

IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH KIM'S MEMORY GAME AT TENTH GRADE OF SMK NEGERI 7 BANDAR LAMPUNG

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh keterbatasan penguasaan kosakata siswa dan kurang aktifnya siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris akibat kegiatan pembelajaran yang masih didominasi oleh aktivitas konvensional. Meskipun berbagai penelitian telah menunjukkan efektivitas permainan dalam pembelajaran kosakata, penelitian mengenai penggunaan *Kim's Memory Game* pada siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan, khususnya dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas X, masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata dan aktivitas belajar siswa melalui penerapan *Kim's Memory Game* pada siswa kelas X Farmasi SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung tahun ajaran 2025/2026. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan desain *Classroom Action Research* (CAR) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, dan setiap siklus terdiri atas tiga pertemuan. Subjek penelitian berjumlah 35 siswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *total sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kosakata, lembar observasi aktivitas siswa, catatan lapangan, dan dokumentasi. Data tes dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dengan menghitung skor individual, nilai rata-rata kelas, dan persentase ketuntasan klasikal, sedangkan data observasi dan catatan lapangan dianalisis secara deskriptif-komparatif dengan membandingkan hasil antarsiklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguasaan kosakata siswa meningkat dari nilai rata-rata 70,86 pada Siklus I menjadi 81,29 pada Siklus II. Persentase siswa yang mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) 75 meningkat dari 43% (15 siswa) menjadi 86% (30 siswa). Aktivitas belajar siswa juga meningkat dari skor rata-rata 6,29 dengan kategori kurang menjadi 7,29 dengan kategori cukup. Dengan demikian, penerapan *Kim's Memory Game* dapat menjadi alternatif pembelajaran yang interaktif untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata dan mendorong aktivitas siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: penguasaan kosakata, *Kim's Memory Game*, *Classroom Action Research*

ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by students' limited vocabulary mastery and low classroom participation, which were associated with conventional vocabulary learning activities. Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of various vocabulary games, research specifically examining the use of *Kim's Memory Game* among vocational high school students remains limited. This study aimed to improve students' vocabulary mastery and learning activity through the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* among tenth-grade students of SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung in the 2025/2026 academic year. The study employed quantitative and qualitative approaches using a *Classroom Action Research* (CAR) design conducted in two cycles, with three meetings in each cycle. The participants were 35 students of class X Pharmacy selected using a *total sampling* technique. Data were collected through vocabulary tests, student activity observation sheets, field notes, and documentation. The test data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating individual scores, the class mean score, and classical completeness, while observation and field-note data were analyzed using descriptive-comparative analysis by comparing the results between cycles. The results showed that students' vocabulary mastery improved, with the mean score increasing from 70.86 in Cycle I to 81.29 in Cycle II. The percentage of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75 increased from

43% (15 students) to 86% (30 students). Students' overall learning activity also increased from an average score of 6.29, categorized as Poor, to 7.29, categorized as Sufficient. Therefore, *Kim's Memory Game* can be used as an interactive alternative for improving students' vocabulary mastery and encouraging active participation in English language learning.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Mastery, Kim's Memory Game, Classroom Action Research*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the fundamental components of language learning because it provides the words learners need to understand and express meaning. Adequate vocabulary knowledge is essential for effective communication, whereas limited vocabulary can hinder learners' ability to express ideas and understand others. Barnhart (2008) defines vocabulary as the stock of words used by a person, group, or profession, as well as a collection of words accompanied by their meanings. Words function as symbols of ideas and serve as a medium through which people communicate their thoughts. Therefore, the more vocabulary learners acquire, the greater their ability to express ideas and communicate effectively. Vocabulary mastery is consequently an essential foundation for successful language use.

Vocabulary also plays a fundamental role in the development of the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Thornbury (2002) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary in language learning and communication, as learners need sufficient vocabulary to understand and produce language effectively. Richards and Renandya (2002) further explain that vocabulary is an essential component of language proficiency and supports learners' ability to develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. This importance is also reflected in Indonesian EFL research. Nurchurifiani et al. (2021), for example, found that the vocabulary mastery of tenth-grade students improved after the implementation of the keyword technique. This finding indicates that vocabulary development requires deliberate and appropriate instructional strategies rather than relying solely on incidental learning.

Vocabulary knowledge involves more than simply knowing the meanings of individual words. Thornbury (2002) explains that knowing a word involves several aspects of vocabulary knowledge, including its meaning, form, and use. Nation (2001) distinguishes between receptive vocabulary, which refers to words that learners recognize and understand when they encounter them, and productive vocabulary, which refers to words that learners can produce when speaking or writing. Thus, effective vocabulary instruction should provide learners with opportunities not only to recognize and memorize words but also to retrieve and use them appropriately in meaningful learning activities.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung, several problems were identified in the teaching and learning of English vocabulary. Many students demonstrated limited vocabulary mastery, which affected their ability to understand learning materials and express ideas in English. Vocabulary learning was also predominantly conducted through conventional activities, in which students were asked to find word meanings in dictionaries and memorize them without sufficient opportunities to use the words in meaningful activities. Harmer (2001) explains that vocabulary learning involves establishing connections between word forms and their meanings as well as distinguishing between words with similar meanings. When vocabulary instruction relies heavily on memorization without engaging learning activities, students may experience boredom and show limited participation. These conditions indicate the need for a learning technique that

can make vocabulary practice more engaging while providing opportunities for students to recall and reinforce newly learned words.

Games have been widely used as an alternative technique for creating more engaging language learning activities. Hadfield (2003) describes a game as a rule-governed activity with specific objectives and an element of enjoyment that can support the learning process. Huyen and Nga (2003) also reported that vocabulary games can increase students' motivation, spontaneity, confidence, and retention. Empirical studies conducted in Indonesian EFL classrooms have provided evidence of the effectiveness of various types of vocabulary games. Fatmawati et al. (2023), for instance, found that *Pictionary* was effective in improving the vocabulary achievement of senior high school students. Similar findings were reported by Fatmawati et al. (2022) and Purba et al. (2022), who demonstrated the potential of *Pictionary* for vocabulary learning at different educational levels. Yelvia (2023) also reported a positive effect of *Pictionary* on students' vocabulary mastery.

Other types of vocabulary games have produced similar results. Wijaksono and Siddik (2022) reported that *crossword puzzle* games were effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery, while Bella and Rahayu (2023) found that *crossword* activities improved students' vocabulary achievement. Dharmayasa (2022) demonstrated that the *Hangman* game could improve elementary school students' English vocabulary. In addition, Mikala et al. (2024) found that *Bingo* games improved vocabulary mastery among elementary school students, consistent with the findings of Aprilia et al. (2021) and Gea (2023). Vocabulary learning has also been supported by media-assisted activities. Idrus et al. (2021) reported improvements through the use of *Wordwall*, while Salsabila et al. (2022) found that the combination of *word square* and *scramble sentence* activities could support English vocabulary learning. At the vocational high school level, Laoli et al. (2023) reported improvements in students' vocabulary mastery through the use of *Word Cloud*. Muhayyang et al. (2023) likewise found that *word card games* could support vocabulary development among junior high school students. Collectively, these studies indicate that interactive and game-based activities can provide an alternative to conventional vocabulary instruction.

One game that specifically emphasizes observation, memorization, and recall is *Kim's Memory Game*. The activity is derived from the character Kim in Rudyard Kipling's novel, who was trained to develop his observational ability by memorizing objects placed on a tray before they were covered (Wright et al., 2006). In language learning, the game can be adapted by displaying vocabulary items for a limited period, covering them, and asking students to recall the words they have observed. This process provides learners with opportunities to focus their attention, encode information, and retrieve vocabulary from memory. Wright et al. (2006) explain that games can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to practice language through engaging activities. Wardani and Ummah (2023) specifically found that *Kim's Memory Game* could improve young learners' vocabulary mastery through an interactive learning process. This finding suggests that a memory-based game may be relevant to vocabulary learning because learners need repeated opportunities to retain and retrieve newly learned words.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of various vocabulary games, the existing Indonesian literature has largely focused on games such as *Pictionary*, *crossword puzzle*, *Hangman*, and *Bingo* (Aprilia et al., 2021; Bella & Rahayu, 2023; Dharmayasa, 2022; Fatmawati et al., 2022, 2023; Gea, 2023; Mikala et al., 2024; Purba et al., 2022; Wijaksono & Siddik, 2022; Yelvia, 2023). Research specifically examining *Kim's*

Memory Game remains limited, particularly in vocational high school contexts. Wardani and Ummah (2023) examined the use of *Kim's Memory Game* for young learners, while Laoli et al. (2023) investigated vocabulary learning in a vocational high school context using *Word Cloud* rather than a memory-based game. Therefore, there is still limited empirical evidence regarding the application of *Kim's Memory Game* to vocabulary learning among vocational high school students. This gap is important because vocational students require English vocabulary that can support both general communication and their future academic or professional needs.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* to improve students' vocabulary mastery at the tenth grade of SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung. Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined visual, puzzle-based, or chance-based vocabulary games, this study focuses on a memory-based activity that requires students to observe, memorize, and recall vocabulary items. The study employs Classroom Action Research to examine improvements across successive instructional cycles. Therefore, this research aims to improve students' vocabulary mastery and learning activity through the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* in the tenth-grade classroom of SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung during the 2025/2026 academic year.

METHOD

This study employed a *Classroom Action Research* (CAR) design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research followed four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Arikunto, 2006). The study was conducted in two cycles, with three meetings in each cycle. The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were 35 students of class X Pharmacy, selected using a *total sampling* technique because all students in the selected class participated in the study. The researcher acted as the teacher, while an English teacher, Maricha Dwi Fitri, S.Pd., served as the observer.

The learning materials were based on *procedure text*. Cycle I focused on healthy food, while Cycle II focused on healthy drinks. Each meeting lasted 120 minutes. *Kim's Memory Game* was implemented by displaying vocabulary items related to the learning topic for a limited time, asking students to observe and memorize them, covering or removing the items, and then asking students to recall the vocabulary. The activities were conducted individually and in groups, followed by feedback and reinforcement from the teacher. Based on reflection from Cycle I, the implementation in Cycle II was improved through clearer instructions, warm-up activities, better time management, and rewards.

Data were collected through vocabulary tests, student activity observation sheets, field notes, and documentation. The vocabulary tests consisted of formative tests administered during the learning process and summative tests administered at the end of each cycle. Each summative test contained 40 multiple-choice questions based on definition, synonym, and contextual meaning items adapted from Heaton (1990). Each correct answer was scored 2.5, with a maximum score of 100. The student activity observation sheet was developed by the researchers based on five indicators: answering the teacher's questions, asking questions about the material, completing individual assignments, completing group assignments, and finding learning resources. Each indicator was scored on a scale of 6–9. The observation sheet was reviewed and validated by experts in English language education before data collection. Field

notes documented classroom events, student responses, difficulties, and instructional improvements, while documentation provided supporting evidence of the research activities.

Quantitative data from the vocabulary tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating individual scores, the class mean, and classical completeness. The individual score was calculated as the number of correct answers divided by the total number of questions and multiplied by 100. Classical completeness was calculated as the number of students achieving the KKM of 75 divided by the total number of students and multiplied by 100%. The class mean was calculated by dividing the total student scores by the number of students. The results of Cycle I and Cycle II were compared to determine changes in vocabulary mastery. Observation data were analyzed using descriptive-comparative analysis by comparing the scores of each activity indicator and the overall average between cycles. The activity scores were interpreted as follows: 8.00–9.00 = Very Good, 7.50–7.99 = Good, 7.00–7.49 = Sufficient, and 6.00–6.99 = Poor. Field notes were analyzed descriptively to identify important classroom events, student responses, difficulties, and improvements between cycles.

The research was considered successful when at least 75% of the students achieved the KKM score of 75. An increase in students' overall learning activity from Cycle I to Cycle II was considered supporting evidence of the effectiveness of the action. If the success criterion was not achieved in Cycle I, improvements were implemented in Cycle II based on the reflection results.

This research received ethical approval before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from the participants and their parents or legal guardians. Participants were informed about the research purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of their data. Students' identities were kept confidential throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Vocabulary Mastery

The results of the vocabulary tests showed an improvement in students' vocabulary mastery from Cycle I to Cycle II. The vocabulary mastery was measured through summative tests administered at the end of each cycle. In Cycle I, the mean score was 70.86, which was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. Of the 35 students, 15 students (43%) achieved the KKM, while 20 students (57%) scored below the required criterion. The results of the vocabulary tests in both cycles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Vocabulary Mastery Results in Cycle I and Cycle II

Indicator	Cycle I	Cycle II
Mean score	70.86	81.29
Students achieving KKM (≥ 75)	15 (43%)	30 (86%)
Students below KKM (< 75)	20 (57%)	5 (14%)

Table 1 shows that students' vocabulary achievement increased from Cycle I to Cycle II. The mean score increased from 70.86 to 81.29, representing an increase of 10.43 points. The number of students achieving the KKM increased from 15 students (43%) in Cycle I to 30 students (86%) in Cycle II. Conversely, the number of students who did not achieve the KKM decreased from 20 students (57%) to 5 students (14%). The percentage of students achieving the KKM in Cycle II exceeded the predetermined success criterion of 75%.

Students' Learning Activity

Students' learning activity was observed during the implementation of the learning process in both cycles. The observation focused on five indicators: answering the teacher's questions, asking questions about the material, completing individual assignments, completing group assignments, and finding learning resources. Each indicator was assessed using a score ranging from 6 to 9. The results of the student activity observations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Learning Activity Results in Cycle I and Cycle II

Learning Activity Aspect	Cycle I	Cycle II
Answering teacher's questions	6.34 (Poor)	7.57 (Good)
Asking questions about the material	6.23 (Poor)	7.28 (Sufficient)
Completing individual assignments	6.66 (Poor)	7.48 (Sufficient)
Completing group assignments	6.46 (Poor)	6.45 (Poor)
Finding learning resources	6.20 (Poor)	7.31 (Sufficient)
Overall average	6.29 (Poor)	7.29 (Sufficient)

As shown in Table 2, the overall average of students' learning activity increased from 6.29 (Poor) in Cycle I to 7.29 (Sufficient) in Cycle II. The largest increase occurred in answering the teacher's questions, which increased from 6.34 to 7.57. The scores for asking questions about the material, completing individual assignments, and finding learning resources also increased. In contrast, the score for completing group assignments slightly decreased from 6.46 to 6.45 and remained in the Poor category.

The results indicate that four of the five observed learning activity indicators improved from Cycle I to Cycle II. The improvement in the overall activity score accompanied the increase in vocabulary mastery, while the group assignment indicator showed no improvement. The achievement of 86% classical completeness in Cycle II and the increase in the overall activity score to 7.29 indicate that the predetermined success criterion for vocabulary mastery was achieved.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* contributed to an improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. The mean score increased from 70.86 in Cycle I to 81.29 in Cycle II, while the proportion of students achieving the KKM increased from 43% to 86%. This improvement indicates that the learning intervention was able to help a greater proportion of students achieve the expected vocabulary competency. The activity requires students to observe vocabulary items, memorize them within a limited period, and recall them after the items are no longer visible. Such activities provide repeated opportunities for students to focus on word forms and retrieve previously encountered vocabulary. This is relevant to Nation's (2001) explanation that vocabulary learning involves developing knowledge of words that learners can recognize and understand as well as words that they can actively produce. Therefore, activities that require students to retrieve vocabulary from memory can provide meaningful practice beyond simply finding word meanings in a dictionary.

The improvement is also consistent with the role of games in language learning. Hadfield (2003) explains that games provide structured activities with specific objectives and an element of enjoyment, making them useful for supporting the learning process. Huyen and Nga (2003) similarly reported that vocabulary games can increase learners' motivation,

spontaneity, confidence, and retention. In the present study, *Kim's Memory Game* transformed vocabulary practice from a predominantly memorization-based activity into an activity involving observation, recall, and interaction. This change may explain why students were able to achieve higher vocabulary scores in Cycle II after becoming more familiar with the game procedure. The finding suggests that the effectiveness of the game was not merely related to its entertaining element but also to the repeated cognitive process involved in recalling vocabulary.

The finding is in line with Wardani and Ummah (2023), who found that *Kim's Memory Game* could improve young learners' vocabulary mastery. The present study extends this evidence to a vocational high school context, particularly among tenth-grade students in a Pharmacy class. The result is also consistent with previous research examining other game-based approaches to vocabulary learning. Fatmawati et al. (2022, 2023), Purba et al. (2022), and Yelviah (2023) reported positive effects of *Pictionary* on vocabulary learning. Similarly, Wijaksono and Siddik (2022) and Bella and Rahayu (2023) found that *crossword puzzle* activities could improve students' vocabulary achievement, while Dharmayasa (2022) reported positive results from the use of *Hangman*. Studies using *Bingo* also demonstrated improvements in vocabulary mastery (Aprilia et al., 2021; Gea, 2023; Mikala et al., 2024). These consistent findings across different types of games strengthen the argument that interactive activities can provide an effective alternative to conventional vocabulary instruction.

The current finding is particularly relevant to the vocational education context. Laoli et al. (2023) found that the use of *Word Cloud* improved vocabulary mastery among tenth-grade students at a vocational high school. Although the media and learning procedures differ, both findings demonstrate the potential of interactive vocabulary instruction in the SMK context. In the present study, *Kim's Memory Game* was implemented in a Pharmacy class using vocabulary related to procedure texts on healthy food and healthy drinks. The use of vocabulary within a specific learning topic allowed students to encounter and recall words as part of the lesson rather than treating vocabulary as an isolated list. This suggests that memory-based games can be incorporated into vocational English instruction while remaining connected to the learning materials.

The improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II also highlights the importance of reflection in Classroom Action Research. The lower achievement in Cycle I indicated that the initial implementation had not yet reached the predetermined success criterion. Based on the classroom reflection, the researcher improved the implementation by providing clearer instructions, conducting warm-up activities, improving time management, and introducing rewards. These modifications provided students with a more structured learning experience in Cycle II. Arikunto (2006) emphasizes the cyclical nature of classroom action research, in which the results of one cycle become the basis for planning improvements in the following cycle. Thus, the improvement in vocabulary mastery should be understood not only as the effect of introducing *Kim's Memory Game* but also as the result of continuously refining its implementation through the CAR cycle.

The improvement in vocabulary mastery was accompanied by an increase in students' learning activity. The overall activity score increased from 6.29 (Poor) in Cycle I to 7.29 (Sufficient) in Cycle II. The largest improvement occurred in students' participation in answering the teacher's questions, while asking questions, completing individual assignments, and finding learning resources also improved. This finding indicates that the implementation

of the game created more opportunities for students to participate actively in the learning process. Hadfield (2003) and Huyen and Nga (2003) emphasize the role of games in creating engaging learning situations that can encourage learner participation and confidence. The present finding provides classroom-based evidence that these characteristics can be observed not only in students' achievement but also in their classroom behavior.

However, not all aspects of learning activity improved. The score for completing group assignments decreased slightly from 6.46 to 6.45 and remained in the Poor category. This finding is important because it demonstrates that the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* did not automatically improve every form of classroom participation. The game appeared to provide stronger support for individual responses, recall, and interaction with the teacher than for group assignment activities. Therefore, future implementation could strengthen the collaborative component by assigning specific roles to group members, establishing clearer group responsibilities, and integrating cooperative tasks into the memory-game procedure.

Overall, the findings suggest that *Kim's Memory Game* can function as an alternative technique for vocabulary instruction in an EFL classroom, particularly when it is implemented through a structured and reflective CAR process. The improvement in both vocabulary mastery and overall learning activity indicates that the game can address two related classroom problems: limited vocabulary achievement and passive participation. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the study. The research involved only 35 students from one class and did not include a control group; therefore, the results demonstrate improvement within the specific classroom context rather than establishing that *Kim's Memory Game* is superior to other vocabulary teaching techniques. Further research involving larger samples, different vocational programs, and comparative or quasi-experimental designs is needed to strengthen the evidence regarding the effectiveness of this technique.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* improved students' vocabulary mastery and learning activity in the tenth-grade Pharmacy class at SMK Negeri 7 Bandar Lampung. The mean vocabulary score increased from 70.86 in Cycle I to 81.29 in Cycle II, while the percentage of students achieving the KKM increased from 43% (15 students) to 86% (30 students). Students' overall learning activity also increased from 6.29 (Poor) to 7.29 (Sufficient). These findings indicate that *Kim's Memory Game* can be used as an interactive alternative for improving vocabulary mastery and encouraging students' participation in English learning.

Future research is recommended to examine the implementation of *Kim's Memory Game* with larger samples, different grade levels, and vocabulary related to specific vocational fields. Further studies may also employ comparative or quasi-experimental designs to provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of *Kim's Memory Game* compared with other vocabulary teaching techniques.

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