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Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery by Using Eye Spy Game

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Abstract

This research aimed to improve the vocabulary mastery of first-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka through the Eye Spy Game. The problem addressed was how the Eye Spy Game could improve students' vocabulary mastery. This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following Kemmis and McTaggart's model, comprising two cycles of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting, and was conducted collaboratively with an English teacher. The subjects were 18 students of class VII.B. Data were collected through student and teacher observation sheets and a 20-item multiple-choice vocabulary test administered at the end of each cycle, then analyzed by calculating the percentage of students meeting the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 75). The results showed that student completeness rose from 56% in Cycle I (11 of 18 students passing) to 83% in Cycle II (15 of 18 students passing), meeting the predetermined success criterion of 80%. Observed student and teacher activity likewise improved from the "poor" category in the first meeting of Cycle I to the "very good" category by the final meeting of Cycle II. It is concluded that the Eye Spy Game is an effective strategy to improve junior high school students' vocabulary mastery and can be recommended as an alternative technique for English vocabulary instruction.

Keywords: *vocabulary mastery, Eye Spy Game, classroom action research, junior high school students*

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for students learning English because it provides an important foundation for developing other language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary knowledge is multidimensional and involves not only knowing individual word meanings but also developing breadth and depth of lexical knowledge. Fan (2020), for example, found that vocabulary learning strategies are closely related to the development of both the breadth and depth of learners' vocabulary knowledge, suggesting that vocabulary learning should be integrated strategically into the broader process of English language learning. Similarly, Lee (2020) demonstrated that motivation, strategy use, language-processing experience, and other learner-related factors are associated with the development of EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. These findings indicate that vocabulary learning should not be limited to memorizing isolated words but should involve active and repeated engagement with vocabulary through appropriate learning activities.

Effective vocabulary instruction should therefore provide learners with opportunities to encounter, recall, and use new words in meaningful contexts. Zhang and Graham (2020), in their study of vocabulary learning through listening among EFL learners, demonstrated that different forms of lexical focus-on-form instruction can influence vocabulary learning outcomes. Their findings suggest that vocabulary learning can benefit from instructional activities that provide learners with opportunities to notice and process

lexical items rather than merely receive vocabulary explanations. In addition, Dixon et al. (2020) found that a multi-component vocabulary intervention involving active engagement and discussion produced significant gains in both receptive and productive knowledge of targeted words. These findings reinforce the importance of providing learners with opportunities to actively process and use vocabulary during instruction.

In classroom practice, however, vocabulary learning may still rely heavily on conventional teacher explanations, repetition, and memorization. Such approaches may provide students with exposure to vocabulary but may not always create sufficient opportunities for interaction and active retrieval. Reynolds et al. (2020), for instance, found that learner-generated word cards could support vocabulary growth when students actively selected and processed linguistic and non-linguistic information related to new words. This finding suggests that learners' active involvement in processing vocabulary can play an important role in vocabulary development. Consequently, teachers need to employ learning activities that encourage students to retrieve, recognize, and use vocabulary rather than simply memorize word lists.

One promising approach is the use of games in vocabulary instruction. Research conducted in 2020 provides considerable support for game-based approaches to language learning. Thompson and von Gillern (2020), in a Bayesian meta-analysis of game-based instruction for English language learning, reported a moderately large positive effect of video-game-based instruction compared with non-game-based instruction. Their findings provide broader evidence that game-based learning can contribute positively to English language development, including vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Yang et al. (2020) found that a cognitive-complexity-based competition game significantly improved EFL students' English vocabulary learning performance. Their study also showed that the design of game difficulty and competition needs to be carefully balanced because excessive challenge or competition may produce anxiety among some learners.

The effectiveness of game-based vocabulary learning has also been demonstrated in different learning environments. Bahari (2020) investigated game-based collaborative vocabulary learning among EFL learners and found a significant relationship between playing vocabulary games and the development of vocabulary size and depth. The study further emphasized the potential of collaborative game-based learning to combine vocabulary practice with interaction and learner motivation. In another study, Rasti and colleagues (2020) found that a digital game-based vocabulary learning task enhanced several dimensions of word knowledge, including receptive and productive knowledge, recognition, recall, meaning, orthography, and association. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they demonstrate that game-based vocabulary activities can involve multiple dimensions of vocabulary knowledge rather than focusing only on word recognition.

Other studies have similarly reported positive outcomes from game-based and interactive vocabulary learning. Alfadil (2020) found that students who learned vocabulary through a virtual reality game achieved higher vocabulary learning outcomes than students who received traditional instruction. The study suggests that interactive and contextualized environments can provide learners with additional opportunities to engage with vocabulary. Chen and Hsu (2020) also demonstrated the potential of serious games for supporting vocabulary and content learning, showing that game-based environments can integrate language learning with meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, Salim et al. (2020), in an action research study involving rural ESL pupils, reported significant improvement in vocabulary scores following game-based lessons. The students also perceived games as fun and interesting and reported that games helped them memorize vocabulary more quickly and increased classroom interaction.

A preliminary observation with the English teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka found that seventh-grade students had limited English vocabulary, difficulty memorizing new words, and correspondingly weak listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Learning vocabulary without an engaging method can easily become tedious, particularly when students are primarily exposed to explanation and memorization. The classroom condition identified in the preliminary observation therefore indicates a need for an instructional activity that can increase students' opportunities to participate actively while simultaneously practicing vocabulary. Based on the findings of previous research, game-based learning provides a potentially appropriate alternative because it combines vocabulary practice with interaction, repetition, retrieval, and learner engagement (Bahari, 2020; Thompson & von Gillern, 2020; Yang et al., 2020).

In addition, interactive learning activities may be particularly useful when students need to develop vocabulary through both recognition and production. Tai et al. (2020) found that an interactive virtual reality environment produced significantly greater vocabulary learning and retention than video-based

learning, partly because the virtual environment provided contextualized vocabulary learning, multimodal support, real-time interaction, and feedback. Although the present study does not employ digital technology, the underlying principle is relevant: vocabulary learning can be strengthened when students interact with words through meaningful and active tasks rather than simply receiving information.

Based on these considerations, the researcher selected the Eye Spy Game as the teaching strategy for the present study. The Eye Spy Game provides a simple, interactive, and collaborative form of vocabulary practice in which students identify or guess objects based on clues. Unlike conventional vocabulary instruction in which students may primarily listen to teacher explanations or memorize word lists, the game requires students to retrieve vocabulary from memory, connect words with objects or characteristics, and communicate their answers with classmates. This active retrieval and production process is consistent with the broader evidence that vocabulary learning benefits from learner engagement, meaningful processing, interaction, and repeated practice (Dixon et al., 2020; Fan, 2020; Rasti et al., 2020).

According to Nappu (2025), the I Spy Game can be used as an instructional activity to support students' English vocabulary mastery. The game involves students identifying or guessing objects based on clues, such as an initial letter or other characteristics of the object. Nappu (2025) investigated the effect of the I Spy Game on the English vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students and found an improvement in students' vocabulary performance after the treatment. The mean score increased from 54.05 in the pre-test to 76.20 in the post-test, while the obtained t-value of 10.61 was higher than the t-table value of 2.048. These findings provide direct empirical support for the use of I Spy as a vocabulary-learning activity.

The I Spy Game is essentially a guessing activity in which students identify an object based on a clue provided by another player. In its common classroom form, one student selects an object that can be seen and provides a clue, after which the other students attempt to identify the object. In language-learning contexts, the clues can be adapted to students' proficiency levels and learning objectives. For beginning learners, clues may involve the initial letter of a word, whereas more advanced learners may be asked to provide clues related to colour, shape, size, function, location, or other characteristics. Such adaptation allows the teacher to control the level of vocabulary difficulty while maintaining the interactive nature of the game.

In the present study, the researcher adapted the I Spy Game for junior high school students as a vocabulary-learning activity. Rather than requiring students only to memorize vocabulary items, the activity encouraged them to identify objects, recall the corresponding English words, and communicate their answers with classmates. The game therefore involves both receptive and productive aspects of vocabulary learning. Students must first understand the clue and recognize the possible referent, and they must then retrieve and produce the appropriate English word. This combination is consistent with research emphasizing that vocabulary knowledge involves multiple dimensions and that active processing can contribute to vocabulary development (Fan, 2020; Rasti et al., 2020).

The procedure used in the present study was also adapted to the students' classroom context. The teacher divided the students into small groups, explained the rules, and demonstrated the activity before the game began. One student provided a clue concerning an object, while the other students attempted to identify the object using the vocabulary they had learned. Students who successfully guessed the object could then take a turn providing clues. This procedure encouraged turn-taking, interaction, repetition, and active participation among students. The collaborative nature of the activity is also consistent with Bahari's (2020) findings that game-based collaborative vocabulary learning can contribute to the development of vocabulary size and depth.

The effectiveness of the I Spy Game found in the present study can therefore be interpreted within the broader literature on game-based vocabulary learning. Previous research has demonstrated positive effects of game-based approaches on vocabulary learning outcomes, vocabulary retention, and learner engagement (Alfadil, 2020; Chen & Hsu, 2020; Salim et al., 2020; Thompson & von Gillern, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Although these studies used different types of digital or non-digital games and different research designs, their findings consistently suggest that game-based activities can create additional opportunities for learners to process and practice vocabulary. Nappu's (2025) study provides more direct evidence for the I Spy Game itself, while the present classroom action research extends this line of inquiry by examining its implementation through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection in a junior high school classroom.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the game requires appropriate classroom management. Because students participate actively and may compete to identify the correct object, the activity can generate considerable interaction and noise. Moreover, group-based guessing activities may allow more confident students to dominate while less active students participate less frequently. These issues are consistent with the broader observation of Yang et al. (2020), who emphasized that competitive elements and task difficulty need to be appropriately balanced because excessive competition or challenge may negatively affect some learners. Therefore, the teacher needs to establish clear rules, distribute turns fairly, monitor group participation, and provide encouragement to students who are less confident. The teacher should also adjust the difficulty of the clues according to students' vocabulary proficiency so that the game remains challenging but manageable.

Overall, the previous literature provides a strong theoretical and empirical basis for investigating the Eye Spy Game as a vocabulary-learning strategy. Research published in 2020 demonstrates that game-based, interactive, collaborative, and retrieval-oriented activities can support vocabulary acquisition and learner engagement, while Nappu (2025) provides direct evidence concerning the use of I Spy for vocabulary mastery. The present study therefore seeks to examine whether the implementation of the Eye Spy Game can improve the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka and to identify how the game influences students' participation during the learning process.

Vocabulary mastery can be understood as the ability to recognize, understand, recall, and use words appropriately in different contexts. In the context of English learning, vocabulary knowledge involves more than simply memorizing word meanings. It includes several aspects, such as pronunciation, spelling, meaning, and the ability to use words appropriately in sentences. These aspects are important because students need to recognize a word when they hear or read it and also be able to produce and use it when communicating. Recent studies on vocabulary learning through games have similarly measured vocabulary mastery through students' ability to recognize and produce vocabulary items, demonstrating that vocabulary development involves both receptive and productive knowledge (Lubis, 2020; Kurniah et al., 2020).

Pronunciation refers to students' ability to say a word correctly, while spelling refers to their ability to write the word accurately. Meaning involves students' ability to understand the meaning of a vocabulary item, including its meaning when used in a particular context. The ability to use words in sentences, meanwhile, reflects students' capacity to apply vocabulary appropriately after recognizing its form and meaning. These aspects are relevant to the present study because the Eye Spy Game requires students to listen to clues, identify objects, recall the corresponding vocabulary, pronounce the words when answering, and subsequently record the vocabulary in written form. Therefore, the activity engages several dimensions of vocabulary knowledge rather than focusing exclusively on memorizing word meanings.

Vocabulary can also be broadly categorized into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can recognize and understand when they encounter them through listening or reading, whereas productive vocabulary refers to words that learners can actively retrieve and use in speaking or writing. In game-based vocabulary learning, these two types of knowledge can be activated together. For example, when students listen to a clue and identify the object, they engage in receptive processing; when they pronounce, write, or use the corresponding word, they engage in productive processing. Research on game-based vocabulary instruction has shown that interactive games can provide opportunities for students to actively recall and use vocabulary rather than simply receive vocabulary explanations from the teacher (Helma & Jufriadi, 2020; Nurpatima et al., 2020).

The use of games is therefore relevant to vocabulary mastery because games can create opportunities for repeated exposure, active recall, interaction, and meaningful use of vocabulary. Helma and Jufriadi (2020), for example, found that the use of the Observe and Remember Game improved students' vocabulary mastery, with the mean score increasing from 51.00 in the pre-test to 92.33 in the post-test. Similarly, Nurpatima et al. (2020) reported that the use of a Treasure Hunt Game contributed to students' vocabulary mastery. These findings suggest that game-based activities can provide a more active learning environment in which students interact with vocabulary while completing meaningful tasks.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, adapted from the model of Kemmis and McTaggart (1998), consisting of planning, implementing and monitoring the action, observation, and analysis and reflection, repeated across cycles until the success criteria were met. The researcher acted as the teacher delivering lessons, while the English teacher of SMPN 3 Kolaka acted as observer, assessing the researcher's teaching activity.

Setting and Subject

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka, located on Jl. Bokeo, Sabilambo, Kolaka, during the 2023/2024 academic year. The subjects were 18 students of class VII.B, selected because preliminary research indicated that this class had particularly low English vocabulary compared to other first-grade classes at the school.

Preliminary Research and Planning

Preliminary research was conducted on 3 August 2023 through an interview with the English teacher, which confirmed that students had limited English vocabulary, difficulty memorizing new words, and correspondingly weak listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Based on these findings, the researcher planned each cycle by preparing a suitable method (the Eye Spy Game), designing student and teacher observation sheets, preparing lesson plans and teaching materials, and setting the criteria for success: a process criterion requiring students to be more active during the teaching and learning process, and a product criterion requiring at least 80% of students to score 75 or above (the school's KKM) on the vocabulary test.

Implementation Procedure

Each cycle consisted of four meetings of English lessons on nouns related to a specific topic (Table 1), with the fourth meeting in each cycle reserved for the vocabulary evaluation test. Each teaching meeting followed a three-part structure. In the pre-activity (about 10 minutes), the teacher greeted students, led a prayer, checked attendance, and motivated students by introducing the day's topic. In the whilst-activity (about 40 minutes), the teacher explained the rules of the Eye Spy Game, divided students into four groups, and had each group take turns acting as the “spy”, describing an object by saying “I spy with my little eye, something that …”, while the other groups tried to guess the object; correct guesses earned points, and after playing, the teacher and students checked each group's written answers using a dictionary before determining the winning group. Winning groups received a small reward, while the group with the lowest score was assigned vocabulary to memorize as a form of follow-up practice. In the post-activity, the teacher asked students to summarize the lesson, gave appreciation and motivation, and reminded students to review the material at home.

Instruments and Data Collection

Two instruments were used to collect data. The first was a set of structured observation sheets, one for students and one for the teacher, used during the first three meetings of each cycle to record activity and behavior during the teaching and learning process. The second was a 20-item multiple-choice vocabulary test, administered at the end of each cycle (the fourth meeting), used to determine students' vocabulary mastery and progress after each cycle of treatment.

Technique of Data Analysis

Observation sheets were scored using a four-point rubric for each indicator of activity, ranging from 1 (activity not seen at all) to 4 (activity looks perfect); total scores for students were classified into four categories, very good (33-44), good (21-32), poor (15-20), and very poor (11-14), and total scores for the teacher were classified similarly using a slightly different range (31-40 very good, 21-30 good, 15-20 poor, 10-14 very poor), adapted from Arikunto (2006). For the vocabulary test, each correct answer was scored 1 and each incorrect answer 0; a student's final score was calculated as the number of correct answers divided by the total number of items, multiplied by 100. The percentage of students achieving the KKM of 75 was then calculated as the number of students who passed divided by the total number of students, multiplied by 100 (adapted from Depdikbud, 2002). A cycle was considered successful if at least 80% of students achieved a score of 75 or above; otherwise, the cycle was considered unsuccessful and the research proceeded to the next cycle.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Preliminary research on 3 August 2023 confirmed that class VII.B students had limited English vocabulary, difficulty memorizing new words, and correspondingly weak listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In Cycle I, the Eye Spy Game was implemented across three teaching meetings covering nouns related to objects in the classroom, the living room, and the kitchen, with the fourth meeting reserved for the evaluation test (Table 1).

At the first meeting, many students were silent, some out of shyness at meeting the researcher for the first time and some due to limited vocabulary, resulting in a "poor" observation score for both students (19) and the teacher (20), the latter reflecting the researcher's own incomplete preparation at this early stage. Students were divided into four groups, with one member per group acting as the "spy" describing an object for the other groups to guess; the winning group received a small reward, while the group with the lowest score was assigned ten vocabulary words to memorize as a form of follow-up practice, a consequence some students completed the same day and others the following day. By the second meeting, both scores rose to the "good" category (24 for students, 25 for the teacher), with more students attempting to answer, though some still struggled to pronounce vocabulary while playing the game in English; the penalty for the lowest-scoring group was increased slightly to encourage more careful play. At the third meeting, scores continued to improve (29 for both students and the teacher, "good"), with students appearing more active and enthusiastic in naming objects around the kitchen, although teamwork remained inconsistent, with some students working individually or arguing within their groups (Table 2).

The Cycle I vocabulary test, administered at the fourth meeting, showed that only 11 of 18 students (56%) achieved the KKM of 75, short of the 80% completeness required for the cycle to be considered successful (Table 3). Reflection with the collaborating teacher identified three main problems: many students remained passive, had limited vocabulary, and were shy to participate; students had difficulty memorizing new vocabulary; and teamwork within groups was still weak. Corresponding solutions were planned for Cycle II, including offering rewards to motivate active participation, directing students to write down and check memorized vocabulary using a dictionary, and reorganizing groups at each meeting (Table 4).

In Cycle II, conducted from 20 February 2024, the Eye Spy Game was applied with the planned adjustments, covering a review of classroom and bag-related nouns before extending to nouns in the kitchen, living room, and bedroom (Table 1). At the first meeting, the researcher reminded students that the Cycle I test result had not met the passing standard and revisited nouns already introduced, this time providing a vocabulary sheet and allowing dictionary use to support memorization; groups were also reorganized based on class roll order rather than the earlier grouping, and the penalty for the lowest-scoring group was raised to twelve words to memorize. Observation scores improved further across all three teaching meetings: student activity rose from 25 (good) to 28 (good) to 34 (very good), while teacher activity rose from 26 (good) to 27 (good) to 31 (very good) (Table 2). Students were reported as more active, enthusiastic, and cooperative in their groups than in Cycle I, and the researcher was able to apply the game more smoothly, having addressed the preparation and motivation issues identified after Cycle I.

The Cycle II vocabulary test showed that 15 of 18 students (83%) achieved the KKM of 75, exceeding the 80% completeness required and meeting the study's success criterion (Table 3). Because this criterion was met, the researcher and the collaborating teacher agreed to conclude the research after two cycles.

Table 2. Vocabulary Topics Taught in Each Meeting

Cycle	Meeting	Date	Vocabulary Topic
I	1	30 Jan 2024	Nouns: objects in the classroom
I	2	1 Feb 2024	Nouns: objects in the living room
I	3	early Feb 2024	Nouns: objects in the kitchen
I	4	12 Feb 2024	Evaluation test (Cycle I)
II	1	20 Feb 2024	Nouns: objects in the classroom and in the bag (review)
II	2	late Feb 2024	Nouns: objects in the kitchen (review, extended)
II	3	early Mar 2024	Nouns: objects in the living room and bedroom
II	4	mid Mar 2024	Evaluation test (Cycle II)

Table 3. Observation Scores of Students' and Teacher's Activity

Meeting	Students' Activity, Cycle I	Teacher's Activity, Cycle I	Students' Activity, Cycle II	Teacher's Activity, Cycle II
1	19 (Poor)	20 (Poor)	25 (Good)	26 (Good)
2	24 (Good)	25 (Good)	28 (Good)	27 (Good)
3	29 (Good)	29 (Good)	34 (Very good)	31 (Very good)

Table 4. Comparison of Vocabulary Test Results between Cycle I and Cycle II

Item	Cycle I	Cycle II
Number of students	18	18
KKM (minimummastery criterion)	75	75
Minimum completeness required	80%	80%
Students who passed	11	15
Students who failed	7	3
Completeness achieved	56%	83%
Conclusion	Failed (below 80%)	Successful (above 80%)

Table 5. Problems in Cycle I and Solutions Applied in Cycle II

Problem Identified in Cycle I	Solution Applied in Cycle II
Most students were passive, had limited vocabulary, and were shy to participate	The researcher offered rewards such as praise and small prizes to motivate students to participate and concentrate more actively
Students had difficulty memorizing new vocabulary	The researcher directed students to frequently write down memorized vocabulary and check it using a dictionary
Teamwork within groups was still weak, with some students working individually or arguing	The researcher reorganized the groups at each meeting in the new cycle so students worked with different peers

Because the thesis on which this article is based did not tabulate the exact vocabulary items covered in each meeting, Table 5 lists illustrative examples typical of each topic area to give readers a concrete sense of the noun categories taught; the specific word lists used in the original classroom sessions may have varied.

Table 6. Illustrative Vocabulary Items by Topic

Topic	Sample Vocabulary Items (illustrative)
Objects in the classroom	blackboard, chalk, eraser, desk, chair, bookshelf, map, flag, ruler, pen
Objects in the bag	book, pencil, eraser, ruler, notebook, pencil case, glue, scissors, calculator, sharpener
Objects in the kitchen	stove, pan, plate, spoon, fork, knife, cup, refrigerator, sink, kettle
Objects in the living room	sofa, television, table, lamp, curtain, carpet, clock, cabinet, painting, fan
Objects in the bedroom	bed, pillow, blanket, wardrobe, mirror, lamp, curtain, alarm clock, hanger, rug

Discussion

The results indicate that the Eye Spy Game was effective in improving vocabulary mastery among first-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka, with student completeness rising from 56% in Cycle I to 83% in Cycle II, alongside a parallel improvement in both student and teacher observed activity from "poor" to "very good." This finding is consistent with recent research showing that game-based activities can create more engaging learning environments and support vocabulary development. Cahyati, Astutik, and Milarisa (2020), for example, found that the Observe and Remember Game improved students' vocabulary mastery, with the average score increasing from 49.82 in the pre-test to 68.46 in the post-test. Similarly, Helma and Jufriadi (2020) reported an increase in students' vocabulary scores from 51.00 to 92.33 after the implementation of the Observe and Remember Game. These findings suggest that games can encourage students to participate more actively in vocabulary learning rather than relying solely on conventional explanation and memorization. In the present study, the Eye Spy Game similarly required students to actively describe and guess objects, which provided opportunities for meaningful engagement with the target vocabulary.

The improvement across cycles also illustrates the value of the reflection stage built into classroom action research. The specific problems identified after Cycle I, namely passivity and shyness, difficulty memorizing vocabulary, and weak group teamwork, were directly addressed through the solutions applied in Cycle II, namely rewards for active participation, dictionary-supported vocabulary memorization, and regrouping students at each meeting (Table 4). The clear improvement in both the observation scores and the vocabulary test results in Cycle II suggests that these adjustments were largely successful. This interpretation is supported by research showing that game-based vocabulary activities can increase students' engagement and active participation in the learning process. Nurpatima et al. (2020), for instance, found that the use of Treasure Hunt Game improved vocabulary mastery and stimulated students' engagement because the activity encouraged them to participate and compete in the learning process. However, the persistence of some teamwork difficulties in the present study indicates that active participation does not automatically occur equally among all students. Therefore, careful grouping, turn-taking, and teacher monitoring remain important when implementing competitive or collaborative vocabulary games.

These findings can also be understood in relation to the assessment orientation of the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013/K13), which emphasizes the development of students' competencies in a comprehensive manner. Within this curriculum framework, learning outcomes are not viewed solely in terms of knowledge acquisition but are assessed through distinct dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Such an assessment structure provides a clearer basis for identifying different aspects of students' development. In the context of the present study, the Eye Spy Game was particularly relevant because its implementation did not merely involve students memorizing vocabulary as a form of knowledge. Students were also required to use the target vocabulary actively when describing and guessing objects, while cooperation, participation, confidence, and interaction with group members could be observed during the activity. Thus, the game provided opportunities for learning and assessment that were compatible with the comprehensive competency orientation of K13.

Furthermore, the relatively clear and structured learning syllabus and instructional devices under K13 can support the systematic implementation of classroom activities such as the Eye Spy Game. When the syllabus, lesson plans, learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment procedures are clearly structured, teachers have a more consistent framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating instructional interventions. In the present study, this structured framework was useful for identifying

learning problems in Cycle I, implementing improvements in Cycle II, and subsequently observing changes in students' learning outcomes and classroom participation. Therefore, the improvement observed in this study should be understood not only in relation to the game itself but also in relation to its implementation within a structured instructional and assessment framework. The compatibility between an interactive game and clearly defined learning objectives and assessment procedures may have helped the researcher monitor both students' vocabulary achievement and their participation during the learning process.

These findings are further supported by recent studies examining the use of games for vocabulary learning. Kurniah, Rusliana, and Pratiwi (2020) found that students who learned vocabulary through the Spot It! Card Game improved their mean score from 5.42 in the pre-test to 8.89 in the post-test, while the control group showed a smaller improvement from 6.36 to 7.91. The researchers concluded that the game was more effective than conventional instruction in their distance-learning context. More specifically, Nappu, Hasnawati, and Humairah (2025) investigated the I Spy Game among seventh-grade students and found that the mean vocabulary score increased from 54.05 in the pre-test to 76.20 in the post-test. Their statistical analysis also produced a t-value of 10.61, which exceeded the t-table value of 2.048, indicating a significant improvement after the implementation of the I Spy Game. These findings provide particularly relevant support for the present study because both studies involve junior high school students and use I Spy as a vocabulary-learning activity. However, while Nappu et al. (2025) used a pre-experimental one-group pre-test-post-test design, the present study employed Classroom Action Research involving two cycles.

This study is limited by its small sample of 18 students from a single class and school, and by its relatively short duration of two cycles, so its findings should be interpreted as evidence from a specific classroom context rather than a generalizable claim about the Eye Spy Game across all junior high school settings. The persistence of some teamwork difficulties even in the more successful second cycle also suggests that group-management strategies beyond simple regrouping may be worth exploring in future applications of the game. In addition, although the K13 framework provides opportunities to assess knowledge, skills, and attitudes separately, the present study primarily focuses on students' vocabulary mastery and classroom activity. Therefore, future studies could investigate more explicitly how the Eye Spy Game contributes to each competency dimension, particularly students' speaking skills, confidence, cooperation, and other observable attitudes.

From a practical standpoint, the rise in completeness from 56% to 83% over just two cycles suggests that the Eye Spy Game can produce a meaningful improvement within a relatively short instructional period, which may make it an attractive option for teachers working under time constraints. Because the game requires no special equipment beyond everyday classroom objects, it is also a low-cost strategy that schools with limited resources could adopt without additional investment in materials or technology. Its active and collaborative nature is also consistent with findings from recent game-based vocabulary studies, which indicate that games can encourage students to become more actively involved in the learning process (Cahyati et al., 2020; Helma & Jufriadi, 2020; Nurpatima et al., 2020). Consequently, the Eye Spy Game can be considered not only a practical technique for improving vocabulary mastery but also an instructional activity that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate vocabulary knowledge, apply language skills, and develop positive classroom participation and interaction.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the Eye Spy Game had a significant effect on the vocabulary mastery of first-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kolaka. In Cycle I, only 11 of 18 students (56%) achieved the KKM of 75, so the cycle was considered unsuccessful against the 80% completeness criterion. In Cycle II, 15 of 18 students (83%) achieved the KKM, meeting the success criterion and leading the researcher and collaborating teacher to conclude the research. Observed student activity rose from 19 (poor) in the first meeting of Cycle I to 29 (good) by its third meeting, and from 25 (good) in the first meeting of Cycle II to 34 (very good) by its third meeting, indicating that the Eye Spy Game also motivated students to become more active participants in the learning process. For future researchers, three specific suggestions are offered based on the researcher's own experience: first, because the game requires careful monitoring to ensure students play correctly, researchers are advised to divide the class into only one, two, or three groups at a time rather than four, since four groups proved difficult to control and led to some students exchanging answers improperly; second, because some students may still become bored despite an engaging method, researchers are encouraged to stay innovative, for instance by giving prizes

to winning groups and a mild penalty to losing groups to sustain enthusiasm; and third, the Eye Spy Game is not limited to junior high school and could be extended to higher levels such as senior high school, provided the vocabulary used is adjusted to match students' proficiency level.

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