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BUILDING STUDENTS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY THROUGH DAILY WORD SHARING ACTIVITIES IN GRADE EIGHT AT SMP NEGERI 1 BALAI

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Abstract: Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of English language learning, yet many eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Balai struggle with limited vocabulary, which hinders their reading comprehension and communication skills. This study aims to improve students' English vocabulary mastery through the implementation of Daily Word Sharing activities. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design consisting of two cycles, conducted from August to October 2024. The participants were 25 students from class 8A. Data were collected using vocabulary tests (pre-test and post-tests), observation sheets, and field notes. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' vocabulary scores. The mean score increased from 45 in the pre-test (initial condition) to 65 in Cycle 1, and finally to 85 in Cycle 2. The success criteria, defined as a mean score of ≥75, were successfully achieved in the second cycle. Qualitative data from observations revealed that students became more active, engaged, and confident in using new words during the learning process. The study concludes that Daily Word Sharing is an effective strategy to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition by providing consistent exposure and active practice. Keywords**:** : vocabulary building, daily word sharing, classroom action research, eighth grade, English learning
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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the building block of language learning. Without a sufficient vocabulary, students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. As emphasized by linguist David Wilkins, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, vocabulary mastery is crucial for mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For Junior High School (SMP) students, a robust vocabulary is necessary to comprehend texts and communicate effectively in daily interactions.

However, observations conducted in Grade 8A at SMP Negeri 1 Balai revealed significant challenges in vocabulary acquisition. Students often struggled to understand simple English texts and were reluctant to speak due to a lack of words. Preliminary data showed that the students' vocabulary mastery was below the expected standard. The pre-test conducted before the research intervention resulted in a mean score of 45, which is far below the minimum passing grade (KKM) of 75. This low performance indicates an urgent need for effective teaching strategies to address the problem.

The root of the problem appeared to be the conventional teaching methods that relied heavily on rote memorization and translation, which students found monotonous and unengaging (Richards et al., 2016). To overcome this, the researcher proposed "Daily Word Sharing" as an alternative strategy. This method involves students actively sharing, explaining, and using new words in a daily routine, fostering a collaborative and consistent learning environment (Parshina et al., 2022).

In a recent study conducted in middle school education classes, incorporating a daily vocabulary activity not only improved learning and retention of targeted words compared to traditional methods, but also led students to perform significantly better than control groups on immediate and long-term tests (O'Connor et al., 2021) . Although generative models have the capacity to construct coherent contexts for vocabulary learning,

they may not always outperform traditional approaches in terms of memory and usage, suggesting the need for a balanced approach that incorporates both technology and traditional procedures (Peng et al., 2023). Likewise, Vocabulary Quest, an outdoor gamified exercise, showed that physical engagement and social connection through embodied learning dramatically improve vocabulary memory and motivation (Alias, 2025).

The primary objective of this research is to investigate whether Daily Word Sharing activities can improve the English vocabulary mastery of Grade 8 students at SMP Negeri 1 Balai. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) measure the improvement in students' vocabulary scores after the implementation of the strategy, and (2) describe the students' engagement during the learning process. The significance of this study lies in providing a practical, student-centered strategy for teachers to enhance vocabulary instruction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary acquisition is a complex process that involves not just knowing the meaning of a word, but also its form and use (Nation, 2015). According to Schmitt (2019), incidental learning alone is often insufficient for EFL learners; explicit instruction combined with active engagement is necessary for retention. Theories of vocabulary learning suggest that repetition and retrieval are key psychological processes. Words need to be encountered multiple times in various contexts to be transferred from short-term to long-term memory (Webb, 2020).

Daily Word Sharing is a student-centered activity where students take turns introducing new vocabulary to their peers. This method aligns with socio-constructivist theories where learning occurs through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). By explaining words to others, students engage in "generative processing," which deepens their own understanding. The "daily" aspect ensures consistent exposure, which is critical for language habit formation. Previous studies (e.g., Lestari, 2018; Hidayat, 2021) have shown that peer-teaching strategies and consistent daily practice significantly improve vocabulary retention and student motivation.

These three frameworks do not operate independently but rather work together synergistically. Social interaction creates opportunities for repetition; repetition consolidates the vocabulary knowledge that acquisition theory identifies as essential; and an explicit focus on vocabulary provides content for meaningful social interaction. This integration creates a powerful learning environment that addresses cognitive, social, affective, and linguistic dimensions of vocabulary development.

For educators, the synthesis presented in this report provides both theoretical justification and practical guidance for implementing daily word-sharing. The strategy is not simply a classroom activity but a theoretically grounded instructional approach that leverages established principles of learning and memory. By understanding how vocabulary acquisition, repetition, and socioconstructivist learning converge in daily word-sharing, teachers can implement the strategy more effectively and adapt it to their specific classroom contexts.

Future research should continue to explore the mechanisms underlying daily word-sharing and related peer-mediated vocabulary strategies. Longitudinal studies examining long-term retention, experimental studies comparing different implementation models, and qualitative research exploring student experiences would all

contribute to a deeper understanding of how these theoretical frameworks operate in practice. Nevertheless, the existing theoretical and empirical foundation provides strong support for daily word-sharing as an effective, evidence-based approach to vocabulary instruction in EFL contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The research consists of cyclical processes comprising four steps: Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. The study was conducted in two cycles to ensure the consistency of the improvement and to address any issues arising in the first cycle.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Balai from August to October 2024. The subjects of this research were 25 students of class 8A. This class was selected based on the initial observation indicating low vocabulary proficiency compared to other classes.

To collect the data, the researcher used the Vocabulary Test to be administered as a pre-test, Post-test 1, and Post-test 2 to measure vocabulary mastery. There were forty test items focused on nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives relevant to the Grade 8 Curriculum. Each item consisted of ten multiple-choice questions. The students were scored based on their ability to answer the multiple-choice test. In addition, the answers for the students' test would be measured by progress.

Observation sheets were used in monitoring students' activities and teacher performance during the learning process. The researcher used a type of cognitive observation sheet. Field notes were used to record specific events or behaviours in which not covered in the observation sheets.

The quantitative data (test scores) were analyzed using descriptive statistics to find the mean score and percentage of improvement (40%) for each cycle. The researcher analysed the observation sheet in cycle 1 and compared it to cycle 2 in order to look for an increase in positive student activities and a decrease in disengaged behaviours. To triangulate the data, the researcher crossed qualitative engagement findings with the vocabulary test scores. The qualitative data were analyzed to describe the classroom atmosphere and student engagement. The success criteria were established at a class mean score of ≥75.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis reveals a consistent improvement in students' vocabulary mastery from the preliminary study through Cycle 2. The initial condition of the students' vocabulary was poor. The mean score of the pre-test was 45. Out of 25 students, only 2 students (8%) passed the minimum passing grade (KKM). This confirmed the problem identification regarding low vocabulary mastery.

Most of the students appeared curious and observant about the new routine at the beginning of the Daily Word Sharing activity. But after the teacher wrote the target verbs on the whiteboard, without images or sentences, a few students in the back rows began to scratch their heads. They diligently wrote down the words, but they remained passive players.

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The collaborator noticed that most of the students were not familiar with the materials. Therefore, the issue made the teacher think about repeating the lesson by adding the media from the flash card to the word wall. Consequently, when the teacher asked the students to think of a new way to use the term 'run' a long quiet followed and students instantly looked up literal synonyms in their dictionaries.

After implementing the Daily Word Sharing activity in Cycle 1, there was a noticeable improvement. The mean score rose to 65. This represents a 44.4% improvement from the pre-test. However, the score was still below the target of 75. Observation data showed that while students were enthusiastic about the new method, the lack of visual context and interactivity limited retention for some learners.

The atmosphere was dramatically different from the previous cycle. The teacher taught the target nouns and adjectives through a colorful picture of a bustling market. Three kids appeared fast, pointed at the picture, and shouted out responses before they were called on. The vocabulary game that followed had a lot of enthusiasm. Students were smiling, pushing forward in their seats, and aggressively negotiating word definitions in English with their partners to win points. There were no students who appeared to be bored or disengaged.

With the improvements made in Cycle 2 (adding visual aids and games), the results improved significantly. The mean score reached 85. All students showed improvement, and 22 out of 25 students (88%) scored above the KKM. This score exceeded the success criteria of 75.

Table 1: *Comparison of Students' Vocabulary Scores across Stages*

Stage	Mean Score	Improvement (Points)	Percentage Increase
Pre-test	**45**	**-**	**-**
Cycle 1	**65**	**+20**	**44.4%**
Cycle 2	**85**	**+40 (from Pre-test)**	**88.9%**

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The results of this study clearly demonstrate that Daily Word Sharing activities are effective in building students' English vocabulary. The improvement from a mean score of 45 to 85 is substantial. Several factors contributed to this success.

First, frequency and repetition played a major role. As noted by Nation (2015), repeated exposure is essential. The "daily" nature of the activity ensured that students were constantly engaging with English words, preventing the forgetting curve from setting in too quickly.

Second, the student-centered approach increased engagement. In Cycle 2, when students used visual aids and games, they were not just passive recipients of knowledge but active creators. The peer-teaching aspect forced the presenters to understand the words deeply before explaining them to others, a concept supported by the "learning by teaching" effect.

Third, the contextualization in Cycle 2 proved vital. The use of pictures and sentences helped students understand the meaning of words without relying solely on translation. This aligns with Webb (2020), who emphasizes the importance of context in vocabulary depth.

The findings align with previous studies by Lestari (2018) and Hidayat (2021), confirming that interactive and consistent vocabulary strategies yield better results than traditional rote memorization. The classroom atmosphere also shifted from passive and bored to active and enthusiastic, indicating that the method improved not just cognitive outcomes but also affective engagement.



Figure 1. The teaching and learning process in class

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the Classroom Action Research conducted in Class 8A of SMP Negeri 1 Balai, it can be concluded that the implementation of Daily Word Sharing activities significantly improved students' English vocabulary mastery. The students' mean score increased from 45 in the pre-test to 65 in Cycle 1, and further to 85 in Cycle 2, successfully meeting the research success criteria.

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The method directly changed the classroom dynamics from passive to active learning for the pupils. The strategy also made the 25 students of Class 8A active in participating and communicate with each other through the Daily Word Sharing activities. Students did not passively listen to the teacher, but instead actively interacted with each other to communicate and process English words. The classroom atmosphere changed into a place that was recognized for student-centered interaction as a result of this collaborative environment.

The effect of the strategy was the highest when the change of the learning process took place at the second stage. The use of visual aids and gamification proved to be an important factor of both emotional and cognitive engagement. Students used visual aids to put the words in perspective, causing the abstract words comprehensible and hence easier to remember. Gamification added a play and healthy competitive component which in turn naturally enhanced student motivation and excitement.

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) has shown that the implementation of Daily Word Sharing activities has a significant influence on improving vocabulary mastery in Class 8A. However, there are certain inherent limitations which should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study was limited in that it had a small sample size of only 25 pupils from a single classroom. Since CAR focuses on the depth of intervention rather than its breadth, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the quantitative increases in test scores to broader student groups or different grade levels.

Secondly, the finding is quite confined to a specific classroom situation of SMP Negeri 1 Balai. The success of the intervention was strongly influenced by the specific factors of this particular context, such as the beginning baseline of low vocabulary competency of the class, the classroom dynamics and the teacher's individual instructional style. So, while the visual aids and gamified tactics were quite successful for these 25 learners, the same pedagogical prescription may give different results in a classroom with different baseline skills, different cultural backgrounds, or different access to resources.

Finally, an important disadvantage of this research design is that there is no comparison or control group. However, although all students in Class 8A were actively involved in the Planning, Acting, Observing and Reflecting cycles, the study did not include a control group of peers studying the same language in a traditional manner at the same time. Without a control group to account for characteristics like as natural maturation or exposure to language outside of the English session, it is difficult to say with any certainty that outside influences were responsible for the students' growth. However, the primary goal was met within the parameters of action

research: to stimulate short-term, place-based instructional change and to successfully raise the class mean above the predetermined success threshold.

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