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**Improving Students Vocabulary Through Word Search Puzzle: A Classroom  
Action Research**

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**Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan motivasi siswa dalam belajar kosakata bahasa Inggris dan menjelaskan bagaimana menerapkan metode teka-teki kata kepada siswa dalam situasi pandemi covid 19. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan observasi dan tes. Tes digunakan sebagai instrumen utama. Dalam menganalisis data digunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data observasi dianalisis secara kualitatif dan data hasil tes dianalisis dengan metode kuantitatif. Subjek penelitian adalah Siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Selama situasi pandemi COVID-19, jumlah siswa yang menghadiri pertemuan belajar sedikit berkurang. Dan penerapan Word Search Puzzle telah berhasil meningkatkan motivasi dan pemahaman siswa dalam pembelajaran Kosakata Bahasa Inggris siswa di SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh.

Kata Kunci: Peningkatan, Kosa Kata, Word Search Puzzle

**Abstract**

The objective of this research were to improve motivation of students in learning English vocabulary and to explain how to implement a word puzzle method to students in the pandemic covid 19 situation. The data was collected by observation and test. The test was used as a main instrument. In analyzing the data used qualitative and quantitative method. The observation data was analyzed by using qualitative and the data from the test was analyzed by using quantitative method. The research subjects were Students of Junior high School (SMP) Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh. The results of the study indicate that During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the number of students attending study meetings was slightly reduced. And the implementation of the Word Search Puzzle has succeeded in increasing students' motivation and understanding in learning English Vocabulary for students at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh.

**Key Word:** *Improving, Vocabulary, Word Search Puzzle*

## A. Introduction

Vocabulary is very important for every student who wants to master English and it is also the central of language teaching and learning. Without vocabulary, the students will find difficult to English mastery. Richard and Renandya (2002: 255) said that vocabulary is core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basic for how well the students speak, listen, read, and write. Therefore, vocabulary is important basic to learn English.

A better way and easier to teach English especially vocabulary to students is by using games, such as word search puzzle game. Because this game could be an alternative or variation in the methods of English teaching for teacher. With this method, students will not feel bored in learning English. But they will become critical and active children in learning English. Many students find difficulty to enrich their vocabulary or to memorize that new word given by teacher. It is something normal for the students, because English is not their mother tongue. So, it is a hard job for the teacher to make his/her students understand and remember new words that they never hear before. In teaching vocabulary, the teacher must have creativity in teaching and learning process. As we know that the students are bored when they do not understand, moreover when the teacher teaches still uses the conventional method in his/her teaching. The teacher just explains the materials and then gives exercise in written form.

In the Junior High School, English is not the new something for students. They have known about it when they were in the Kindergarten or elementary school. But, sometimes they still feel difficult. As Celce-Murcia (2000: 77) states, vocabulary should be recognized as a central element in language instruction from beginning. Students have difficulties in using English for communication. It is because their mastery of vocabulary is so limited. Students still difficult to remember the new vocabulary in a short term memory, so that students will quickly forget the new vocabulary is given by the teacher. The teacher should increase their creativity with create the interesting of teaching media in their classroom activity. This media can be created through game. Word search puzzle game is used to make the students catch easily about what they have learned.

Hamer (2021) explained that Vocabulary is one of aspect in English. It is very important for studying English. Learner who just learns grammar without vocabulary will be difficult to convey what he or she want to say. However, learner who just learn vocabulary or just read text or open dictionary will be able to say something. Vocabulary is a very important part for us in learning English. It is because of vocabulary is an essential element of foreign language learning which contributes at every level to communication and comprehension in the target language. It means that vocabulary has big contribution to supporting everyone to communicate with another people and comprehend target language. Furthermore, without grammar very little can be convey but without vocabulary nothing can be convey.

Wright, et. Al (2006) said that a game is one of media that can be used in teaching vocabulary. Game is an activity which is entertaining and engaging, often challenging, and an activity in which the learners play and usually interact with others. Through game, they can learn things in a fun away. As the enjoy the activities of game, the children will not afraid to speak English and will likely use it as a natural part of the game. They also feel enjoyable in the class and interested in the material that is given by a teacher using games. Therefore, the research of improving students vocabulary through word search puzzle has to be done. The objective of this research are to improve motivation of students in learning English vocabulary and to explain how to implement a word puzzle method to students in the pandemic covid 19 situation.

The goal of teaching and learning process is to enable the student to acquire the four language skills. They need lots of vocabulary because vocabulary has an important role in communication using target language. Without vocabulary mastery it is impossible to make meaningful sentences in communication. Vocabulary is list words. Can be identified into vocabulary

Vocabulary is the set of words known by one or another entity, or are part of a certain language. A person's vocabulary was defined as an assembly of all the words that the person understood or all the words that the person would likely use to compose a new sentence. The wealth of one's vocabulary is generally considered to represent intelligence or the level of education. (Empit, 2010)

Vocabulary is the total number of words in a language. It is also a collection of words a person knows and uses in speaking and writing. Vocabulary is words that people both meaning and usage understand. So the readers must have enough vocabulary to understand what have

been read and heard, being able to speak and write in the right words so that it can be understood by others.

Richard et.al (2014) Vocabulary is a set of LEXEMES, including single words, COMPOUND WORDS and IDIOMS. According to Hornby (2005) vocabulary is a total number of words which (with rules for combining them) make up the language. In learning vocabulary, the learners should emphasize on the aspect of words. The success in learning a foreign language is determined by the size of vocabulary one has learned. In conclusion, vocabulary is a word that is used to learn all languages.

A word search puzzle is a word game that is letters of a word in a grid that usually has a rectangular or square shape. The objective of this puzzle is to find and mark all the words hidden inside the box. The words may be horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Often a list of the hidden words is provided, but more challenging puzzles may let the player figure them out. Many word search games have a theme to which all the hidden words are related. The puzzle itself kind to play that can be used to practice certain language features at certain phases in learning process in order to develop communication skill. In summary, word search puzzle is a game played to find vocabulary in the words that are scattered.

## B. Methodology

This research is classroom action research (CAR) that used pre-experimental research design with quantitative approach. the researcher intended to investigate the effect of using word search puzzle game for improving students' vocabulary mastery of the second grade at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh. The data was collected by observation and test. The test was used as a main instrument. The observation data was analyzed by using qualitative method and the data from the test was analyzed by using quantitative method

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Result

#### a. Prelude Research Result description (Pre- Cycle)

Before doing a research, the writer performs a test to see how far the students understand English vocabulary. The result of pre-test will be explained and described in the table below

**Table 1. Pre test result analysis of students in understanding English vocabulary**

No	Student's name	Score	Annotation
1.	AS	55	Not complete
2.	Is	70	Complete
3.	FM	25	Not complete
4.	Kh	50	Not complete
5.	MD	55	Not complete
6.	MF	70	Complete
7.	NA	75	Complete
8.	NF	50	Not complete
<b>Total score</b>		<b>450</b>	
<b>Average</b>		<b>56,25</b>	
<b>Total complete pre-test</b>		<b>3 students</b>	
<b>Complete pre-test percentage</b>		<b>37,5%</b>	
<b>Total not complete pre-test</b>		<b>5 students</b>	
<b>Not complete pre-test percentage</b>		<b>62,5</b>	

Based on the table above can be conclude that student's affinity in learning English vocabulary is in the adequate category. Because there are only 7 students who complete pre-test from the total 8 students who followed pre-test. The percentage is still under the predictive criteria, specifically  $\geq 80\%$  from the average score of students that is  $\geq 65$ . This is happened because the students never practice their understanding of English vocabulary by reading English text, trying to find meaning of words in the dictionary, or trying to speak English with those vocabulary so they cannot know and understand even if they are only simple English vocabularies. The students also cannot classify those words, whether they are including into countable noun and uncountable noun. Here are the data of students' activity observation.

**Table 2. Students' activity observation result**

No	Aspect Of Assessment	Numeral	Percentage
1.	Students give their attention when teacher is explaining	6	75%
2.	Students do the assignments solemnly	2	25%
3.	Students ask questions	4	50%
4.	Students answer teacher's questions	4	50%
<b>Average percentage</b>			<b>50% (good)</b>

Based on the table above can be conclude that the average percentage of students activity in classroom reaches 50% with good category. Based on the result of pre-test and students' activity observation that has been done, the teacher as the writer of this study tried to implement a learning method which can help to improve students' affinity in learning English vocabulary that is word search puzzle. The writer hopes that word search puzzle can make it better, it means that this word search puzzle is hoped to help improving students' affinity in learning English vocabulary at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh.

### 1. Research result description

The writer already did the four steps of classroom action research, specifically planning, action, observation, and reflection. Every activity will be explained as follows:

#### 1. planning

before doing the research, the writer determined the material to be taught to the students, prepared the lesson plan, found problems that are happened in classroom. Found the best method to solve the problem, prepared media and students' worksheet.

#### 2. Action

The action step performed on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 10.00- 11.00 am through luring learning after pandemic COVID -19 situation. The writer acted as a teacher and the quider teacher acted as an observer. The student's who joined the meeting were only 8 until 10 students from the total 15 students. In action step, the activies were divided into three parts, such as preliminary, core activity and closing. The writer asked the students to fill the online attendant list and told them about the goal of countable and uncountable noun subject that had to achieve while gave motivation to the students in learning countable and uncountable noun that understanding English vocabulary when the writer performed the preliminary part. Next, the writer continued to core activity by explaining the materials and discussing the material with the students. Last, the writer concluded the materials asked the students to submit assignments.

#### 3. Observation

Observation performed when the teaching and learning process was happened by implementing word search puzzle. Besides, in the closing part the writer gave them worksheet that had to submit. The result of the post- test will be explained and described in the table below.

**Table 3 post-test Result Analysis of students in understanding English vocabulary**

No.	Student's Name	Score	Annotation
1.	AS	85	Complete
2.	IS	85	Complete
3.	FM	85	Complete
4.	KH	85	Complete
5.	MD	90	Complete
6.	MF	85	Complete
7.	NA	95	Complete
8.	NF	90	Complete
<b>Total score</b>			<b>700</b>
<b>Average</b>			<b>87,5</b>
<b>Total complete post-test</b>			<b>8 students</b>
<b>Complete pre-test percentage</b>			<b>100%</b>
<b>Total not complete pre-test</b>			<b>0 students</b>
<b>Not complete pre-test percentage</b>			<b>0%</b>

Based on the table above the readers can see that all eight students got exhaustive score with the percentage reached 100% and the score average reached 87,5. It means that students understanding of English vocabulary is in very good category. It also means the students' affinity in learning English vocabulary has improved since the word search puzzle help them. The data of observation result of students' activity will be described in the table bellow.

**Table 4. Students' activity observation result**

No.	Aspect of assessment	numeral	Percentage
1.	Students give their attention when teacher is explaining	6	75%
2.	Students do the assignments solemnly	7	87,5%
3.	Students ask questions	6	75%
4.	Students answer teacher's questions	8	100%
<b>Average percentage</b>			<b>84,37% ( very good )</b>

The table above that students' activity percentage improved. The percentage reached very good category. In this cycle, the students gave their attention when the teacher was explaining material. Besides, the students wanted to ask question to the teacher when they did not understand the instruction. In addition, all eight students wanted to answer teacher's question and did the assignments solemnly.

#### 4. Reflection

From the observation result, this study can reflect that to improve student's affinity in learning English vocabulary at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh, the teacher can implement word search puzzle during teaching and learning process. It can be seen from the improvement between pre-test and post-test score percentage. In pre-test students only got 50% with adequate category but in post-test the students got 100% which is in very good category. Not only pre-test and post-test but also students' activity improved from 50% with good category to 84,37% with very good category. Based on those result, it can study already achieved success criteria. Therefore, this study is stopped.

## 2. Discussion

The classroom action research was performed by the writer in a cycle with four steps, such as planning, action, observation, and reflection. This study is based on the problems which is happened in classroom which is included students' understanding in learning English vocabulary and students' activity luring teaching and learning process at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh. The students still cannot distinguish noun, countable noun and uncountable noun. So, the writer implement word search puzzle in learning English vocabulary to improve students' understanding in learning English vocabulary. If the result improves, it means that the students' affinity in learning English vocabulary improves too. Word search puzzle is the method which makes the students search word in the table. this method is believed can make the students are interested in doing the assignment because it is full of funny pictures and consists of challenge that makes students fell challenged to fine the answer.

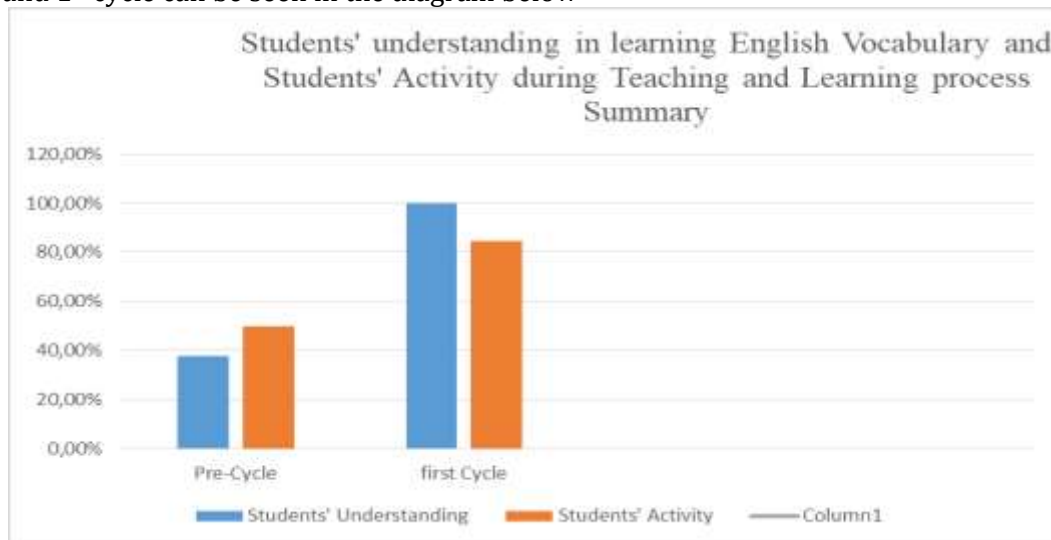
Using word search puzzle game given significant effect to the students' vocabulary was effective in building up the students' vocabulary mastery and also the students' attitude and interest in the use of puzzle game. The effective said by the researcher here means that the using word search puzzle game gives a positive change in the teaching learning process. It can be seen from the students' motivation and achievement. Before they were given a treatment, they were lazy because they felt difficult to memorize the vocabulary. Beside that they were bored because the activity only to complement from the sentence or paragraph and memorizing, so when the researcher introduce the using word search puzzle game they were interested and motivated to finish it as fast as they can. Besides, using word search puzzle game could develop their thinking in learning and playing vocabulary because they must guess the difficult word and the content of word search puzzle when they cannot to complement from the sentence or paragraph the words. According to Hadfield (1990), the puzzle is the questions or issues that are difficult to understand or answer.

Word search puzzle game is effective to improve vocabulary ability. It is because word search puzzle game can encourage the students to study vocabulary more active, effective and

enthusiastically. Word search puzzle game also fun activities in study vocabulary. As the theory stated by Wendy & Ytreberg (1990) that learners love to play, and learn the best when they are enjoying themselves.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that using word search puzzle game is effective in this research. By using word search puzzle game the teaching learning process will run attractively and exciting. So the class will be live because the students will not feel bored or sleepy. The students can learn while enjoy the game competitively. The students can memorize many vocabularies and its spelling in happy situation easily. In addition students will learn to work cooperatively and competitively.

The students' affinity in learning English vocabulary by using word search puzzle is able to improve, either individual or classical. In pre-cycle, the percentage of students' understanding in learning English vocabulary is 50% with adequate category increase to 100% with very good category in 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of the study. However, the students' activity percentage during teaching and learning process also increased from 50% with good category in pre-cycle to 84,37% with very good category in 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of this study. The development which were happened between pre-cycle and 1<sup>st</sup> cycle can be seen in the diagram below



Picture 1. Students' understanding and activity in learning English vocabulary summary at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh diagram.

Based on the picture above, students' affinity in learning English vocabulary improves. Before the writer implement word search puzzle, the percentage only reached 37,5%, either students' understanding in learning English vocabulary and 50% students activity during teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the percentage increased to 100% for students' understanding in learning English vocabulary an 84.37% for students' activity during teaching and learning process after word search puzzle has implemented.

#### D. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the result, it can be concluded that, During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the number of students attending study meetings was slightly reduced. As an example. This class has 15 students, but due to the situation and conditions, only about 8 to 10 students attend the class meeting and there are only 8 students who want to submit assignments.

The implementation of the Word Search Puzzle has succeeded in increasing students' motivation and understanding in learning English Vocabulary for students at SMP Kartika XIV-1 Banda Aceh. It can be seen from the percentage of the students' understanding in learning English vocabulary and students' activity, either in pre-cycle or 1<sup>st</sup> cycle. It was increased from 50% to 100% as students' activity during teaching and learning process.

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