

Innovative Strategies for Vocabulary Acquisition: Integrating Suggestopedia and Word Search Games in EFL Classrooms

Selfin Jesika Loblobly¹, Nursalim^{2*}

^{1,2}Universitas Pendidikan Muhammadiyah Sorong

*Corresponding author, E-mail: nursalim@unimudasorong.ac.id

Abstract

Vocabulary acquisition remains a significant challenge for many junior high school students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of integrating the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The research employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design involving 20 seventh-grade students from class VII B at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong. Data were collected through a vocabulary test consisting of 20 items focusing on verb-related vocabulary administered before and after the treatment. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS through descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test. The results showed a clear improvement in students' vocabulary achievement. The mean score increased from 60.00 in the pre-test to 79.75 in the post-test, indicating a substantial improvement after the implementation of the instructional strategy. The paired sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. These findings indicate that the integration of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games effectively improves students' vocabulary acquisition. The results suggest that combining a relaxed learning environment through Suggestopedia with interactive game-based activities such as Word Search Games can support vocabulary learning in EFL classrooms. This integrated approach encourages student participation and facilitates repeated exposure to target vocabulary. Therefore, the study concludes that the combined use of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games provides an effective alternative strategy for vocabulary instruction in junior high school EFL contexts.

Keywords: Suggestopedia; Word Search; Vocabulary Acquisition

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Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is widely recognized as a fundamental component of language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Vocabulary knowledge enables learners to understand and produce language effectively across the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without adequate vocabulary, learners often struggle to express ideas, comprehend texts, and participate in communication. Webb and Nation (2017) emphasize that vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in language proficiency because it provides the linguistic resources necessary for meaningful interaction. Similarly, Teng (2020) states that vocabulary development strongly influences learners' overall language competence and academic success in EFL settings.

Despite its importance, many students in Indonesian EFL classrooms continue to face difficulties in learning and retaining English vocabulary. These challenges are often associated with teacher-centered instruction, limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, and low student motivation during vocabulary lessons. Previous studies have shown that traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and textbook-based exercises often fail to sustain students' interest or promote long-term retention of vocabulary (Wahyuni & Yuliana, 2020; Lestari & Rahmawati, 2023). In addition, Nurjanah et al. (2021) and Fitriana and Setiawan (2022) report that students frequently become passive during vocabulary instruction when the learning process does not involve interactive activities or engaging learning media.

Similar problems were observed at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong, where many seventh-grade students experienced difficulties in remembering and using English vocabulary. Classroom

observations indicated that students often relied on memorization without meaningful practice, which limited their ability to recall vocabulary during communication activities. These conditions highlight the need for more engaging and student-centered instructional strategies that can support vocabulary acquisition while also increasing students' motivation and participation in the learning process.

To address these challenges, researchers and educators have increasingly explored innovative teaching approaches that combine both cognitive and affective aspects of learning. One approach that has received considerable attention is the Suggestopedia method, developed by Georgi Lozanov. Suggestopedia emphasizes the importance of creating a relaxed and supportive learning environment through the use of music, positive suggestion, and engaging classroom activities. This method aims to reduce learners' anxiety and improve memory retention by lowering psychological barriers that often interfere with language learning (Lozanov, 2015). Previous studies have demonstrated that Suggestopedia can enhance vocabulary learning by creating a low-stress learning atmosphere that encourages students to participate more actively in classroom activities (Marlina, 2021; Sari & Wijayanti, 2022).

In addition to affective-based approaches such as Suggestopedia, game-based learning strategies have also been widely recognized as effective tools for vocabulary instruction. Educational games encourage learners to participate actively, collaborate with peers, and practice vocabulary in meaningful contexts. One example of such a strategy is the Word Search Game, which requires students to identify vocabulary items hidden within a grid of letters. Research indicates that word search activities can improve vocabulary recognition, strengthen spelling awareness, and promote repeated exposure to target words (Simatupang & Derin, 2020; Hidayati & Prasetyo, 2021). Through game-based activities, students are more likely to remain engaged and motivated during the learning process.

Several previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of Suggestopedia and vocabulary games separately. Farhani (2022) found that the Suggestopedia method positively influenced vocabulary acquisition by reducing learner anxiety and promoting deeper cognitive processing. Similarly, Simatupang and Derin (2020) reported that word search games improved students' vocabulary mastery by encouraging interactive and enjoyable practice. Although these findings demonstrate the effectiveness of each method individually, most previous studies have examined Suggestopedia and vocabulary games independently rather than integrating them into a single instructional strategy.

This situation reveals a clear research gap. While Suggestopedia focuses on preparing learners emotionally by creating a relaxed and supportive learning environment, word search games emphasize active participation and cognitive engagement through game-based activities. Integrating these two approaches may provide a more comprehensive learning experience by addressing both affective and cognitive aspects of vocabulary learning. However, empirical research examining the combined use of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games in EFL classrooms remains limited, particularly in Indonesian secondary school contexts.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of integrating the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games in improving vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether the combination of a relaxation-based instructional method and a game-based learning activity can significantly enhance students' vocabulary mastery. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more engaging and student-centered vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

a. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is widely regarded as a core component of language learning because it represents the body of words that learners must know and use in communication. In the context of English as a foreign language, vocabulary supports learners' ability to understand and produce language across the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nation (2020) defines vocabulary as the knowledge of words and their meanings that enables learners to communicate effectively in a second language.

Similarly, Schmitt (2020) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge involves not only knowing word meanings but also understanding how words function in context.

Vocabulary mastery is essential for effective communication. Learners with limited vocabulary often struggle to express ideas and comprehend messages. Research consistently shows that vocabulary size strongly predicts overall language proficiency and academic success in EFL settings (Alqahtani, 2015; Nation, 2020). Therefore, vocabulary instruction remains a central focus in English language teaching, particularly in classrooms where exposure to English is limited.

Vocabulary can also be categorized into different word classes such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Thornbury (2017) notes that beginner learners tend to acquire concrete nouns more easily because they are highly visual and meaningful. For this reason, many classroom programs introduce thematic vocabulary such as animals, foods, and everyday objects at the early stages of learning. Consequently, innovative strategies that make vocabulary learning engaging and memorable are increasingly encouraged in modern EFL pedagogy.

b. Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is an alternative language teaching method developed by Lozanov that emphasizes the role of positive suggestion and a relaxed learning environment in accelerating learning. The method is based on the premise that psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence can inhibit language acquisition (Lozanov, 2018). By creating a calm and encouraging classroom atmosphere, Suggestopedia aims to lower learners' affective barriers and enhance memory retention.

Sahade and Amsa (2020) describe Suggestopedia-oriented instruction as a learner-supportive approach that combines music, comfortable classroom settings, expressive teacher presentation, and meaningful dialogue exposure. These elements are intended to place learners in a relaxed but attentive state that facilitates subconscious language absorption. The method typically includes stages such as presentation, concert sessions, elaboration, and practice activities (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2017).

Research indicates that Suggestopedia can positively influence vocabulary learning. Studies report improvements in learners' motivation, confidence, and retention when vocabulary is presented in a low-anxiety environment (Wahyuni & Yuliana, 2020; Rahmawati & Lestari, 2023). This aligns with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which states that language acquisition is more effective when learners experience low stress and high motivation (Krashen, 2017). Because vocabulary learning often requires repeated exposure and strong memory support, Suggestopedia is considered a promising approach for EFL classrooms, especially for young or beginner learners.

c. Word Search Games

Word search games are puzzle-based activities in which learners locate target vocabulary items hidden within a grid of letters. As a form of game-based learning, word search activities combine cognitive challenge with enjoyment, making vocabulary practice more engaging than traditional exercises. Educational researchers note that games encourage active participation, sustained attention, and repeated exposure to learning material, all of which support vocabulary acquisition (Prensky, 2017; Fitriana & Setiawan, 2022).

In vocabulary learning, word search games help learners recognize spelling patterns, reinforce word form awareness, and strengthen visual memory. Hidayati and Prasetyo (2021) found that students who practiced vocabulary through word search puzzles showed better word recognition and retention than those using conventional worksheets. Because students must actively scan and identify words, the activity promotes focused attention and retrieval practice.

Word search games are particularly suitable for EFL learners because they are simple to implement, visually appealing, and adaptable to various vocabulary themes and proficiency levels. However, in many classrooms, word search is used only as a supplementary or filler activity rather than being systematically integrated into a structured instructional approach (Setyawan & Susanti, 2021). This indicates the potential value of combining word search games with a pedagogically grounded method such as Suggestopedia.

d. The Use of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games in Vocabulary Teaching

Game-based and affective-based approaches have gained increasing attention in EFL vocabulary instruction because they address both emotional and cognitive aspects of learning. Suggestopedia prepares learners by lowering anxiety and creating a supportive learning environment, while word search games reinforce vocabulary through active and enjoyable practice. The combination of these strategies aligns with modern learner-centered pedagogy that emphasizes engagement, interaction, and meaningful repetition (Widodo & Nurhayati, 2023).

Previous studies report that Suggestopedia can enhance learners' confidence and memory, whereas vocabulary games can increase classroom participation and retention (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2017; Fitriana & Setiawan, 2022). When integrated, these approaches may provide complementary benefits. Suggestopedia offers rich contextual input and emotional readiness, while word search games provide structured retrieval practice that strengthens word recognition and recall.

Despite these promising theoretical connections, empirical research examining the combined use of Suggestopedia and word search games remains limited, particularly in EFL contexts such as Indonesia. Many studies investigate these strategies separately rather than as part of an integrated instructional design. Therefore, further investigation is needed to determine how their integration can more effectively improve students' vocabulary mastery. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of combining Suggestopedia and word search games in EFL vocabulary learning.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest–posttest design, to examine the effectiveness of integrating the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. This research design allows the researcher to measure students' vocabulary performance before and after the implementation of the instructional treatment in order to determine whether significant improvement occurs.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population of this study consisted of all seventh-grade students at the school, which were distributed across eleven classes. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the research participants. Class VII B was chosen as the research sample because the students were available during the research period and showed difficulties in vocabulary learning. A total of 20 students participated in the study and completed both the pretest and posttest.

The primary instrument used in this study was a vocabulary test designed to measure students' mastery of verb-related vocabulary. The test consisted of 20 items, including 10 multiple-choice questions and 10 fill-in-the-blank questions. The same test format was used for both the pretest and the posttest to ensure consistency in measuring students' progress. The scores were calculated based on the number of correct answers and then converted into percentages.

The research procedure consisted of three main stages: pretest, treatment, and posttest. In the first stage, a pretest was administered to measure students' initial vocabulary knowledge before the intervention. After the pretest, the treatment phase was implemented over four instructional sessions. During the treatment, the Suggestopedia method was applied to create a relaxed and supportive learning environment. The teacher used soft background music, storytelling, and positive suggestions to introduce the target vocabulary and reduce students' anxiety during the learning process.

Following the Suggestopedia activities, Word Search Games were used as reinforcement activities. Students were asked to identify and locate target vocabulary items hidden in a grid of letters. This activity required students to focus on spelling patterns and recognize vocabulary forms while interacting with their peers. The integration of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games allowed students to learn vocabulary through both affective support and interactive practice, encouraging active participation and repeated exposure to the target words.

After the completion of the treatment sessions, a posttest was administered to evaluate students' vocabulary improvement. The data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30.0. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of the tests. A Shapiro–Wilk normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Since the data met the normality assumption, a paired sample t-test was performed to examine whether the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically

significant. The level of significance used in this study was $p < 0.05$. The results of the statistical analysis were used to determine whether the integration of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition.

Result

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games in enhancing English vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong. The findings were drawn from pre-test and post-test assessments administered to 20 students who completed both tests. Table 1 presents the classification of student scores before and after treatment. A noticeable improvement is observed in the post-test, with more students achieving higher performance levels.

Table 1. Score Classification of Students' Vocabulary Test Results

Classification	Score Range	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)
Very Good	90-100	0%	25%
Good	70-89	40%	45%
Fair	50-69	40%	30%
Poor	30-49	15%	0%
Very Poor	10-29	5%	0%

As shown in the table and visualized in Figure 1 below, the percentage of students scoring in the "Very Good" category increased from 0% to 25%, while the "Poor" and "Very Poor" categories were eliminated entirely.

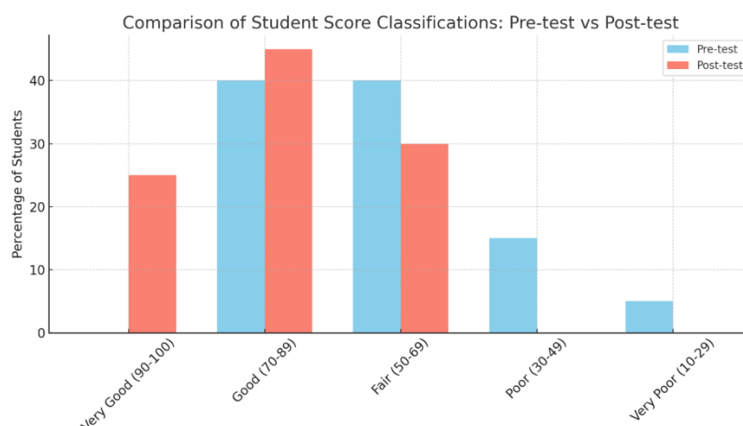


Figure 1. Students Score

The mean and standard deviation scores of the students also showed a substantial enhancement after the implementation of the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games.

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

Test	Mean Score	Stand. Deviation
Pre-test	60.00	18.77
Post-test	79.75	14.27

The increase in the mean score by nearly 20 points reflects the effectiveness of the intervention. Furthermore, the reduced standard deviation indicates more consistent performance among the students after treatment. To statistically assess whether the improvement in students' vocabulary performance was significant after the intervention, a paired sample t-test was conducted. This test is appropriate for comparing two related means in this case, the same students' scores on the pre-test and post-test. The analysis was carried out using SPSS software, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean Score and Standard Deviation in Pretest and Posttest

Mean (Pre-test)	Mean (Post-test)	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
60.00	79.75	19.75	0.000

The results of the paired sample t-test revealed a significance value of 0.000, which is well below the accepted threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the improvement in students' vocabulary scores following the implementation of the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) which posits that the intervention does not affect vocabulary acquisition must be rejected. On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) stating that the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition is accepted. This statistical evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the teaching methods applied in this study had a meaningful and measurable impact on students' learning outcomes.

The study found that students' vocabulary acquisition improved significantly after the treatment. This was evident from the increase in mean test scores and the shift in classification levels from lower to higher categories, particularly into the "Good" and "Very Good" ranges. The paired sample t-test provided strong statistical confirmation of this improvement, with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Overall, the findings validate the research hypothesis and demonstrate that integrating the Suggestopedia method with Word Search Games is an effective approach to enhancing vocabulary mastery among junior high school students.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the integration of the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition. This improvement can be observed from the increase in students' mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. The findings suggest that combining relaxation-based instruction with interactive game-based activities can support vocabulary learning more effectively than traditional teaching methods. The improvement also indicates that students benefited from a learning environment that addressed both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning.

One important factor contributing to this improvement is the implementation of the Suggestopedia method, which emphasizes a relaxed and supportive classroom atmosphere. The use of soft background music, storytelling, and positive suggestion helped reduce students' anxiety during the learning process. When students feel comfortable and relaxed, they tend to be more open to receiving new information and participating in classroom activities. This finding is consistent with Lozanov's theory, which suggests that reducing psychological barriers can improve learning efficiency and memory retention. Previous studies have also reported similar results. For example, Sari and Wijayanti (2022) found that Suggestopedia created a low-stress learning environment that improved students' vocabulary retention and learning motivation.

In addition to Suggestopedia, the use of Word Search Games also played an important role in enhancing vocabulary learning. Word search activities required students to actively locate and recognize vocabulary items within a grid of letters. This process encouraged students to pay attention to spelling patterns and word forms while repeatedly encountering the target vocabulary. As a result, students were able to strengthen their vocabulary recognition and recall. The interactive nature of the game also encouraged students to participate more actively during the learning process. This finding supports the study conducted by Simatupang and Derin (2020), which reported that word-based games can improve vocabulary mastery by promoting repetition and active engagement.

Another important aspect of the findings is the integration of both strategies within a single instructional approach. Suggestopedia prepared students emotionally by creating a relaxed and supportive learning environment, while Word Search Games reinforced vocabulary learning through active practice and repetition. This combination allowed students to experience vocabulary learning through multiple learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic activities. According to Ahmadi and Reza (2018), multisensory learning approaches can improve vocabulary retention because learners process information through different sensory channels.

The integration of these methods also contributed to increased student motivation and participation in the classroom. During the treatment sessions, students appeared more enthusiastic and actively involved in the learning activities. The relaxing atmosphere created by Suggestopedia encouraged students to participate without fear of making mistakes, while the competitive and interactive nature of Word Search Games made vocabulary learning more enjoyable. Similar findings were reported by Fitriana and Setiawan (2022), who found that game-based learning strategies can increase students' engagement and motivation in language learning activities.

Despite the positive results, several limitations were identified in this study. First, the research involved only 20 students from a single class, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study used a pre-experimental design without a control group, which makes it difficult to compare the effectiveness of the integrated strategy with other teaching methods. Third, the treatment was conducted over a relatively short period of time, which may not fully reflect the long-term impact of the instructional strategy on vocabulary retention.

Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger samples and experimental designs with control groups in order to obtain more comprehensive results. Researchers may also investigate the effectiveness of integrating Suggestopedia with other game-based learning strategies in vocabulary instruction. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that combining Suggestopedia and Word Search Games can create an engaging and supportive learning environment that improves students' vocabulary acquisition in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the effectiveness of integrating the Suggestopedia method and Word Search Games in improving vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kota Sorong. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of these combined instructional strategies significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. This improvement is evident from the increase in the mean score from 60.00 in the pre-test to 79.75 in the post-test. In addition, the paired sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which indicates a statistically significant difference between students' vocabulary performance before and after the treatment. These findings confirm that the integration of Suggestopedia and Word Search Games had a positive effect on students' vocabulary acquisition. The improvement in students' vocabulary mastery can be attributed to the complementary roles of the two strategies. The Suggestopedia method helped create a relaxed and supportive learning environment that reduced students' anxiety and encouraged active participation. Meanwhile, the Word Search Games provided an interactive learning activity that allowed students to practice vocabulary through repetition and visual recognition. Together, these strategies supported both the affective and cognitive aspects of vocabulary learning, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful for students.

However, this study had several limitations. The research involved a relatively small sample of 20 students from a single class, and the intervention was conducted over a limited period of time. In addition, the study used a pre-experimental design without a control group, which limits the ability to compare the results with other instructional methods. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that English teachers consider integrating Suggestopedia and game-based learning activities such as Word Search Games into vocabulary instruction to create more engaging learning environments. Future research is also encouraged to involve larger participant groups, longer treatment periods, and experimental designs with control groups in order to further examine the effectiveness of this integrated instructional approach.

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