



Learning English Vocabulary with Crossword Media for Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to determine whether Crossword media can improve the mastery of early childhood at an early childhood education institution toward English Vocabulary; and to find out the implementation of Crossword as a media in improving mastery of English Vocabulary at an early childhood education institution. This research is a Classroom Action Research which was conducted from March 2023 to April 2023 by using Crossword as the media. Crossword is able to improve the ability of early childhood in mastering English vocabulary optimally. This can be seen from the pre-test result of 85,77, post-test 1 in cycle one result of 83,85, and post-test 2 result in cycle two of 86,15. Therefore, it can be concluded that Crossword is an effective learning media to be used in improving early childhood English vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: *crossword; english vocabulary mastery; early childhood*

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Introduction

Language is a communication tool that plays an important role in life. Language allows a person to communicate with others, express themselves, express feelings, conveys ideas, information and ideas, and disseminate information. Language, according to Hurlock (Yuana, Muliani, & N, 2021) language includes every means of communication by inferring thoughts and feelings to convey meaning to others. In fact, because of the large number of written and spoken languages, language can act as the most effective and efficient tool in the world of education. It can be concluded that everyone needs a communicative language to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others. Especially in the era globalization, mastering foreign languages such as English is very important. The ability to speak English can be an added value. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language that should be learnt by students and it can be learnt from an early age starting from kindergarten to university level. In addition, many parents teach their children English from an early age. The goal is for the children to be skilled in English. According to Danarti (in Sasmita, 2022), learning a foreign language, especially English, is a must because of the increasingly globalized world that requires people to be proficient in English.

The English materials taught to early childhood are different from the materials taught at the elementary, Junior High, and High school levels. In early childhood, the materials introduced is basic English materials, such as introducing the alphabet, numbers, animals, body parts, fruit, family, et cetera. Therefore, an interesting strategy is needed so that learning English in early childhood becomes fun and not boring for them. According to Tarigan (in Adha, Desi, & Rahma, 2021), a person's skill in language is seen from the vocabulary he or she has. The more vocabulary one has, the more ideas one has in language. Therefore, it is very important to teach English vocabulary to children from an early age to increase their knowledge or understanding of English. Good mastery of English vocabulary has a very important and decisive role in learning English because vocabulary is related to the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). So, Vocabulary learning patterns using crossword puzzles can hone these four aspects.

Learning English vocabulary for young children requires persistence and patience. Teachers should use interesting learning media in order to conduct effective learning for early childhood through play. Through play activities, children can improve motor skills, cognitive skills, creativity, and language. As the opinion of Donan (Dewi & Puspitasri, 2021) who recommends that learning activities to recognize vocabulary be carried out from infancy. By choosing the right method, children do not feel forced. Games to support learning have a variety of forms including role-playing games, charades games, puzzle games, and other games. One of the effective media in learning English vocabulary is through games namely crossword puzzle games. According to (Sasmita, 2022) the advantages of this method are *mengajak peserta didik untuk belajar berdiskusi yang menyenangkan (Stimulating Discussion)*, *mengajak peserta didik untuk belajar kelompok (Colaborative Learning)*, *mengajak peserta didik untuk belajar dengan sebaya atau teman satu kelas (Peer Teaching)*, dan *mengajak peserta didik untuk belajar mandiri (Independent Learning)*. Crossword puzzles are a game that is recognized in all walks of life. Crossword is a language game that involves filling in boxes with letters so that the word can be read either vertically or horizontally. This game is expected to trigger their thinking power to fill the crossword correctly.

Some other studies that have been conducted and used game media to improve early childhood English vocabulary include *Kemampuan English Vocabulary Siswa Sd Di Desa Putukrejo Kabupaten Nganjuk* (Toyyibah & Fachruli Aulia, 2021); *Media Pembelajaran Diy: Membuat Flash Card Dan Teka-Teki Silang Mandiri* (Aribowo, 2017); *Penggunaan Working With Words Sebagai Strategi Untuk Meningkatkan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris* (Pilongo, 2021); and *Crossword Puzzle Learning Media to Improve Indonesian Vocabulary Mastery for Grade 2 Elementary School Students* (Ramadahnia & Adnan, 2022). From some of the studies above, it can be seen that game media has been widely used in research related to English language learning. However, each of them certainly has a distinctiveness in the results of the research. This study also uses game media in research related to English language learning. However, the difference between this study and the above studies is that the crossword media used in this study is applied to kindergarten students and it turns out that it can improve the mastery of vocabulary of early childhood. In addition, the crossword media used is based on local wisdom. The results obtained also show that students' mastery of English vocabulary increases by using crossword media based on local wisdom. Strategies that can be carried out in the early childhood English process by learning while playing is by using interesting game media so that learning becomes more fun.

Methodology

This research is a Classroom Action Research. Classroom action research is one of the important teacher tasks to be carried out in parallel with learning management to develop teachers and students systematically (Meesuk, P., Sramoon, B., & Wongrugsa, A, 2020). In this case, action research is a systematic and dynamic research which includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This is in line with Arikunto, et al (Sasmita, 2022), classroom action

research (PTK) is action research which in its implementation is in the form of a repetitive cycle in which there are four main stages of activity namely planning, action, observation, and reflection (**Figure 1**).

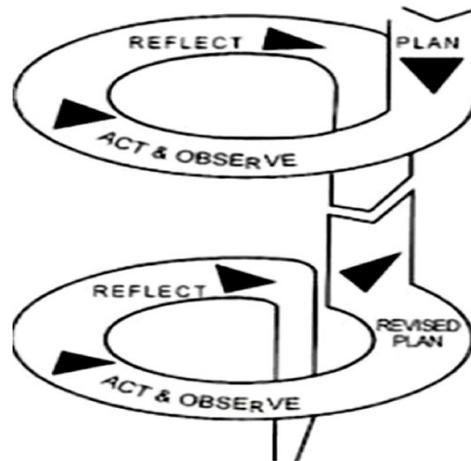


Figure 1. Four steps in Classroom Action Research by Kemmish and McTaggart (in Burns, 2009)

In action research, it is also necessary to adjust educators as parties who involve themselves together with researcher in research to achieve the goal of understanding the teaching and learning process in the classroom and to bring better improvements in classroom learning process. The subject of the research is early childhood in class B TK Pembina Surakarta with a total of 13 students and with an age of 6-7 years old. This research was conducted from March 2023 until April 2023. Data collection techniques were through tests, observations, and interviews. While data analysis techniques were carried out through qualitative data analysis and quantitative data analysis. To analyze qualitative data, an interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2010) was used, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification or drawing conclusions (**Figure 2**).

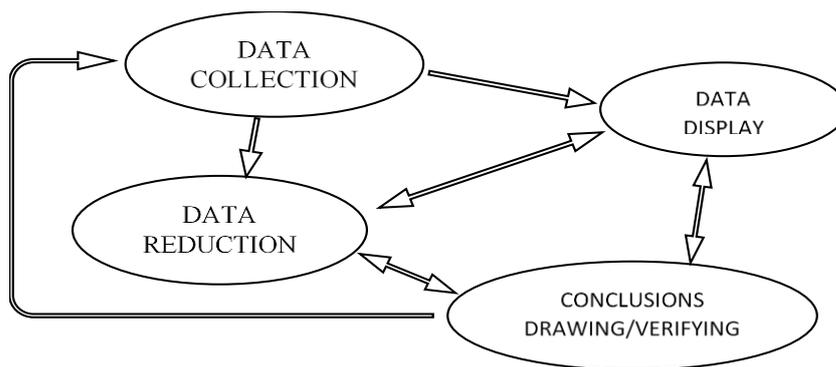


Figure 2. Diagram Component of data Analysis by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2019)

Result and Discussion

Result

The implementation of the use of Crossword media could improve the mastery of English vocabulary. This could be seen from the research result which showed the average scores of pretest post-test 1, and post-test 2, as shown in table 1.

Tabel 1. Comparison between Averages

	Pre test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
Total Value	1115	1090	1120
Average Value	85.77	83.85	86.15

From **table 1**. It could be explained that there was an increase in early childhood vocabulary after the implementation of Crossword media (pretest) but there was a decrease after the action in cycle 1 (post-test 1) and an increase in cycle 2 (post-test 2). Before the action using Crossword media, a pretest was held first to see the children's ability to speak English, especially related to vocabulary. The average score of the pretest was 85.77. However, the score decreased in cycle 1 to 83.85 after the implementation of Crossword media. In cycle 2, there was an increase in the average score from the pretest and post-test 1 which was 86.15. The assessment is also adjusted to the 2013 curriculum assessment guidelines which state that 1) BB means Not Developing; 2) MB means Starting to Develop; 3) BSH means Not as Expected; 4) BSB means Developing Very Well. The result of this study indicated that early childhood students at TK Pembina fulfill the classification of Developing Very Well (BSB).

From the pretest result presented in **table 2**, it could be concluded that there were no children who scored below 60 in the pre-cycle activity process. As for those who obtained scores in the 80-85 range were 5 children while those who obtained scores 86-89 were 6 children. The highest score achieved by children was 90 by two children. Although in this pretest there were 10 students who were in the BSB classification, there were still 3 children who were in the BSH classification, and in the MB and BB classifications there were none or empty. The assessment classification based on the 2013 curriculum assessment guidelines in the pretest is shown in **table 3**.

Table 2. Pretest Result

No	Name	Star	Value	Description
1	F	5	86	BSB
2	R	5	86	BSB
3	R	4	82	BSH
4	D	5	88	BSB
5	G	4	80	BSH
6	D	5	88	BSB
7	E	5	86	BSB
8	N	5	89	BSB
9	I	4	80	BSH
10	A	5	90	BSB
11	V	4	85	BSB
12	A	5	90	BSB
13	A	4	85	BSB
TOTAL SCORES			1115	
AVERAGE VALUE			85.77	

Table 3. Post-Test 1 Result

No	Name	Star	Value	Description
1	F	3	72	BSH
2	R	3	70	BSH
3	R	3	79	BSH
4	D	5	89	BSB
5	G	4	83	BSH
6	D	5	90	BSB
7	E	5	89	BSB
8	N	4	84	BSH
9	I	5	86	BSB
10	A	4	84	BSH
11	V	4	84	BSH
12	A	5	90	BSB
13	A	5	90	BSB
TOTAL SCORES			1090	
AVERAGE VALUE			83.85	

Table 4. Classification of Assessment Based On the 2013 Curriculum Assessment Guidelines

No	Classification	Value	Number of Students
1	BSB (<i>Berkembang Sangat Baik</i>)	85-100	10
2	BSH (<i>Berkembang Sesuai Harapan</i>)	60-84	3
3	MB (<i>Mulai Berkembang</i>)	40-59	0
4	BB (<i>Belum Berkembang</i>)	0-39	0
Total Number of Students			13

From the result of post-test 1 (**table 4**) it could be concluded that there were 3 children who obtained scores below 80 (range 70-79) in post-test 1 activities. While children who obtained the 80-85 range were 4 children and those who obtained scores in the 86-89 range were 3 children. The highest score achieved by children was 90 points and the lowest score was 70 points. In this cycle the average value of post-test 1 (83.85) was lower than the average pretest (85.77)

Table 5. Classification of Assessment Based On the 2013 Curriculum Assessment Guidelines

No	Classification	Value	Number of Students
1	BSB (<i>Berkembang Sangat Baik</i>)	85-100	6
2	BSH (<i>Berkembang Sesuai Harapan</i>)	60-84	7
3	MB (<i>Mulai Berkembang</i>)	40-59	0
4	BB (<i>Belum Berkembang</i>)	0-39	0
Total Number of Students			13

In post-test 1 in this cycle (**table 5**) there were 7 children who were in the BSH classification, 6 children were in the BSB classification, and there were no MB or BB classifications. Most of the children were able to put dots on each letter given by the researcher. In terms of pronouncing English words, most children were correct in pronouncing them. In addition, they were able to remember well the meaning of words in English and Indonesian because they have previously learned the vocabulary using Crossword media. The researcher also gave instructions if there were children who found it difficult or confused to thicken the letters. Although the average score of post-test 1 was lower than pretest score and also the number of BSB classification was less but most of children were still very enthusiastic about learning English vocabulary using Crossword media and the researcher continued the learning activities in cycle 2 by providing better reinforcement of English vocabulary and how to pronounce it in proper English to children through Crossword media. In addition, the researcher considered that the average score obtained was still considered unsatisfactory because it was lower than the pretest, so further action was taken in cycle 2 by continuing to use Crossword media in the English language learning process.

In this post-test 2 in cycle 2 (**table 6**) there were 9 children who were in the BSB classification, 4 children in the BSH classification, and in the MB and BB classification there were none or empty. Most of the children were able to thicken letters, guess, and pronounce English words that referred to the pictures given by the researcher better. In cycle 2, there was also an increase in the average score from the pretest and post-test 1 which was 86.15 (**table 7**). In addition, they were increasingly able to remember the meaning of words in English and Indonesian.

Table 6. Classification of Assessment Based On the 2013 Curriculum Assessment Guidelines

No	Classification	Value	Number of Students
1	BSB (<i>Berkembang Sangat Baik</i>)	85-100	9
2	BSH (<i>Berkembang Sesuai Harapan</i>)	60-84	4
3	MB (<i>Mulai Berkembang</i>)	40-59	0
4	BB (<i>Belum Berkembang</i>)	0-39	0
Total Number of Students			13

Table 7. Post-test 2 Result

No	Name	Star	Value	Description
1	F	5	89	BSB
2	R	3	79	BSH
3	R	4	83	BSH
4	D	5	90	BSB
5	G	4	84	BSH
6	D	5	87	BSB
7	E	5	87	BSB
8	N	5	90	BSB
9	I	5	89	BSB
10	A	5	89	BSB
11	V	3	79	BSH
12	A	4	85	BSB
13	A	5	89	BSB
TOTAL SCORES			1120	
AVERAGE VALUE			86.15	

Discussion

The implementation of Crossword media in learning English vocabulary at TK Pembina Surakarta was implemented in pre-cycle, cycle 1 and cycle 2. In the pre-cycle, the researcher gathered the children aged between 5-6 years old totaling 13 students in the classroom. The researcher asked simple questions about part of body in English according to the material and media used by the previous teacher by singing. This was done to find out the children’s initial level of understanding of their vocabulary mastery before the action was taken. The implementation of crossword media in this study has been carried out in the pre-cycle with simple material namely animals by thickening letters of body members in English. The crossword used in this study both for pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2 were about the theme of part of body, fruits, and animals (Figure 3, Figure 4 dan Figure 5).

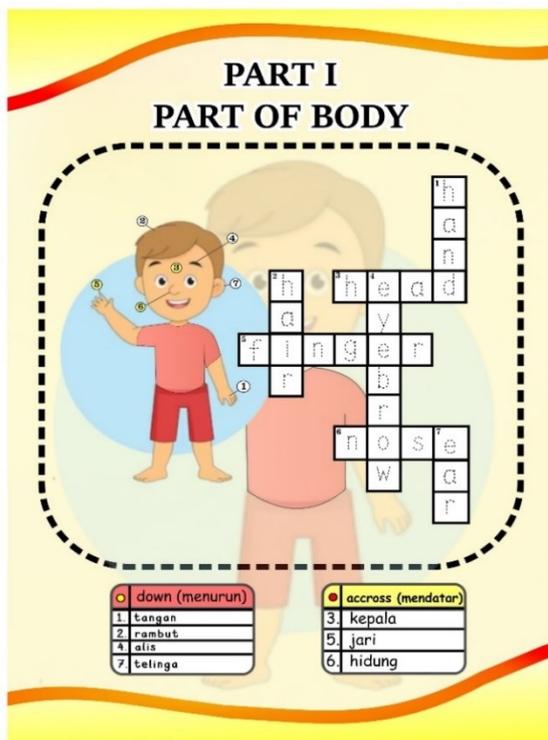


Figure 1. Crossword of Part of body

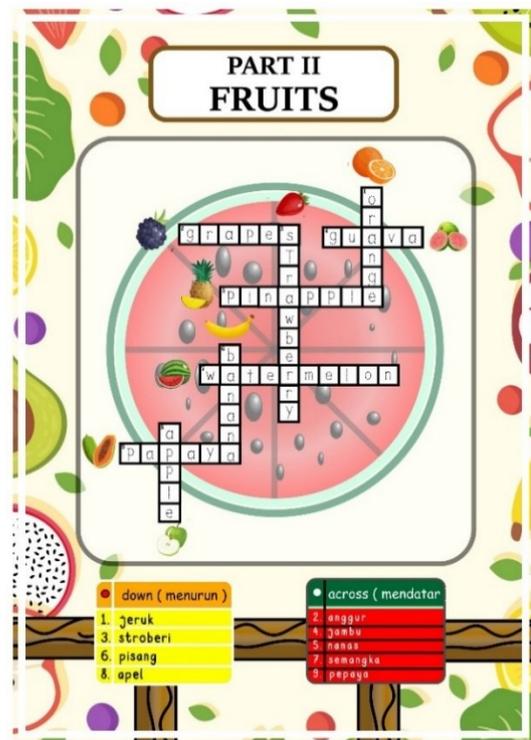


Figure 2. Crossword of Fruits



Figure 3. Crossword of Animals

Crossword media and the themes used in this study was made by the researcher and then reproduced. Then the material was given to class B children. Next, the researcher demonstrated how to work and thicken the letters on the Crossword media. After that, the children were given time to thicken the letters on the letters on the crossword sheet. Then next, if the children have finished working on the sheet, it could be collected back. After that, the researcher asked questions related to vocabulary using Indonesian and the children together answered them with English vocabulary.

After implementing crossword media in each cycle, the researcher conducted post-test 1 and post-test 2 activities related to the mastery of English vocabulary in class B. In the first cycle, the researcher conducted the test after the children obtained the material related to English vocabulary with the theme of Fruits by singing and using crossword. So, crossword media was used in the process of learning English vocabulary. So that, it attracted most of children's interest to follow the learning with pleasure and made it easier for them to understand the meaning of the words in English and Indonesian. As for the test, the researcher gave a crossword sheet according to the material and was given to children and they were asked to bold the letters and pronounce them together in English.

In cycle 2, the researcher provided material with the theme of Animals. In this activity, the researcher invited children to be directly involved in the learning of English vocabulary. The researcher distributed crossword sheets to the children. They actively answered the names of animals mentioned by the researcher in English. And occasionally, the researcher gave clues that made it easier for them to answer. In this cycle 2, the children were more active in learning. Their ability to pronounce words in English was also getting better. After the activities in cycle 2 were over, the researcher conducted a post-test 2 to test their level of ability in vocabulary mastery. The test material was related to the theme of animals. The test material was given by the researcher to the children in the form of interesting picture and dot letters that had not been thickened and they were asked to mark the pictures and pronounced them in English.

The result showed positive changes in the implementation of crossword media because in this case the children became more excited, enthusiastic, active, and creative in responding to the learning process, as well as confident in learning English vocabulary and pronunciation.

This resulted in more conducive, fun, and effective classroom conditions. The implementation of crossword media has also improved their mastery of English vocabulary and pronunciation. Before the implementation of crossword media, they learnt English vocabulary with existing media while singing and it made them bored, less motivated, and less enthusiastic. This also had an impact on the unsatisfactory results obtained in the vocabulary learning media. The use of Crossword media can be used as an effective English vocabulary learning media especially in TK Pembina Surakarta because crossword media is an interesting and exciting media for all ages. When it is used for early childhood, such in TK Pembina Surakarta, it is enough to adjust the material to their abilities and their ages. Crossword media is also widely used in research conducted by several researchers. However, in their research, crossword was applied to students in elementary school and not in early childhood education. Such as the scientific article written by Buasim (2008) with the title 'Meningkatkan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Siswa SD' which was the result of research in class 4 SDN Tegal Parang 06 Pagi; Adha, A, et al (2021) with the title 'Pelatihan Strategi Meningkatkan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Menggunakan Crossword Puzzle Pada Siswa SDN 20 Nan Sabaris Pariaman' which was the result of research in SDN 20 Sabaris Pariaman; and Ramadhania & Adnan (2022) with the title 'Crossword Puzzle Learning Media to Improve Indonesian Vocabulary Mastery for Grade 2 Elementary School Students' which was the research result in class 2 SDN Pulogebang 11.

All of these articles showed the effectiveness of Crossword implementation in English vocabulary learning in elementary school. This can also be equated with the result of research at TK Pembina Surakarta where the implementation of the use of crossword media in kindergarten can be implemented well and effectively. It was also able to improve children's vocabulary mastery after early childhood. Therefore, the use of crossword media can also be applied to early childhood and not only to elementary school students. It needs to be adjusted to the characteristics of early childhood and the material that the teacher wants to convey. The increase in motivation of early childhood in TK Pembina Surakarta during the teaching and learning process also contributed positively. They became more active and enthusiastic in the learning process. Teaching vocabulary through crossword media can reduce boredom and also increase children's participation, activity, and interaction in the learning process while playing.

Conclusion

Crossword media is one of the alternative learning media that can be implemented in the process of learning English vocabulary especially in kindergarten because it can improve early childhood vocabulary mastery. Engagement and interaction between young children can also increase with enthusiasm during learning. Teachers can use crossword media to introduce English to children against the use of learning media that is always the same and less varied.

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