative data analysis techniques, where qualitative data is obtained from observations or observations during the learning process.

Result and Discussion

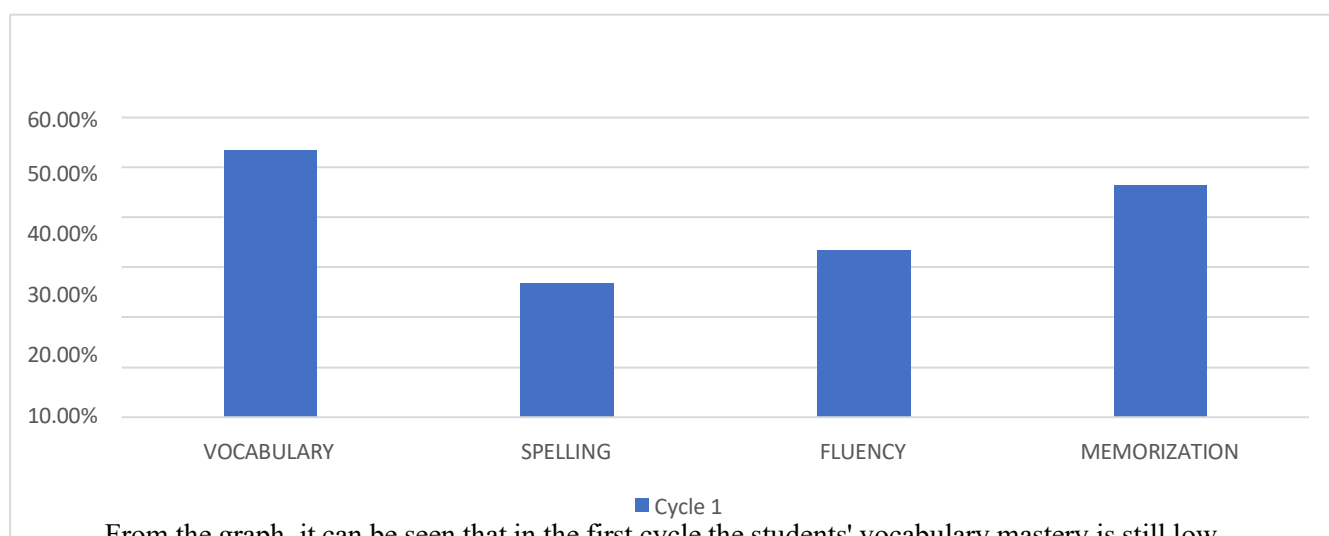
This observation was made to determine the extent of students' abilities and understanding using fun learning strategies whether it can improve each student's vocabulary mastery. This research was conducted by 4th semester students at SMPIT AZ-ZAHRA Sragen for the 2022/2023 academic year and the target is grade VII students. This study consists of two cycles, each consisting of 5 meetings, to find out the extent to which fun learning strategies can increase students' knowledge in vocabulary mastery. Based on the results of research, field notes, and vocabulary mastery tests found in cycle I students have little difficulty in remembering vocabulary. This is due to learners who still play a lot so that their focus is not controlled. At the second cycle meeting, researchers try to focus their control so that no one plays during the teaching and learning process. In this second cycle test, there was a significant improvement, as evidenced when in the morning when students wanted to enter the class, researchers gave quizzes as their entrance tickets to the class. The quiz is like mentioning 10 vocabulary words in the classroom. Almost all students can mention it in less than 3 minutes.

The table below shows the average vocabulary knowledge of students

Average speaking score in cycle 1

No	Indicator	Percentage
1	Vocabullary	53,36%
2	Spelling	26,68%
3	Fluency	33,35%
4	Memorization	46,69%

From the data contained in the table above, it can be seen that the average ability to master the vocabulary of students. The following graph illustrates the percentage point average of students' abilities.



From the graph, it can be seen that in the first cycle the students' vocabulary mastery is still low and has not reached the expectations desired by the author using the fun learning method. Therefore, researchers continue in the second cycle by applying methods that are in accordance with the expectations of researchers. At the first meeting of cycle II, researchers tried to provide material to

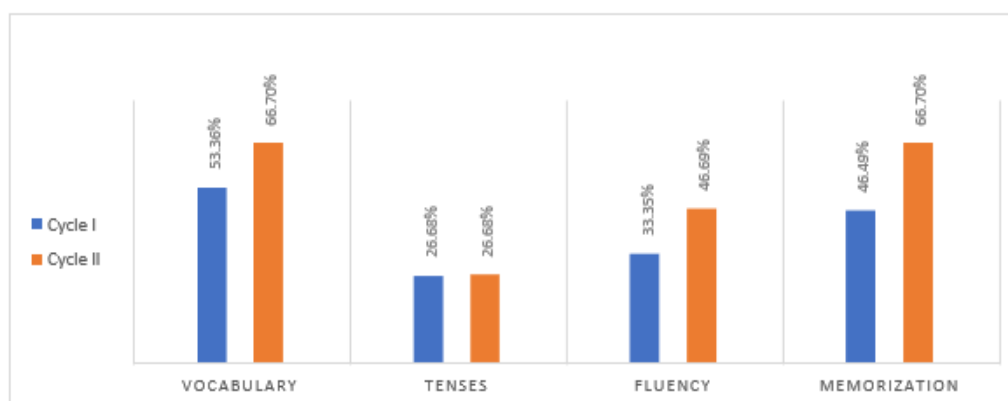
students by training students to spell their own names with the English alphabet. At the second meeting of cycle II, researchers focused on improving vocabulary by giving students pieces of letters and then students arranged the pieces of letters into an English word. At the last meeting of cycle II, researchers can see an increase in students' knowledge using the fun learning method.

The increase in student scores can be seen from the table below:

Increase in the average speaking score of students in cycle I and II

No	Indicator	Cycle I	Cycle II
1	Accent	53,36%	66,7%
2	Grammar	26,68%	26,68%
3	Vocabulary	33,35%	46,69%
4	Fluency	46,69%	66,7%

Based on the table above, the following is a comparison in the form of a diagram of Cycle I and Cycle II



Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the Fun Learning method effectively enhances vocabulary knowledge among seventh-grade students at SMPIT AZ-ZAHRA Sragen. By creating an enjoyable and engaging learning environment, this approach successfully increased students' ability to memorize, spell, and pronounce English words, while also boosting their interest and enthusiasm for learning. The positive results observed in both cycles of the study highlight the potential of Fun Learning to improve student participation and performance in English language education, particularly among female students.

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