ELEVATING EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH EDUCANDY GAME: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian students often struggle to master English vocabulary due to limited exposure to the language. Effective teaching strategies that cater to students' needs are crucial for vocabulary acquisition. This study investigates the use of the Educandy game to enhance vocabulary mastery among eleventh-grade students at MA Ihyaul Islam during the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Employing the collaborative classroom action research (CAR) model by Kemmis and Taggart, the study was conducted over two cycles with 20 eleventh-grade students. The researcher collaborated with an English teacher in planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the game-based learning sessions. Various instruments were used, including observation sheets to monitor game implementation, interviews to explore related issues, and field notes to document all research activities. The findings indicate that the Educandy game significantly improved vocabulary mastery among the students. This digital tool engaged and motivated the learners, fostering active participation in vocabulary learning. All students met the minimum completion criteria in both cycles. The CAR approach facilitated continuous improvements based on observations, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the study.

Keywords: *Classroom action research, Educandy games, Eleventh graders, Vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

The English is spoken all over the world and is used by people from different countries to talk to each other. Harahap (2023) says this makes English an "international language." Learning English is important because it helps us share knowledge and communicate about science and technology. Thus, English is necessary for effective communication in many situations and for many reasons. Moreover, English is taught at various levels of education in Indonesia, starting from elementary school up to universities. According to (Andriani, 2016), English

is considered the primary foreign language and is essential for accessing information, understanding and advancing in science, technology, arts, and culture, as well as fostering relationships with other countries. Mastering English is crucial for Indonesia as it facilitates global connections, enables communication with people from diverse backgrounds, and contributes to a successful career. Since English is spoken worldwide, learning it also allows individuals to explore different cultures and expand their knowledge.

In Indonesia, teachers frequently encounter obstacles when teaching English vocabulary effectively. Despite these challenges, it is crucial to deliver comprehensive vocabulary instruction, going beyond mere memorization, to ensure students comprehend texts thoroughly and cultivate robust language skills in the long run. Furthermore, Rahman (2015) highlights that teaching vocabulary without context is feasible but ineffective. The primary strategy for successful vocabulary teaching emphasizes the significance of offering students ample opportunities to grasp the conceptual connections among words within the content they are studying.

Vocabulary holds significant importance in language learning. A strong command of vocabulary is highly beneficial when acquiring a foreign language. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students can articulate their thoughts, exchange knowledge, and comprehend each other effectively through the use of vocabulary. Additionally, a robust vocabulary facilitates better understanding of the subject matter being studied. As students expand their knowledge, they also enhance both the quality and quantity of their vocabulary, leading to more effective language usage. Furthermore, Mukti (2012) suggests that a good understanding of vocabulary greatly influences the communication process positively. Thus, it can be concluded from these statements that learning vocabulary is paramount for effective communication.

Indonesian individuals face challenges in mastering English vocabulary primarily because they use English in limited contexts. Moreover, for many, English is considered a secondary language. Munir (2016) highlights that while English holds the status of an official second language in Indonesia, its influence

extends to various aspects of daily life. This differs significantly from native English speakers who utilize the language in their everyday interactions. Consequently, Indonesian people, particularly students, often struggle to attain proficiency in vocabulary, making it difficult for them to excel in English, especially in communication.

In English language teaching, particularly in vocabulary instruction, the selection of learning strategies tailored to students' needs proves highly advantageous (Hamer & Lely, 2019). Teachers should employ engaging strategies in the classroom to ensure comprehensive understanding, sustain student interest, and prevent boredom, thus facilitating quicker comprehension. Antara (2022) defines language learning strategies as specific actions undertaken by learners to streamline the learning process, rendering it more enjoyable, independent, efficient, and adaptable to new situations. From this perspective, language learning strategies encompass a set pattern or particular habits adopted by learners to optimize the acquisition, retention, and utilization of information, thereby expediting language proficiency. In senior high schools in Indonesia, teaching vocabulary is a continuous and gradual endeavor. Creating an immersive and stimulating environment is crucial to facilitate effective vocabulary learning. Teachers must tailor their teaching approaches to accommodate the diverse needs and abilities of their students.

To improve vocabulary teaching in Indonesia, it is important to address the errors in vocabulary teaching by incorporating relevant cultural content, adapting teaching methods, and providing sufficient opportunities for students to actively use and practice new vocabulary. In addition, making the learning experience interesting and interactive can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition. The rise of vocabulary teaching using digital and conventional games has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages, according to (Revalita & Shofiyuddin, 2023) digital games can increase student engagement and motivation, as they often present learning as an enjoyable and interactive experience. Besides that, Mukti (2012)states that unequal access to technology may create disparities in learning opportunities, as not all students have equal

access to digital resources. It can be concluded above that the use of digital games in the learning process has advantages and disadvantages.

In teaching vocabulary, a teacher may realize that she cannot apply only one or two strategies for all levels. In addition, he is also required to be able to recognize the character of students as well as choose the right strategy for them. teachers should know that children are closed with something fun and happy. So, teachers must be selective in choosing learning strategies to introduce a learning material to students. Nugroho (2007) states that strategy is an individual's internal ability to think, solve problems, and make decisions. During the thinking process, individuals may experience difficulties. Therefore, strategies are essential for each individual to get through these challenges. A good and fun learning strategy would automatically make it easier for teachers to attract students' interest in the learning process.

However, based on the small talk during the teaching and learning activities, the researcher found the problems of the situation in the classroom. Firstly, the atmosphere lacked liveliness, leading to student boredom and inactivity. Additionally, students exhibited low attention and motivation levels, and disruptive behavior, such as noise-making, was observed during English class. These challenges highlight the importance of addressing classroom dynamics to enhance the overall learning experience.

Other problems were found dealing with the classroom situation. Firstly, the teacher did not employ a variety of teaching methods, and the way the teacher delivered the material was less attractive. As a result, many students did not concentrate on the lesson. Second, the teacher uses a traditional method to teach vocabulary.

This research presented a strategy in vocabulary learning for senior high school. This strategy was very fun and interesting for young learners. The teaching strategy in question was about "The use of games (Educandy) in vocabulary teaching for high school students," which was carried out with a set of rules in mind.

This research centers on vocabulary mastery, prompted by observations that senior high school students struggle with acquiring English vocabulary. This challenge underscores the researcher's decision to investigate vocabulary proficiency at the senior high school level. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of interest in vocabulary learning among these students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language basically serves as a symbolic system for communication. This suggests that language allows individuals to communicate with each other, whether in their native language or a foreign language. Moreover, the rapid advancement of globalization requires people around the world to master various languages, especially English.

The senior high school English curriculum encompasses various essential components aimed at enhancing students' language skills and preparing them for college-level study. These components include reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Furthermore, the curriculum integrates research and composition, critical reading, and literary analysis, which are vital for developing students' analytical and interpretive abilities. It's important to recognize that the specific content and structure of the curriculum may differ depending on the regulations set by individual schools and states.

English holds a significant position as an international language, serving as a means of communication among people from diverse nations. According to Harahap (2023), English as an International Language refers to its widespread use across borders for communication purposes. The global study of English underscores its importance as a universal language facilitating access to knowledge, scientific advancements, and technological innovations. Consequently, proficiency in English is indispensable for effective communication across various contexts and for diverse purposes.

In line with Berta (2020) vocabulary comprises the entirety of words known and used by an individual, encompassing the lexicon of a particular language. Recognizing the importance of vocabulary in language proficiency, the English

curriculum emphasizes vocabulary development alongside other language skills to equip students with the linguistic tools necessary for effective communication and comprehension.

Syahraeni (2010) Vocabulary is the foundation of language, encompassing the words and phrases that allow us to communicate ideas, thoughts, and emotions effectively. It refers to the inventory of words that a person knows and understands, including their meanings, spellings, and usage in context. Meanwhile, Jannah (2011) Building a rich vocabulary is essential for language learners as it enhances their ability to comprehend and express themselves fluently.

In the realm of learning English, Fitria & Roziqi (2022) said that vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role. Since English boasts a vast lexicon derived from various sources such as Latin, Greek, and Germanic languages, mastering its vocabulary unlocks the door to comprehension and expression across diverse contexts. Whether one aims to engage in everyday conversations, navigate academic texts, or pursue professional endeavors, a robust vocabulary is indispensable.

Media, in the context of teaching vocabulary, refers to the diverse tools and resources utilized to facilitate learning and retention (Simanungkalit et al., 2023). It encompasses traditional mediums like textbooks, flashcards, and worksheets, as well as modern digital platforms such as educational websites, apps, and multimedia presentations. November & Alchorni (2023) Media aids in presenting vocabulary in engaging formats, catering to different learning styles and preferences.

According to Wardani & Ummah (2018) Games represent a dynamic and interactive form of media for teaching and learning vocabulary. Incorporating games into language learning activities not only makes the process enjoyable but also enhances retention through active participation and reinforcement. Word games like Scrabble, crossword puzzles, and word association exercises stimulate critical thinking and creativity while reinforcing vocabulary acquisition. While, Rezi et al., (2023). Digital games and apps further gamify the learning experience,

offering immersive environments and interactive challenges that motivate learners to engage with and master new words and phrases (Thoyyib & Jannah, 2022). By integrating game media into vocabulary instruction, educators can create dynamic and effective learning environments that foster enthusiasm and proficiency in English language acquisition.

Educandy games are interactive educational activities designed to engage learners in vocabulary acquisition through a variety of engaging exercises and challenges (Simanungkalit et al., 2023). These games often feature customizable options that allow educators to tailor activities to meet the specific needs and proficiency levels of their students. Beside that, Jannah (2011) Educandy games may include word matching, word search, hangman, and other vocabulary-based activities, all presented in a fun and accessible format.

The use of Educandy games for mastering vocabulary offers numerous benefits to language learners. Firstly, these games provide an enjoyable and motivating learning experience that encourages active participation and sustained engagement. By incorporating elements of competition, collaboration, and rewards, Simanungkalit et al., (2023) Educandy games captivate learners' attention and foster a positive attitude towards vocabulary acquisition.

Moreover, Educandy games offer opportunities for repeated exposure and practice, which are essential for reinforcing vocabulary retention (Rezi et al., 2023). Through interactive activities and quizzes, learners can revisit and review words and phrases in various contexts, thereby deepening their understanding and internalizing new vocabulary more effectively. Furthermore, Educandy games promote the development of essential language skills such as spelling, pronunciation, and word recognition. By presenting vocabulary in diverse formats and challenging learners to apply their knowledge in different contexts, these games facilitate holistic language learning and proficiency development.

RESEARCH METHOD

To address the research problem, classroom action research (CAR) serves as a methodological approach undertaken by the researcher to resolve specific

classroom issues or seek solutions to context-specific problems (Legesse & Kitila, 2024; Yin, 2016). Kemmis (2009) outlines the components of CAR as a series of activities, forming a cyclic process from action planning to reflective evaluation, known as the cycle of research. This cycle comprises four stages: planning, action implementation, observation and interpretation, and analysis and reflection.

This research was conducted at MA Ihyaul Islam it is located in Sitarda Street No. 2 Bolo, Ujungpangkah Gresik East Java 61154. The research subject were the eleventh grade students who consisted of twenty students. Based on the interview with the English teacher in the preliminary research, the researcher found that the eleventh grade students had difficulty in remembering new words. With the method and strategy of classroom action research (CAR) design was employed, adapted from the model proposed by Kemmis and Taggart (as cited in Andriani, 2016). The model follows a cyclical process, as depicted in Figure 1, involving iterative phases of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Figure 1 : Cyclical Model of Action Research by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (2014)
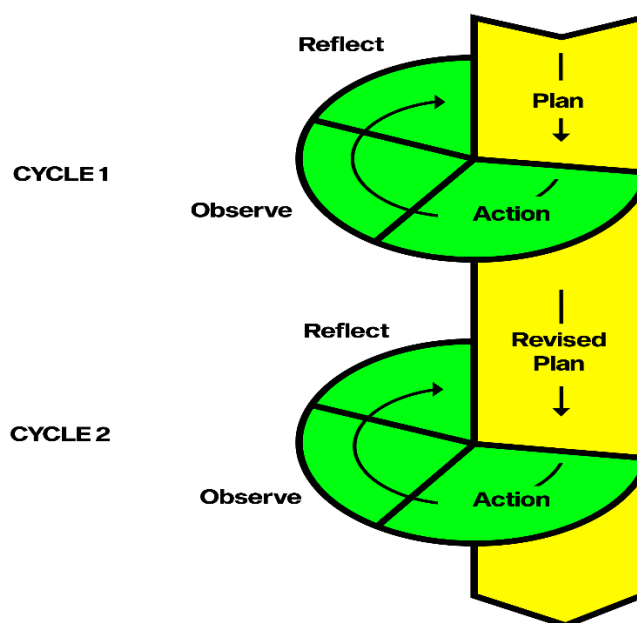
For this research, a collaborative action research approach was utilized, emphasizing the cultivation of an inquiry-based environment within communities of practice, where diverse stakeholders serve as co-researchers (Ridwan & Athena, 2023). In collaborative action research, the focus of inquiry is determined by the researcher, who assumes the role of teacher-researcher responsible for conducting the teaching and learning process. Additionally, an English teacher collaborates as an observer, closely monitoring the teaching and learning activities, and documenting observations and field notes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study include data on the motivation and mastery of vocabulary of grade 11 students in the teaching and learning process in cycle 1 and cycle 2. The data were obtained from various sources including vocabulary song material in grade 11, observation data, and field notes.

Findings and Discussion in Cycle 1

Findings on The Teaching-Learning Process in Cycle 1

The teaching and learning process during the first cycle was based on observation data, interview and field notes. According to the field notes, more than 80% of students were enthusiastic and active in participating in the teaching and learning process using the methods and educational games provided. They responded well to the teacher's questions, which included asking about students' preferences in singing. Ninety-five percent of students said they enjoyed singing, which was pertinent because the study focused on songs.

The teacher then provided material on the definition, generic structure, and language features of a song. Afterwards, the teacher assigned an exercise using one song, instructing students to understand its meaning and identify unfamiliar vocabulary. Next, the teacher introduced the song "Heal the World" by Michael Jackson and asked students to list 10 unfamiliar vocabulary words. One hundred percent of students were enthusiastic, singing together while recording vocabulary. The teacher wrote the unfamiliar vocabulary on the blackboard, and together they

searched for the meanings. Students were then given 10–15 minutes to memorize the vocabulary.

Afterwards, the teacher introduced the Educandy game and distributed links and class codes to the students. During the first meeting of the first cycle, the teacher used a word search game and gave students 15 minutes to find the foreign vocabulary they had memorized earlier. Ninety-five percent of students were enthusiastic about the Educandy game.

According to the field notes, the collaborator suggested using more current songs. Nevertheless, the collaborator stated that the first meeting was quite satisfactory, with the engaging media being a novel experience for both collaborators and students, which made the students active and interested in learning.

At the second meeting, students maintained their enthusiasm for the song material. Before starting, the teacher reviewed the vocabulary from the first meeting. Ninety-five percent of students still remembered and memorized the vocabulary, while 5% could recall 7 out of 10 words. The activities during the second meeting were similar to the first, except that a different song was used: a Westlife song. The Educandy game remained a word search activity. All students were actively engaged and enthusiastic about learning, taking notes, and working on the questions. After completing the exercise, the teacher reviewed the foreign vocabulary with the students, and 98% of them retained and remembered the vocabulary they had learned.

Based on the field notes, the collaborator had no specific notes for the teacher, only stating that the second meeting went well and was satisfactory. The collaborator did suggest the teacher manage some students who were disruptive during the learning process.

Findings on the Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Cycle 1

The vocabulary test assessment in the first cycle was conducted to measure the students' vocabulary proficiency and improvement. The assessment results indicated that 100% of students scored above the school's minimum completeness criteria score of 75. Additionally, the English teacher noted that nearly all students

achieved a perfect score of 100, with only 5 students scoring 90. However, the researcher observed that students still struggled slightly with correctly remembering vocabulary, particularly with accurate pronunciation.

Reflection on Cycle 1

Based on the data collected in the first cycle from the students' final assignment and the learning process, the final assignment calculated the percentage of students scoring perfect marks and above the KKM (Minimum Completeness Criteria). In addition, the observation sheet showed that students' interest and enthusiasm in the learning process was very good. However, although almost all students received perfect scores, they still struggled with correctly pronouncing English words.

Given these findings, a second cycle is necessary to address the students' pronunciation challenges and further reinforce their vocabulary skills. In cycle 2, targeted pronunciation exercises can be integrated into the learning process, providing students with the opportunity to practice and improve their pronunciation of English words. The second cycle can offer additional support and feedback to students who continue to experience difficulties with pronunciation. By incorporating focused activities and exercises that emphasize pronunciation, students can gain confidence in their speaking abilities and further enhance their language skills.

Findings and Discussion in Cycle 2

Finding on the Teaching-Learning Process in Cycle 2

In the second cycle, the researcher was still the teacher who taught in the class that applied the Educandy game. Meanwhile, the English teacher as a collaborator observed the process of learning activities using the Educandy game. In the second cycle, researchers observed the results of field notes as well as observation sheets that had been made in the first cycle, the learning process at each meeting was 60 minutes.

The first meeting of the second cycle was held on February 5, 2024, before starting the learning process the teacher started by saying greetings, all students

answered the teacher's greetings, after that the teacher led a prayer before the learning process, after finishing praying the teacher asked the students if the students still remembered the vocabulary that had been memorized and learned last week, only a few students answered because almost all students had forgotten the vocabulary that had been memorized last week during the first cycle. When listening to the students' answers, the teacher invited the students to reopen their notes and recall the vocabulary that had been learned last week, the teacher gave 5 minutes to the students to recall. After finishing reviewing the learning process last week, the teacher asked random questions to students about vocabulary, for example "what is the English of the future?" students answered correctly "future".

In the main activity, the teacher continues the song material in the second cycle, on the first meeting of the second cycle the teacher gives a song by Shawn mendes entitled Imagination, the teacher presents the music video of the song Imagination on the projector layer, students observe while recording foreign vocabulary in the song, the activities in the second and first cycles are similar, it's just that in the second cycle using different games. After the song was finished, the teacher asked the students about the foreign vocabulary that had been recorded by the students, after which the teacher wrote the foreign vocabulary on the blackboard as well as gave directions to the students to find the meaning of the vocabulary. Then, the vocabulary that has been found and recorded on the board is memorized by all students, the teacher gives 10-15 minutes for students to memorize and remember the vocabulary.

In the next activity is working on questions in the Educandy game, in the second cycle the teacher uses a crossword game, students are given vocabulary questions in Indonesian, then students fill in with English about the vocabulary in the questions that have been given by the teacher. When working on questions with Educandy, students were very happy and enthusiastic because according to them, they could learn and play. Furthermore, after completing the work the teacher reviewed the students' work, the teacher appointed students randomly to pronounce the vocabulary that had been recorded previously.

In the closing activity before the teacher closed with greetings, the teacher asked students whether the material and questions at this meeting were difficult, some students answered no but there were some students answered a little difficult. However, almost all students said that the game this time was a little more difficult than the game in the first cycle, it was because the answer column in the crossword was difficult to touch, but it did not reduce the students' enthusiasm and interest. After that, the teacher invited students to pray and closed with greetings.

The second meeting of the second cycle was held on February 6, 2024. The teacher starts by saying greetings, then praying and reviewing the lesson at the previous meeting, when the teacher reviews the vocabulary at the previous meeting all students respond well and all students remember the vocabulary well enough. The core activity at the second meeting was the same as the first meeting, namely the teacher gave a song to be observed by students, at the second meeting the teacher used One Direction's song entitled night changes, when the teacher gave the song, the students were very enthusiastic because most students liked the boy band One Direction and according to them this song was viral on the TikTok application. Students observe the video by noting foreign vocabulary in the song, after that the teacher invites students to wrote the meaning of foreign vocabulary on the blackboard in front of the class. Furthermore, students are given directions to memorize and remember the foreign vocabulary that has been found. Then the teacher gives the Educandy game link as well as the access code to the students. 100% of students are still very enthusiastic about the learning process by using the game. After completing the questions, the teacher reviewed the vocabulary that had been learned previously.

Closing activities at the last meeting the teacher gave a small book containing a collection of vocabulary to students, students were very happy when they got the small book, after that the teacher thanked all students, then the teacher led the prayer and closed with greetings

Based on the field notes, the collaborator did not give notes to the teacher, the collaborator only said that the learning process went very well and all students

were very enthusiastic because learning while playing is a new thing for students and collaborators. In addition, from the results of interviews with collaborators (English teachers) said that students experienced an increase in remembering English vocabulary, educandy games can also be used as a media for learning English, the results of observations from English teachers students are very enthusiastic about educandy learning media, so that students do not quickly feel bored and uninterested, so it can be concluded that according to collaborators from the results of interviews that using educandy games as a medium.

Findings on the Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Cycle 2

The assessment of student worksheets in the second cycle is needed to determine the improvement of students' vocabulary. The results of the assessment of student worksheets in the second cycle showed that 100% of students scored above the KKM (Minimum Completeness Criteria). Only 3 students scored 95. and 17 students scored 100 because they answered all the questions correctly.

Analysis of the improvement of students' abilities in the second cycle shows that the average score of the students' final assignment reached a perfect score of 99, the score in the second cycle is higher than the score of the assignment in the first cycle, this shows an improvement in students' ability to vocabulary compared to the previous cycle which got a perfect score of 15 students, in the second cycle an improvement of 17 students got a perfect score.

In conclusion, the Educandy game in improving vocabulary skills resulted in higher scores on the test, although some students still had difficulty in pronouncing the vocabulary correctly. However, according to the English teacher said that students are very sufficient in learning vocabulary with Educandy game. It was also proven from the test result with Educandy game.

Reflection on Cycle 2

Based on the value of the students' final worksheet as well as data on the learning process in the second cycle, from the value of the students' final worksheet results, all students can be said to have 100% exceeded the school's Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). Therefore, from the results of the

collaborator's observation sheet, field notes, students' participation and enthusiasm in participating in the teaching and learning process in the classroom are very good, so with this, the researcher stated that the second cycle had reached the research success criteria.

Given the outstanding results achieved in the second cycle, with all students demonstrating a high level of proficiency and engagement, there is no need to conduct a third cycle. The goals set for the research have been fully met, indicating that the teaching methods and materials used were effective in enhancing students' vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Thus, the study can be deemed successful, and no further cycles are required.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and data collected during the process of teaching vocabulary using Educandy games to 11th graders at MA Ihyaul Islam Bolo Ujungpangkah Gresik, it can be concluded that the use of Educandy games is an effective method for improving students' vocabulary skills. Students enjoy learning with this new approach, which enhances their engagement and motivation.

Vocabulary learning, especially in English, is crucial as it forms the foundation of language and international communication. According to (Supeno et al., 2021), English has achieved global status as the most widely used language for international communication.

The researcher selected the Educandy game as an exciting tool that had not been widely used, particularly in the local community. This choice aimed to engage students and generate enthusiasm for the learning process, especially in vocabulary acquisition. In addition, the researcher employed a collaborative classroom action research (CAR) approach, which involves several steps: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on actions.

The results of the research using the Educandy game demonstrate its significant utility in improving vocabulary skills when applied to 11th-grade students at MA Ihyaul Islam. After implementing the Educandy game, students'

vocabulary skills improved notably and met the predetermined success criteria. The results showed that in both the first and second cycles, 100% of students achieved the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM).

However, the field notes from the collaborator in the first cycle indicated that the initial song selection was not current, raising concerns about student interest and enthusiasm. Consequently, in the second cycle, the researcher switched to a more recent and popular song known among teenagers. Aside from this suggestion, the collaborator found the Educandy game highly effective and noted that students were enthusiastic about the learning process, leading to a significant improvement in their grades. In conclusion, the Educandy game effectively enhances vocabulary skills for 11th-grade students at MA Ihyaul Islam.

The research showed that using Educandy games to teach vocabulary to 11th graders at MA Ihyaul Islam was effective. This approach engaged and motivated students, helping them actively participate in vocabulary learning. The innovative method also improved students' vocabulary skills, with all students achieving the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) in both cycles. The collaborative classroom action research (CAR) approach allowed for continuous improvements based on observations, increasing the study's overall effectiveness.

However, there were some weaknesses. In the first cycle, the initial song choice wasn't current, which could have affected student interest. This was resolved in the second cycle by using more recent, popular songs. The study also had a limited scope, focusing mainly on one educational tool for vocabulary improvement. Despite these minor issues, the research concludes that Educandy games are effective for enhancing vocabulary skills in 11th-grade students at MA Ihyaul Islam, and they could be beneficial in language learning curricula.

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