# DEVELOVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY THROUGH SNOWBALL THROWING GAME

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary learning and to investigate students' perceptions toward the use of the game in English language learning. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the learning process and students' classroom experiences. The participants of this study were seventh-grade students at MTs Islamiyah Sayang. Data were collected through classroom observations, closed-ended (yes–no) questionnaires, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to examine students' activities and the learning process during the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game, while the questionnaires were used to identify students' responses and perceptions toward vocabulary learning through the game. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, and were strengthened through triangulation to ensure data credibility. The findings revealed that the Snowball Throwing Game was implemented systematically through pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity stages. During the learning process, students demonstrated active participation, high enthusiasm, and positive interaction with their peers. The game encouraged students to practice vocabulary, particularly verbs, through interactive and collaborative activities. Furthermore, the questionnaire results indicated that most students had positive perceptions of learning vocabulary through the Snowball Throwing Game, as the learning activities were enjoyable, helped them understand and remember vocabulary more easily, and increased their motivation and confidence in using English. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Snowball Throwing Game is an effective game-based learning strategy for teaching vocabulary at the junior high school level.

**Keywords:** *vocabulary, game based learning, snowball throwing game, junior high school*

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is an essential component of language learning. According to Fatimah (2021) vocabulary refers to the collection of words that individuals need to master in order to communicate effectively. Through vocabulary, individuals are able to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly, as well as understand

messages conveyed by others in
communication. In line with this view, Schmitt (2002) states that vocabulary knowledge involves not only knowing the meaning of words but also understanding how words are used in different contexts. This suggests that vocabulary mastery goes beyond simple word recognition and includes appropriate word use in communication. In language learning, vocabulary knowledge plays a fundamental role because it allows learners to comprehend meaning and use language appropriately in various contexts (J. Helmie 2015).

In addition, Hazar (2020) emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use, stating that vocabulary knowledge enables language use, while frequent language use contributes to the expansion of learners' vocabulary. This continuous cycle indicates that vocabulary development and language use reinforce each other in the process of language learning.

Vocabulary is a key element in English language learning because it forms the foundation for understanding and using the language in meaningful communication. Learners with limited vocabulary often struggle to comprehend texts, follow instructions, and express ideas clearly in classroom interactions. Furthermore, Musiman *et al.* (2025) emphasizes that vocabulary plays a crucial role in achieving proficiency in the English language, as it underpins the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary mastery, learners may face difficulties in developing these skills effectively, which can hinder their overall language performance.

Based on the importance of vocabulary mastery in English language learning, it is necessary to implement teaching strategies that actively engage students in the learning process. Interactive and game-based learning activities provide opportunities for students to practice vocabulary in a more engaging and less monotonous learning environment. Sugianto (2023) explains that Game-Based Learning combines instructional goals with game features, allowing students to learn in a more interactive and enjoyable way. Through this approach, learners are encouraged to explore, experiment, and actively participate during the learning process (Jauhar Helmie, Aminah, and Id 2023). Such active involvement can increase students' motivation and help them retain vocabulary more effectively, as learners are directly engaged in meaningful learning experiences rather than passive memorization.

Therefore, the use of game-based learning strategies is considered appropriate to support vocabulary development in English classes, particularly in creating a learning environment that encourages active participation and collaboration among students. One game-based learning technique that can be applied to develop students' vocabulary is the Snowball Throwing Game. This game involves students writing vocabulary words on pieces of paper, forming them into "snowballs," and exchanging them with peers through a throwing activity. Through

this process, students are encouraged to remember, recognize, and use vocabulary in an interactive and fun way.

The Snowball Throwing Game also promotes student interaction and cooperation, allowing learners to learn from one another while actively participating in the learningprocess. By engaging students physically and cognitively, this game has the potential to increase students' motivation and improve their vocabulary mastery.

Previous studies have widely explored the use of game-based learning to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Yudha and Mandasari (2021) found that the use of games in vocabulary learning was effective in increasing students' interest and motivation, particularly among junior high school students. Similarly, several studies have confirmed that various types of word games, such as word chain games (Musiman *et al.*, 2025; Darma, 2024) and guessing word games (Siregar *et al.*, 2023), significantly improved students' vocabulary achievement and classroom engagement. These findings indicate that game- based activities can create a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment that supports vocabulary development.

However, most of the previous studies focused on general games or specific word games other than Snowball Throwing, and mainly examined students' vocabulary improvement through quantitative measures, such as test scores or classroom action research cycles. In addition, while Aprilia *et al.* (2025) investigated the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game, their study focused on descriptive writing skills, not on vocabulary learning. This indicates that research on the application of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary instruction remains limited.

Moreover, limited attention has been given to exploring students' perceptions toward learning vocabulary through the Snowball Throwing Game. Most existing studies emphasize learning outcomes, while students' views, experiences, and responses to the learning process are not sufficiently discussed. Therefore, there is a need for a study that specifically examines how the Snowball Throwing Game is implemented in teaching vocabulary and how students perceive this learning activity. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary instruction and exploring students' perceptions toward its use in English language learning.

**METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in teaching vocabulary and to investigate students' perceptions toward its use in English learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth

understanding of participants' experiences, classroom practices, and learning processes in a natural setting. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) qualitative research is appropriate for exploring how individuals interpret their experiences and how meaning is constructed within specific contexts.

This research was conducted at MTs Islamiyah Sayang, located in Sayang Village, Cianjur District, Cianjur Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The school was selected because English learning, particularly basic vocabulary learning, is taught at the seventh-grade level and allows the implementation of interactive, game-based learning activities. The participants of this study were students from two seventh-grade classes, namely VII A and VII C, with a total of 33 students. These classes were chosen because seventh-grade students are still at an early stage of learning English vocabulary, especially daily verbs, and therefore require engaging and interactive learning techniques to support vocabulary development.

Data were collected through classroom observations, questionnaires, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to examine the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game and to identify students' participation, interaction, and engagement during the learning process. Questionnaires were used to gather students' perceptions toward learning vocabulary through the Snowball Throwing Game. The questionnaire consisted of Yes–No questions designed to obtain clear and direct responses regarding students' experiences, interest, and engagement during the learning activities. Documentation in the form of photographs and teaching records was also collected to support the observation data.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying the data obtained from classroom observations, yes–no questionnaires, and documentation. Data display was conducted by organizing the data into descriptive forms to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing was carried out by interpreting the findings to answer the research questions. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from classroom observations, questionnaire responses, and documentation. This process helped enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings.

The data collection procedure begins with the preparation of vocabulary materials and the design of learning activities using the Snowball Throwing Game. The game was then implemented during the English vocabulary lesson. During the learning process, the researcher conducted classroom observations and collected relevant documentation. After the implementation, students were asked to complete the yes–no questionnaire to express their perceptions of learning vocabulary through the Snowball Throwing Game.

## RESULTS

This section presents the research findings based on the two formulated research questions. The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data were obtained from classroom observations, lesson plan (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP) analysis, documentation, and a yes–no questionnaire administered to students.

1. The Implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in Vocabulary Learning

Based on the results of classroom observations, lesson plan analysis, and learning documentation, the implementation of the snowball throwing game in vocabulary learning was conducted systematically through three stages: pre-activity, main activity, and post- activity. In the pre-activity stage, the teacher began the lesson by greeting the students and conducting a brainstorming activity to activate students' prior knowledge related to the vocabulary topic. This stage aimed to prepare students cognitively and create readiness before entering the core learning activities.

During the main activity stage, the teacher presented the vocabulary material according to the lesson topic and provided examples of the vocabulary items to be learned. The teacher also modeled the correct pronunciation to help students understand both the word forms and their pronunciation. After the material presentation, the teacher implemented the snowball throwing game by explaining the procedures and rules clearly. Students were asked to write vocabulary items on pieces of paper, shape them into balls, and throw them to other students. The student who received a paper was required to read the vocabulary item and act it out, while the other students guessed the intended word. Observation results showed that students were actively involved and demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm throughout the learning process.

In the post-activity stage, the teacher encouraged students to reflect on the lesson by reviewing the vocabulary learned. The teacher provided feedback on students' pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension and concluded the lesson. This stage functioned to reinforce students' understanding and evaluate the overall learning process.

2. Students' Perceptions of Vocabulary Learning through the Snowball Throwing Game Students' perceptions were obtained through a yes–no questionnaire and analyzed

following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The findings indicate that students generally held very positive perceptions of vocabulary learning through the snowball throwing game. The data reduction results revealed that most students stated the teacher explained the game rules clearly, provided equal opportunities for all students to participate, and managed the classroom effectively during the implementation of the game. This indicates that the activity was conducted in a structured and well-controlled manner.

Furthermore, the majority of students reported that they were able to understand the vocabulary used during the game. Many students also stated that the snowball throwing game helped them remember new vocabulary more easily. These findings suggest that the game was not only enjoyable but also effective in supporting vocabulary comprehension and retention.

From an affective perspective, most students expressed that they enjoyed learning vocabulary through the snowball throwing game. They felt that the learning process became more interesting, enjoyable, and less monotonous. Some students also reported increased confidence in using English vocabulary after participating in the activity.

Additionally, the questionnaire results indicate that the snowball throwing game increased students' motivation and focus during the learning process. Most students expressed their willingness to use the game again in future lessons and hoped that more similar activities would be implemented in English language learning. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the snowball throwing game is perceived by students as an effective, engaging, and motivating method for vocabulary learning.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary learning and to explore students' perceptions toward its use in Englishlanguage learning. The findings of this study indicate that the Snowball Throwing Game was implemented systematically and effectively, and that students responded positively to its use in learning vocabulary.

The findings related to the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game show that the learning process followed three structured stages: pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity. This implementation aligns with the principles of effective language teaching, which emphasize the importance of preparation, active engagement, and reinforcement in the learning process. The brainstorming activity conducted during the pre-activity stage helped activate students' prior knowledge, which is essential for vocabulary learning, as learners can connect new words with existing knowledge. This finding supports Schmitt's (2002) view that vocabulary learning involves not only word recognition but also meaningful contextual understanding.

During the main activity, the Snowball Throwing Game encouraged students to actively participate in learning by combining physical movement, collaboration, and cognitive processing. Students were required to write, read, pronounce, and act out vocabulary items, which allowed them to engage with vocabulary through multiple learning modalities. This supports the concept of game-based learning proposed by Sugianto (2023), who states that integrating

instructional goals with game elements can increase students' engagement and motivation. The high level of student enthusiasm observed during the activity indicates that the game successfully created an interactive and enjoyable learning environment.

Furthermore, the use of modeling pronunciation by the teacher before the game helped students understand the correct forms of vocabulary items. This finding is consistent with Hazar's (2020) assertion that vocabulary knowledge and language use are interrelated, as students need opportunities to hear, practice, and use vocabulary in meaningful contexts. The Snowball Throwing Game provided such opportunities by allowing students to practice vocabulary in a communicative and collaborative setting.

In the post-activity stage, reflection and feedback played an important role in reinforcing students' vocabulary understanding. By reviewing the vocabulary and providing corrective feedback, the teacher helped students consolidate their learning. This stage is crucial in vocabulary instruction, as reinforcement supports long-term retention and comprehension.

Regarding students' perceptions, the findings indicate that most students viewed the Snowball Throwing Game positively. Students reported that the game made vocabulary learning more interesting, enjoyable, and less monotonous. These results are in line with previous studies by Yudha and Mandasari (2021), as well as Musiman et al. (2025), which found that game-based learning activities increased students' motivation and engagement in vocabulary learning. However, unlike previous studies that focused mainly on learning outcomes measured through tests, this study highlights students' subjective experiences and perceptions, providing deeper insight into how students respond to game-based vocabulary instruction.

Additionally, students' reports of increased confidence and motivation suggest that the Snowball Throwing Game supports not only cognitive aspects of vocabulary learning but also affective factors, such as enjoyment and self-confidence. This is important because positive emotions and motivation can significantly influence students' willingness to participate and use vocabulary actively in the classroom. Therefore, the findings of this studyreinforce the idea that game-based learning activities can create a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and vocabulary development.

Overall, the discussion of these findings suggests that the Snowball Throwing Game is an effective instructional strategy for vocabulary learning, particularly in junior high school contexts where students require engaging and interactive learning experiences. The findings also contribute to existing literature by providing qualitative evidence on the implementation process and students' perceptions of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary instruction.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocabulary learning and to explore students' perceptions of its use in English language teaching. The findings indicate that the Snowball Throwing Game was implemented systematically through pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity stages. The game encouraged active student participation, increased classroom interaction, and created a more engaging and enjoyable learning atmosphere. In addition, students demonstrated very positive perceptions of vocabulary learning through the Snowball Throwing Game, as it helped them understand and retain vocabulary more easily while also enhancing their motivation and confidence in using English.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Snowball Throwing Game is an effective and relevant game-based learning strategy for teaching English vocabulary, particularly at the junior high school level. The implementation of this game supports an interactive and student-centered learning environment, thereby contributing to more meaningful vocabulary learning experiences.

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