

# Enhancing Students' Vocabulary Through Integration Flashcards in Snake and Ladder Game

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## Abstract

Vocabulary acquisition remains a critical challenge in EFL classrooms, particularly among young learners who often perceive vocabulary exercises as unengaging. This study examines the effectiveness of integrating flashcards with the traditional Snake and Ladder game to enhance vocabulary learning. The research employed a pre-experimental design with nine fourth-grade students in Jepara, Indonesia. Participants completed pre- and post-tests assessing receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge after four intervention sessions combining visual flashcards with game-based practice. Results demonstrated significant improvement ( $p = 0.001$ ), with mean scores increasing from 38.56 to 68.11 (76.6% gain), confirming the intervention's effectiveness. The large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.84$ ) and consistent performance gains across all participants suggest this method successfully addresses motivation and retention challenges identified in prior research. The findings offer practical implications for EFL educators in low-resource settings, demonstrating how traditional games can be adapted for vocabulary instruction. Policymakers may consider incorporating such gamified approaches into elementary curricula. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and scalability across diverse educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Flashcard; Vocabulary; Snake And Ladder Game; Elementary School

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding vocabulary is fundamental to language proficiency, underpinning efficient communication in every aspect of language skills, speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Fitriana & Maro, 2018; Vu & Bui, 2023). Research consistently underscores its pivotal role in language acquisition, particularly for young learners (Naharuddin & Megawati, 2018). Vocabulary is not merely about memorizing word meanings (Feng, 2023) but involves the ability to retrieve and use words contextually, which directly impacts pronunciation, comprehension, and overall proficiency (Prabantari et al., 2017). This is especially true when learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in places like Indonesia, where students don't get much chance to speak or practice outside the classroom, making it harder to learn the language (Gazali, 2022). Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition remains a significant hurdle for elementary students. Studies reveal that vocabulary deficiencies hinder communication, leading to anxiety and disengagement (Anggara, 2023; Li, 2023). Conventional techniques, including rote memorization and passive activities, frequently do not tackle these challenges, leading to diminished motivation and inadequate retention (Komalasari, 2022). In Jepara's elementary schools, these challenges manifest as classroom disengagement and limited participation, highlighting the need for innovative, interactive strategies. In order to fill these gaps, this study investigates the incorporation of flashcards alongside the Snakes and Ladders board game a unique blend that utilizes visual and gamified learning. Flashcards, with their colorful imagery and concise text, enhance word recognition through dual coding (Maghfiroh & Bahrodin, 2022), while Snakes and Ladders fosters active

participation and reduces anxiety through play (Kasanah et al., 2022). Prior research supports such methods (Hadi & Masyudi, 2022; Permana, 2020), but few studies have examined their combined effects in EFL settings. Vocabulary acquisition in young learners is fundamentally shaped by several key theoretical frameworks that inform effective teaching methodologies. At the core of these theories is Paivio's (1986) (Thomas, 2020) Dual Coding Theory suggests that our brains handle information through two connected channels: the words we use and the images we see. This theory provides strong theoretical support for using flashcards in vocabulary instruction, as the combination of visual imagery (pictures) and verbal cues (words) creates multiple memory pathways that enhance retention (Putri & Alfurqan, 2023). When learners encounter vocabulary through both visual representations and verbal labels simultaneously, they are more likely to encode and retrieve these words effectively, making flashcards particularly powerful tools for language learning. Complementing this cognitive perspective is Vygotsky's (1978) (McLeod, 2025) Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes the social nature of knowledge acquisition. In accordance with this framework, the most effective learning takes place through social interaction and collaborative activities that are just beyond a learner's present level of ability (the zone of proximal development). The Snakes and Ladders game aligns perfectly with these principles by creating opportunities for peer interaction, cooperative learning, and scaffolded vocabulary practice (Maulida et al., 2023). As students engage in gameplay, they naturally negotiate meaning, provide explanations, and reinforce each other's learning in a socially mediated environment that mirrors Vygotsky's vision of optimal learning conditions. The emotional aspect of language learning is explored through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that emotional elements like motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence play a crucial role in determining the success of language acquisition outcomes (Liu, 2023). This theory helps explain why traditional vocabulary drills often prove ineffective - they typically create high-anxiety environments that raise learners' affective filters. In contrast, game-based learning approaches like the modified Snakes and Ladders game create low-stress, enjoyable learning experiences that lower the affective filter, making students more receptive to input (Lia, 2023). When combined with the visual support of flashcards, this approach addresses both cognitive and emotional barriers to vocabulary acquisition. Empirical research provides substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of these theoretical approaches in actual classroom settings. A lot of research has shown that flashcards are a super useful way to pick up new vocabulary. For instance, Insyirah Shafa, Zulham Siregar (2021) found that systematic use of flashcards improved both immediate recall and long-term retention of new vocabulary items. Maghfiroh & Bahrodin, (2022) reported even more striking results, with elementary students showing a 25% increase in vocabulary retention when flashcards were incorporated into regular instruction. These findings consistently highlight the power of visual-verbal pairing in vocabulary learning, validating the predictions of Dual Coding Theory. Similarly, research on educational games has shown significant benefits for language learning. The Snakes and Ladders board game, in particular, has been adapted for various educational purposes with notable success. Setiani & Handayani (2022) documented how the game's competitive yet collaborative nature increased student motivation and engagement with learning materials. Kasanah et al., (2022) found that using Snakes and Ladders for vocabulary instruction resulted in a remarkable 30% improvement in test scores compared to traditional methods. These studies suggest that the game's structure with its built-in repetition, immediate feedback, and social interaction creates an ideal environment for vocabulary acquisition. The broader literature on gamification in education further supports these findings. Meta-analyses by researchers such as Hadi & Masyudi (2022) have consistently shown that game-based learning approaches lead to higher engagement, better retention, and improved academic outcomes across various subject areas. In the context of language learning, gamification has been particularly effective in vocabulary instruction, as it transforms rote

memorization tasks into meaningful, interactive experiences. However, despite this wealth of research on flashcards and educational games separately, there remains a noticeable gap in studies examining their combined effects. Few researchers have systematically investigated how integrating visual tools like flashcards with interactive games might produce synergistic benefits for vocabulary learning.

Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the current study hypothesizes that the integrated use of flashcards and the Snakes and Ladders game will yield significantly better outcomes in vocabulary acquisition and student engagement compared to traditional teaching methods. This hypothesis draws support from all three theoretical frameworks discussed: the dual coding benefits of flashcards, the social learning opportunities provided by the game, and the anxiety-reducing effects of gamification. By combining these elements, the proposed intervention addresses vocabulary learning from multiple angles cognitive, social, and affective potentially creating a more comprehensive and effective approach than any single method could achieve alone. The literature suggests that such an integrated approach may be particularly beneficial for young learners in EFL contexts, who often struggle with motivation and retention in conventional vocabulary instruction. The study aims to (1) provide educators with effective vocabulary teaching strategies and (2) enhance students' vocabulary knowledge while fostering positive attitudes toward English learning. By creating word-rich environments through gamification (Fahmi & Purnawan, 2025), this approach has the potential to transform traditional vocabulary instruction in elementary settings. The findings will contribute to existing knowledge about practical teaching techniques while encouraging the adoption of more student-centered, differentiated instructional methods.

## **METHOD**

This study utilized a pre-experimental design (Ary et al., 2010), specifically employing a one-group pretest-posttest approach, to examine how integrating flashcards with the Snake and Ladder game affects vocabulary acquisition among elementary students. The pre-experimental design was selected for its suitability in exploratory research contexts where implementing a control group proves impractical (Muhyiddin, 2020). This design enables direct observation of intervention effects by comparing participants' performance before and after treatment implementation. The students who took part in this study were in fourth grade and attended an elementary school in Jepara, Indonesia. Nine kids were picked because they were happy to join in and their level of English was somewhat okay. The selection process was intentional, aiming to ensure that the participants represented the target population of young learners who are in the early stages of acquiring English as a second language. This method fits well with the goal of exploring how vocabulary develops in a real classroom setting, especially where English is being learned as a foreign language.

Data collection utilized a 25-item multiple-choice vocabulary test measuring both receptive and productive knowledge (Andari et al., 2022), along with specially designed instructional materials combining visually-enhanced flashcards (Sadighi & Nourinezhad, 2018) and a modified Snake and Ladder game for contextual practice (Kadnawi & Fanani, 2022). The research procedure followed four systematic phases: (1) pretest administration to establish baseline vocabulary knowledge, (2) four intervention sessions featuring flashcard-based vocabulary introduction followed by game activities requiring word definitions, sentence construction, and synonym/antonym provision, (3) post-test administration using an equivalent test form, and (4) data analysis employing descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests via SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to determine statistical significance. While acknowledging the design's limitation in establishing causality without a control group, this approach provided valuable insights into the intervention's potential effectiveness through

combined quantitative analysis and qualitative classroom observations, offering a comprehensive understanding of how game-integrated flashcards can enhance vocabulary learning in authentic educational contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The results of this research are students in fourth grade may explore vocabulary through the snake and ladder game (Nuridayanti et al., 2024). A pretest and a posttest were given to the participating class as part of the descriptive statistical approach used in this study (Sudwintari et al., 2023). The analyses were conducted using the SPSS version 25 software.

**Table 1.** Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Before Treatment	38.5556	9	12.17694	4.05898
	After Treatment	68.1111	9	17.50317	5.83439

The results of this study indicate that adding flashcards to the Snakes and Ladders game significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition. Basically, the students' vocabulary scores jumped quite a bit from an average of 38.56 on the pre-test to 68.11 on the post-test. That's a solid gain of about 29.55 points overall. This impressive score increase shows that the intervention improved students' ability to acquire and retain new vocabulary in a positive and measurable way. The fact that all participants' performance consistently improved suggests that the combination of interactive engagement with the Snakes and Ladders game and visual support with flashcards created a productive learning environment that catered to the different needs of young students.

**Table 2.** Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Before Treatment & After Treatment	9	.464	.209

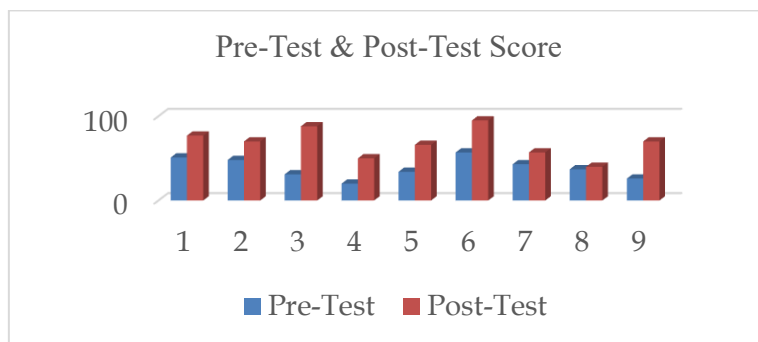
Students' vocabulary scores before and after the treatment are compared using the Paired Samples Correlations analysis. The pre-test and post-test scores show a moderately positive correlation, according to the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.464$ ). This implies that pupils who had comparatively higher vocabulary scores prior to treatment tended to continue to have higher scores following treatment, though the correlation is not very strong. At the 5% significance level, the correlation is not statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value (Sig. = 0.209), which is higher than 0.05. So, what this really means is that there's a moderate link between how people did on the pre-test and the post-test, but it's not strong enough to say for

sure that one directly causes the other. Basically, there's some connection, but it's not super clear or guaranteed.

**Table 3.** Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
		mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Before Treatment - After Treatment	-29.55556	16.03209	5.34403	-41.87891	-17.23220	-5.531	8	.001

The Paired Samples Test used to see if there was any real difference in the students' vocabulary scores before and after using flashcards in the Snakes and Ladders game. The results reveal a mean difference of -29.56, indicating that the students' vocabulary scores increased by an average of 29.56 points after the treatment. The standard deviation of 16.03 indicates that there was a degree of variability in the enhancement of students' scores, with certain students demonstrating greater advancement than their peers. The standard error mean (5.34) represents the estimated accuracy of the sample mean difference, providing insight into the precision of the measurement. The 95% confidence interval (-41.88 to -17.23) suggests that, with 95% confidence, the true mean difference in vocabulary scores lies within this range. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, it strengthens the assertion that a notable disparity exists between pre-test and post-test scores. The t-value (-5.531) indicates the magnitude of difference relative to the variability in the sample. A larger absolute t-value suggests a stronger effect. With  $df = 8$ , the degrees of freedom indicate that the sample consisted of 9 students ( $N - 1 = 8$ ). The significance value (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.001) is less than 0.05, meaning that the improvement in vocabulary scores after the treatment is statistically significant. This suggests that the use of flashcards in the Snakes and Ladders game had a significant impact on students' vocabulary acquisition, making it an effective teaching strategy. The difference of score pre-test and post-test can be seen in figure 1 below:



**Figure 1.** line diagram of the difference between pre-test and post-test score

In addition to the statistical data, qualitative insights were gathered through classroom observations and reflective interviews with students. These results really help us get a better sense of how the intervention affected students’ engagement, emotional reactions, and their ability to remember new words more effectively.

**Table 4.** Students Response

Student	Engagement Level	Participation	Emotional Response	Vocabulary Retention	Student Comments
Student 1	High	Active	Excited	Strong	I like the game, it's fun.
Student 2	Medium	Moderate	Interested	Moderate	Flashcards helped me remember words.
Student 3	High	Active	Happy	Strong	I enjoyed playing and learning.
Student 4	Low	Passive	Bored	Weak	It was hard to focus.
Student 5	Medium	Moderate	Curious	Moderate	I liked the pictures on the cards.
Student 6	High	Active	Excited	Strong	The game made learning easy.
Student 7	Medium	Moderate	Neutral	Moderate	I learned some new words.
Student 8	High	Active	Happy	Strong	Playing helped me remember better.
Student 9	Low	Passive	Disengaged	Weak	I prefer other activities.

From Table 4, it is evident that the integration of flashcards into the Snake and Ladder game had a varied yet generally positive impact on students’ engagement, emotional responses, and vocabulary retention. A majority of the students (Students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8) demonstrated medium to high levels of engagement, with active or moderate participation during the learning sessions. These students also expressed positive emotional responses such as excitement, happiness, and curiosity, which were reflected in their comments like “I like the game, it’s fun” and “The game made learning easy.” Notably, these students also showed strong or moderate vocabulary retention, suggesting a clear link between emotional involvement and learning outcomes. In contrast, Students 4 and 9 exhibited low engagement and passive participation, accompanied by negative or neutral emotional responses such as boredom and disengagement. Their vocabulary retention was also categorized as weak, and their comments, “It was hard to focus” and “I prefer other activities”, indicate that the method may not have fully addressed their learning preferences or needs. This contrast highlights the importance of differentiated instruction even within small-class settings. Overall, the qualitative data reinforce the quantitative findings by illustrating how the combination of visual aids and game-based learning can foster positive learning experiences, particularly for students who are responsive

to interactive and visual stimuli. The results also suggest that while the method is broadly effective, individual differences in learning style and motivation should be considered to maximize its impact.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating flashcards into the Snake and Ladder game can significantly enhance vocabulary mastery among elementary school students in a small-class setting. The combination of visual aids and game-based learning not only improved students' test scores but also fostered greater engagement, emotional involvement, and retention. These outcomes align with the study's original objective, which was to explore the effectiveness of a multimodal instructional strategy in a naturalistic classroom environment.

From a scientific perspective, the improvement in vocabulary scores, an average gain of 29.55 points—indicates that the intervention successfully addressed the limitations of traditional vocabulary instruction. The use of flashcards provided visual reinforcement, while the game format introduced elements of play and competition that motivated students to participate actively. This supports the theory that multisensory and interactive learning environments can enhance cognitive processing and memory retention (Hadi & Masyudi, 2022; Sadighi & Nourinezhad, 2018).

The qualitative findings further validate the quantitative results. Students who expressed enjoyment and curiosity during the sessions tended to show stronger vocabulary retention. Their comments revealed that the visual and interactive nature of the activity made learning more meaningful and less intimidating. This idea lines up pretty well with constructivist learning theory, which says that students really learn best when they're actively involved and genuinely care about what they're studying (Vygotsky, 1978) (McLeod, 2025).

Compared to earlier studies, our findings pretty much align with what's been found before. Studies by (Agustina et al., 2023), (Maria Dimitrij Angie Pavita, 2022), and (Setiyani et al., 2022) have shown that both flashcards and board games can improve vocabulary retention and student motivation. However, this study contributes a novel integration of the two methods, offering a more holistic approach that caters to diverse learning styles. Unlike prior research that examined these tools in isolation, this study demonstrates how their combination can amplify learning outcomes, particularly in small-class contexts.

It's interesting to see that the correlation between pre-test and post-test scores is moderate ( $r = 0.464$ ,  $p = 0.209$ ). This suggests that although most students saw some benefit from the intervention, individual differences still played a pretty big role in how much they improved. This finding is consistent with Lubis et al., (2023), who emphasized that visual aids like flashcards are particularly effective for students who are visually oriented. It also supports the notion that differentiated instruction is essential, even in small groups, to accommodate varying levels of prior knowledge, motivation, and learning preferences.

Several factors may have influenced the success of the intervention beyond the instructional strategy itself. The teacher's role in facilitating the game, peer interactions during gameplay, and the novelty of the activity likely contributed to the positive outcomes. Additionally, students' exposure to vocabulary outside the classroom, through media, social interactions, or extracurricular activities, may have reinforced their learning. These contextual variables highlight the complexity of educational interventions and the need for holistic evaluation.

Notwithstanding these encouraging findings, the study has a number of drawbacks. The findings' generalizability is constrained by the small sample size ( $N = 9$ ). Furthermore, it is challenging to compare the efficacy of this method with more conventional approaches due to the lack of a control group. Additionally, this study does not assess long-term vocabulary retention, raising questions about whether the gains in vocabulary are maintained over time.

Furthermore, because the study was limited to a single Jepara elementary school, its findings might not be entirely generalizable to other learning environments.

Nonetheless, the implications of this study are significant. For educators, the findings offer a practical and engaging strategy for vocabulary instruction that can be adapted to various classroom contexts. For curriculum developers and policymakers, the study provides evidence supporting the integration of gamified and visual learning tools into elementary English curricula. By demonstrating the value of combining flashcards with educational games, this research encourages a shift toward more student-centered, differentiated, and enjoyable learning experiences.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how flashcards can be used in conjunction with the Snake and Ladder game as a creative way to improve vocabulary development in elementary school students. The fact that students' vocabulary scores improved after two weeks indicates how much learning is not only made easier, but also retention and comprehension of new words enhanced by this method. Combining visual reinforcement with interactive gameplay, this approach helps individuals learn vocabulary in a collaborative and enjoyable manner, overcoming common challenges such as low motivation and disengagement. This study is pretty exciting because it could really shake up the way we teach languages, especially for students who find it hard to pick up new vocabulary. For teachers, the results give solid, real-world strategies to make learning new words more fun and effective. And for students, this way of learning can help them feel more confident, less nervous, and actually enjoy studying English. By showing how games and visual tools can help, this research adds to the growing trend of creative teaching ideas and provides a practical plan to improve language lessons in elementary schools. In research, this study emphasizes how important it is for teachers to focus on students' individual needs and offer ways that really click with young learners. It lines up with other research showing that interactive and game-like learning tools can be super effective. Plus, it adds something new by looking at how combining flashcards with the classic game Snakes and Ladders works. Looking ahead, doing more studies with bigger groups, control groups, and longer-term tests could really help figure out how well this approach sticks around and whether it can work on a larger scale. Overall, this research shows that mixing games and visual aids in vocabulary teaching really can make a difference. It's a nudge for teachers and education policymakers to rethink old-school methods and welcome more fun, engaging, and memorable ways to teach.

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