

Original Research

Students' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of the Taboo Game in Enhancing English Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract

The integration of game-based learning methods in language education has been explored to varying extents, yet there remains a significant gap in understanding how specific games like the Taboo Game can impact English vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students. This study aims to address this gap by examining students' perceptions of using Taboo to enhance their English vocabulary. Participants included 34 junior high school students from MTs Madrisatul Ikbar during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, with a subset of 12 students selected for interviews. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants. The study utilized a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, collecting data through observation sheets, questionnaires, and interviews. Findings indicate that the majority of students perceived the Taboo Game positively, noting improvements in vocabulary retention, increased engagement, and reduced anxiety in learning English. Despite some differing opinions, the overall consensus highlighted the game's effectiveness and enjoyment as a learning tool. This study underscores the potential of Taboo as an engaging and effective method for enhancing English vocabulary skills in a junior high school setting.

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1. Introduction

In the world of education, vocabulary mastery is a very important aspect, especially in the context of learning a foreign language such as English. Vocabulary is a vital foundation for students' ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Vocabulary is a verbal asset that a person possesses through language. Vocabulary plays an important role in determining the fluency of communication, because nothing can be communicated without understanding. In addition, comprehension is the basis for four language skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. In other words, language learning, be it English, Indonesian or other languages, is greatly influenced by the amount of understanding mastered by a language learner. Considering the importance of language acquisition, learning requires students to know various terms in order to understand lessons well and operate in a language. Learners must have a fairly broad understanding. As stated by [Namaziandost et al. \(2021\)](#), long-term retention of English language comprehension is a major challenge faced by the majority of EFL students worldwide. This is also a similar problem in Indonesia, especially among students from primary to secondary school levels. In Indonesia, exposure to English from an early age and difficulties in understanding and recalling memories are the main factors that complicate the English language learning process. This is reflected in the fact that many students, especially at the elementary and middle levels, experience difficulties in learning English vocabulary because they feel less familiar with new words and have difficulty remembering the pronunciation of words ([Saridevita et al., 2022](#); [Yuliawati & YB, 2020](#)).

In facing this challenge, educators in Indonesia must find the right solution to increase students' mastery of knowledge in learning English. One approach that has been proven effective is the use of games in the

learning process. [Fithriani \(2021\)](#) emphasized that games can be an effective tool in making mathematics learning more fun and interesting for students. There are several educational advantages to incorporating games-based learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms ([Fithriani, 2021](#)). Supporting this perspective, [Marcaida et al. \(2022\)](#) highlights that game-based learning can enhance language acquisition by fostering an environment conducive to appropriate exposure to the target language. Implementing educational games in the classroom can help students learn vocabulary more swiftly and with greater enthusiasm. Game-based learning is considered one of the most effective teaching methods, particularly for motivating students to engage more deeply with their studies. Furthermore, game-based learning involves entertaining activities that integrate educational content and fulfill essential instructional objectives ([Muhajarah & Rachmawati, 2019](#)).

Although games-based learning is widely utilized for language education, particularly for learning English, it predominantly relies on computers and handheld devices. However, not all EFL students have a stable financial situation; many cannot afford to purchase cell phones or laptops to aid their education. Additionally, many educational institutions lack the necessary funds to provide computers and other technological learning aids, such as internet access and other ICT infrastructure, for their students ([Manguni, 2022](#)). Even in cases where students can afford such technology, some schools enforce policies that prohibit students from bringing handheld devices like cell phones and tablets into the classroom, fearing these devices may distract students and hinder learning. Empirical evidence has also shown potential issues with using mobile devices for educational purposes, such as students using their cell phones during class for non-educational activities ([Fithriani, 2021](#)). Despite these challenges, these obstacles should not deter EFL teachers from incorporating game-based learning in their courses. Teachers can explore alternative methods to implement GBL, with or without technological support.

However, the use of technology-based games in learning also has its own obstacles, especially in contexts where students do not have stable access to technological devices or educational institutions do not have sufficient funds to purchase technological devices and other related infrastructure ([Manguni, 2022](#)). Therefore, games like Taboo, which do not require technology, can be an effective alternative in improving students' mastery of English knowledge. Although many studies have examined the benefits of using games in language learning, there is still limited research that specifically explores the effectiveness of non-digital games such as Taboo in the context of learning English vocabulary in Indonesia. Through this research, it will be further explored how the Taboo game can be utilized in learning English vocabulary, especially in the context of students' perceptions of its effectiveness. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide a deeper understanding of how non-digital games can make a significant contribution in improving students' mastery of English vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Perception

Perception, as explained by ([Walgito, 2010](#)), is a multifaceted process that occurs after the initial stage of receiving stimuli by an individual through their senses, also called the sensory process. This means that before an individual can form a perception, they first undergo a sensory process towards external stimuli through various sensory channels such as sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. This sensory input is then processed by the brain, resulting in the formation of perception. Expanding on this, ([Fahmi, 2020](#)) provides a different understanding of perception by distinguishing between narrow and broad meanings. In the narrow sense, perception is specifically related to vision, referring to how one visually perceives something. This implies that perception involves visual interpretation of stimuli, such as shapes, colors, and patterns. However, in a broader sense, perception encompasses more than just visual interpretation. It includes how one understands, interprets, and makes sense of their environment. This broader perspective indicates that perception is not limited to visual stimuli but includes all sensory experiences and cognitive processes involved in understanding the world around us.

Based on the theories of perception that have been described, it can be concluded that perception shapes an individual's understanding and interpretation of their surrounding environment, influencing how they perceive and respond to events they encounter in their environment. This process of perception is closely related to language, because language serves as the primary tool used by individuals to express and articulate their perceptions to others.

2.3 Vocabulary

Vocabulary, as a linguistic asset possessed by an individual, plays an initial role in language acquisition, which includes speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills (Cameron, 2001). This is considered the foundation in English language education for learners, which significantly impacts their ability to articulate thoughts and written expressions in English (Simatupang & Derin, 2020). Challenges arise when learners encounter foreign words, thereby hindering their retention and pronunciation efforts (Saridevita & Hasan, 2022).

In the realm of language learning, the fundamental aspect is vocabulary comprehension. Tarigan and Stevani (2020) explains that vocabulary encompasses not only common words in a language but also specific terms found in various fields of knowledge. Furthermore, vocabulary mastery includes the number of words an individual possesses and their ability to arrange those words according to the dictionary, accompanied by concise and practical explanations. Therefore, the breadth of an individual's vocabulary mastery directly correlates with their language proficiency, as emphasized by (Febriani et al., 2022). Strong vocabulary mastery equips individuals with the necessary linguistic tools to express themselves effectively, comprehend written and spoken language, and engage in meaningful communication across various contexts.

2.3 Learning to Play (Play Theory)

Play Theory is a framework that emphasizes the crucial role of play in development and learning. Prominent figures like Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget have significantly contributed to this theory. Vygotsky, in "Mind in Society" (1978), argued that play fosters cognitive development, abstract thinking, problem-solving, and cultural understanding. Piaget's (2013) "Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood" identified play as essential for cognitive processes of assimilation and accommodation, categorizing play into practice play, symbolic play, and games with rules (Khadijah, 2016).

Based on the above theories, it can be concluded that play activities such as Taboo play an important role in facilitating students' cognitive, social, emotional, and language development, as well as creating an enjoyable, interactive, and student-centered learning environment, thereby potentially enhancing positive perception, motivation, and student engagement in the process of learning English vocabulary.

2.4 Taboo Game

According to Huizinga (in von Sydow, 2017), Taboo is a cultural game originating from the concept of the "magic circle," a separate space where players can engage in activities typically prohibited in society without real-world consequences. Stenros (2019) classified Taboo as a "mimicry" game involving "madness" (ilinx), where players challenge social norms in a controlled environment, experiencing the thrill of breaking rules safely. Sutton-Smith (in Mechling, 2015) further developed TG theory, viewing it as play that reflects the tension between cultural values and individual desires, allowing players to explore forbidden actions within a secure and regulated game context.

The Taboo Game is a cultural game that creates a game environment. TG can be used as an innovative and engaging method for teaching English vocabulary to students. By creating a game circle, students can enter a space separate from everyday life and be more open to learning new vocabulary that may be considered taboo or difficult in English. Furthermore, TG facilitates English vocabulary learning in a more open manner without the fear of violating social norms. Additionally, TG provides a safe space for students to experiment with new vocabulary without negative consequences, and how this contributes to improving their vocabulary mastery.

3. Method

The research was conducted at MTS Madrisatul Ikbar Tembung in the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year using a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach aims to describe natural phenomena through descriptive and interpretive language, avoiding statistical measurement and instead opting for qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and questionnaires (Ramadhan, 2021). This methodology aligns with the research objective of describing students' opinions on the application of Taboo in English vocabulary learning.

A total of 34 eighth-grade students from MTS Madrisatul Ikbar Tembung were selected as participants using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific

considerations, such as their relevance to the research objectives and their comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter (Sugiyono, 2019). This selection method ensured that the participants had the necessary background to provide valuable insights into the study.



Figure 1. The Example of Taboo Card

Figure 1 illustrates an example of a Taboo card used in this research. The primary research instruments included observation sheets, questionnaires, and interviews, each designed and validated to gather comprehensive data on students' experiences and perceptions. Initially, 25 participants who were unfamiliar with the TG were introduced to the game's rules and procedures. During the implementation phase, students engaged in the game, which required them to guess words without mentioning specific taboo terms, while researchers observed and recorded their interactions. Data collection involved administering questionnaires to all participants and conducting semi-structured interviews with 12 selected students to gain deeper insights. The qualitative analysis of the collected data revealed that the TG significantly enhanced vocabulary learning, promoted active participation, and made the learning process enjoyable. These findings underscore the TG's effectiveness as a teaching tool, providing valuable implications for educators and curriculum developers seeking to incorporate interactive and engaging methods into language education.

4. Results

In this study, the researcher analyzed the perspectives of 34 students regarding the use of the Taboo game in English vocabulary learning. The researcher employed a qualitative approach and descriptive method. This facilitated a better understanding of how students experience and respond to the use of the Taboo game in English vocabulary learning.

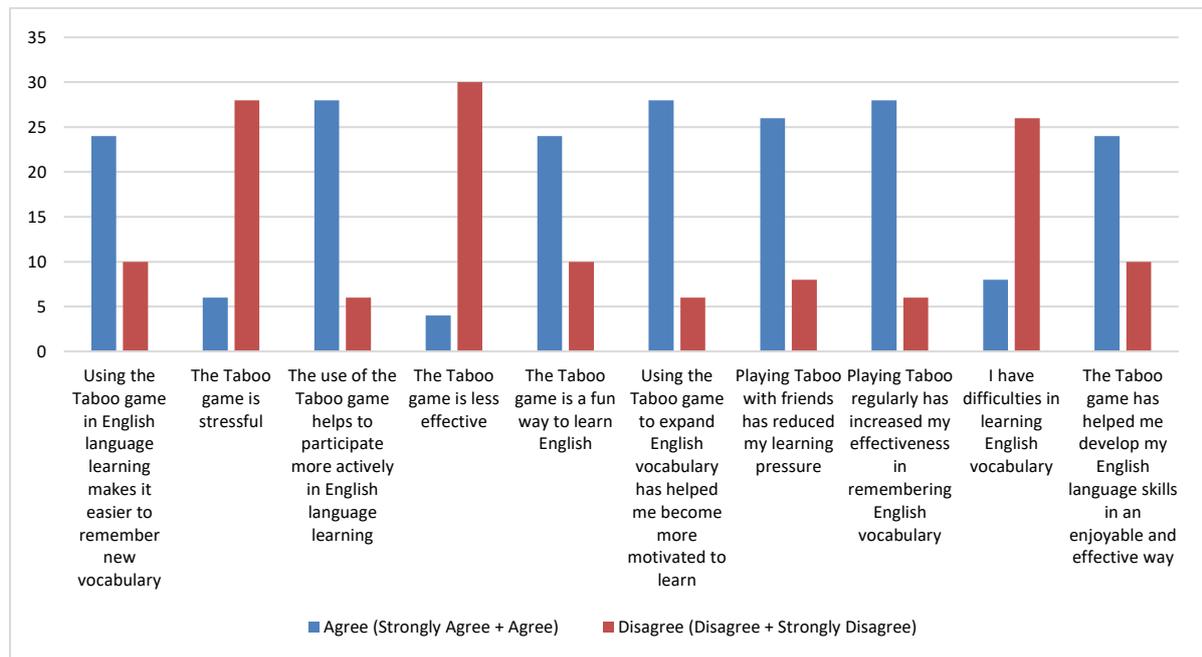


Figure 1. Students' Perception of Taboo Game in Learning English Vocabulary

Based on Figure 1, which illustrates students' perceptions about the use of the Taboo game in learning English vocabulary, several key insights can be drawn. The figure presents the responses of students to various statements related to their experiences with the Taboo game. Firstly, it is notable that a substantial proportion of students strongly agree or agree that the Taboo game aids in remembering new vocabulary and encourages active participation in English language learning. This suggests that the game is perceived as beneficial in enhancing vocabulary retention and engagement among students. However, there is a significant portion of students who disagree or strongly disagree that the Taboo game is stressful. This indicates that while some students may find the game enjoyable and stimulating, others may perceive it as challenging or anxiety-inducing. Additionally, the figure reveals that a majority of students consider the Taboo game to be a fun way to learn English and believe that it has helped them become more motivated to learn. This highlights the potential of gamified approaches like the Taboo game to foster a positive attitude towards language learning and promote student motivation.

"I found the Taboo game very interesting because it actively encouraged me to think of new words related to a given topic. This helps me expand my English vocabulary in a fun and interactive way." —

Excerpt 1

"For me, the charm of the Taboo game lies in the challenge of communicating words without using prohibited keywords. This makes me motivated to look for creative ways to convey ideas, which in turn helps me to hone my English skills." —

Excerpt 2

When asked about “what makes the Taboo game interesting for you in improving your English vocabulary,” the interview gave favorable accounts with the Taboo game. Respondents expressed a sense of enthusiasm and interest in the game, primarily due to its capacity to stimulate their thought process and prompt them to brainstorm new words associated with the given topic. This active engagement was perceived as instrumental in facilitating the expansion of their English vocabulary in an enjoyable and interactive manner. Additionally, participants emphasized the appeal of the game's challenge, which involves communicating without resorting to prohibited keywords. This aspect was noted for its ability to ignite creativity and enhance English language skills. Overall, the interview highlights the positive aspects of the Taboo game, showcasing its effectiveness in fostering vocabulary growth and skill development in English through its engaging and stimulating gameplay dynamics.

The interview results showed that the participants felt great joy and interest in the Taboo game. They feel encouraged to think actively and hone their English skills through this game. This is in line with the results of quantitative studies which show that the majority of students feel that the Taboo game helps them remember new vocabulary and encourages active participation in English learning. Thus, it can be concluded that the positive experiences of participants in interviews support the findings of quantitative studies regarding the benefits of the Taboo game in increasing English vocabulary and motivating students in learning.

"Playing Taboo can help me learn new words in English in a fun way. When playing, I have to think quickly and find ways to explain words without using prohibited words. This makes me actively look for words new and play while learning" — **Excerpt 3**

"Taboo is really fun for learning English vocabulary. I play while competing with friends, so it's more fun. I'm more enthusiastic about finding out new words so I can win" — **Excerpt 4**

When asked "how do you think the Taboo game can help you learn new words in English in a fun way," the participants suggested that the learning experience had been interesting. Participants felt that this game encouraged them to think quickly and find ways to explain words without using prohibited words, so they actively looked for new words. This is in line with the findings of quantitative studies showing that Taboo helps in expanding English vocabulary in a fun and interactive way. From the interview results, it was also seen that the competitive element in the game encouraged participants to be more enthusiastic in looking for new words, thus enriching their learning experience. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' experiences in interviews support the findings of quantitative studies regarding the benefits of the Taboo game in learning English vocabulary in a fun and effective way.

"Of course! My experience playing Taboo was really fun! So, when playing, we have to find a way to explain words without using forbidden words, that is. Well, when playing, I often found new words because I had to think quickly. So, playing Taboo helps me understand new words in English" — **Excerpt 5**

"Wow, playing Taboo is really fun! When I play, my friends and I like to compete on who can guess the most words. So, from there, I often hear new words. That's why playing Taboo helps me learn words new in English" — **Excerpt 6**

"The experience of playing Taboo was fun! I could play while learning. When playing, I had to think quickly to give instructions. So, from there, I often heard new words that I had never heard before. So, playing Taboo was really fun." really helped me learn new words in English" — **Excerpt 7**

The interview results for the question "can you share your experience playing Taboo and how it helped you understand new words in English" confirmed the enjoyable experience of playing Taboo and its ability to help understand new words in English. In all the answers, it can be seen that playing Taboo is not only fun, but also useful in expanding the English vocabulary. Participants stated that through the game, they were encouraged to think quickly, which then helped them find new words. This is in line with the quantitative results which show that Taboo does encourage participants' activeness in searching for new vocabulary. Thus, it can be concluded that the positive experiences of participants in interviews are consistent with the findings of quantitative studies, regarding the benefits of Taboo in developing English vocabulary in a fun way.

"Playing Taboo Game can help us increase my English vocabulary in a fun way! I play without realizing I'm learning, because I have to think quickly to give instructions. So, playing Taboo is fun and useful" — **Excerpt 8**

"Taboo game is really cool for increasing your English vocabulary! I play while competing with friends, so it's even more exciting. From playing Taboo, I can learn lots of new words without realizing it" — **Excerpt 9**

For the question "how can Taboo games help you expand your English vocabulary in an interactive and entertaining way," the results confirmed that playing the Taboo game can help expand English vocabulary in a fun and interactive way. In both answers, it can be seen that playing Taboo is not only fun, but also useful in improving English vocabulary. Participants stated that through the game, they could learn without realizing it because they had to think quickly to give instructions without using forbidden words. This is in

line with the findings of quantitative studies showing that Taboo can facilitate unstressed vocabulary acquisition. On the other hand, it can also be seen that the competitive aspect of the game encourages participants to be more enthusiastic and active in learning new vocabulary. Thus, it can be concluded that the positive experiences of participants in interviews are consistent with the findings of quantitative studies regarding the benefits of Taboo in expanding English vocabulary in a fun and interactive way.

"Yes, after playing Taboo, I became more confident in using new words in English. Because from playing, I became more accustomed to new ways of expressing words. So, now I'm more brave in trying to use words -new word."
— **Excerpt 10**

"Yes, I feel more confident in using new words in English after playing Taboo. Because when playing, I'm used to trying to express new words quickly. So, when it comes to everyday life, I become more dare to use words I just learned." — **Excerpt 11**

"Definitely! I feel more confident using new words in English after playing Taboo. Because from there, I get used to new vocabulary and become more confident in speaking English in front of other people." — **Excerpt 12**

The answers for "do you feel more confident in using new words in English after playing Taboo game? If yes, why is that?" from the three respondents indicate that playing Taboo provides an experience that can increase confidence in using new words in English communication. They stated that through playing Taboo, they became more familiar with new ways of expressing words. This makes them bolder to try using the new words they learn. Apart from that, playing Taboo also helps them express new words quickly, which then increases their confidence in using these words in everyday conversations. Thus, it can be concluded that the positive experiences of participants in interviews are consistent with the findings of quantitative studies regarding the benefits of Taboo in increasing confidence in using new words in English.

"Yes, I like playing Taboo to learn English. Because it's fun and not boring like studying from books all the time."
(Excerpt 13)

"Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Sometimes I like it because I can play with friends and learn together. But sometimes I don't like it because of the time pressure and it can be difficult to guess the forbidden word." —
Excerpt 14

"I really like it! Because playing Taboo makes learning more enjoyable and I can quickly remember new *words*."
— **Excerpt 15**

The results of the interviews for the question "Do you like playing Taboo to learn English vocabulary?" showed that there were various perceptions from students regarding the use of the Taboo game in learning English vocabulary. Most students love it for its fun nature and help in remembering new vocabulary. However, some feel that this game sometimes creates time pressure and makes it difficult to guess forbidden words. However, in general, students find the Taboo game helpful in learning English vocabulary in a fun way.

"I feel more motivated to learn English after playing Taboo because it presents a new challenge. But sometimes it can be stressful if I can't guess the forbidden word." — **Excerpt 16**

"Yes, I feel more enthusiastic about learning English after playing Taboo. Because playing Taboo is really fun and makes me want to learn more new words." — **Excerpt 17**

"I totally agree! Playing Taboo makes learning more enjoyable and not boring. So, I am more enthusiastic about learning English." — **Excerpt 18**

The researcher also asked the question "Do you feel more enthusiastic about learning English after playing Taboo? Why?" Excerpt 16 illustrates that the Taboo game fosters greater enthusiasm among students in learning English due to the presence of new challenges. However, on the other hand, it sometimes also induces stress if they cannot guess the forbidden words. Excerpt 17 reveals that students feel more excited about learning English after playing Taboo. They find the game very enjoyable and it motivates them to learn more new vocabulary. Excerpt 18 indicates agreement that the Taboo game makes the learning process more enjoyable and less boring. This increases students' enthusiasm for learning English. Overall, these three excerpts emphasize that the Taboo game enhances students' spirit and enthusiasm in learning English,

particularly in acquiring new vocabulary. Despite some concerns about time pressure and difficulty in guessing forbidden words, the game is seen as a fun new challenge that makes the learning process more enjoyable.

"Yes, I feel more motivated to learn English vocabulary after playing Taboo. Because during the game, I can quickly remember new words, so I want to learn even more." — **Excerpt 19**

"Yes, because playing Taboo can be a chance to compete with friends. So, I feel more motivated to learn English vocabulary to become smarter than my friends." — **Excerpt 20**

"I totally agree! Playing Taboo really makes me excited to learn English vocabulary because it shows that learning English can be fun and not boring." — **Excerpt 21**

The previous question is followed up with "Do you feel more motivated to learn English vocabulary after playing Taboo? Why?" The interview results show that the Taboo game increases students' enthusiasm and enthusiasm in learning English, especially in acquiring new vocabulary. Although there were some concerns about time pressure and difficulty guessing forbidden words, overall, the game was considered a fun new challenge and made the learning process more exciting. Students feel more motivated and enthusiastic about learning English after playing Taboo because this game provides fun and makes them want to learn more new vocabulary.

"Yes, I think playing Taboo with friends can help me learn better. Because when playing Taboo, we can learn together with friends, help each other guess words, so we remember them faster." — **Excerpt 22**

"Yes, because playing Taboo makes the learning atmosphere more enjoyable. We can discuss with friends while playing, so it doesn't feel like studying alone." — **Excerpt 23**

"Yes, I think playing Taboo with friends can help me learn better. Because we can push and support each other while playing, so we become more motivated." — **Excerpt 24**

Regarding the matter of playing Taboo with friends, respondents said that the game can help the process of learning English vocabulary. The students felt that playing together allowed them to learn collaboratively, helping each other guess words, thereby speeding up the process of remembering new vocabulary. Apart from that, the Taboo game also makes the learning atmosphere more enjoyable because there is discussion and interaction with friends while playing. This makes the learning process feel more interactive and less alone. By playing together, students also feel support and encouragement from their friends, which increases learning motivation. Thus, it can be concluded that playing Taboo in a group or with friends can support the English vocabulary learning process by creating a more fun and interactive learning environment, which in turn motivates students to learn better.

"In my opinion, playing Taboo can help me overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary because during the game, we focus a lot on remembering new words. So, it helps us understand their meanings faster." — **Excerpt 25**

"Yes, playing Taboo can help me overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary because while playing, we can learn while having fun. So, it's more relaxed but still allows us to learn." — **Excerpt 26**

"In my opinion, playing Taboo can help me overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary because we can play with friends. So, if there's a difficult word, we can ask other friends for help." — **Excerpt 27**

The interview results for the question "how do you think playing Taboo can help you overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary" show that playing Taboo can help overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary. The students felt that while playing, they focused heavily on remembering new words, which helped them understand the meaning of the vocabulary more quickly. Apart from that, the Taboo game also helps in overcoming difficulties in learning English vocabulary because the learning atmosphere is relaxed but still educational. Apart from that, playing Taboo with friends also helps overcome difficulties in learning vocabulary because you can gather together and discuss difficult words. Thus, playing Taboo is considered an effective way to overcome difficulties in learning English vocabulary by creating a focused, relaxed, and collaborative learning environment.

5. Discussion

This study presents valuable insights into the use of Taboo games in English language learning among students. The main findings show that most students felt that the Taboo game was useful in remembering new vocabulary and encouraging active participation in English learning. However, some students also assume that the Taboo game can cause stress, especially when they have difficulty guessing forbidden words. Despite this, most students still find the Taboo game a fun way to learn English and feel that it has increased their motivation to learn. Interviews with students showed similar responses, where they expressed a high level of enthusiasm and interest in the Taboo game as a learning tool. They stated that this game was challenging and fun, and helped them expand their knowledge of English interactively. Furthermore, students felt that playing Taboo with friends could enhance learning, because they could support each other and discuss during the game.

Using Taboo game cards can be an effective tool in a fun English learning process. With Taboo game cards during the learning process, students can become more active and enthusiastic. Taboo game cards also improve students' speaking skills, especially when students describe the characteristics of guessed understanding. Apart from that, this research also aims to determine students' perceptions of the Taboo game card design to support appropriate and effective product design. The focus of this research is product development that can help students learn English. The understanding content in this game card is adjusted to students' needs for analysis.

Taboo game cards are developed using 4-D models. The 4-D model is a learning media development model. The 4D development model consists of 4 main stages, namely: Define, Design, Development, and Disseminate. This research begins with the Define stage. Researchers analyzed student needs which were presented in the form of a questionnaire containing students' needs, deficiencies and desires. Then the researcher carried out an analysis by interviewing teachers. The final stage of the 4-D model is Disseminate. Before distributing student perception questionnaires to students, product trials were carried out first. During the product trial, the researcher was accompanied by the English teacher concerned so that later the teacher could immediately know how to use the Taboo game cards during teaching. The testing step, namely, first the researcher entered the class and then explained how to play using Taboo game cards to the students. Second, researchers divided students into several groups, these groups were divided randomly. Third, after all groups had joined their group members, the researcher asked each group to choose a group representative who would be the word explorer on the taboo card. And finally the game started, one by one the groups came forward to play. The group with the smallest number of points was given a punishment, the punishment was singing and saying vocabulary in English. At the end of the product trial, researchers asked students' perceptions of the product. Researchers interviewed students and also distributed questionnaires. After collecting student perceptions and suggestions from experts, researchers evaluate the product to become the final product. The product designed in this research has several similarities and differences from previous research products (Sadeghi, 2022).

According to the findings of student interviews, initial reactions to the Taboo game were lukewarm, but engagement levels increased significantly once the game commenced. Students found themselves more interested, although they occasionally struggled with unfamiliar English terms. The interviews confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that the Taboo game enhanced student interest in vocabulary acquisition, motivating them to compete, participate, be excited, and driven to learn the language (Nastiti, 2021). The repetitive nature of the game helped students improve their pronunciation by explaining prohibited terms repeatedly. Moreover, the Taboo game facilitated stronger peer relationships and improved English proficiency. Some educational institutions recognize the potential benefits of using games to enhance interpersonal skills and vocabulary, provided students are actively engaged with their classmates. Motivation is a key factor in learning, as highlighted by various educational theories. The Taboo game can be seen as an effort to boost student motivation and interest in learning. Students also perceive the Taboo game as an effective and enjoyable tool for mastering difficult vocabulary (Nastiti, 2021).

This research supports the idea that learning time can be efficiently utilized for other tasks, such as reading and recalling class materials. This approach aids in transferring vocabulary from short-term to long-term memory by creating strong connections between new lexical items and existing components in the mental lexicon (Schmitt, 2000). Enhanced vocabulary recall is a memory-improving strategy where students learn to associate new information with previously acquired knowledge. When information is presented in a way that complements or is strongly linked to what students already know, it is retained for longer periods

and can be easily retrieved through verbal or visual cues. Essentially, educators can use the Taboo game to connect new vocabulary to existing terms in students' long-term memories, facilitating more effective learning and retention.

Sarmila (2022) also developed non-electronic learning media in the form of card games that will be used for speaking skills, though they used a card game developed by Yulia called "Choose and Talk cards" while the researcher used "Taboo game cards." Samortin (2020) has the same goal as this research, namely designing a game card entitled "Development of the Talk or Dare Card Game for Learning Arabic Speaking Skills for Class V Students". In their game card products contain vocabulary, similar to research products. However, their game card products were developed for different subjects from the game cards developed by researchers, where their products were for Arabic subjects while the researchers' were for English. The weakness in this research lies in the product. Additionally, the interviews revealed that the gamified group perceived vocabulary as a crucial component of language learning. Students were motivated by competition, fun, and teamwork, though they encountered difficulties with certain words. This difficulty might stem from the random selection of words, which could have caused confusion. This finding aligns with the inherent nature of games, involving competition, teamwork, and fun.

This study provides an important contribution in understanding the effectiveness of the Taboo game in learning English vocabulary among students. Our findings are consistent with a number of previous studies that have investigated the use of game-based or gamification learning methods. For example, research by Siregar (2023), Ni'maturrohmah and Millah (2022), and Nguyen (2021) show that gamification does not produce significant differences in student achievement in terms of vocabulary mastery. Nevertheless, our findings show that the Taboo game was consistently considered enjoyable and beneficial by the majority of students, although a small proportion of them experienced stress related to the game (Sarwat, 2023). These results are in accordance with previous research which highlights the importance of interesting and interactive learning designs to increase student motivation in learning. Interviews with students also illustrate that the Taboo game can facilitate collaborative learning and stimulate students' critical thinking. This is in line with the findings of Azizah (2023) who highlight the role of games in triggering a learning process that involves competition, teamwork and fun.

Word games are widely believed to aid in vocabulary acquisition, benefiting learners in several ways. Firstly, games are effective in motivating language learners, particularly young learners aged 4 to 12. Eryilmaz demonstrated this in a study conducted in a Turkish primary school, where games created a motivating and enjoyable learning environment. Consequently, students participated more actively in classroom activities, leading to easier and more permanent language retention. Additionally, playing games provides students with opportunities for repetitive practice, akin to traditional drilling methods, but in a more enjoyable and communicative manner. This allows students to learn English within a fun and engaging context, fostering communicative practices. Furthermore, word games serve as effective tools for enhancing the ability to remember and infer meanings of new vocabulary. Studies have shown that word games offer ample opportunities for learners to understand and use new words, thereby enhancing their ability to remember and infer meanings, leading to improved communication skills. Moreover, word games, including word-search puzzles, have been found to provide adult learners with opportunities to encounter and discover new vocabulary independently, reinforcing previous skills without excessive teacher assistance. Studies have shown that word games effectively improve vocabulary learning and retention. In summary, word games, due to their engaging and interactive nature, play a crucial role in motivating learners, providing ample practice opportunities, and enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention in language learning contexts (Nguyen, 2021).

Studies consistently indicate the positive impact of using games as an instructional strategy in language teaching, particularly for vocabulary acquisition. However, not all word games prove equally effective in language learning contexts. The success of incorporating games into language teaching largely hinges on the teacher's selection of appropriate games. Despite the potential benefits, challenges exist in effectively integrating games into language instruction. Bafadal and Humaira (2019) encountered mixed results in their university-level language teaching endeavors, with some students exhibiting limited enthusiasm due to a mismatch between game content and their interests. This highlights the importance of aligning game selection with teaching objectives to ensure meaningful engagement. Moreover, an examination-focused orientation within language education poses another obstacle to the effective use of games. Participants in some studies prioritized exam outcomes over language usage opportunities provided by games, undermining their perceived value. Additionally, logistical constraints such as crowded classrooms and curriculum

demands hinder teachers from incorporating games into language classes. Furthermore, the casual and relaxed nature of games may be misconstrued as unproductive busywork by both teachers and students. Issues may arise when students work in pairs or groups, such as a tendency for students in monolingual groups to revert to their native language, limited engagement due to strategic competence deficits or shyness, and misunderstanding of task objectives (Stavy, 2019). In conclusion, while games offer promising benefits for language teaching, their effective implementation necessitates careful consideration of game selection, alignment with instructional goals, and mitigation of logistical and attitudinal barriers.

In this context, our research provides additional support for structured and interactive learning approaches in increasing students' motivation and achievement in English language learning. Further research could explore the factors that influence students' perceptions and experiences in using the Taboo game as well as effective learning design strategies to maximize its benefits in language learning contexts.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this research shows that the use of Taboo has a significant positive impact on English vocabulary learning among class VIII students at MTS Madrisatul Ikbar Tembung. Based on a qualitative descriptive approach, this research succeeded in describing students' perceptions of the application of the Taboo game in the learning process. Most students stated that this game helped them remember new vocabulary more easily and increased active participation in English learning. This is due to the fun and interactive nature of the game, which makes students more motivated to learn. Interviews with students revealed that they felt challenged and entertained by game mechanics that required them to explain words without using certain prohibited words, thereby encouraging creativity and critical thinking. Apart from that, the competitive element in the game also increases students' enthusiasm for learning, which encourages them to be more active in searching for and using new vocabulary. However, there are also some students who feel this game can cause stress, especially when they have difficulty guessing prohibited words. Nevertheless, overall, the Taboo game is considered an effective and enjoyable learning tool, which can increase students' motivation and confidence in using English. This research makes an important contribution to the development of interactive learning methods and shows that gamification approaches such as the Taboo game can be an effective strategy for improving students' vocabulary mastery and English skills.

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