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## The Effect of Using Secret Word Games on English Vocabulary Mastery at Seventh Grade Students of SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar

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### Abstrak

Peneliti memutuskan untuk mengimplementasikan Permainan Kata Rahasia dalam penelitian ini, yang bertujuan untuk menilai dampak permainan ini terhadap penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris di antara siswa kelas tujuh di SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar pada tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimental dengan metode kuantitatif. Dua kelas dilibatkan: kelas eksperimen (VII-A) dan kelas kontrol (VII-B). Peneliti memilih populasi sebanyak 60 siswa kelas VIII, dengan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling untuk memilih sampel untuk kedua kelas. Untuk menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan rumus uji-t untuk menentukan apakah penggunaan Permainan Kata Rahasia mempengaruhi penguasaan kosakata siswa. Di kelas eksperimen, skor rata-rata pre-test adalah 61,6, sedangkan skor post-test adalah 80,6. Sebaliknya, kelas kontrol memiliki nilai rata-rata pre-test 59,83 dan nilai post-test 71. Standar deviasi untuk kelas eksperimen adalah 1,270, dan untuk kelas kontrol adalah 1,235. Setelah menghitung rata-rata dan standar deviasi untuk kedua kelas, peneliti menggunakan rumus t-test, yang menunjukkan bahwa nilai t-test melebihi nilai t-tabel pada tingkat signifikansi 5% ( $5,519 > 1,672$ ). Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa hipotesis alternatif ( $H_a$ ) diterima, sedangkan hipotesis nol ( $H_0$ ) ditolak. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan Permainan Kata Rahasia secara positif mempengaruhi penguasaan kosakata siswa, khususnya di kelas tujuh.

Kata Kunci: *Kosakata, Penguasaan Kosakata, Permainan Kata Rahasia*

## Abstract

The researcher decided to implement Secret Word Games in this study, which aimed to assess the impact of these games on English vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar during the 2024/2025 academic year. This research utilized a quasi-experimental design with quantitative methods. Two classes were involved: the experimental class (VII-A) and the control class (VII-B). The researcher selected a population of 60 eighth-grade students, using purposive sampling techniques to choose the samples for both classes. To analyze the data, the researcher applied a t-test formula to determine whether the use of Secret Word Games influenced students' vocabulary mastery. In the experimental class, the average pre-test score was 61.6, while the post-test score was 80.6. In contrast, the control class had an average pre-test score of 59.83 and a post-test score of 71. The standard deviation for the experimental class was 1.270, and for the control class, it was 1.235. After calculating the means and standard deviations for both classes, the researcher used the t-test formula, which indicated that the t-test value exceeded the t-table value at a significance level of 5% ( $5.519 > 1.672$ ). Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted, while the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of Secret Word Games positively influences students' vocabulary mastery, particularly in seventh grade.

Keywords: *Vocabulary, Vocabulary Mastery, Secret Word Games*

## INTRODUCTION

English has become a widely used language for international communication (Rao, 2019). This is especially advantageous for students in Indonesia, covering all levels of education, from elementary to university. The primary goals of English language education are to enhance students' learning, writing, speaking, and listening skills, enabling them to use English proficiently (Kurniawan, 2024). Additionally, students are encouraged to recognize how English can help Indonesia compete on a global scale and understand the relationship between language and culture, as outlined in the 2013 English syllabus.

In the process of learning English, students must develop specific skills, which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sadiku, 2015). The skills of reading and listening are termed "receptive skills" because they involve comprehension, while speaking and writing are referred to as "productive skills" since they require the creation and expression of language. A robust vocabulary is crucial for achieving proficiency in these four areas (Rahmah et al., 2023). Proficiency in both written and spoken English allows for effective communication in various everyday contexts (Kemendikbud, 2017 in Marsur et al., 2020). The concept of English as a Global Language provides a comprehensive assessment of the language (Adawiyah, 2022).

Among the various language skills, vocabulary acquisition is often the most challenging for students (Manda et al., 2022). Proficient vocabulary skills are essential for effective and succinct writing. The larger an individual's vocabulary, the more skilled they become in communication (Alqahtani, 2015). According to Richards and Renandya (2002:55) as cited in Murti & Baso (2022), vocabulary is a critical component of language skills. Mastery of vocabulary is vital for students aiming to enhance their four main language skills. Hornby (1995:721) as cited in Nopiyadi et al. (2023) defines mastery as complete control over knowledge. English has a vast and diverse vocabulary; thus, the more vocabulary students can utilize, the easier it becomes for them to learn and understand the language (Syarifudin et al., 2014). However, beginners must first establish a solid vocabulary base to grasp the meaning of English in terms of communication and knowledge.

English teachers frequently encounter challenges in their teaching. Observations made by the researcher during their tenure as a seventh-grade teacher at SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar revealed that many educators rely solely on textbooks, leading to a tedious and monotonous learning environment. While teachers fulfill their roles professionally, they can enhance student engagement by adapting their teaching methods and fostering creativity and motivation among students (Mudzakkir & Darmawan, 2024). When students feel empowered and guided in their learning, they are more likely to achieve their educational objectives. Effective communication is crucial in active learning, where the teacher serves as the primary communicator. According to Angraini et al. (2021), the learning process involves five components: learners, materials, instructional tools, and learning goals (Salam et al., 2020). Among these components, learning media is essential for enhancing students' language knowledge (Sobari et al., 2024).

With the advancement of technology, various media are available to help increase vocabulary, one of which is games. A game is defined as an activity characterized by rules, a specific objective, and enjoyment (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016). Students of all ages find games engaging. Harmer (2001) as cited in Kartini & Kareviati (2021) argues that games can make learning vocabulary more dynamic and enjoyable. One effective tool for aiding students in learning English is the secret word game, which involves providing hints about a specific word while students either create words from letters or guess the word. The researcher aims to enhance students' vocabulary knowledge through secret word games. In this game, students must deduce hidden words using clues or guesses, which helps them improve their understanding of English by applying context and knowledge. Moreover, it fosters their contextual comprehension skills and broadens their vocabulary in an engaging and interactive manner.

Based on the researcher's experiences during practical fieldwork with seventh-grade students at Tamansiswa Private Middle School, Pematangsiantar, several challenges were identified regarding curriculum fulfillment: First, students struggled to identify vocabulary, particularly verbs (e.g., "He quickly to the market" is incorrect; "He ran quickly to the market" is correct). Second, they had difficulty writing the past forms of verbs (e.g., "Yesterday, She go to the zoo" is incorrect; "Yesterday, She went to the zoo" is correct). Third, a significant percentage of students scored below the KKM (75), with 60% failing to meet this standard, compared to only 40% who succeeded.

Given these challenges, teachers must adopt creative teaching strategies. Collaborative teaching methods are essential to stimulate student interest, and educators should be innovative in their approach to learning activities. The researcher believes it is crucial to find a suitable method tailored to students' backgrounds, specifically focusing on the Secret Words media aimed at enhancing their English vocabulary. Previous research, such as "The Use of Word Association Games to Help and Motivate Improve Students' Vocabulary for Eighth-Grade Students of SMP Muhammadiyah 17 Ciputat" by Maspupa (2017), indicates that Word Association Games can effectively assist and motivate eighth-grade students in improving their vocabulary. This study utilized experimental methods and Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its approach.

The information above illustrates that secret word games can significantly aid students in enhancing their vocabulary skills. This research differentiates itself from earlier studies by focusing specifically on seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar. Based on the background above, the researcher tries to conduct a research with the title "The Effect of Using Secret Word Games on English Vocabulary Mastery at Seventh Grade Students of SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar".

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed a quantitative approach, requiring the researcher to explain how different variables influenced one another, as noted by Creswell (2012:13). It was classified as quasi-experimental because the researchers could not completely control the variables. The study utilized a Non-equivalent Control Group Design. Initially, both groups took a pre-test (Y1). The distinction was that one group received treatment (X), while the other group did not receive any treatment and served as a control. Although both groups participated in the study, they experienced different instructional methods. After the treatment phase, both groups took a post-test (Y2). The experimental group learned using

the Group Investigation (X) cooperative learning model, while the control group had regular English lessons.

In this study, the researcher selected classes VII-A and VII-B as the sample groups. There were a total of 62 students: 31 students from VII-A were in the experimental class, and 31 students from VII-B comprised the control class. The researcher employed purposive sampling for this study. This method was chosen due to the similar composition of the two classes, which had nearly the same number of students. The instrument used in this research was an essay (filling in the blanks with verbs according to the past tense) and writing the verbs correctly. It was estimated that 20 tests would be used for data collection. In this study, the researchers focused solely on writing vocabulary, asking students to write the correct words, particularly verbs.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Data Description

In the experimental class, the researcher used a secret word game with the students. The process started with a pre-test, followed by playing the game, and ended with a post-test. The test had 20 questions, and students received 5 points for each question they answered correctly.

Table 1. Students scores of the Experimental Class

No	Student's Initial Name	Pre Test	Post Test
1.	AA	65	80
2.	AAK	60	90
3.	AANH	55	80
4.	AAQD	55	75
5.	AAR	65	80
6.	AD	55	90
7.	ADAS	55	75
8.	ADZ	65	75
9.	AF	65	85
10.	AMA	65	80
11.	AN	65	85
12.	AS	70	90
13.	BAD	65	75
14.	BNA	65	85
15.	DGS	75	80

16.	JSRS	65	90
17.	MGN	70	75
18.	MIRL	55	75
19.	MSAS	65	90
20.	MTAS	55	70
21.	NAA	50	75
22.	NSM	60	75
23.	NTPH	70	85
24.	PF	60	85
25.	RA	65	80
26.	RADS	65	80
27.	RAP	55	75
28.	RO	50	80
29.	YAH	60	85
30.	ZMA	60	75
	$\Sigma$	1850	2420

In the experimental class, the highest pre-test score recorded was 75, while the lowest score was 50. After implementing the secret word game as a teaching medium, the post-test results showed a significant improvement, with the highest score reaching 90 and the lowest score at 70. The total score for the pre-test in the experimental group was 1850 points, resulting in an average pre-test score of 61.6. Following the instructional intervention, the experimental group achieved a total of 2420 points in the post-test, leading to an improved average score of 80.6.

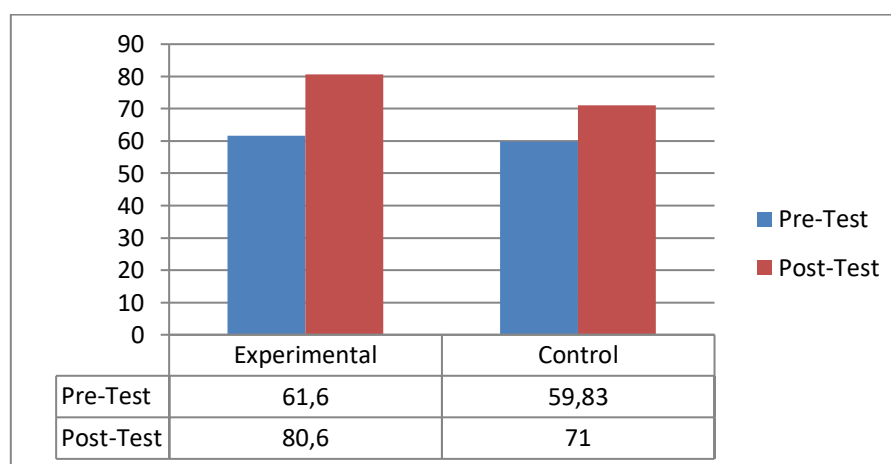


Figure 1. Improvement in Experimental and Control Class

After calculating the average scores for the pre-test and post-test in both the experimental and control classes, the researcher made a single graph to display the results.

This graph shows how students improved their vocabulary skills. It highlights the increase in scores, especially the differences seen after the treatment. The experimental class learned with the secret word game, while the control class used regular teaching methods. The graph shows that the experimental class had mean score of 61.6 on the pre-test and 80.6 on the post-test, which is an improvement of 19 points. In contrast, the control class had mean score of 59.83 and a post-test score of 71, which is an increase of 11.17 points. This means the experimental class improved more than the control class.

### Testing Hypothesis

After conducting the data analysis, the researcher found that the t-test value was 5.519. The distribution table and t-test value were then calculated for various degrees of freedom (df). In this study, the degrees of freedom were determined to be 58, and at a significance level of 0.05, the t-table value was also 5.519. Based on these calculations, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted, while the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected, as the t-test value surpassed the t-table value at the 0.05 significance level, specifically ( $5.519 > 1.672$ ).

### Research Findings

The result found by researcher include the following:

1. Experimental Class
  - a) The mean pre-test score is 61.6 and the post-test mean is 80.6.
  - b) The lowest pre-test score is 50 and the highest is 75.
  - c) For the post-test, the lowest score is 70 and the highest is 95.
  - d) The total mean change ( $M_a$ ) is 19.
  - e) The total standard deviation ( $d_a^2$ ) is 1.270.
  
2. Control Class
  - a) The mean pre-test score is 60.16 and the post-test mean is 70.6.
  - b) The lowest pre-test score is 50 with a highest score of 75.
  - c) In the post-test, the lowest score is 60 and the highest is 80.
  - d) The total mean change ( $M_b$ ) is 11.16.
  - e) The total standard deviation ( $d_b^2$ ) is 1.235.

The results of the hypothesis testing show that the t-test value of 5.519 is greater than the t-table value of 1.672 at a 5% significance level. Therefore, we accept the Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) and reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

## Discussion

This research aimed to examine how secret word games affect vocabulary skills in seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar. The study involved two classes: one class (VII-A) served as the experimental group, while the other class (VII-B) acted as the control group. Both classes took the same tests before and after the study. The experimental group used secret word games as a learning tool after the first test, whereas the control group employed traditional teaching methods with textbooks. The researcher discovered that students who played secret word games scored higher than those who used regular textbooks. One significant benefit of these games was that students found it easier to understand the material because they could visualize the learning content and remember sentences from the videos. The researcher also noted how engaged the students were in the classroom by observing their participation in the games.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher found that secret word games were helpful for students in learning vocabulary. The data analysis showed that these games greatly improved students' vocabulary skills. The results confirmed that after using secret word games in the experimental class, students' scores improved significantly, especially in their understanding of vocabulary. Using these games made it easier for students to remember words and understand their meanings. Therefore, we can say that secret word games are an effective way to teach vocabulary. They facilitate students' ability to remember and write words, making them a valuable learning tool. However, there are a few minor considerations to keep in mind when using secret word games for teaching.

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