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Journal of Education, Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching

BOOSTING VOCABULARY RETENTION THROUGH PLAY: THE USE OF SCATTERGORIES GAME IN STUDENTS AT GRADE VII

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Abstract

This research aims to find out how Scattergories Game increases and trains grade 7 students' memory on vocabulary and explore students' perception of using the Scattergories game in increasing and training student memory on vocabulary. This research was conducted at MTsS MIM Langsa during the 2024/2025 academic year used a quasi-experimental design and compared the results between the experimental group taught with the Scattergories game and the control group taught with a conventional approach. Data were collected through vocabulary pre-test and post-test to measure the improvement of skills, as well as interviews to understand students' perceptions of the game used. The results of the analysis showed a significant increase in post-test scores in the experimental group (average 66.6) compared to the control group (average 51.2), with an average difference of 21 points. Statistical tests using t-test resulted in a significance value ($p < 0.05$), which means the null hypothesis is rejected and the Scattergories game is proven to have a real effect. The learning effectiveness value measured by Cohen's d of 1.5 indicates a strong impact on improving students' vocabulary acquisition. In addition, most students gave positive responses to the use of the game. They considered Scattergories as a fun and challenging learning tool that helps them remember new vocabulary and improve their thinking speed. Overall, the findings of this study conclude that Scattergories game is very effective as an interactive and motivating method in learning English vocabulary.

Keywords: *Scattergories game, Vocabulary building, Memory training*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is part of learning English at school and is always studied throughout a person's life. Even though language consists of limited grammatical rules, people never run out of words to learn. Vocabulary plays an important role in language teaching and learning because students do not know many words to understand other people or express their thoughts. As stated by Wesseles (2011) vocabulary knowledge is key to English language learners' reading comprehension and can be improved through effective vocabulary instruction and research-based strategies.. Just studying language structures without knowing a lot of vocabulary will not greatly improve students' English proficiency. Because improving students' English language skills and vocabulary is a must. Therefore, second or foreign language learners will find it easier to learn a language if they have a rich understanding. Otherwise, students with limited comprehension will have difficulty speaking fluently, comprehending sentences, comprehending conversations, and communicating ideas in a foreign language.

Vocabulary is an essential component of language proficiency, and a diverse and extensive vocabulary can enable effective communication and facilitate understanding of spoken and written language. Building a strong vocabulary is an ongoing process that involves learning new words, understanding their meaning, and incorporating them into one's language use, as Wang (2021) states that teaching English vocabulary effectively requires the combination of context, relevant practice, and considering the age of the student. Reading, writing, and engaging in conversation are effective ways to expand and improve vocabulary. As stated by Wasik (2016) Six strategies to expand and improve vocabulary include reading, rereading, defining words explicitly, encouraging dialogue, retelling, using props, and engaging in post-reading activities. With these six strategies, it is hoped that students can easily understand in terms of memorizing new vocabulary taught by the teacher. These activities can also encourage students so that students do not only learn monotonously, such as listening and writing it down again, but students can hone their memory by repeating then retelling and memorizing the vocabulary they have just obtained.

Furthermore, as stated in the 2013 curriculum, the purpose of language skills for students is to help students communicate effectively. To communicate well and effectively, several elements are needed that students must have, one of which is vocabulary that they must understand and memorize. As stated by Alqahtani (2015), lexical knowledge is very important in communicating and mastering a second language, and a lack of vocabulary knowledge is a barrier to learning. Without a broad vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, students often fail to reach their potential and may be reluctant to take advantages of language learning opportunities in environment. For example: listening to the radio, listening to native speakers or using the language in other contexts, reading books, watching television, etc. Therefore, students cannot learn a language without acquiring vocabulary.

Although vocabulary is an important factor in learning any language, EFL learners face several challenges in vocabulary learning. Salam (2021) students face difficulties in pronouncing unique English sounds, spelling, memorizing long syllable-words, and understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words when learning English vocabularies. In other words, the learning carried out by existing teachers is still not effective and optimal in developing and training students' memory in learning vocabulary. As stated by Calderon, et al. (2011) Schools must address the language, literacy, and academic needs of English learners more effectively, focusing on quality instruction, comprehensive reform models, and professional development. Students still find many obstacles when they try to remember the vocabulary they have learned. Related to these problems, it is suggested that teachers use more interesting activities in teaching English so that English learning is more interesting and creates conditions that support students' vocabulary learning. Listyowati & Hidayat (2022) Game-based learning is suitable for improving the vocabulary of junior high school students, with more advantages than challenges.

There are many strategies or activities that can be used to learn a language. One activity that can be used is the Scattergories game. Scattergories is a board game first published by the Parker Brothers company in 1988, and has since been recognized as one of a variety of games that can be utilized in classroom learning activities, especially in developing students' vocabulary skills in general. Scattergories is a game played by mentioning the name of an object in a set according to the initial letter and time. With this game, teachers want to know how many words students can get in a short time and how they can remember the words and then try to describe what they wrote in English. Fauziah (2019) stated that using the Scattergories game can make it easier for students to remember and recall the vocabulary presented by the teacher. The use of Scattergories games for high school students can increase

the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary. In his research, PintuBatu (2021) said that teachers can use Scattergories games as a learning medium to make students want to memorize existing vocabulary. By using interesting activities, it is hoped that students can learn more and memorize vocabulary that can help them in learning English. Fun learning can increase student engagement and help them focus more. Interactive activities, educational games, and creative projects can make the subject matter more interesting. In addition, a positive and supportive learning environment also plays an important role in increasing student motivation. In this way, students not only learn more effectively, but also enjoy the learning process itself.

However, empirical studies examining the use of Scattergories game to improve vocabulary retention among junior high school students, particularly in Islamic secondary schools, remain limited. Thus, this research was conducted to find out does the Scattergories game increase student memory in vocabulary and to know student perception of Scattergories game in improving and practicing students vocabulary memory.

METHODS

The design of the study was quasi-experimental, and the researcher employed the quantitative approach. The researcher compared two factors in this study to see if there was any impact of the Scattergories game on students' vocabulary knowledge. Two classes were employed in this study design: the controlled class and the experimental class. The quasi-experimental design was an appropriate research method to use in this study because the two groups were compared. This research begins with the researcher giving pre-test to the students, then treatment in meeting 1, 2, 3, and ends with the researcher giving post-test.

In the implementation of this study, the researcher determined two classes that will be the main subjects in the data collection process, namely one experimental class and one control class, which are selected based on the quasi-experimental design approach as previously explained. In the control class, the learning process of English vocabulary was carried out without the help of game media, so that learning takes place conventionally. In contrast, in the experimental class, the researcher applied a different learning method, namely by using the Scattergories game as the main strategy in teaching vocabulary to students. The main objective of this research is to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of using Scattergories game in improving vocabulary acquisition of seventh grade students at MTs MIM Langsa during the 2024-2025 academic year. Through the comparison between the learning outcomes of the two classes, the researcher hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which the Scattergories game is able to make a positive contribution to the improvement of students' vocabulary competence in the context of English language learning at the junior high school level.

The research population consisted of all seventh grade students at MTs MIM Langsa during the 2024–2025 school years. There were 74 students in all, divided up into three different classes. There were between 24 and 25 students in each class. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to choose the sample for this investigation. It refers to the group chosen after giving it some thought, including an interview with the English teacher and an assessment of one's own judgment. Additionally, two seventh-grade classes from MTs MIM Langsa served as the study's sample; one served as the experimental class and the other as the control class. In the experiment, the controlled class was 7-2, and the experimental class was 7-1. Every class has twenty-five pupils. The classes were selected because, in the opinion of the school's English teacher, their English proficiency is on par with that of classes 7-3. Furthermore, those classes made sense as the subject of this study.

Research Instruments

1. Pre-Test and Post-Test

The researcher used instruments to gather data. A vocabulary test was the instrument the researcher used to gather the information. There are 30 questions on the test. Pre- and post-tests were included in this study's testing. Both the experimental group and the control group received pre- and post-tests. The pre-test was given prior to the treatments in order to assess the students' vocabulary before the actual treatments began. A post-test was carried out subsequent to the intervention. The right answer received a score of five (5), while the incorrect answer received a score of zero (0).

2. Interview

The researcher used interviews as secondary data to support this study. Interviews were conducted after the treatment. The purpose was to measure how well students learned vocabulary after using the Scattergories game as part of the treatment. In the experimental class, five students received it. In addition, analysis of validity and reliability items was conducted before the test was given to ensure the quality of the instrument. It showed that only 30 questions were acceptable to be used as pre- and post-test instruments.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The Scattergories games increase students memory in vocabulary

1. The Data Of Experimental class

Table 1. The students' score of Experimental class (using Scattergories game)

Students	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Gained Score
1	25	50	25
2	20	45	25
3	35	55	20
4	30	60	30
5	35	65	30
6	40	65	25
7	65	70	5
8	45	75	30
9	60	70	10
10	50	80	30
11	35	60	5
12	20	55	35
13	60	70	10
14	45	70	30
15	65	85	20
16	70	95	25
17	40	55	15
18	45	60	20
19	55	70	15
20	70	85	15
21	65	75	10
22	35	60	25
23	25	50	25
24	40	80	40
25	55	60	5
Σ	1130	1665	525
Mean	45.2	66.6	21

Based on the data listed in Table 1 which presents the results of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class, it is known that the lowest score obtained by students during the pre-test was 25, while the highest score reached 70, with the overall average student score at 45.2. After the treatment was given through the application of the Scattergories game, the post-test results showed a significant increase. The lowest score in the post-test was recorded at 45 and the highest score reached 95, with the overall average increasing to 66.6. In other words, there was a considerable jump in scores between the pre- and post-treatment results. After comparing the pre-test and post-test scores, an average difference of 21 points was obtained. This indicates that the average score of the students after the treatment is much higher than the average score before the intervention, which strengthens the assumption that the Scattergories game has a positive effect on improving students' vocabulary acquisition in the experimental class.

2. The data of Control Class

Table 2. The students' score control class (without Scattergories game)

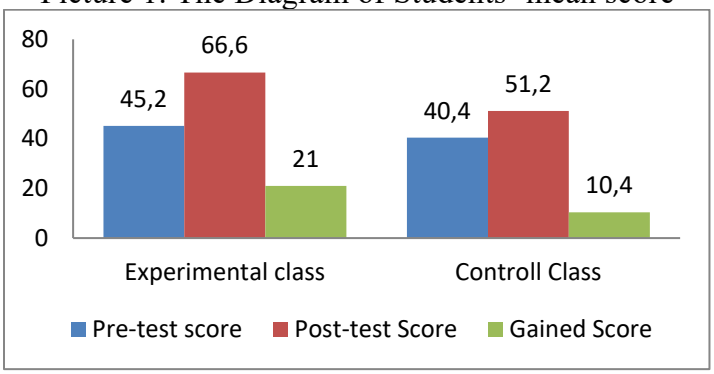
Students	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Gained Score	Students	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Gained Score
1	20	40	20	14	45	50	5
2	25	45	20	15	55	55	0
3	45	55	10	16	50	65	5
4	55	60	5	17	45	55	10
5	30	40	10	18	40	60	20
6	45	45	0	19	25	50	25
7	30	45	15	20	50	60	10
8	35	50	15	21	35	40	5
9	40	55	15	22	45	50	5
10	50	60	10	23	55	60	5
11	45	50	5	24	50	50	0
12	30	45	15	Σ	970	1230	250
13	25	45	20	Mean	40.4	51.2	10.4

Based on the table 2 above, it showed that the lowest score in pre-test was 20 and the highest score 55 with the average of pre-test score was 40.4. The lowest score in post-test was 45 and the highest was 65 with the average 51.2. Furthermore, after pre-test and post-test, the researcher found the average of the gained score was 10.4, it means there is an effect towards students vocabulary knowledge.

From the table above, it can be concluded that the mean score of post-test in experimental class (66.6) got higher score than in the controlled class (51.2). The experimental class is the

group that applied the Scattergories game in the vocabulary learning process, while the control class did not use the game. This shows that the Scattergories game had a positive impact on students' vocabulary comprehension, which can be proven through the diagram below:

Picture 1. The Diagram of Students' mean score



Data Analysis

In this section, the researcher analysed the data collected from pre-test and post-test from experimental and controlled class. Before analysing the data, the researcher conducted the normality test and homogeneity test. The test were used to know whether the data from both classes have been normally distributed or not and whether the samples were homogeneous or not. After that, the researcher used t-test to analyse the data and all the data were shown in statistical form. Moreover, the data were analysed and calculated by using IBM SPSS 25 version.

1. Normality Test

The normality test is carried out to determine whether the sample or data obtained has a distribution that matches the characteristics of a normal distribution. In this study, researchers used the Shapiro-Wilk method on IBM SPSS software version 25 to analyse the data. The following are the results of the normality test:

Table 3. Normality test result of pre-test and post-test in experimental class and control class.

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Kelas	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Hasil	Pretest A (Kontrol)	.207	24	.009	.921	24	.063
	Posttest A (Kontrol)	.152	24	.161	.933	24	.113
	Pretest B (Eksperimen)	.113	25	.200*	.955	25	.318
	Posttest B (Eksperimen)	.143	25	.200*	.971	25	.663

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the data above, it shows that the significance of pre-test normality in the experimental class is 0.318. Thus, the significance in the control class obtained 0.063 in the pre-test. This means shows that the data in both classes are normally distributed because the significance is more than α = 0.05 (0.318> 0.05; 0.063> 0.05).

In addition, the data obtained shows that the significance of normality for the post-test of the experimental class is 0.663 and for the control class is 0.113. These results indicate that the data is also normally distributed because both classes have a significance higher than α = 0.05 (0.663> 0.05; 0.113> 0.05).

2. Homogenity test

After conducting the normality test, the researcher continued by conducting a homogeneity test to determine whether the samples from each class had the same variance or not. To conduct this homogeneity test, researchers used Levene Statistic in the SPSS version 25 program. The description of the homogeneity test is explained below:

Table 4. Homogenity test of Pre-test in Experimental and controlled class

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	Based on Mean	3.417	1	47	.071
	Based on Median	2.673	1	47	.109
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.673	1	46.811	.109
	Based on trimmed mean	3.487	1	47	.068

According to the table it shows that the significant pre-test scores both of experimental and controlled class is 0.071. This indicates that the data in both classes are homogeneous because the significant value is higher than α = 0.05 (0.071> 0.05).

Table 5. Homogenity test of Post-test in Experimental and controlled classs

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Posttest	Based on Mean	6.248	1	47	.016
	Based on Median	5.936	1	47	.019

	Based on Median and with adjusted df	5.936	1	38.674	.020
	Based on trimmed mean	6.198	1	47	.016

In addition, when referring to the data listed in the table of post-test results of the two classes studied, it can be seen that the significance value obtained is 0.016. This value is below the predetermined significance limit, which is α = 0.05, or in other words 0.016 < 0.05. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that equal variances not assumed. There is significant difference between the variances of the two classes, so that the post-test results of the two groups of students can be said to be not homogeneous.

3. Test of Hypothesis

After the researcher gets the normal and uniformity test result, the researcher conducts a hypothetical test. This test is used to determine whether there is a significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental class and the control class. Hypothesis analysis can be seen as follows:

Ho: there is no significant effect of using Scattergories game on vocabulary knowledge of 7 grade students of MTs MIM Langsa in the 2024/2025 academic year

Ha: there is significant effect of using the Scattergories game on students' vocabulary knowledge in class 7 grade MTs MIM Langsa in the 2024/2025.

Table 6. Group Statistics

Group Statistics

	Kelas	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Nilai	Posttest_Kontrol	24	51.25	7.261	1.482
	Posttest_Eksperiment	25	66.60	12.393	2.479

Table 6 above shows the statistical result of the post-test hypothesis for the experimental and control classes. Class N is the number of samples for each class. Both classes consisted of 25 and 24 students involved in the study. Based on the table above, it is known that the students tested after the experimental class mean was 66,60, and that the post-test mean for the control class was 51,25. Therefore, after receiving the treatment, the was a difference of 15,35 points between the two classes, and the experimental class became a higher class. Moreover, the table can see as follows:

Table 7. Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means

									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Nilai	Equal variances assumed	6.248	.016	-5.261	47	.000	-15.350	2.917	-21.219	-9.481
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.315	39.025	.000	-15.350	2.888	-21.191	-9.509

Table 7 showed that from the independent sample test of post-test obtained p-value or (2-tailed) = 0,000. Based on the formula, sig (2-tailed) have to lower than 0,05. It means that the score (0,000) is lower than the determined significant value 0,05. From the result, it proved that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted because the p-value (0,000) is lower than sig α = 0.05 (5 %). In other words, there is a significant difference in the post-test and between experimental and controlled class. In conclusion, there is a significant effect of using Scattergories game towards students' vocabulary knowledge.

4. Effect Size Formulation

After all the statistical data had been collected, the researcher continued the analysis process by evaluating the effectiveness of the research. This step was carried out with the main purpose of assessing the importance of the research results in the context of learning, as well as to show the strength and significance of the data that had been obtained. In this analysis process, the researcher used Cohen's d formula as a measuring tool to interpret the magnitude of the standardized difference contained in the average results between the experimental and control groups. By using this approach, the researcher can present a more in-depth picture of the impact of the intervention applied, especially in the context of the application of the Scattergories game on students' vocabulary acquisition.

$$\sigma \text{ pooled} = \frac{\text{Standard Deviation 1 + Standars Deviation 2}}{2}$$

$$d = \frac{\text{Mean score of group A – Mean score of group b}}{\sigma \text{ pooled standard deviation}}$$

Mean score of group A (Experimental) = 66.60
Mean score of group B (Kontrol) = 51.25
Standard deviation of group A = 12.3
Standard deviation of group B = 7.2

1) $\sigma \text{ pooled} = \frac{12{,}39 + 7.26}{2} = 9.82$
2) $d = \frac{66{,}60 - 51.25}{9.82} = 1.5$

Meanwhile, the criteria of the data of the effect size level suggested by Cohan are interpreted as follows :
0 – 0.20 = weak effect
0.21 – 0.50 = modest effect

0.50 – 1.00 = moderate effect
>1.00 = strong effect

Based on the results of the calculations that have been carried out in this study, the effect size value is 1.5. When referring to the effect size classification criteria described by Cohen, this figure is included in the high or strong effect size category. In other words, this value indicates that the use of the Scattergories game has a significant and strong effect on improving students' vocabulary acquisition. The effect size (Cohen's d = 1.5) indicates a strong effect, suggesting that the Scattergories game had a substantial impact on students' vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, this finding strengthens the evidence that the Scattergories game is not only a fun learning medium, but also has a substantial impact in helping students improve their vocabulary competence in English language learning.

Experimental Class Students' Perception of Scattergories games in Improving vocabulary

Based on the data obtained through observations and interviews, it can be concluded that most students showed a positive attitude towards the use of Scattergories game in learning English vocabulary. This positive attitude is reflected in the high enthusiasm of the students during the game, as well as their responses which state that the activity feels fun, challenging, and makes it easier for them to remember new vocabulary. The majority of students revealed that the Scattergories game encouraged them to think more actively and accelerated the process of remembering the learned vocabulary. This finding shows that the game not only helps with passive comprehension of vocabulary, but also plays a role in practicing memory and improving thinking speed, especially in connecting words with relevant categories. This statement is supported by the result of interviews with several students, AK said that this game is fun because it can add new vocabulary that she doesn't know.

In addition, students feel more confident when engaging in games compared to traditional learning methods. The competitive yet fun atmosphere of the game encourages them to be more courageous in trying to use new vocabulary without fear of making mistakes. This condition also increases students' motivation in learning English, which is one of the key factors in the success of foreign language acquisition.

In terms of cooperation, the game also provides opportunities for students to interact and discuss with their group members, so that the process of sharing knowledge can strengthen vocabulary understanding. Some students even stated that they remembered the vocabulary that emerged in the group discussion more easily than the words delivered in writing by the teacher. NS said that the game is fun and exciting, especially being able to learn together with friends and practicing cohesiveness.

However, some students admitted that they had difficulty following the game, mainly due to time constraints or lack of understanding of some of the categories. Nonetheless, they also stated that with practice and repetition, they got used to it and enjoyed the game more over time. MGA said that this game made her learn new vocabulary and be able to make sentences with the vocabulary she found, although sometimes she felt unclear and did not understand when discussing the material.

Overall, students' perceptions of the Scattergories game were very positive. They perceived the game as an effective, fun and non-boring method in helping to improve English vocabulary acquisition. This finding is in line with activity-based learning theory, which states that direct involvement of students in meaningful activities can have a positive impact on learning processes and outcomes.

Discussion

The use of Scattergories game in English vocabulary learning for Grade 7 students was found to be effective in improving vocabulary acquisition and memory. This discussion reviews the results in line with the objectives as alfi (2021) said using the Scattergories board game effectively increased students' vocabulary mastery in the seventh grade. The game creates a fun and interesting learning atmosphere, encouraging students to actively participate. The game requires students to remember and use vocabulary in a limited time, supporting an active learning approach. This mental engagement makes information easier to remember. In addition, the requirement to think quickly stimulates short-term memory, while repetition during the game strengthens long-term memory.

The post-test results showed a significant increase in vocabulary compared to the pre-test, supporting the notion that the Scattergories game effectively expanded students' vocabulary knowledge. Students in the experimental class showed higher results than the control class, proving that the game-based approach was more successful than the conventional memorization or lecture method. These result are similar to the result obtained by Anggraini & Salmiah (2024) The Scattergories game has an effect on students' vocabulary mastery, with an average score of 25.36 on the post-test compared to 13.63 on the pre-test.

In addition, the grouping element of the game encourages students to classify vocabulary based on specific themes, such as animals, food, or occupations, thus strengthening meaning connections in the brain. As a result, students remember words more easily through contextual clues. This approach is in line with deep processing theory, which states that the more deeply information is processed - such as by categorizing words - the stronger the recall of that information. The finding is line with Deng & Yu (2014) who argued that deeper processing enhances memory retention.

The students also revealed that they felt more motivated and confident during English lessons. Learning through games is perceived as more relaxed and fun, thus having a positive impact on their attitude towards the learning process. This finding is in line with the results of previous studies such as Munawarah et al (2024) Games like Zepeto, board games, spinning wheel games, and guessing games can enhance EFL students' speaking and writing skills, promoting fluency, confidence, and motivation. which state that the use of games in language learning can increase students' engagement and their language skills.

However, there were some barriers to implementation. Some students initially have difficulty dealing with the competitive side of the game and time management becomes a challenge. Therefore, the teacher needs to explain the rules in detail and supervise the game. Despite the obstacles, with clear directions and repeated practice, students were able to adjust well.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the Scattergories game proved effective in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. The data shows that the average post-test score in the experimental class reached 66,6, higher than the control class which only obtained an average of 51,2. In addition, the result of statistical analysis using independent sample t-test showed that the significance value (Sig 2-tailed) of 0,000 was smaller than the significance level (α) of 0,05. Thus, since $p < \alpha$, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. To obtain a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the Scattergories game, the author calculated the effect size by referring to Cohen's d formula as an additional analysis tool. Based on the result of these calculations, it is known that the effect size value obtained is 1,5, which according to Cohen's criteria is include in the strong

category. This finding strengthens the previous result, which is that there is a significant difference between the post-test score of students in the experimental and control classes.

These findings suggest that English teachers are encouraged to integrate game-based activities such as Scattergories to foster active and engaging vocabulary learning. The result shows that Grade 7 students have a positive perception of the use of Scattergories game in vocabulary learning. They find the game fun, challenging, and helps them remember vocabulary more easily. The classroom atmosphere became more active and students were more motivated to learn. Although some students experienced difficulties due to limited time or unfamiliarity with the word categories, they claimed to be getting used to it after a few times playing. Overall, Scattergories was effective in improving students' memory and interest in English vocabulary. In other words, the use of the Scattergories game proved to make a significant contribution in improving students vocabulary mastery, especially in class VII students of MTsS MIM Langsa in the 2024/2025 academic year, who were the subjects in this study.

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