

"THE USE OF PUZZLE MEDIA IN IMAGINATIVE STORY MATERIALS TO ENHANCE EIGHTH GRADE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MASTERY OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY"

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to ascertain how well eighth-grade junior high school students' English vocabulary may be improved through the use of riddles in imaginative stories. More creative, engaging, and entertaining learning materials are required since pupils' poor vocabulary knowledge is a significant issue in English language instruction. Two cycles of classroom action research (CAR) comprising the phases of preparation, action, observation, and reflection were carried out using the Kemmis and Taggart paradigm. During cycle I, students used puzzle media to identify and comprehend new vocabulary within the framework of creative narratives. The average score increased from 60 on the pre-test to 70 on the post-test in cycle I, according to the results. The average score on the post-test in cycle II rose to 80 after enhancements were made by offering vocabulary aids and word usage examples. Puzzles were able to boost student interest, engagement, and activity in the learning process in addition to raising scores, according to observations. As a result, puzzles have been shown to be useful in fostering a more engaging and cooperative learning environment while also assisting students in understanding terminology more contextually.

Keywords: *Media Puzzles, English Vocabulary, Imaginative Stories, Interactive Learning, Classroom Action Research.*

INTRODUCTION

The swift advancement of development has compelled individuals to enhance their skills, particularly in the English language. English serves as a global language that is crucial in numerous aspects of life. Acquiring English skills during junior high school comes with its own set of difficulties. As reported by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, the English proficiency of junior high school students remains quite low, with an average national exam (UN) score of merely 65 out of 100 (Kemendikbud, 2020). Having a good command of English is a fundamental skill that students need to keep up with advancements in science and technology.

This is crucial for kids to develop critical thinking abilities, communication skills, and preparation for academic challenges at the next level of schooling, particularly at the junior high school level. A significant reason for poor English proficiency is the lack of diverse teaching methods. Many educators continue to rely on traditional approaches that emphasize grammar and vocabulary, often failing to engage students actively, which indicates that students who learn through interactive and enjoyable techniques are likely to understand English more effectively. (Simatupang & Tanjung, 2025)

Vocabulary is an essential part of language proficiency and serves as the basis for effective speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. (Puzzle, 2021) Mastering vocabulary refers to the ability to effectively employ words in both writing and speaking. Additionally, grasping English vocabulary can be quite challenging without focused study, and on the other hand, possessing good grammar but lacking an extensive vocabulary makes it difficult for a piece of writing to be comprehensively understood. A significant challenge

in mastering vocabulary stems from insufficient practice in applying words within real-life situations. Students frequently learn vocabulary in isolation, failing to comprehend how to incorporate those words into contextually relevant sentences. (Ambarita et al., 2025)

Repetitive teaching approaches can obstruct vocabulary growth. Numerous educators continue to employ methods centered around memorization, leading students to experience boredom and lack of motivation in their learning, menurut (Ali et al., 2025), Learning activities that mainly consist of lectures (one-directional communication) and lack interaction will typically lead students to feel disengaged and less participatory in the educational experience. Penelitian oleh 33 (Pendidikan et al., 2025) This indicates that utilizing creative teaching materials can boost students' engagement and facilitate their comprehension of new vocabulary. Hence, it is essential to discover more engaging approaches for vocabulary instruction and learning resources.

The advancement of innovation in education is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Due to swift technological progress, teachers must adjust their teaching strategies and resources to meet the needs of their students. Menurut penelitian (Siswa et al., 2025), The incorporation of creative learning tools can boost students' motivation and involvement in their educational journey. Utilizing diverse learning media can enhance students' comprehension of the subject matter. When teaching English, appealing media can spark greater interest in students for acquiring vocabulary and grammar.

According to (1, 2, 1,2, 2025), The incorporation of learning media can aid students in grasping the content more readily, enhancing the effectiveness of their learning experience. Furthermore, advancements in learning media can also support students in cultivating their critical and creative thinking abilities. Utilizing media can ignite imagination and creativity, encouraging students to engage more actively in the educational process. The usage of interactive media has emerged as one way to enhance the quality of the learning process and student results in response to the need for innovation in education. Puzzle media, which offers educational gaming activities like word arrangement, word search, and visual puzzles so that kids learn while having fun, is one kind of media that is seen to be beneficial.

One type of educational media that can aid in achieving this objective is puzzle media. Games like word puzzles, crossword puzzles, or similar activities can enhance students' vocabulary while engaging them in enjoyable tasks. Research indicates that (Sd et al., 2025), A word search puzzle is a game that displays a collection of letters in which players need to find specific words. One benefit of this type of puzzle is that it enables students to engage in learning through play. Sitiawati et al. (2024) (Ipas, 2025) This method has the potential to greatly enhance both motivation and comprehension of concepts.

According to Erviana (2024) dan Nur aini (2024) The utilization of digital media, such as puzzles and interactive posters, demonstrates its contribution to enhancing students' creativity and critical thinking abilities. Consequently, integrating puzzle media in English instruction is highly pertinent for elevating the overall quality of education. Therefore, puzzle media can serve as an effective alternative to enhance vocabulary mastery among junior high school students. Implementing this media in English language learning is anticipated to positively influence student motivation, engagement, and academic performance, particularly with regard to imaginative content. (Belajar et al., 2025)

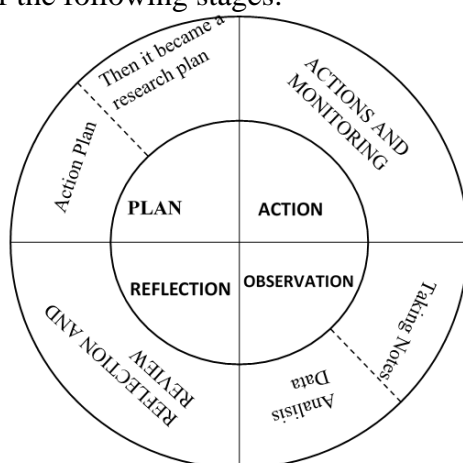
Creative content plays a crucial role in junior high school students' English language acquisition. Imaginative narratives not only assist learners in grasping the structure of the language but also expand their vocabulary. Furthermore, incorporating puzzles can boost

students' creativity in crafting imaginative tales. According to (Sd et al., 2025), Research indicates that students engaged in creative learning are often better at generating high-quality work. Puzzle media can foster an enjoyable learning environment. Incorporating game elements into education can enhance students' motivation to learn and encourage them to participate actively in activities. According to (Agustina, n.d.), Learners in a welcoming environment often achieve more favorable academic results. Thus, incorporating puzzles into the teaching of creative stories can foster a supportive learning atmosphere.

Considering the background and discussions outlined previously, the primary research question in this study is: “In what ways can incorporating puzzle media within imaginative story materials enhance the English vocabulary proficiency of eighth-grade junior high school students?” This research question serves as the foundation for investigating the correlation between the implementation of puzzle media and the enhancement of students' vocabulary skills in the realm of English language education..

METHOD

The research methodology implemented in this investigation was formulated by Kemmis and Taggart. The aim of this study was to utilize a puzzle-oriented learning approach and monitor the improvements in students' mastery of English vocabulary. (Anshar et al., 2025) according to (Kirana & Siswanto, 2025) Classroom action research (CAR) typically consists of the following stages:



1. Educators create learning activities that incorporate puzzles. They design these puzzles with new vocabulary linked to the imaginative tales being explored. Furthermore, instructors also develop observation forms to capture student involvement and reactions throughout the learning process.
2. A method where instructors lead classes that incorporate puzzles. Learners are grouped into smaller teams to solve puzzles and engage in discussions about the vocabulary they come across. As noted by (Ali et al., 2025), interactive multimedia facilitates adaptable learning that can cater to the diverse learning preferences of students.
3. The observation phase occurs at the same time as the Action phase. Educators monitor and document student interactions, engagement levels, and comprehension of new vocabulary. The information gathered during this observation will serve as the foundation for the reflection phase.
4. At this point, educators assess the data and determine how successfully puzzle media enhances students' vocabulary acquisition. If students are identified as having challenges, teachers can develop remedial strategies for the following cycle.

The next cycle will focus on enhancing elements that were not successful in the initial

cycle. For instance, if students struggle with specific vocabulary, educators can include clarifications or provide examples of how that vocabulary is used in sentences. Through ongoing refinement, it is anticipated that learning outcomes will improve with every cycle.(Novita et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings show that eighth-grade pupils' English vocabulary greatly increases when they use puzzle media. The majority of pupils were unable to comprehend or apply fundamental terminology in the context of imaginative stories, according to the researcher's average score of 60 on the pre-test. At this point, pupils tended to just identify words on their own without comprehending how they were used in sentences or their context. The pupils' errors when asked to create short stories or match words with matching pictures demonstrated this.

The average score increased to 70 with the use of puzzle media in cycle I. This rise indicates that pupils' language abilities started to improve as a result of the puzzle medium. The puzzle media made it easier for kids to comprehend terminology by showing them the connections between words, visuals, and the story's context. Nevertheless, cycle I's rise fell short of the researcher's goal. Some students continued to struggle, particularly when it came to swiftly solving the puzzles and determining the meaning of certain terminology. Low-ability students took longer to do the tasks, seemed hesitant, and lacked confidence. Additionally, several students continued to be inactive and did not contribute enough, making group discussions subpar.

As cycle II began, the researchers added a number of enhancements, such as including a glossary of terms, examples of how words are used in phrases, and more precise puzzle assembly instructions. This supplementary approach sought to lower students' obstacles to comprehending word meanings and boost their participation in group projects. With an average score of 80, the results demonstrated a more notable improvement. At this point, children are more engaged, capable of working well in groups, and able to create creative stories using new language. This enhancement demonstrates that puzzle-based learning is successful in assisting students in comprehending word meanings, the context in which they are used, and retaining vocabulary for extended periods of time.

The following table shows the development of student scores at each stage of the study:

Research Stage	Average Score	Description
Pre-test	60	Low initial ability
Post-test Siklus I	70	Starting to increase but not yet at maximum capacity
Post-test Siklus II	80	Significant improvement after repair

The table displays how student scores changed throughout the course of the study:

- Pre-test (60): demonstrates pupils' poor English skills prior to using puzzle media.
- Post-test cycle I (70): demonstrates an improvement in ability following the first cycle's use of puzzle media, while the outcomes are still subpar.
- Cycle II post-test (80): demonstrates an improvement in ability following modifications to the learning process (e.g., offering vocabulary instruction and instances of word usage in sentences).

Puzzle media can boost student involvement, according to observations made during the learning process. Students started to assemble puzzles with passion in cycle I, although

others still seemed apprehensive and unconfident. As cycle II began, kids were considerably more engaged, capable of group discussions, and able to create inventive stories using new terminology. These results are consistent with (Akyuna et al., 2026) study, which claims that interactive media might boost students' motivation and engagement in the classroom.

Students provided good feedback on the utilization of puzzle media in addition to boosting their scores. They reported that learning was less tedious, more enjoyable, and difficult. Additionally, puzzle media helped students comprehend visual vocabulary, the context of stories, and tasks like organizing picture and word pieces. This demonstrates that puzzles foster a more favorable and cooperative learning environment in addition to enhancing cognitive abilities. (Abdullah, 2024)

This study demonstrates that the use of puzzles improves students' social and effective skills in addition to their cognitive abilities. The environment in the classroom becomes more favorable, engaging, and cooperative. This is due to the fact that pupils actively participate in the completion of the work. Puzzles can therefore be considered a useful learning tool for boosting motivation to learn, improving knowledge of the subject matter, and promoting active student participation throughout the learning process.

However, the investigation encountered a number of difficulties. Low-ability students typically needed more help and took longer to finish the tasks. In order for pupils to follow the course effectively, teachers have to provide supporting tactics like tiny glossaries or sample sentences. In terms of comprehension, contextual usage, and learning motivation, puzzles can be a highly useful tool for enhancing English vocabulary acquisition..(Metode et al., n.d.).

CONCLUSION

The study's findings show that eighth-grade students' English vocabulary can be improved through the use of puzzle media in creative narratives. A comparison of test results from each cycle shows how pupils' abilities have continually improved. The students' initial talents were still low, as seen by their average pre-test score of 60. The average score rose to 70 after the puzzle media was used in cycle I, but it fell short of the learning objective since some students were still having trouble comprehending word meanings and applying them to the story's context. With an average score of 80, learning improvements in cycle II brought about by the use of a dictionary, example sentences, and more organized instructions produced a notable increase.

Additionally, observations made throughout the learning process support these conclusions. Students demonstrated greater drive, engagement, teamwork, and self-assurance while utilizing new terminology. Puzzle media made learning more engaging and less tedious, which helped students retain language and use it to create creative narratives. As a result, puzzle media not only enhanced cognitive abilities but also promoted a fun and cooperative learning environment. The creation of digital puzzle media or combining puzzles with other interactive games has the potential to become a more engaging and successful learning innovation, according to additional research.

Overall, the study's findings support the notion that eighth-grade students' understanding of English vocabulary is improved by using puzzle media, both in terms of learning outcomes and the learning process. Through the integration of visual, linguistic, and collaborative activities, this media allows learning to focus on comprehension and application of vocabulary in the context of creative stories rather than just memorization. Each cycle's improvements in learning techniques led to discernible shifts in students' academic aptitude, motivation, and activity levels. As a result, puzzles can be seen as a

creative and successful teaching tool as well as a workable substitute for vocabulary development in the classroom.

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