ENHANCING VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH MAKE-A-MATCH TECHNIQUE: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Effective understanding and expression of meaning depend on one's vocabulary. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Make-a-Match technique in improving students' vocabulary mastery. Using a quasi-experimental design, this study involved two groups: a control group that received conventional instruction and an experimental group that was taught using the Make-A-Match Technique. This study involved 8th grade students of SMP Negeri 12 Palu with the number of students in the control class of 25 students and the experimental class of 26 students. Both groups received a pre-test and a post-test to assess their vocabulary skills. The results showed that the average score of the experimental group increased from 66.15 to 84.84, which indicated a significant increase in their vocabulary. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference between the two groups was found by the Mann-Whitney test (p=0.000 <0.05) which indicated that there was a statistically significant increase in vocabulary mastery. This increase indicates that this technique improves students' retention of vocabulary. The results of this study encourage educators to incorporate Make-A-Match as an engaging and effective learning strategy in their classrooms. Future research could further explore its impact across various subjects and student populations.

Keywords: Make a Match Technique, Vocabulary Mastery, Quasi Experimental

A. INTRODUCTION

One of the key components that supports linguistic proficiency is vocabulary. Susanto (2017) asserts that vocabulary is crucial for language learners and plays a major part in language instruction. According to Simangunsong et al. (2022), vocabulary serves as the primary connection between the four language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Vocabulary, as described by Kusnandar and Fatimah (2018), is a fundamental linguistic. The goal of vocabulary teaching is to introduce, instruct, and enhance language learners' vocabulary mastery. A person cannot effectively understand (read, listen) or communicate (talk, write) without a strong command of language, which makes it a fundamental element

of communication. Vocabulary teaching is an important part of language learning because vocabulary is the main foundation in developing all language skills. In addition, Yudha & Mandasari (2021) Vocabulary plays an important role in learning English. Learning vocabulary in English is not easy, especially for students in vocational high school. It is in line with the statement of Firmansyah (2020) that vocabulary is crucial since words are a means of understanding and communicating meaning. Alqahtani (2015) further underlined that mastering vocabulary is a crucial component of learning a foreign language because textbooks and classroom instruction frequently center on acquiring new words. This indicates that with good vocabulary mastery, speaking skills can further develop. In the context of classroom learning, particularly in text-based disciplines such as Indonesian and English, vocabulary knowledge serves as the foundation for understanding topics. Without a thorough understanding of the terms used in the text, students will struggle to grasp the overall meaning of what they read or hear. This can slow down the learning process, diminish interest, and impact overall learning outcomes. Thus, vocabulary teaching plays an important role because it can support the mastery of language skills as a whole (Asyiah, 2017).

However, during the learning process, students often face various challenges that hinder their ability to fully understand the material presented by the teacher. One of the main obstacles is the difficulty in understanding the meaning of words, which may be caused by a lack of familiarity with the vocabulary. Lutfiyah et al., (2022) found that there were several obstacles in learning vocabulary, difficulty in distinguishing how to spell and pronounce English words correctly, difficulty in developing their vocabulary skills and difficulty in using vocabulary correctly and difficulty in understanding the connotation. In other words, most students have limited vocabulary mastery, so they have difficulty remembering and understanding new words. Furthermore, researchers also found that students' vocabulary mastery at SMP Negeri 12 Palu was still low. The results of the observation showed several problems, including: students had difficulty understanding the meaning of words, were unable to express their feelings and ideas in English due to limited vocabulary, and considered English lessons as boring subjects. This indicates that the teacher need appropriate strategy in teaching vocabulary.

Based on the description above it can be concluded that vocabulary teaching requires an effective technique. As stated by Anuthama (2011) that teaching vocabulary involves complex linguistic, semantic, and psych cognitive aspects. One of the interesting techniques to apply in English learning is the Make-A-Match technique. As claimed by Huda (2011) that the Make-a-Match technique has several advantages, including 1) Encourage student to play a more active role in the learning process Increasing student learning motivation; 2) The material presented is more interesting to students; 3) Training students' courage to appear and present the results of their discussions; 4) This technique can be applied to various subjects; 5) Encouraging collaborative learning and the ability to work together in groups and 6) Creating a pleasant learning atmosphere.

According to Fiddiniya et al. (2022), using the Make-A-Match cooperative learning model with card media helps students become more engaged, improves the learning environment, makes the material easier to understand, and helps them develop a cooperative spirit with their peers. In addition, Fitriana (2018) argued that "Make-a-Match is an enjoyable teaching strategy that uses cards and can boost students' motivation and excitement for learning. Furthermore, Arif et al (2023) argue that the application of this technique made the students actively participate and focus on the vocabulary learning process, interested to follow the

learning process due to the learning media andthe role that they play during the section. This technique is a learning model that involves students in a game of matching paired cards. Through this technique, students can practice their memorization skills, think quickly, develop good social attitudes, and improve learning outcomes and vocabulary mastery.Therefore, the "matching" method is effective in English language learning, especially in vocabulary acquisition (Bintari & Supiah, 2023).

Nikmah and Husein (2018) explain that Make-a-Match is a cooperative learning method that is used in pairs. While, Arifah (2013) adds that Make-a-Match is a learning game that played by two groups. Answer cards are brought by one group, and question cards are brought by the other. Each student from both groups receives one card; While students in group B hold cards with succinct explanations, students in group A possess topic cards. To create a fun and laid-back mood, the teacher plays music in the background while the students search for their companions. Students notify the teacher once they have found a compatible companion. Finally, the instructor assigns the class to write a larger paragraph on the assigned topic. To apply the Make a Match learning model, teachers can follow several steps to make the learning process more active and enjoyable for students.

According to Wanti (2022), the steps in implementing the Make a Match method are as follows:
1. the teacher prepares several cards containing questions and answers. Yellow cards contain questions, while pink cards contain answers. These cards are rolled and placed into a jar.
2. The teacher blows a whistle to signal the beginning of the activity. Students take turns drawing cards from the jar, with one student taking a yellow card and another taking a pink card. This continues until all cards have been distributed
3. Students then discuss and search for matching pairs between the question-and-answer cards. After finding their pairs, each group takes turns reading the question and answer aloud in front of the class. The teacher provides feedback and reinforcement regarding the accuracy of the match.
4. Students who succeed in correctly matching the question-and-answer cards are awarded points or grades.
5. Students who fail to find the correct match receive an agreed-upon non-physical consequence. Instead of punishment, they are asked to perform enjoyable activities such as singing, reciting poetry, or dancing.
6. Finally, the teacher provides reinforcement and concludes the lesson.

Based on the description above, the present study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the Make-A-Match technique in enhancing the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu. By addressing the persistent challenge of limited vocabulary proficiency among EFL learners, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically, by enriching the literature on cooperative learning strategies, and practically, by providing teachers with an engaging alternative for vocabulary instruction.

B. METHOD

The research design used in this study was a quasi-experimental design. This design is appropriate for educational settings where random assignment is often impractical (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Indrayadi (2020), one benefit of quasi-experimental research is that it can replicate real experimental circumstances by manipulating the variables, but without completely randomizing the participants. 51 students from class VIII at SMP Negeri 12 Palu participated in this study during the 2024–2025 school year. Class VIII B was assigned as the experimental group, while Class VIII A served as the control group. Independent and dependent variables was the two categories of variables used in this investigation.

Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests designed to measure students' vocabulary proficiency. The pretest establishes basic vocabulary knowledge, while the posttest assesses improvement after treatment. Both tests consist of vocabulary items appropriate to the student's level to ensure content validity. After completing a pre-test and received treatment, the experimental group was given a post-test. The control group, on the other hand, merely completed the pre-test and post-test using standard classroom instruction. Data analysis employed statistical techniques to test the hypotheses. The t-test was used with a significance level of 0.05 (95%), following recommendations by Pallant (2020), who highlights its suitability for comparing means between two independent groups. Prior to conducting the t-test, assumption checks such as normality and homogeneity were carried out to ensure the appropriateness of the statistical procedure.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to determine whether the Make-a-Match method can aid students in improving their vocabulary. In line with the research objective, this section presents the findings of the pre-test and post-test administered to both the control and experimental groups. The pre-test was designed to identify the students' initial vocabulary proficiency before the implementation of the Make-a-Match method, while the post-test was conducted to measure the improvement after treatment. By comparing the scores across the two groups, it becomes possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the Make-a-Match method in enhancing students' vocabulary competence. The results of both tests are summarized in Table 1.

As presented in Table 1, the comparison between pre-test and post-test scores reveals a marked difference in learning outcomes between the control and experimental groups. The control group displayed minimal improvement, with some students even showing a decline in performance. In contrast, the experimental group exhibited significant and consistent progress, particularly among students who initially had low pre-test scores. These results indicate that the Make-A-Match technique effectively enhanced students' vocabulary mastery by fostering active participation and collaborative learning.

Table 1. Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

No	Control Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Experimental Group	Pre Test	Post Test
1	ASK	86	83	NZWN	50	76
2	ADLN	53	66	NTSP	80	96
3	SBA	80	83	AYAN	80	96
4	RDT	86	66	AURH	60	80
5	RHTLA	86	73	RHL	76	100
6	RDTY	56	66	IZD	76	76
7	PUTG	60	73	SYT	80	79
8	REHA	70	73	NC	90	86
9	MR	53	63	ALZ	60	86
10	MF	50	73	NBR	60	80
11	PD	76	73	MHRY	40	53
12	AY	76	83	MRND	56	93
13	NRA	93	83	ILHM	23	86
14	KNY	80	66	VLN	46	86
15	NJWA	86	86	RSN	56	80
16	MRF	83	83	IFN	63	90
17	SZK	83	86	ALNS	73	90
18	MALF	56	66	BY	73	83
19	NMH	90	90	MOR	43	90
20	MALA	96	86	ANAZ	90	93
21	PUA	43	63	ANDA	90	100
22	MSY	53	66	BRYN	90	96
23	RVL	70	66	NYB	73	100
24	INRW	60	66	MRFS	56	90
25	DN	53	63	ANFI	63	100
26				AD	73	90

To provide a clearer overview of these findings, Table 2 summarizes the average values and standard deviations of the pre-test and post-test results in the experimental group, which serve as the basis for further statistical analysis.

Table 2. Results of the experimental group

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	25	43	96	71.12	15.923
Posttest	25	63	90	73.80	9.065
Valid N (listwise)	25				

This descriptive data shows the pretest and posttest results of 25 respondents. The pretest scores ranged from 43 to 96 with an average (mean) of 71.12 and a standard deviation of 15.923, indicating a considerable variation in scores among respondents. Meanwhile, the

posttest scores increased, ranging from 63 to 90, with the average rising to 73.80 and the standard deviation decreasing to 9.065, indicating an overall improvement in performance and less variation in scores. Overall, there are indications of improved outcomes after the intervention or treatment provided.

Table 3. Results of the control group

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	26	23	90	66.15	17.232
Posttest	26	53	100	87.50	10.312
Valid N (listwise)	26				

This descriptive data illustrates the pretest and posttest results of 26 respondents. In the pretest, scores ranged from 23 to 90 with an average of 66.15 and a standard deviation of 17.232, indicating considerable variation in the respondents' initial abilities. After the intervention, posttest scores significantly increased with a range of 53 to 100, the average rising to 87.50 and the standard deviation decreasing to 10.312, which signifies overall performance improvement and a more even distribution of scores. This result indicates a positive impact of the treatment provided on improving the respondents' learning outcomes.

Table 4. Normality Test
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Control	Experiment
N		25	26
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	73.80	87.50
	Std. Deviation	9.065	10.312
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.245	.134
	Positive	.245	.113
	Negative	-.205	-.134
Test Statistic		.245	.134
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000[c]	.200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Based on the results of the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the data in the control group showed a significance value of 0.000 (with Lilliefors correction), indicating that the data were not normally distributed because the significance value was less than 0.05. In contrast, the experimental group had a significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in the experimental group were normally

distributed. Since the control group data did not meet the assumption of normality, the researcher proceeded with a nonparametric test. Nonparametric tests are appropriate when the data deviate from normal distribution or when the sample size is relatively small, as they do not rely on strict distributional assumptions. In this study, the Mann-Whitney U test was selected to compare the central tendencies of the control and experimental groups. This test is designed for independent samples and enables researchers to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between the groups without assuming normality. To further examine the differences between the control and experimental groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted, and the results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Nonparametric test

Test Statistics [a]	Experiment – Control
Z	-3.560[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

Testing Hypothesis

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, the significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.000. Because the significance value is smaller than the specified limit ($p < 0.05$), then H_0 (null hypothesis) is rejected and H_a (alternative hypothesis) is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the results of the experimental group and the control group. This indicates that the treatment or intervention given to the experimental group has a real effect on the results, compared to the control group that did not receive the treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Make-a-Match technique is an effective strategy for enhancing the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu. This result aligns with previous research by Maduratna (2014), who reported the efficacy of the Make-a-Match method in improving students' vocabulary comprehension. Similarly, Munawaroh et al. (2017) found that this approach facilitates vocabulary acquisition by simplifying text comprehension and creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment. Additionally, Destika (2022) observed that the technique increases student engagement and facilitates understanding of the material. During the vocabulary learning sessions, the researchers noted heightened student participation and enthusiasm. Widiastuti (2019) also highlighted the effectiveness of the Make-a-Match technique in teaching vocabulary to junior high school students, while Iwanti (2020) confirmed its role in enhancing vocabulary comprehension. Based on the research results from Madhanty et al., (2022) there was an increase in each cycle which stated that the application of the Make a Match Technique could improve students' learning activities and vocabulary mastery. Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges were observed. The classroom environment became noisier during activities, and some students with weaker language skills found the tasks challenging or confusing. To mitigate these issues, the researchers implemented a time constraint for partner selection, which helped maintain focus and manage classroom dynamics.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted with eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu, the Make-a-Match technique effectively improves student learning outcomes in vocabulary mastery. This is evidenced by a significant increase in the experimental group's average score, from 66.15 to 87.15, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating statistically significant results. In contrast, the control group showed only a slight increase from 71.12 to 73.80, which was not statistically significant (p = 0.224). Moreover, the experimental group exhibited a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.29), while the control group's effect size was small (Cohen's d = 0.25). These results demonstrate that the Make-a-Match strategy is more effective than traditional learning methods in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. It is recommended that educators consider incorporating this technique to foster more engaging and effective vocabulary learning. These findings collectively highlight the superiority of the Make-a-Match strategy over traditional methods in enhancing vocabulary learning. This technique not only encourages active student participation through interactive and collaborative activities but also creates a more engaging and dynamic learning environment, which in turn results in better vocabulary retention and comprehension. Therefore, it is highly recommended for educators and curriculum developers to consider integrating the Make-a-Match strategy into English language learning, especially in vocabulary-focused instruction. This can make the teaching and learning process more student-centered, enjoyable, and effective, ultimately contributing to improved student academic achievement and language proficiency.

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