

Multimedia and Game-Based Approaches in Vocabulary Instruction: A Study on Young EFL Learners Using YouTube and Taboo Games

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game in improving vocabulary acquisition among young EFL learners at SD Muhammadiyah Aimas. The study aimed to determine whether the combination of multimedia learning and game-based activities could enhance students' vocabulary mastery and engagement in the learning process. A quantitative approach was employed using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design involving 20 fourth-grade students from Class IVA. Data were collected through vocabulary tests consisting of multiple-choice and matching items administered before and after the intervention. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS to examine descriptive statistics and conduct a paired sample t-test. The results indicate a substantial improvement in students' vocabulary performance after the implementation of the instructional strategy. The mean score increased from 50.75 in the pre-test to 80.75 in the post-test, demonstrating a significant gain in vocabulary mastery. The paired sample t-test produced a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. These findings suggest that the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game provides an effective learning environment that supports vocabulary development among young learners. The use of YouTube videos provided rich audiovisual input that helped students understand vocabulary through contextualized visual and auditory cues, while the Taboo game encouraged active participation, collaboration, and vocabulary retrieval during classroom interaction. Together, these approaches created an engaging and student-centered learning atmosphere that increased motivation and participation in vocabulary learning activities. The integration of multimedia learning and game-based instruction can effectively enhance vocabulary acquisition among young EFL learners. The findings highlight the potential of combining digital media and interactive games as an innovative strategy for vocabulary instruction in elementary school contexts. Future studies are recommended to involve larger participant groups and explore different vocabulary categories to further validate the effectiveness of this approach.

Keywords: YouTube; Taboo Games; Vocabulary Instruction

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Introduction

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning, particularly in mastering English as a foreign language. Vocabulary knowledge enables learners to express ideas, understand spoken and written texts, and participate in communication effectively. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners often experience difficulties in developing other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Murcia, as cited in Lube and Nuraeni (2020), emphasizes that vocabulary plays a central role in language acquisition because it forms the foundation of meaningful communication. Similarly, Widyahening and Rahayu (2021) define vocabulary as the collection of words known by an individual that support the development of linguistic competence. In addition, Sari and Agung (2023) state that vocabulary mastery is closely related to the improvement of the four basic language skills, as learners rely on vocabulary knowledge to understand and produce language effectively.

Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition often presents challenges for many learners, especially young EFL students. Several studies have identified factors that hinder vocabulary learning. Putri et al. (2024) report that students frequently struggle with memorizing new words, understanding word meanings, and maintaining motivation during vocabulary lessons. These difficulties are often

influenced by monotonous teaching methods and limited use of engaging learning media. Similar findings were reported by Lube and Nuraeni (2020), who noted that traditional vocabulary instruction tends to emphasize memorization rather than meaningful interaction with language. As a result, students often experience low motivation and limited vocabulary retention. The same issue was observed at SD Muhammadiyah Aimas, where many fourth-grade students experienced difficulties in understanding and remembering English vocabulary. One contributing factor is the limited exposure to English instruction at earlier educational levels. Under the previous curriculum, English was not included as a compulsory subject in elementary schools, which resulted in many students having minimal foundational vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, students often struggle to recognize and use basic English vocabulary during classroom activities.

To address these challenges, educators have increasingly explored innovative teaching strategies that promote student engagement and active learning. One such strategy is the integration of multimedia learning and game-based instruction. Multimedia learning involves the use of visual and auditory materials to support students' comprehension and memory. According to Mayer (2009), learners process information more effectively when it is presented through both visual and verbal channels. In this context, digital platforms such as YouTube provide rich audiovisual materials that can support vocabulary acquisition. Research by Rasman (2021) indicates that YouTube videos can improve students' vocabulary understanding by presenting language in authentic contexts. Similarly, Hapsari and Zulherman (2021) found that students who learned vocabulary through YouTube videos demonstrated higher engagement and improved vocabulary achievement compared to those who used traditional learning media. Other studies also highlight that video-based learning can increase students' motivation and help them understand vocabulary through contextualized visual input (Legiowati et al., 2023; Milala et al., 2024; Maulana, 2023).

In addition to multimedia learning, game-based learning has also been widely recognized as an effective strategy in vocabulary instruction. Educational games encourage students to participate actively in the learning process while reducing anxiety and boredom during language learning activities. Prensky (2017) explains that games increase engagement because they incorporate elements such as challenge, feedback, and competition. One example of a vocabulary game frequently used in language classrooms is the Taboo game. In this activity, students must describe a target word without using certain restricted keywords, encouraging them to paraphrase and communicate using alternative expressions. Research by Nastiti and Veniranda (2021) shows that the Taboo game significantly improves students' vocabulary mastery by encouraging active recall and communicative interaction. Similarly, Siregar and Fithriani (2023) found that students who learned vocabulary through the Taboo game demonstrated better vocabulary recall and higher participation in classroom activities. Other studies also confirm that word-based games can increase motivation, collaboration, and vocabulary retention among EFL learners (Fitriana & Setiawan, 2022; Yusuf & Hidayat, 2022).

Although previous studies have shown the effectiveness of multimedia learning and game-based instruction individually, most research has examined these strategies separately rather than integrating them within a single instructional approach. While YouTube videos provide contextual exposure and audiovisual support for vocabulary learning, games such as Taboo reinforce vocabulary through active recall, communication, and collaboration. Therefore, combining these two approaches may create a more comprehensive learning experience that supports both receptive and productive vocabulary development. However, empirical studies investigating the integration of multimedia platforms such as YouTube with interactive vocabulary games remain limited, particularly in the context of young EFL learners in elementary schools. This research gap highlights the need for further investigation into how multimedia and game-based strategies can be combined effectively in vocabulary instruction. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game in improving vocabulary acquisition among fourth-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah Aimas. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for English teachers on how to implement engaging multimedia and game-based learning strategies to enhance vocabulary instruction for young learners.

Literature Review

a. Multimedia Learning through YouTube

Multimedia learning refers to the use of visual and auditory elements to support the learning process and enhance students' understanding and memory. According to multimedia learning theory, learners process information more effectively when it is presented through both verbal and visual channels (Mayer, 2009; Mayer, 2021). When learners receive information through multiple sensory channels, they are able to build stronger cognitive connections, which helps them retain knowledge more effectively. In language learning contexts, multimedia materials such as videos, animations, and images can provide meaningful input that supports vocabulary acquisition. One widely used multimedia platform in language education is YouTube, which offers a wide range of authentic audiovisual materials that can support language learning. YouTube videos combine visual images, spoken language, text, and contextual cues, allowing students to observe how vocabulary is used in real-life situations. This multimodal input helps learners associate words with actions, objects, and contexts, making vocabulary learning more meaningful and memorable.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of YouTube in vocabulary instruction. Hapsari and Zulherman (2021) found that students who learned vocabulary through YouTube videos showed higher engagement and better vocabulary achievement compared with those who used traditional teaching media. Similarly, Putri and Hidayat (2021) reported that YouTube-based instruction improved students' vocabulary retention because audiovisual materials helped learners connect word meanings with real-life contexts. Rasman (2021) also emphasized that YouTube can provide authentic language input that increases students' motivation and interest in learning English. For young EFL learners, multimedia input is particularly beneficial because it provides concrete visual support that facilitates comprehension. Harmer (2017) explains that young learners tend to respond strongly to visual and auditory stimuli, making video-based learning highly effective in elementary school contexts. However, the successful use of YouTube in language classrooms requires careful planning and guidance from teachers. Teachers need to select appropriate videos, provide clear instructions, and design follow-up activities to ensure that students actively engage with the learning materials rather than passively watching the videos.

b. Game-Based Vocabulary Learning and Taboo Games

Game-based learning has become an important approach in modern language teaching because it promotes active participation, motivation, and meaningful practice. Educational games provide an interactive environment where students can practice language skills in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. According to Prensky (2017), games increase learners' engagement because they involve elements such as challenge, competition, feedback, and rewards, which encourage students to participate actively in learning activities. In vocabulary instruction, games are particularly useful because they allow learners to encounter and practice new words repeatedly in meaningful contexts. Through games, students are encouraged to recall vocabulary, communicate with peers, and apply their knowledge in interactive situations. Fitriana and Setiawan (2022) reported that vocabulary games significantly increased student engagement and participation in EFL classrooms. Similarly, Yusuf and Hidayat (2022) found that students who participated in word-based games demonstrated better vocabulary recall and improved classroom interaction.

One example of a communicative vocabulary game is the Taboo game, in which students must describe a target word without using several restricted keywords. This activity requires learners to explain word meanings using alternative expressions, encouraging them to use paraphrasing and circumlocution strategies. As a result, students actively retrieve vocabulary from memory and use language creatively during communication. Research has shown that the Taboo game can effectively support vocabulary learning. Nastiti and Veniranda (2021) found that the use of the Taboo game significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery and communicative ability. Similarly, Siregar and Fithriani (2023) reported that students who learned vocabulary through the Taboo game showed increased motivation, better vocabulary recall, and more active participation during classroom activities. For young learners, such interactive games also help reduce boredom and increase confidence in speaking activities, making vocabulary learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

d. Integration of YouTube and Taboo Games in Vocabulary Instruction

Recent developments in EFL pedagogy emphasize the importance of combining multimedia learning with interactive classroom activities to improve learning outcomes. Multimedia platforms such as YouTube provide rich contextual input that helps students understand vocabulary through visual and auditory cues. At the same time, interactive games such as the Taboo game reinforce vocabulary learning through active recall, communication, and collaboration. When these two approaches are combined, they address both receptive and productive aspects of vocabulary learning. Students first receive contextual exposure to new vocabulary through multimedia input, and then they actively practice using the vocabulary through communicative games. Widodo and Nurhayati (2023) argue that multimodal instruction becomes more effective when learners interact with language through multiple sensory channels while also engaging in meaningful communication.

Supporting this perspective, Fitriana and Setiawan (2022) found that integrating digital media with game-based learning significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation. Similarly, Nurjanah et al. (2021) highlight that Indonesian EFL learners benefit from student-centered learning approaches that combine technology and interactive activities. These approaches encourage learners to participate actively in the learning process and support both cognitive and social aspects of language development. Despite the potential advantages of combining multimedia and game-based learning, empirical studies investigating the integration of YouTube and Taboo games remain limited, particularly for young EFL learners in Indonesian elementary school contexts. Most previous research has examined multimedia learning or vocabulary games separately rather than exploring how these approaches can be systematically integrated within a single instructional model. Therefore, further classroom-based research is needed to explore how multimedia and game-based strategies can be combined effectively to enhance vocabulary acquisition among young learners. The present study addresses this research gap by investigating the effectiveness of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game in vocabulary instruction for elementary school students.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pre-test and post-test design, to examine the effectiveness of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game in improving vocabulary acquisition among young EFL learners. This design allows researchers to measure students' vocabulary achievement before and after the implementation of the instructional treatment in order to determine whether significant improvement occurs. The pre-experimental design was selected because the study was conducted within a natural classroom setting where it was not feasible to create a control group. The research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Aimas, Sorong Regency. The population of the study consisted of all fourth-grade students at the school. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. The sample consisted of 20 students from Class IVA, who were chosen because they had limited vocabulary knowledge and were considered suitable for the implementation of multimedia and game-based learning activities. These students represented young EFL learners who were beginning to develop their English vocabulary.

The primary research instrument used in this study was a vocabulary test designed to measure students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. The test consisted of 20 items, including 15 multiple-choice questions and 5 matching questions, focusing on noun vocabulary related to everyday topics such as animals, fruits, vegetables, school supplies, and professions. The same test format was used for both the pre-test and the post-test to ensure consistency in measuring students' vocabulary improvement. Students' scores were calculated based on the percentage of correct answers. The research procedure consisted of three main stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test was conducted during the first session to assess students' initial vocabulary knowledge. After the pre-test, the treatment was implemented over several sessions using the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game as instructional strategies. During the treatment sessions, students were first introduced to vocabulary through selected YouTube videos that presented vocabulary in contextualized audiovisual form. The teacher guided students to observe the videos, repeat the pronunciation of target words, and identify their meanings.

Following the video-based instruction, students participated in Taboo game activities in small groups. In this activity, students were required to describe a target word without using several restricted keywords provided on the game card. Other group members attempted to guess the word based on the description. This activity encouraged students to recall vocabulary, use descriptive language, and interact with their peers during the learning process. The combination of multimedia input and interactive gameplay allowed students to practice vocabulary in both receptive and productive ways. After the completion of the treatment sessions, a post-test was administered to measure students' vocabulary improvement after participating in the learning activities. The scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test were then analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of the tests. Before conducting hypothesis testing, a normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk test was performed to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Since the data met the normality assumption, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores and to determine whether the improvement in vocabulary mastery was statistically significant. The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, with the significance level set at $p < 0.05$. The results of this analysis were used to determine whether the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition.

Result

This study investigated the effect of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game on students' English vocabulary acquisition over seven sessions. The intervention introduced thematic noun-based vocabulary (e.g., vegetables, fruits, animals, school supplies, professions) through multimedia input and interactive gameplay. The vocabulary was reinforced through pronunciation practice, collaborative writing, and active recall, creating a dynamic and student-centered learning environment. Table 1 presents the classification of students' vocabulary performance before and after the intervention. Prior to treatment, most students (45%) were at the fair level, with only 15% in the good category and none achieving very good. Post-intervention, a significant shift occurred: 60% of students reached the very good level, and no students remained in the poor or very poor categories.

Table 1. Students' Vocabulary Score Distribution in Pre-test and Post-test

Classification	Score Range	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)
Very Good	90-100	0%	60%
Good	70-89	15%	5%
Fair	50-69	45%	35%
Poor	30-49	30%	0%
Very Poor	10-29	10%	0%

These results indicate a substantial improvement in students' vocabulary proficiency, suggesting the effectiveness of the combined YouTube video and Taboo game strategy in enhancing lexical knowledge in a primary school context. To ensure statistical validity, a Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to examine the normality of the data. Both the pre-test ($p = .928$) and post-test ($p = .263$) yielded significance values above .05, confirming that the data were normally distributed and suitable for parametric analysis. Descriptive statistics further support these findings. The mean score in the pre-test was 50.75 (SD = 17.42), while the post-test mean increased substantially to 80.75 (SD = 20.15). This 30-point improvement in mean scores suggests a strong effect of the treatment on vocabulary acquisition.

Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation in Pretest and Posttest

Test	Mean Score	Stand. Deviation
Pre-test	50.75	17.42
Post-test	80.75	20.15

To confirm the significance of the observed improvement, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The analysis yielded a t-value of 10.503 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$, which is lower than the standard alpha level of 0.05. These results confirm a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 3. T-Table Result

Mean Difference	t	df	Sig.2 (tailed)
-30.00	10.503	19	0.000

The paired sample t-test analysis produced a t-value of 10.503 with a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05. This result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game does not influence students' vocabulary acquisition, is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, indicating that the instructional strategy significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. The findings suggest that the integration of multimedia learning through YouTube videos and interactive game-based learning through the Taboo game effectively enhanced vocabulary acquisition among young EFL learners. The combination of audiovisual input and communicative gameplay provided students with opportunities to learn vocabulary in an engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition. The improvement can be observed from the increase in students' post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. The results demonstrate that the combination of multimedia learning and game-based activities can support vocabulary development among young EFL learners. This suggests that the use of engaging instructional media and interactive learning strategies can help students learn vocabulary more effectively.

One important factor contributing to this improvement is the use of YouTube videos as multimedia learning resources. YouTube provides audiovisual input that allows students to observe vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Through visual images, spoken language, and contextual cues, students are able to associate words with real-life objects and situations. This type of learning supports vocabulary retention because learners receive information through both visual and auditory channels. Mayer's multimedia learning theory explains that learning becomes more effective when learners process information through multiple sensory channels (Mayer, 2009; Mayer, 2021). In this study, students showed greater interest and attention when learning vocabulary through YouTube videos, which helped them understand word meanings more easily.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research on the use of YouTube in language learning. Hapsari and Zulherman (2021) found that students who learned vocabulary through YouTube videos demonstrated higher engagement and improved learning outcomes compared with those taught using traditional media. Similarly, Rasman (2021) reported that YouTube-based learning can increase students' motivation and provide authentic language input that supports vocabulary acquisition. Other studies also highlight that audiovisual media help learners connect vocabulary with real-life contexts, making the learning process more meaningful and memorable. In addition to multimedia learning, the Taboo game also contributed significantly to the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery. The Taboo game requires students to describe a word without using certain restricted keywords, encouraging them to think creatively and use alternative expressions to convey meaning. This activity promotes active vocabulary retrieval, which is an important process in language learning. When students repeatedly recall and use vocabulary during communication, their understanding of the words becomes stronger and more permanent.

The findings of this study align with previous research on game-based vocabulary learning. Nastiti and Veniranda (2021) found that the Taboo game significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery and communicative ability. Similarly, Siregar and Fithriani (2023) reported that students who participated in Taboo game activities showed increased motivation, better vocabulary recall, and more active participation during classroom interaction. Educational games provide a relaxed learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable experimenting with language, which helps reduce anxiety and encourages communication.

Another important finding of this study is related to students' engagement and classroom interaction. During the implementation of the learning activities, students became more active in participating in group discussions and game sessions. They showed enthusiasm when watching YouTube videos and demonstrated increased confidence when describing vocabulary words during the Taboo game. The interactive nature of the activities encouraged students to collaborate with their peers, share ideas, and support each other during the learning process. This collaborative learning environment helped students feel more confident in using English vocabulary. The combination of multimedia learning and game-based instruction also created a more enjoyable learning atmosphere compared to traditional teaching methods. Students appeared more motivated to participate in vocabulary learning activities because the lessons were presented in an engaging and interactive way. This finding supports the argument that student-centered learning approaches can increase learners' motivation and participation in the classroom. By combining visual learning with interactive communication activities, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that support both cognitive and social aspects of language development.

Despite the positive findings, several limitations were observed during the study. First, the research involved only one class consisting of 20 students, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the intervention focused only on noun vocabulary, which means the results may not represent vocabulary learning in other categories such as verbs or adjectives. In addition, the duration of the treatment was relatively short, as the study was conducted over several sessions. These limitations suggest that further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of integrating multimedia and game-based learning strategies in broader educational contexts. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, longer intervention periods, and more diverse vocabulary categories in order to obtain more comprehensive results. Researchers may also explore the integration of other multimedia platforms and interactive learning games to determine how different combinations of instructional strategies influence vocabulary acquisition. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game can be an effective strategy for improving vocabulary learning among young EFL learners while also increasing students' engagement and participation in the learning process.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of integrating YouTube videos and the Taboo game in improving vocabulary acquisition among fourth-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah Aimas. The findings of the study indicate that the use of multimedia learning and game-based activities significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. This improvement is evident from the comparison between the pre-test and post-test results, where the mean score increased from 50.75 in the pre-test to 80.75 in the post-test. In addition, the paired sample t-test showed a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between students' scores before and after the treatment. These results confirm that the integration of YouTube videos and the Taboo game had a positive effect on students' vocabulary learning. The improvement in students' vocabulary mastery can be attributed to the combination of audiovisual learning and interactive communication activities. YouTube videos provided contextual and visual input that helped students understand the meaning and pronunciation of new vocabulary. At the same time, the Taboo game encouraged students to actively recall and describe vocabulary words during group interaction. Through these activities, students were able to practice vocabulary in both receptive and productive ways. The interactive nature of the learning process also increased students' motivation, participation, and confidence in using English vocabulary.

Furthermore, the use of multimedia and game-based learning created a more engaging classroom atmosphere compared to traditional vocabulary instruction. Students showed greater enthusiasm during the learning process and participated actively in collaborative activities. This indicates that integrating digital media and interactive games can support not only students' vocabulary development but also their engagement in the learning process. However, this study had several limitations. The research involved only a small sample of 20 students from a single class, and the intervention focused specifically on noun vocabulary. In addition, the duration of the treatment was relatively short. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to a broader population without further investigation. Based on these

findings, it is recommended that English teachers consider incorporating multimedia resources and interactive games into vocabulary instruction, particularly for young EFL learners. Such approaches can create more engaging and effective learning experiences while supporting students' vocabulary development. Future research is encouraged to involve larger participant groups, explore different vocabulary categories, and investigate the use of other multimedia platforms and educational games to further examine the effectiveness of technology-enhanced vocabulary instruction.

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