

Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery through Games and Songs

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 11 December 2025	This study aims to improve eighth-grade students' English learning outcomes through the use of songs and games at State Junior High School 5 Kupang. The study was motivated by students' difficulties in understanding English vocabulary, low participation, and limited motivation during the learning process. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on a cycle consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two cycles involving 65 eighth-grade students during the 2021/2022 academic year. Data were collected through learning outcome tests and classroom observations. The tests were administered before and after the implementation of learning activities, while observations were conducted to identify students' participation, motivation, and behaviour during the learning process. In the first cycle, the implementation of songs and games showed an improvement in students' engagement, although some students remained passive and were distracted during learning activities. The average learning outcome score in Cycle I was 38.83, which was categorized as low. Based on the reflection, improvements were made in the second cycle by strengthening classroom management, learning activities, and student participation. The results of Cycle II showed a substantial improvement, with the average student learning outcome increasing to 85.5, which was categorized as high. In addition, approximately 90% of students actively participated in classroom activities, while disruptive behaviours decreased. These findings indicate that the use of songs and games can improve students' English learning outcomes while increasing their motivation, participation, concentration, and enthusiasm. Therefore, songs and games can be considered effective and enjoyable instructional media for supporting English vocabulary learning among eighth-grade students.
Accepted: 18 February 2026	
Published: 01 March 2026	
Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Games, Songs, Classroom Action Research	

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1. Introduction

Language is a communication tool that plays an important role in life. By using language, one can interact with other humans, express oneself, express feelings, convey ideas, information and ideas, and disseminate knowledge (Noermanzah, 2019). In fact, through a variety of written and spoken languages, language can act as the most effective and efficient medium of instruction in the world of education (Chimuanya et al., 2015). Currently, learning English is deemed necessary and important at an early age, given its importance and role; therefore, the quality of learning must be improved (Mayasari, 2024). English learning models that can improve early childhood language skills need to be developed and researched (Pasaribu et al., 2024). If, from an early age, students are equipped with good and correct English skills, these abilities will certainly be used at the next education level. This is especially important in the era of globalization, where English is one of the languages of international communication and requires each individual to be able to speak English properly and correctly, both orally and in writing, in accordance with the development of science, technology, and communication (Kurniawan, 2024).

In addition, the scope of English in Junior High School includes limited oral communication skills in the school context, which include the following aspects: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, and (4) writing.

The difficulties experienced by eighth-grade students in English lessons, especially in understanding vocabulary, are generally caused by the fact that many students still do not dare to answer questions in front of the class because they lack an understanding of various English vocabulary (Siregar & Zainuddin, 2023). As a result, classroom conditions and situations are not conducive, so the goal of enabling students to understand various English vocabulary items is not optimal. The use of conventional learning media has a direct or indirect impact on student interest and participation in the learning process (Andriani et al., 2025). Therefore, teachers must be inventive in choosing interesting activities and provide various effective ways to maintain students' concentration in learning by providing something interesting for their mental and physical development (Suraya et al., 2024). Students must be motivated to learn and memorize vocabulary sequentially in order to read, spell, and write vocabulary. An interesting way to increase student motivation is by using song and game media (Yamin, 2017b).

Junior High School students have characteristics, such as: (1) children bring their language learning, personalities, likes and dislikes, interests, cognitive styles and abilities, strengths, and weaknesses; (2) they still gain understanding from direct experience through objects and visual aids; (3) Junior High School students may not see the "whole" in the component several parts; (4) they need love, security, recognition, and a sense of belonging to accompany the gradual shift from dependence on adults to peer group support and approval; (5) children prefer to play and enjoy team games; (6) they begin to learn about cooperation and sharing; (7) they usually like physical activities in which they often participate in noisy and sometimes aggressive ways; (8) they need to play and engage in fantasy and pleasure; and (9) they are often enthusiastic and lively (Kay, 2005).

Song and game media can have two important functions in learning English. First, a wide variety of games and songs can be used to teach English, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency (Yamin, 2017a). Second, games and songs can introduce people and culture to those using English as a first language. Songs are an effective learning technique for improving listening skills in particular and English competency in general (Ratminingsih, 2014). When the teaching and learning process is carried out using English music as well as a fun game, the first skill to learn is listening, as an introduction to the four skills that must be possessed: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Another skill obtained is that students are indirectly invited to speak by asking them to follow the music of a song as well as a game used in learning (Octaberlina, 2023). The main

cognitive reason for using songs in class is to help automate the language development process (Nurhayati, 2009). There are many advantages to using games in teaching activities.

Games are structured activities designed to provide enjoyment and make students feel interested. In the teaching and learning process, games are an educational tool to determine the extent to which students are willing to learn English vocabulary (Samola, 2023). One of the games that the researcher uses is the game around a chair while singing. This game is a technique through which children can experience challenge, enjoyment, confidence, and competency movement through games while also learning vocabulary (Firdaus et al., 2024). Games allow students to gain experience, feel happy participating in learning activities, and stimulate the classroom atmosphere (Džanić, 2016). Amato (1998) believes that games are fun but warns teachers not to ignore their values, especially in teaching foreign languages.

2. Method

The researcher used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. CAR is very useful for teachers to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process and learning outcomes in the classroom (Sunendar, 2008). Classroom Action Research is an alternative research application that can be easily conducted during the teaching and learning process (Rahayu & Saskia, 2025). Classroom Action Research also sharpens teachers' skills in teaching through simple methodological research applications (Kantun et al., 2022). In this research, the researcher was encouraged to make notes about classroom activities, implement actions, conduct observations, and make reflections. Classroom Action Research is considered more suitable for the field of education because of the diverse and dynamic nature of its objects and objectives (Ni'mah, 2017). Therefore, students can participate actively and experience development throughout the learning process.

The research cycles suggested by Kemmis and Taggart provide a clear direction for the research process (Purohman, 2011). This research was conducted in two cycles through four stages: action planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Classroom Action Research is defined as one of the problem-solving strategies that utilizes concrete actions and capacity-building processes to identify and resolve problems (Narmaditya et al., 2017).

This research was conducted with eighth-grade students at State Junior High School 5 Kupang in the 2021/2022 academic year. The participants consisted of 60 students. The research was carried out over four weeks. The aim of this research was to increase students' motivation to learn, particularly in learning English. The data were obtained by administering tests to gather information about students' understanding of English learning concepts. The tests were administered at the beginning of the study, at the end of each action, and at the end of the study after a series of actions had been implemented (Fang et al., 2023).

3. Results

a. Cycle I

1) Planning

At this stage, the researcher examines the English curriculum. The researcher then prepared a test that would be given to students in the eighth grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang to find out the learning that would be carried out, after applying the teaching material the researcher then made plans for learning English using the song and games approach.

2) Implementation

The observations of researchers at the initial meeting with 65 students present. When the learning process takes place less productive learning because there are still students who do not pay attention to learning when explained by researchers there are still students who are joking with friends and when researchers ask questions there are only a few students who answer these questions about 30% of students who are active in the eighth grades of SMP

Negeri 5 Kupang.

The second meeting the researchers asked questions about learning that had been discussed and studied at the previous meeting and there were only a few students who were active and answer these questions. Furthermore, the researcher delivered the material to be discussed and studied at this second meeting with the material spelling very simple English vocabulary with the correct spelling to improve listening skills in students using the songs and games media with the following steps:

- a) Students present are 65 people, then the researcher tells them to vacate their seats and asks them to row backward according to the number of students present, then empty one or two of their seats.
- b) The researchers play English songs and have them surround an empty bench.
- c) The researchers turn off the song and order them to occupy the available seats. If there are students who do not get a seat, meaning that these students will get a penalty. The law is to say one of the song lyrics that are heard. If you can pronounce or imitate correctly then the student is allowed to re-participate in the game, but if not, possible it is not permitted to participate in the next game.
- d) After carrying out the punishment on students who do not have a seat, the researchers then increased the vacated seats to 3 to 5 seats.
- e) This game activity can be repeated and continued by reducing the number of student seats in the class until there is only one seat left. Thus, all the student preachers who took part in this game activity would concentrate more on listening to the song being played, so students could say the song lyrics when exposed to human because they could not get an available seat. The song playing can vary not be just one song that makes students bored. Though the purpose of learning to use the song and play method is to make the learning process feel fun and comfortable learning English.

At the third meeting during the learning process takes place students who play with their peers and do other activities diminish, when the researcher asked questions about the material that had been discussed at the previous meeting using the song and play method, students abilities seemed to show changes, students were active and their enthusiasm to answer this question also increased.

3) Evaluation

Student mastery scores are grouped into four categories so that the frequency score is as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

No	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	0 - 25	Very Low	7	10,8%
2.	26 - 50	Low	35	53,8%
3.	56 - 75	Medium	17	26,2%
4.	76 - 100	High	6	9,2%

Based on the average score of student learning outcomes obtained after the teaching and learning process during the first cycle which is the same as 38,83 after being categorized based on the table above, it is known that the level of understanding of English students in the low category.

4) Reflection

At the beginning of learning, there is enthusiasm and activeness of students in learning by using the song and game media that aims to increase student enthusiasm for learning, in general students who act passively and only listen to explanations or questions raised by researchers there are still some students who play with their peers and do other activities when asking questions.

b. Cycle II

1) Planning

At this stage, as in the first cycle, the researcher first studies the English learning curriculum, to discuss what learning will be discussed and what problems will be solved in the eight grades of the SMP Negeri 5 Kupang.

2) Implementation

The second cycle of learning English for eight grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang lasted for 2 days with time at each meeting for 2 hours of study. Where the first meeting is filled with learning using song and play methods and at the second meeting the second cycle test is carried out, the second cycle is carried out after the first cycle test where the results of the first cycle test have not been reached indicator. The implementation of the second cycle is based on the results of observation, evaluation, and reflection in cycle I.

- a) At this meeting with a total of 65 students or all present, the researcher submitted the results of the test results that were carried out in cycle I. Furthermore, the researchers arranged the class the same as the meeting in the first cycle which aims to create a community of students who support learning English, after the researcher explained the material and learning objectives at this meeting and then the researcher gave the exercise questions and asked several students to answer the exercise questions.
- b) At this second meeting before the researcher conveys and explains the material to be studied at this second meeting, the researcher gives questions related to the material that has been studied at the previous meeting. Next, the researcher explained what explained the material to be discussed and studied at this second meeting, then gave assignments related to the teaching material, allowing students to recall past lessons. At this second meeting, the researcher felt and saw that some changes occurred in the behaviour and abilities of students. At this meeting, the enthusiasm of students to be active in the teaching and learning process increased. The observations at this meeting during the learning process took place almost all students did not do other activities and no one joked with their peers almost all students focused on the learning material explained and provided by the researcher, and there was only one student who asked to be explained back about the material that was discussed because the student who pay attention to the discussion of the material also increased and students who worked on the problems correctly also increased. This is because students who were active at the time of material discussion were approximately 90% of the number of students in eight grades at SMP Negeri 5 Kupang.

3) Evaluation

Students' mastery scores are grouped into four categories, so the frequency scores obtained for the percentage of student learning outcomes in cycle II are as follow:

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

No	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	0 - 25	Very Low	0	0 %
2.	26 - 50	Low	6	9,2%
3.	56 - 75	Medium	19	29,2 %
4.	76 - 100	High	40	61,6 %

4) Reflection

The results achieved during learning English using these songs and games, both from the behaviour, attitudes, activeness, and motivation to learn English. It turns out that this can have a positive influence on students to improve student learning outcomes.

4. Discussion

Based on the results of data processing from research that has been carried out in the eight grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang, it can be seen that learning English using the songs and games media can provide an influence to improve student learning outcomes.

1) Discussion of Cycle I

Based on the result of the implementation in the first cycle that the average value obtained by students is 65,83 out of 100 possible values and after grouping it into 4 categories it can be seen that from 65 students who have student learning outcomes in learning English can be categorized as very low as many 7 students or around 10,8%, categorized as low as 35 students or 53,8%, categorized as the medium as many as 17 students or 26,2%, categorized as high as 6 students or 9,2%. After being categorized into 4 groups, it can be seen in English learning in the eight grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang in the first cycle that can be categorized as medium.

2) Discussion of Cycle II

Based on the data that has been described then after the implementation of the second cycle of action, the average value of students increased to 85,5 and after being grouped into 4 categories, there were no students who received very low grades, which were categorized as low only 6 students or 9,2%, which is categorized as medium 19 students or 29,2%, which is categorized high as 40 students or 61,6%. After being categorized into 4 categories, it can be seen that the mastery in the eight grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang in cycle II is in the high category. Therefore, in the result of reflection cycle I, in the implementation of cycle II there are improvements to identify the application of songs and games media, can reduce and avoid the behaviour of students that can interfere during the ongoing learning process, implement intensive indicators on learning in the learning process.

Based on these results, it can be said that the application of the songs and games media in learning English can have a positive effect and improve student learning outcomes, after being given the same treatment in two cycles. Using the songs and games media has also been proven to increase student motivation to follow the teaching and learning process, this is seen in the enthusiasm of students to attend, participate and be active during the learning process.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the problem in this study is to improve student learning outcomes in English subject. To overcome this problem, an action must be taken using the songs and games media that starts from planning, implementing, observing and reflecting in each cycle so that there is an increase in student learning outcomes in English subject. From the data obtained from the results of observations of class actions in Junior High school students stated that the planning of learning English subject using the songs and games media can improve student learning outcomes. The score of student learning outcomes in English learning in eight grades of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang in the first cycle 38,83 are in low category and the score of student learning outcomes in the second cycle after learning using the song and games media score obtained have increased is 85,5 are in the high category.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Persatuan Guru 1945 NTT, for its academic support. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the participation and cooperation of the eighth-grade students of State Junior High School 5 Kupang during the research process.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this research or its publication.

Authors' Contributions

Yanrini Martha Anabokay: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.

Yandri Susuek Ndun: Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.

Ni Putu Juliani Lestari Dewi: Supervision, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

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All authors contributed to the manuscript, reviewed the final version, and approved it for publication.

Statement of the Use of AI

The authors used an AI-assisted tool for English translation during the preparation of this manuscript. All AI-assisted output was reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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