Exploring Students' Perceptions of Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning: A Study at SMPN 34 Padang

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Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of using the Scrabble game as a tool for vocabulary learning at SMPN 34 Padang. The participants of this study were 37 8th-grade students in the 2024/2025 academic year. The research focuses on four key areas: attractiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and motivation, aiming to understand the educational value students associate with the game in the context of vocabulary acquisition. A quantitative method was employed, with data collected through a questionnaire and analysed using SPSS for reliability testing. Findings show that students generally perceive Scrabble positively, with an overall average score of 3.41, categorizing their perception as very positive. Students reported increased engagement and confidence, feeling that Scrabble makes learning English vocabulary enjoyable and less intimidating. Additionally, they found the game relevant to academic purposes and real-life applications, enhancing their motivation. This research aligns with existing studies on game-based learning, suggesting that Scrabble can be an effective educational tool for vocabulary learning. The study's implications support the integration of Scrabble and similar educational games into language curricula to foster vocabulary development and motivation in learners.

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication relies heavily on language proficiency and learning. According to ProLiteracy America (1997), four fundamental skills—reading, speaking, listening, and writing—are essential for learning English. To develop these abilities, mastering vocabulary is crucial, as it serves as a foundation of language learning (Hadijah et al., 2020). Binzt (2017) further emphasizes that vocabulary mastery, encompassing definitions, pronunciation, spelling, and context, forms the basis for word comprehension and usage. For learners of English as a Second

Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary knowledge is widely acknowledged as essential (Moeller et al., 2009).

Despite its importance, many students encounter challenges in acquiring and mastering vocabulary. Ayuningtyas (2008) observes that learning new words is complex and demands an ability to recognize, retain, pronounce, spell, and use vocabulary accurately. Students often struggle with spelling, translation, and understanding word meanings (Rahman, 2016). Vocabulary acquisition is typically based on memorization, which makes it difficult to retain (Hadfield, 1999; Susanto, 2012; Pratolo & Hafizhah, 2022). Consequently, students lack motivation and often forget words, leading to a deficiency in vocabulary (Susanto, 2017).

Classroom observations at SMPN 34 Padang during the odd semester of July–December 2023, particularly in classes VII A, VII B, and VII C, highlighted these challenges. Many students had not received English instruction in primary school due to changes in the 2013 Curriculum, leaving them with a limited vocabulary foundation. Teachers relied on traditional methods, primarily using repetitive exercises, which failed to engage students or improve vocabulary retention. Additionally, students expressed that they found English challenging, had trouble remembering vocabulary, and struggled with text translation, further limiting vocabulary development.

Recognizing the importance of vocabulary mastery in English learning, teachers need to use innovative strategies that engage students in meaningful learning. One effective approach is game-based learning (GBL), which uses structured games to support learning through active student participation. Charlotte (2011) suggests that games can significantly improve language acquisition by making the learning process more accessible and enjoyable. This study adopts GBL theory, which asserts that structured game-based learning can strengthen students' critical thinking and foster autonomous learning (Azizan et al., 2021). In this context, the board game Scrabble serves as a valuable tool for vocabulary learning.

Scrabble is frequently used in English language learning, particularly to enhance vocabulary acquisition. It enables students to engage in word formation, spelling, and memorization. Scrabble is a competitive board game that requires players to construct words on a grid, fostering vocabulary practice and creativity (Warner & Brown, 2005; Khaira, 2021). Research suggests that Scrabble enhances vocabulary knowledge, engages students, and increases classroom motivation (Chairani, 2021; Onasanya et al., 2021). However, some students find the game challenging due to its rules and duration, while others struggle to participate actively due to limited vocabulary knowledge. Observations at SMPN 34 Padang revealed that some students disengaged quickly, either due to difficulty understanding the rules or because of limited vocabulary knowledge, raising questions about their perceptions of using Scrabble as a learning tool.

A range of studies supports the effectiveness of Scrabble in vocabulary development. Supriadi and Jalaluddin (2023) found that Scrabble improved junior high school students' vocabulary scores significantly, while Jonanda et al. (2024) demonstrated that Scrabble increased vocabulary achievement among children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. Tuti et al. (2022) also found that Scrabble improved engagement and vocabulary mastery in an EFL context. Although these

studies affirm Scrabble's potential to enhance vocabulary learning, there is a need to further explore students' perceptions of its use as an educational tool.

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of students at SMPN 34 Padang regarding the use of Scrabble in enhancing vocabulary learning, with a focus on mastering vocabulary. By examining students' views, this study seeks to understand Scrabble's impact as a vocabulary-learning tool from the learners' perspective, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of game-based learning in educational contexts.

METHODS

Descriptive research with quantitative methods was used in this research. The population of this research was the 8th-grade students of SMPN 34 Padang academic year 2024/2025. Simple random sampling was used as the sampling technique of this research. Eight classes in total 37 students were taken randomly by using online randomizer technique as the sample. To collect the data, the researcher used a questionnaire as the instrumentation. The questionnaire was designed with close-ended questions, using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Agree), and 4 (Strongly Agree). to get information about students' perception towards the use of Scrabble Game on their vocabulary learning.

In measuring the items of the questionnaire, content validity was used in this research. The validity of the content was validated by a lecturer in the English Department of UNP. Furthermore, to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha with SPSS program version 26. The result shows that the questionnaire of this research has high reliability with Cronbach's Alpha .602.

The researcher asked the teacher for permission to distribute the questionnaire. After that, the researcher selected participants from the eighth grade who had played Scrabble before, from class VIII. A to VIII.H, totaling 37 students. With the teacher's assistance, the researcher then distributed the questionnaires directly to the students. Finally, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire and used SPSS version 26 to determine the students' perceptions of vocabulary learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding (tentative)

The study's findings were presented through tables showing frequency and mean values, along with descriptive narration.

Finding 1

1. **Students' Perceptions on the Attractiveness of Scrabble Game on their Vocabulary Learning**

   The first indicator was about students' perceptions on the attractiveness of Scrabble game on their vocabulary learning. There were five statements in this indicator and the results can be seen or the table below.

Table 1 Students' Perceptions on the Attractiveness of Using Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
1.	I feel more confident in my vocabulary skills after playing Scrabble.	0	0	5	10	19	57	13	52	37	119	3,22	P
2.	Scrabble has expanded my vocabulary by introducing me to new words in a fun way.	0	0	0	0	16	48	21	84	37	132	3,57	VP
3.	Scrabble encourages me to explore vocabulary to improve my English skills.	0	0	0	0	14	42	23	92	37	134	3,62	VP
4.	Playing Scrabble caught my attention in improving my English vocabulary.	0	0	0	0	16	48	21	84	37	132	3,57	VP
5.	I can expand my vocabulary when constructing words by adding suffixes like '-ing', '-ed', or '-ly' when playing Scrabble.	0	0	8	16	22	66	7	28	37	110	2,97	P
TOTAL MEAN												3,39	VP

In table 1, it can be seen that the highest score from the aspect of attractiveness in the item *"Scrabble encourages me to explore vocabulary to improve my English skills."* with an average score of 3.62 in the very positive category and the lowest score on the item *"I can expand my vocabulary when constructing words by adding suffixes like '-ing', '-ed', or '-ly' when playing Scrabble."* with an average score of 2.97 is in the positive category.

Overall, the average score of the indicators follows the attractiveness, namely 3.39 which is in the very positive category. This illustrates that the used of Scrabble Game on vocabulary learning by eight grade students at SMPN 34 Padang from the aspect attractiveness is very positive.

Finding 2

2. **Students' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning**

The next is students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Scrabble game on vocabulary learning. There were five statements in this indicator that students had to respond. The results on the effectiveness aspect can be seen on the following table.

Table 2 Students' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Using Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
6.	Playing Scrabble helps me remember the use of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives in English.	0	0	6	12	22	66	9	36	37	114	3,08	P
7.	I can increase my English vocabulary by connecting words when playing Scrabble.	0	0	0	0	15	45	22	88	37	133	3,59	VP
8.	Playing Scrabble helps me spelling English vocabulary by putting	0	0	0	0	15	45	22	88	37	133	3,59	VP

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
	words together.												
9.	Playing Scrabble helps me increase my vocabulary by adding plurals (-s, -es) in arranging words on the board.	0	0	5	10	22	66	10	40	37	116	3,14	P
10.	Playing Scrabble improves my vocabulary so that I can answer English exam questions correctly.	0	0	0	0	22	66	15	60	37	126	3,41	VP
TOTAL MEAN												3,36	VP

In table 2, the highest score from the aspect of effectiveness in the item *" I can increase my English vocabulary by connecting words when playing Scrabble."* and *"Playing Scrabble helps me spelling English vocabulary by putting words together."* with an average score of 3.59 in the very positive category and the lowest score on the item *" Playing Scrabble helps me remember the use of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives in English."* with an average score of 3.08 is in the positive category.

Overall, the average score of the indicators follows the effectiveness, namely 3.36 which is in the very positive category. This illustrates that the used of Scrabble Game on vocabulary learning by eight grade students at SMPN 34 Padang from the aspect effectiveness is very positive.

Finding 3

3. Students' Perceptions on the Relevance of Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

The next is students' perceptions on the relevance of Scrabble game on vocabulary learning. There were five statements in this indicator that students had to respond. The results on the relevance aspect can be seen on the following table.

Table 3 Students' Perceptions on the Relevance of Using Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
11.	I understand more when answering English questions how affixes can affect the structure and meaning of words after playing Scrabble.	0	0	7	14	22	66	8	32	37	112	3,03	P
12.	I find the vocabulary learned while playing Scrabble useful for writing essays and other assignments.	0	0	0	0	15	45	22	88	37	133	3,59	VP
13.	The vocabulary I get from playing Scrabble helps me better understand the English material.	0	0	0	0	15	45	22	88	37	133	3,59	VP
14.	The words I learned from playing Scrabble often appear in English tests and exams.	0	0	0	0	16	48	21	84	37	132	3,57	VP
15.	Playing Scrabble	0	0	0	0	17	51	20	80	37	131	3,54	VP

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
	helped me recognize words that often appear in textbooks and other reading												
TOTAL MEAN												3,46	VP

In table 4.3, the highest score from the aspect of relevance in the item *" I find the vocabulary learned while playing Scrabble useful for writing essays and other assignments."* and *"The vocabulary I get from playing Scrabble helps me better understand the English material."* with an average score of 3.59 in the very positive category and the lowest score on the item *" I understand more when answering English questions how affixes can affect the structure and meaning of words after playing Scrabble."* with an average score of 3.03 is in the positive category.

Overall, the average score of the indicators follows the relevance, namely 3.46 which is in the very positive category. This illustrates that the used of Scrabble Game on vocabulary learning by eight grade students at SMPN 34 Padang from the aspect relevance is very positive.

Finding 4

4. Students' Perceptions on the Perceived Motivation of Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

The next is students' perceptions on the perceived motivation of Scrabble game on vocabulary learning. There were five statements in this indicator that students had to respond. The results on the perceived motivation aspect can be seen on the following table.

Table 4 Students' Perceptions on the Perceived Motivation of Using Scrabble Game on Vocabulary Learning

No.	Statements	Alternative Answers								Total		Mean	Category
		SD(1)		D(2)		A(3)		SA(4)					
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
16.	I feel more confident using words with the prefixes 're-' or 'mis-' to change the meaning of an English word after	0	0	4	8	21	63	12	48	37	119	3,22	P

| No. | Statements | Alternative Answers | | | | | | | | Total | | Mean | Category |
| | | SD(1) | | D(2) | | A(3) | | SA(4) | | | | | |
		F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx	F	Fx		
	playing Scrabble.												
17.	I am not afraid to ask the teacher when I have trouble finding vocabulary when playing Scrabble.	0	0	0	0	15	45	22	88	37	133	3,59	VP
18.	Playing Scrabble makes me feel that learning English is no longer boring.	0	0	0	0	13	39	24	96	37	135	3,65	VP
19.	I am more confident doing English exercises without the help of a dictionary after learning by playing Scrabble.	0	0	0	0	24	72	13	52	37	124	3,35	VP
20.	I don't get excited about learning English vocabulary when I play Scrabble in class.	0	0	5	10	15	45	17	68	37	123	3,32	VP
TOTAL MEAN												3,43	VP

In table 4.4, the highest score from the aspect of perceived motivation in the item *" Playing Scrabble makes me feel that learning English is no longer boring."* with an average score of 3.65 in the very positive category and the

lowest score on the item *" I feel more confident using words with the prefixes 're-' or 'mis-' to change the meaning of an English word after playing Scrabble."* with an average score of 3.22 is in the positive category.

Overall, the average score of the indicators follows the relevance, namely 3.43 which is in the very positive category. This illustrates that the used of Scrabble Game on vocabulary learning by eight grade students at SMPN 34 Padang from the aspect relevance is very positive.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of Scrabble as a tool for enhancing vocabulary learning at SMPN 34 Padang. The results from 37 students indicated a highly positive perception of Scrabble, with an overall average score of 3.41 across key dimensions—attractiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and motivation.

Students found Scrabble engaging and enjoyable, emphasizing its attractiveness as a hands-on learning experience that diverges from traditional rote memorization methods. The average score of 3.39 as "very positive" for the attractiveness variable confirms this engagement. This indicates a high level of interest and curiosity in using Scrabble to master English vocabulary. These results support the research by by Anthonius and Andanti, (2023), who note Scrabble games fostering an understanding of word structures significantly benefit vocabulary mastery. They improved their word recognition by repeatedly encountering certain words and structures, such as suffixes. Additionally, Harahap et al. (2023) found that the game effectively supported vocabulary acquisition, as students engaged actively in exploring new words and their meanings. Students' responses revealed that they felt enthusiastic and motivated to use Scrabble because it was fun, helped them feel more confident in their vocabulary skills, expanded their vocabulary, created a lively learning atmosphere, and challenged them to form words, further enhancing their vocabulary mastery.

Regarding effectiveness, the game was perceived as a significant aid in improving vocabulary retention and understanding. With an average score of 3.36 as "very positive" for effectiveness, Scrabble plays a crucial role in vocabulary development. Students reported that Scrabble challenged them to think strategically and recall words, reinforcing their vocabulary skills. Additionally, Nurwayuni (2024) suggests that Scrabble significantly helped students expand their vocabulary by encouraging them to think of new words and recognize correct spellings within time constraints.

The relevance of Scrabble to students' educational goals was also evident, with a score of 3.46 as "very positive". Students recognized that the game directly supports their language learning objectives, particularly vocabulary mastery. Scrabble's emphasis on correct spelling and word formation aligns well with their academic aspirations. According to Spencer (2020), effective classroom activities lie at the core of teaching, playing a crucial role in shaping students' learning outcomes. This is in line with Alberth et al. (2014) show that students who actively engage with words in Scrabble games

experience enhanced word recall and retention due to increased cognitive involvement.

Finally, the perceived motivation to learn vocabulary through Scrabble scored an impressive 3.43 as "very positive", indicating that the game fosters a sense of competence and collaboration among students and teachers. This finding aligns with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which suggests that increased confidence in one's abilities enhances both performance and motivation (Bandura, 1997). By providing a supportive environment for engagement, Scrabble encourages students to take an active role in their learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of using Scrabble as a tool for enhancing vocabulary learning at SMPN 34 Padang, revealing a highly positive reception among the participants. Data collected from 37 students indicated that Scrabble significantly engages learners through its attractive, effective, relevant, and motivational aspects, with an overall average score of 3.41, categorized as "Very Positive." The findings suggest that Scrabble fosters a hands-on, enjoyable learning environment that enhances students' confidence and happiness while tackling vocabulary challenges. Its effectiveness is evident in improved memory retention and the strategic thinking required during gameplay, reinforcing vocabulary skills in a practical context. Additionally, students recognized the relevance of Scrabble in achieving their vocabulary goals, feeling a stronger connection to the learning material. The game's competitive nature and opportunities for peer collaboration further motivated students to participate actively in the learning process.

Given these insights, it can be concluded that Scrabble is a valuable educational tool for vocabulary acquisition, making the learning process more dynamic and enjoyable for students. The game not only facilitates vocabulary mastery but also serves as an effective assessment tool for teachers to evaluate students' understanding of vocabulary in a meaningful context. Incorporating Scrabble into regular learning activities can enhance vocabulary mastery and create a more engaging classroom environment. Schools should support the implementation of game-based learning tools like Scrabble by providing resources and training for teachers to effectively integrate these games into their curriculum. Additionally, future studies could explore the broader impacts of Scrabble on vocabulary mastery and student motivation, as well as extend the research to different educational levels, including primary and senior high schools.

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