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Spelling Bee Game to Enhance Vocabulary among First-Semester Economics and Business Students

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*Mohammad Noor Khairullah, Sukma Irdiana, Kurniawan Yunus Ariyono[abc]
[123]Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Widya Gama Lumajang, Indonesia
Corresponding author: mohnoorkhairullah@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to improve students' vocabulary mastery through the Spelling Bee Game. It employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), consisting of one cycle with four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The participants were 128 first-semester students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at ITB Widya Gama Lumajang. The preliminary average score was 75, below the minimum standard of 85. Learning activities included identifying unfamiliar vocabulary in Recount Text, discussing difficult words, and practicing spelling through the game. The study was considered successful when the average score reached at least 85. The results showed that the students' mean score increased from 75 to 85, representing a 10-point improvement or 13.33%. These findings indicate that the Spelling Bee Game can be an effective alternative method for teaching vocabulary through Recount Text. Further research should compare its effectiveness with other vocabulary teaching techniques in various educational contexts and among different students.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a crucial component of English language learning because it enables learners to understand messages and express their thoughts effectively in communication. Vocabulary knowledge encompasses not only understanding word meanings but also recognizing pronunciation, spelling, and appropriate usage according to context and sentence structure. Fauziati (2010) emphasizes the central role of vocabulary in language learning. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, students may encounter difficulties understanding written texts, interpreting spoken messages, answering questions, and expressing their ideas clearly. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is essential for developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Vocabulary refers to the collection of words that language users understand and employ to communicate meaning. Annisa (2011) discusses the importance of understanding vocabulary beyond merely memorizing words and their meanings, while Achmad (2013) relates vocabulary to the linguistic resources used to express and interpret meaning in communication. Similarly, Triana (2013) emphasizes that vocabulary is a fundamental component of effective communication. Vocabulary mastery, therefore, involves the ability to recognize, understand, recall, and use words appropriately in different communicative situations. It also enables learners to construct sentences and develop their language proficiency.

Effective vocabulary instruction should provide systematic opportunities for students to recognize, understand, remember, and use new words. Scrivener (2016) emphasizes the importance of developing both receptive knowledge, which involves recognizing and understanding vocabulary, and productive knowledge, which involves using vocabulary in communication. Vocabulary learning should consequently extend beyond memorization to

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include meaningful practice, the use of words in context, and strategies for independent vocabulary development. However, vocabulary teaching can be challenging, particularly for students with limited exposure to English who are accustomed to conventional learning activities. Copying vocabulary, memorizing word lists, translating meanings, and repeating pronunciation may not provide sufficient opportunities for active participation and meaningful application. Teachers therefore need interactive instructional strategies that encourage students to engage with vocabulary more actively.

One approach to making vocabulary learning more interactive is the use of language games. Games provide opportunities for learners to practice language in enjoyable and less threatening environments. Bin-Hady (2023) discusses the potential of games to make language lessons more engaging, support vocabulary learning, and encourage meaningful classroom participation. Through structured games, students can practice recalling words, understanding their meanings, and using them in specific contexts. Consequently, games can serve as an alternative to conventional vocabulary instruction that relies heavily on memorization.

One vocabulary-learning activity that can be implemented in English classrooms is the Spelling Bee Game. A spelling bee is a competition in which participants are required to spell given words correctly. Uranga (2003) describes a spelling bee as a contest in which competitors are eliminated when they incorrectly spell a given word; this format is also known as a spelldown. In educational settings, the activity can be adapted by providing clues such as definitions, pronunciation, word classes, or example sentences before students spell the target words. Through these procedures, students are encouraged to connect word meanings with pronunciation and spelling while strengthening their vocabulary recall. Furthermore, the competitive and collaborative nature of the activity may encourage participation and help students develop confidence when responding in front of their peers.

Previous studies have reported positive findings regarding the implementation of Spelling Bee Games in vocabulary learning. Sari, Afrianto, and Azhar reported improvements in vocabulary achievement among second-year junior high school students in Pekanbaru following the implementation of an English Spelling Bee Game. Wedhanti, Ratminingsih, and Samiyanti also identified a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students who learned through the Spelling Bee Game and those who used flashcard-based memorization, alongside positive student attitudes toward the learning process. Similarly, Nurwidia, Baa, and Asriati reported an increase in students' vocabulary scores from 50.10 to 79.80 after the implementation of the game. Windasari, Ghozali, and Al Fauzi likewise reported improvements in students' vocabulary achievement following Spelling Bee activities. In addition, Afiase et al. found improvements in vocabulary mastery through Classroom Action Research, while Agustina and Budiyanti reported positive results after implementing Spelling Bee Games. These findings suggest that the Spelling Bee Game has potential as an instructional strategy for improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Despite these positive findings, research on Spelling Bee Games has predominantly focused on younger learners, particularly elementary and junior high school students, and has frequently employed quasi-experimental or pre-experimental designs. Research investigating the implementation of Spelling Bee Games through Classroom Action Research among first-semester university students in non-English study programs remains limited. This gap warrants attention because university students encounter vocabulary demands that differ from those of younger learners, particularly in academic, technological, business, and professional contexts. Therefore, further investigation is needed to examine how Spelling Bee Games can support vocabulary development among university students.

The present study involved first-semester students from the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Informatics Department at the Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang during the 2025/2026 academic year. English vocabulary is relevant to these students because they may encounter English terminology in academic materials, digital applications, business activities, and information technology. However, preliminary observations indicated that students experienced difficulties memorizing vocabulary,

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understanding word meanings, and using English words appropriately. Their average vocabulary score was 75, which was below the minimum standard score of 85. Classroom activities also tended to emphasize writing vocabulary on the board, repeating pronunciation, and memorizing word meanings. These conditions indicated a need for more engaging learning activities that provide opportunities for active vocabulary practice.

The Spelling Bee Game was selected to address these difficulties because its procedures require students to recall and spell words accurately while connecting spelling with meaning and pronunciation. The competitive format can encourage students to participate actively, while collaborative activities can provide opportunities for peer interaction and learning support. Furthermore, the game can be integrated with Recount Text to help students practice vocabulary in a meaningful textual context rather than learning isolated words. Anderson & Anderson (1997) explain text types in English, including recount texts, which present past events or experiences in chronological order. By using vocabulary drawn from recount texts, students can practice recognizing word meanings and spelling while developing their understanding of language in context.

Considering the classroom problems and the identified research gap, this study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to investigate the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery through the implementation of Spelling Bee Games integrated with Recount Text. The study focused on first-semester students from the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Informatics Department at the Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang in the 2025/2026 academic year. Accordingly, this research was entitled "Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery by Using Spelling Bee Games on Recount Text at the Faculty of Economics and Business and Informatics Department of the Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang in the Academic Year 2025/2026."

METHOD

Research Design

This research adopted Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the research design. Latief (2011) stated that CAR is an effective method for enhancing teachers' teaching performance and improving students' learning outcomes. In this study, CAR was implemented collaboratively by the lecturer and students to identify and overcome difficulties in vocabulary mastery through the application of the Spelling Bee Game.

The Classroom Action Research (CAR) process followed a systematic procedure involving four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These stages were carried out in cycles, with each cycle comprising the following activities:

Planning

During this stage, the researcher identified the difficulties students encountered in learning vocabulary and developed a plan for the instructional activities. The researcher prepared lesson plans, Recount Text materials, vocabulary lists, Spelling Bee Game activities, observation sheets, and vocabulary assessment instruments. The researcher also determined the criteria for evaluating students' improvement.

Action/Implementation

At this stage, the researcher carried out the planned instructional activities by introducing students to the vocabulary found in the Recount Text. Students were asked to identify unfamiliar words, discuss their meanings and pronunciation, and practice spelling them. Subsequently, the researcher organized the Spelling Bee Game into groups, requiring students to spell the selected vocabulary accurately according to the instructions given by the researcher.

Observation

Throughout the implementation of the action, the researcher monitored students' involvement, reactions, motivation, and challenges encountered during the learning process.

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The observation focused on students' involvement in identifying, pronouncing, remembering, and spelling vocabulary. Students' learning achievement was also measured through vocabulary assessments.

Reflection

After completing the action and observation stages, the researcher analyzed the results of the learning activities and students' vocabulary scores. The researcher evaluated the advantages and limitations of the Spelling Bee Game implementation and assessed whether the predetermined success criteria had been fulfilled. If the outcomes failed to meet these criteria, the researcher would modify the teaching plan and proceed to the subsequent cycle.

Therefore, the Classroom Action Research was carried out through a systematic cycle consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The findings from each cycle served as a reference for refining the next cycle until the anticipated improvement in students' vocabulary mastery was attained.

Respondents

This study was conducted at the ITB Widya Gama Lumajang, specifically in the Faculty of Economics and Business. The research participants were first-semester students enrolled in the 2025/2026 academic year. The study involved 128 students and was carried out during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year as part of the English learning process. The research was conducted in this setting because students faced challenges in mastering vocabulary, especially in understanding, remembering, and spelling English words. Therefore, this context was considered appropriate for applying the Spelling Bee Game as a strategy to enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

Procedures

This section describes the research procedures, which include a preliminary study, action planning through the preparation of a lesson plan, implementation of the research in which the teacher carries out the planned lessons, observation, and finally, reflection.

Preliminary Study

The researcher did preliminary study by interviewing the lecturer. The researcher got the score from the lecturer. After knowing this condition, the researcher was checked this by doing a test. Based on the objective assessment conducted by the researcher and the lecturer as an observer using the same scoring rubric, the students' vocabulary mastery scores during the preliminary study were found to be below the school's minimum passing criterion. The students obtained an average score of 75, whereas the minimum passing score for English was 85. Several factors may have contributed to these low achievement levels, including students' limited enthusiasm for learning English and a lack of engaging classroom activities. Therefore, the researcher implemented the Spelling Bee Game as an instructional strategy to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Planning the Action

At this stage, the researcher prepared all the necessary materials and resources required for implementing the planned action, including the following:

Designing Lesson Plan

The researcher needs to write lesson plan (lesson plan is the lesson that researcher should prepare before teaching process). in every meeting, in order to make teaching and learning activity well organized and spelling bee game used in teaching learning process.

Prepare Instructional Media

The media which is used is the text about recount text, and dictionary.

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The Criteria of Success

The success criteria were established to determine whether the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game effectively improved the English learning process, particularly in vocabulary instruction. The research was considered successful if at least 60% of the students achieved a minimum score of 75.

Implementing

The subject of the action is first semester of economy and business faculty of Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang. The implementation of this action is below:

At each meeting, the researcher provided students with a Recount Text before conducting the Spelling Bee Game. The students were asked to read the text and identify unfamiliar vocabulary items. After completing these activities, they proceeded to participate in the game. The activity was allocated approximately 25 minutes, including student grouping, an explanation of the game rules, and the implementation of the game. The procedure began with the researcher explaining the rules to the students. Next, the researcher prepared a list of words taken from the Recount Text and pronounced the first word to the initial participant. The student was given 40 seconds to spell the word and could request additional clues, such as its definition. If all team members spelled the assigned words correctly, the team received 100 points. But if one of them fail spell the word the team did not get the point. The treatment was held 4 meetings.

Observing

Latief (2011) explains that observation is a process of gathering data to determine whether a strategy successfully addresses classroom problems (p. 149). In this study, the observation focused on collecting information relevant to the predetermined success criteria. This process aimed to identify whether the implementation of the instructional strategy or learning media resulted in improvements in students' learning achievement. Therefore, data collection in Classroom Action Research (CAR) encompassed all information related to the research process and its alignment with the established success criteria.

Here in classroom action research (CAR) also need the lecturer observer. The researcher collaborated with the lecturer serving as an observer, who provided suggestions and recommendations to ensure that the teaching and learning process proceeded effectively.

Observation Checklist

The researcher employed an observation checklist to gather data throughout the teaching and learning process. The description was about active reading recount text, and active opening dictionary, asking question to the teacher, and active in playing the game.

Field Note

The researcher used field note as the addition instrument to record any important data and necessary information that is not included in observation checklist. The researcher used field note to anticipate of losing necessary data during the teaching process.

Test

In this research, the teacher gave the test to the student that is by giving them fifty vocabularies. The vocabulary was spell by the teacher then students write the word based on the vocabulary that has been played. The test gave in the last meeting of the first cycle. The achievement of student's vocabulary got from this test.

Scoring guidance focuses on the vocabulary that correct or incorrect. If the students less one word in the vocabulary it means the vocabulary is incorrect. When the score is 50 and it multiplies by 2, the score will be 100. For example: when the students get score 25, it will multiply by 2. His/his score will be 50 and so on.

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Reflecting

Latief (2011) defines reflection as the process of analyzing collected data to determine the extent to which a strategy has successfully addressed the identified problems (p. 152). Reflection plays an essential role in determining the improvements needed for the subsequent cycle. The shortcomings and weaknesses identified in the first cycle should be addressed to prevent them from recurring in the second cycle. Therefore, the second cycle was conducted to resolve the problems encountered and improve the outcomes of the previous cycle. As previously established, the research was considered successful if at least 60% of the students achieved a score of 75 or higher in the Spelling Bee Game assessment. Once this success criterion was met, the researcher concluded the action research, indicating that the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game had successfully improved students' vocabulary mastery.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cycle I

The first cycle took place from January 11 to January 16, 2026, and comprised four meetings. The first three meetings were dedicated to teaching and learning activities involving the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game, whereas the fourth meeting was allocated for administering the vocabulary test. This cycle was carried out through four systematic stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Implementation of the Action

In accordance with the research plan, the intervention was carried out over four meetings. The first three sessions concentrated on enhancing students' vocabulary mastery through the application of the Spelling Bee Game, while the final session was devoted to administering the vocabulary test.

Meeting I

The first meeting took place on January 12, 2026, at 8:50 a.m. and lasted approximately 80 minutes. The researcher opened the lesson by greeting the students and inquiring about their well-being and feelings. Subsequently, the researcher informed the students that the Spelling Bee Game would be incorporated into the lesson, as had been discussed previously. The researcher then outlined the rules and procedures of the game and instructed the students to listen carefully. Throughout the explanation, the students paid attention and followed the instructions provided. After confirming that the students understood how to play the game, the researcher introduced the topic for the teaching and learning session. A Recount Text was then distributed to the students, who were instructed to identify unfamiliar or challenging vocabulary items in the text. The researcher and the students then discussed the meanings, pronunciations, and spellings of the identified words. After the discussion, the students participated in the Spelling Bee Game.

During the game, students were required to spell the selected vocabulary items accurately. They practiced spelling the words individually and consulted their group members when encountering difficult vocabulary before participating in the activity. According to the field notes, students paid close attention to word pronunciation and repeatedly attempted to spell unfamiliar words correctly. They also expressed verbal reactions when their teams provided correct or incorrect answers. These behaviours indicated that students were actively engaged in the learning process.

At the end of the lesson, the researcher gave students the opportunity to ask questions regarding the game and the learning materials. The researcher addressed their questions, reiterated explanations when necessary, and provided additional examples to reinforce their understanding. After ensuring that the students had understood the material and the procedures of the game, the researcher concluded the lesson with a closing greeting.

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Meeting II

The second meeting of Cycle I was conducted on Thursday, January 13, 2026, from 10.30 a.m. to 11.40 a.m. At the beginning of the lesson, the students appeared ready to continue the previous learning activity. The lesson began with prayer and greetings led by the class leader. The researcher then conducted a brainstorming activity by asking questions related to the previous lesson. Some students successfully answered the questions, whereas others required further clarification because they had forgotten certain aspects of the material. Subsequently, the researcher organized the students into six groups, with four groups comprising four members each and the remaining two groups consisting of five members each. The students then rearranged their chairs to establish a designated working area for each group. The students arranged the chairs so that each group could work in its designated area. After the groups were organized, the researcher distributed a Recount Text to each group. The researcher instructed the students to read the text, identify difficult vocabulary items, and discuss the words with their group members.

Following the vocabulary discussion, the Spelling Bee Game was implemented. In comparison with the first meeting, the students demonstrated greater familiarity with the game's procedures. The field notes showed that the students interacted more actively with their group members, discussed possible answers, and paid attention to the answers given by other groups. When a group answered correctly, its members responded positively, while incorrect answers were followed by discussion and encouragement from group members. The students also attempted to obtain points for their respective groups. These behaviors provided observable evidence of students' active participation and competitive interaction during the game.

After all activities had been completed, the researcher summarized the lesson and reviewed the vocabulary that had been discussed. The researcher then asked the class leader to close the lesson with prayer and greetings.

Meeting III

The third meeting of Cycle I took place on Friday, January 14, 2026, from 8:50 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. During this session, the researcher prepared the Spelling Bee Game with a different topic from those presented in the previous meetings. The lesson commenced with a prayer and greetings led by the class leader, after which the researcher instructed the students to take their seats in their respective groups.

The researcher informed the students that the Spelling Bee Game would be conducted using a new topic. The students were then given time to read the Recount Text and identify unfamiliar or challenging vocabulary items. The researcher and the students then discussed the meanings, pronunciations, and spellings of the identified words. Following the discussion, the researcher facilitated the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game with the students. The field notes indicated that the students were increasingly familiar with the game procedures. They took turns spelling the vocabulary items, listened to the answers given by other students, and discussed difficult words with their group members. The students also responded to the results of the game, particularly when their group gained or lost points. These observations indicated that students' participation and interaction were maintained throughout the third meeting.

After completing the activities, the researcher provided a conclusion and reviewed the main vocabulary items learned during the lesson. The researcher then instructed the class leader to conclude the lesson by leading the closing prayer and delivering greetings.

Meeting IV

The fourth meeting was dedicated to administering the vocabulary test, which took place on Monday, January 15, 2026, from 8:50 a.m. to 11:40 a.m. The researcher opened the session by greeting the students and leading a prayer, followed by checking their attendance.

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Prior to the test, the researcher allotted seven minutes for students to review the learning materials. Once the review session had ended, the researcher distributed the test papers and ensured that each student wrote their name on the designated sheet.

The researcher then provided an explanation of the test instructions and regulations. The assessment was conducted under closed-book conditions, meaning that students were prohibited from using dictionaries. Before the test commenced, students were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the instructions. Throughout the assessment, the researcher supervised the classroom and moved around the room to ensure that students completed the test independently. All students finished the test at 11:40 a.m.

The remaining time was devoted to a brief closing session, during which the researcher expressed gratitude for the students' participation and cooperation throughout the teaching and learning activities and apologized for any mistakes that might have occurred during the classroom sessions. Finally, the meeting concluded with a prayer.

Observation

The observation phase was carried out throughout the implementation of the action to gather information about students' participation, responses, interactions, and difficulties encountered during the application of the Spelling Bee Game. Data were obtained through an observation checklist and field notes. During the teaching and learning process, the researcher served as both the lecturer and the observer.

The findings of Cycle 1 are presented in two categories: quantitative findings and qualitative findings.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data were gathered from the vocabulary test administered during the fourth meeting. The test aimed to assess students' vocabulary mastery following the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game across the three preceding teaching sessions. The average vocabulary score obtained by students in the preliminary study was 75, which increased to 85 after the completion of Cycle I. This represents an improvement of 10 points in the students' average scores. These quantitative findings demonstrate an improvement in students' vocabulary achievement following the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game. Furthermore, the test results provided measurable evidence of the changes in students' vocabulary mastery throughout Cycle I.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data were gathered through an observation checklist and field notes documented during the three teaching sessions. The observations concentrated on students' engagement, interactions, responses, and behaviours throughout the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game. During the first meeting, students initially demonstrated attentiveness to the researcher's explanation of the game procedures. Throughout the activity, they made efforts to spell the vocabulary items accurately, paid attention to word pronunciation, and collaborated with their group members to discuss challenging vocabulary. They also reacted when their teams provided correct or incorrect answers. These observations suggested that students participated actively in the learning activities.

During the second meeting, students demonstrated greater familiarity with the procedures of the Spelling Bee Game. The field notes also indicated an increase in interaction among members of each group. The students discussed possible answers, paid attention to the answers given by other groups, and encouraged their group members when they experienced difficulties. The students also attempted to obtain points for their groups. These observations provided specific evidence of competitive interaction, because students were actively responding to the scoring process and attempting to contribute to their groups' performance.

In Meeting III, students demonstrated greater familiarity with the activity. They took turns spelling vocabulary items, listened to other students' answers, and discussed difficult words with their group members. They also responded to changes in their group's score. The

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continued participation, group interaction, and verbal responses during the game suggested that the activity created an interactive classroom environment. Rather than describing the students simply as "motivated" or "having fun," the field notes provided observable evidence through their willingness to participate, repeated attempts to spell words, interaction with group members, and responses to correct and incorrect answers.

In general, the qualitative findings indicated that the use of the Spelling Bee Game promoted students' engagement in vocabulary learning through spelling exercises, collaborative discussions, turn-taking activities, and interaction with their peers. The students' increasingly familiar and active participation across the three teaching meetings provided qualitative evidence that the game was engaging for the students.

Thus, the quantitative results were reflected in the improvement of the students' average vocabulary test score, which rose from 75 to 85. Meanwhile, the qualitative results were demonstrated through students' participation in classroom activities, interactions within groups, responses to the game, and observable competitive behaviors documented in the field notes.

Data of Teaching and Learning Process

Based on the field notes, the researcher observed that students demonstrated high levels of motivation and enthusiasm when learning vocabulary through games. They also appeared to enjoy the teaching and learning process, as evidenced by the large number of students who attempted to answer the questions. Furthermore, students showed increased participation and activeness when the researcher incorporated games into vocabulary instruction. They also appeared less nervous and more confident when expressing themselves in English, as reflected in their willingness to answer questions voluntarily.

Vocabulary instruction through the game stimulated students' interest in learning English because they found the activities enjoyable. Furthermore, the implementation of the game fostered a competitive learning environment that motivated students to participate actively throughout the teaching and learning process. Additionally, the activity helped students recognize the importance of teamwork and collaboration within their groups.

Data of Learning Process

The vocabulary test for this cycle was administered on Monday, January 19, 2026, to assess students' vocabulary mastery following four meetings of instruction using the Spelling Bee Game. According to the established success criteria, the minimum required score was 75. Therefore, the researcher aimed for the students to achieve an average score of at least 75. Compared with the previous mean score of 70, the students demonstrated an improvement in their vocabulary achievement. After evaluating the students' test responses, the researcher calculated an average score of 83.035. This result indicated that the students' mean score had exceeded the predetermined minimum standard of 75.

Table 1 The Analysis of Students' Vocabulary Test Results in Cycle I

No	X	*F*	*fx*
1	75	7	525
2	77	2	154
3	80	3	144
4	95	7	665
5	97	5	485
6	88	4	352
	Σ *x*=512	Σ *f*=28	Σ *fx*=2325

$N = 28$

$M = \frac{\Sigma fx}{N}$

$= 2325/28$

$= 83.035$

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Reflection

Based on the findings obtained from the observation checklist, field notes, and students' vocabulary test scores, the observations during the implementation of the action indicated that students demonstrated increased motivation and interest in learning vocabulary. After analyzing the students' test results, the researcher conducted a reflection to evaluate the progress made throughout the teaching and learning process. The analysis revealed that the students achieved an average score of 83.035. These findings led the researcher to conclude that the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game had significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the average test score exceeded the predetermined minimum criterion for success, indicating that the research had achieved its intended objective. Therefore, the researcher concluded that no further research cycles were necessary.

Discussion

This section presents an analysis and interpretation of the research findings, with particular emphasis on how and why the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game contributed to the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery. The discussion addresses not only the increase in students' vocabulary test scores but also the learning activities that may have supported this progress. Furthermore, the findings are examined in relation to relevant previous studies to identify similarities and differences with earlier research. The improvement in students' vocabulary mastery can be understood by considering the characteristics of the Spelling Bee Game. During its implementation, students were instructed to identify unfamiliar vocabulary in the Recount Text, discuss the meanings and pronunciation of the words, and subsequently spell them correctly during the game. This structured process offered students repeated opportunities to encounter, recall, pronounce, and spell the target vocabulary items.

Therefore, the game did not only provide entertainment but also created opportunities for active vocabulary practice. One reason the Spelling Bee Game may have contributed to vocabulary improvement is that it required students to actively retrieve vocabulary from memory. When students were asked to spell a word, they could not rely only on recognizing the word in the text; they had to recall the sequence of letters and produce the word orally. The students also needed to pay attention to pronunciation before spelling the word. This combination of recognition, pronunciation, recall, and spelling provided multiple forms of vocabulary practice within the same learning activity. The repeated practice may have helped students become more familiar with the vocabulary introduced in the Recount Text. The group-based nature of the game also contributed to students' active involvement in the learning process. The classroom observations showed that students discussed difficult vocabulary with their group members, took turns spelling words, listened to the answers given by other groups, and responded to correct and incorrect answers. Students also attempted to obtain points for their respective groups. These behaviors suggest that the scoring system created a competitive element that encouraged students to participate actively. Thus, the competitive aspect of the game was not merely an additional feature but provided students with a reason to pay attention, recall vocabulary, and participate in the spelling activity. This finding is in line with Uberman (1998), who argues that games can provide benefits for language learning because they can motivate learners and help them sustain their effort in learning.

The present study supports this view because students demonstrated active participation throughout the game. Their repeated attempts to spell words, interaction with group members, and responses to the scoring process indicated sustained involvement in the vocabulary learning activities. Therefore, the present findings suggest that the motivational potential of games can support vocabulary learning when the game is directly connected to the target language and requires students to practice the vocabulary being learned. The findings can also be related to Schuna (2015), who argues that games can support self-esteem, self-acceptance, and a greater connection between learners and activities. In this study, the

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group format allowed students to participate collaboratively and receive support from their peers. Students could discuss difficult words before attempting to spell them and respond to the results of the game together. This interaction may have provided a more supportive environment for students to practice vocabulary. However, the present study does not directly measure students' self-esteem or self-acceptance; therefore, Schuna's argument is used as a theoretical explanation rather than as a directly measured finding of this study. The results of the current study are in line with the findings of Effendi (2013), who conducted a study entitled "The Use of Game to Improve Vocabulary Mastery of Seventh Grade Students of SMPN 5 Malang." Effendi found that the implementation of games enhanced students' vocabulary mastery and that the established success criteria were fulfilled after a single cycle.

The findings of the present study indicate that the Spelling Bee Game can support students' vocabulary development through active and repeated practice. This result is consistent with Thompson & von Gillern (2020), whose Bayesian meta-analysis found an overall positive effect of video-game-based instruction on English vocabulary acquisition, although the effects varied across studies. Similarly, Smith et al. (2013) reported that Chinese undergraduate EFL students learned significantly more vocabulary through computer games embedded in e-books than through conventional study activities. Chen & Hsu (2020) also found improvements in vocabulary and content knowledge among college EFL students who participated in a serious-game intervention. These studies provide broader support for integrating games into vocabulary instruction, although their digital game formats differ from the face-to-face Spelling Bee Game used in the present study.

Research focusing specifically on Spelling Bee games has also reported positive vocabulary outcomes. Mawar & Anggreni (2025), for example, found a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students following a Spelling Bee intervention. In addition, Sari et al. (2018) reported that students' vocabulary scores increased after they participated in English Spelling Bee activities. These findings are consistent with the improvement observed in the present study, in which the mean vocabulary score increased from 75 in the preliminary study to 85 after Cycle I. However, the results should be interpreted in relation to the particular participants, instructional procedures, and assessment criteria used in each study.

The present study also contributes contextual evidence by examining the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game among first-semester students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang. Unlike studies conducted with school students or using digital games, this study employed a classroom-based action research approach with university students learning vocabulary through Recount Text. Classroom observations showed that students participated in group discussions, took turns spelling words, attempted challenging vocabulary, listened to their peers, and responded to the scoring process. These observations suggest that the game provided opportunities for active participation and repeated engagement with target words. Such opportunities are relevant to vocabulary learning because learners need to encounter and work with words through purposeful learning activities (Nation, 2013).

The improvement in test scores, together with the classroom observations, suggests that the Spelling Bee Game provided a useful structure for vocabulary practice involving spelling, pronunciation, word retrieval, and peer interaction. Nevertheless, because the study did not isolate these elements experimentally, their individual contributions to the score improvement cannot be determined. The findings therefore support the use of the Spelling Bee Game as a practical vocabulary-teaching strategy in this particular context, rather than establishing that it will produce identical outcomes in all learning environments. Further research involving different student populations, instructional settings, and research designs is needed to examine the broader applicability of this approach.

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CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, the implementation of the Spelling Bee Game improved the vocabulary mastery of first-semester students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Institute of Technology and Business Widya Gama Lumajang. This improvement was reflected in the increase in the mean vocabulary score from 75 in the preliminary study to 85 after Cycle I. Qualitative findings also indicated that students responded positively by participating actively, collaborating in groups, discussing difficult words, taking turns spelling vocabulary, and paying attention to their peers' answers. The learning activities included introducing the game procedures, forming groups, providing Recount Text, identifying challenging vocabulary, and practicing spelling, pronunciation, and word recall through the game. These activities supported meaningful vocabulary practice and classroom interaction. Since the research success criteria were achieved after Cycle I, an additional cycle was unnecessary. However, these findings are limited to the participants and learning context of this study. Further research involving different student populations, educational settings, and research designs is recommended to examine the applicability of Spelling Bee Games in other contexts.

DECLARATION

Author Contributions: All authors contributed to the research and manuscript preparation according to their respective roles, expertise, and areas of responsibility. Their contributions covered the research design, methodology, implementation of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and manuscript preparation. All authors participated in reviewing and approving the final version of the manuscript.

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