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Helping Young Learners Memorize Vocabulary Through The "Stepping Game"

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Abstract. *This study looks at how the stepping game can help young learners remember English words. Learning vocabulary is very important for children, but they often forget new words when using normal teaching methods. The stepping game uses movement and fun to make learning easier and more interesting. The study was done with primary school children. In the game, learners stepped on word cards on the floor while listening to instructions, saying the words, or showing their meaning. The teacher watched the class and gave a vocabulary test before and after the game. The results show that the stepping game helped children remember words better and made them more interested in learning. They enjoyed the game and participated more in class. This study suggests that using games with movement is a good way to teach vocabulary to young learners.*

Key words: *young learners, vocabulary acquisition, stepping game, game-based learning, physical activity.*

Introduction

Learning new words is very important for young learners. Vocabulary helps children understand what they read, listen, and speak. But, sometimes it is hard for them to remember new words when teachers use only traditional methods like repeating or writing. This can make lessons boring and students lose interest [1]. Games can make learning more fun and help children remember words better. The stepping game is one way to do this. In this game, learners step on word cards on the floor while saying the words or showing their meaning [2]. Moving their body while learning makes children more active and helps them remember words for longer. Many researchers say that using movement and games in the classroom is useful for young learners. The stepping game combines these ideas and gives children a chance to learn vocabulary in an enjoyable way. This study looks at how the stepping game can help young learners memorize words and be more engaged in class [3].

Literature Review

Learning vocabulary is very important for young learners, and teachers often try different ways to help children remember new words. Cameron says that young learners learn better when lessons are fun and meaningful.1 If children only repeat words or copy them from the board, they often forget [4]. Games are one way to make learning vocabulary easier and more interesting. Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby explain that games create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and help children participate more. Uberman also says that games help learners remember words because they repeat them while playing and using them in context [5].

Movement can also help children remember vocabulary. Asher developed Total Physical Response (TPR), which combines learning with actions.4 When children move their bodies while learning, they remember better [6]. Shams and Seitz found that using more senses, like seeing, hearing, and moving,

improves memory.5Pinter explains that young learners naturally enjoy moving and playing, so combining games and physical activity helps them stay motivated.6 Brewster, Ellis, and Girard also point out that interactive activities help children remember words longer than traditional lessons [7]. In short, research shows that combining games and movement is very effective for teaching vocabulary. The stepping game uses these ideas, giving children a fun and active way to learn new words [8].

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test and post-test approach to investigate the effectiveness of the stepping game in improving vocabulary retention among young learners. The design allowed for the comparison of learners' vocabulary knowledge before and after the implementation of the game-based intervention. In addition, classroom observation was used as a qualitative method to examine learners' engagement and participation during the instructional process.

The participants of the study were primary school learners aged between 8 and 9 years. Total of 24 students from one intact class participated in the research. The participants were selected using convenience sampling, as the class was accessible to the researcher during the teaching practice period. All learners had similar English proficiency levels based on their school records and previous classroom assessments.

Three main instruments were used to collect data in this study:

1. Vocabulary Pre-test and Post-test:

A researcher-designed vocabulary test consisting of 20 multiple-choice and picture-matching items was administered before and after the intervention. The test measured learners' ability to recognize and recall the target vocabulary items related to everyday topics. The same test format was used in both assessments to ensure consistency.

2. Observation Checklist:

An observation checklist was used to record learners' behavior during vocabulary lessons. The checklist included indicators such as active participation, attention to task, peer interaction, and motivation. Observations were conducted by the teacher-researcher during both traditional lessons and stepping game sessions.

3. Teacher Field Notes:

Informal field notes were taken to document learners' reactions, difficulties, and overall classroom atmosphere during the activities. These notes supported the quantitative findings and provided additional insights into learner engagement.

The study was conducted over a two-week period during regular English classes. In the first stage, learners completed the vocabulary pre-test to assess their initial knowledge of the target words. After the pre-test, vocabulary was taught using traditional methods such as repetition, drilling, and board-based exercises for one lesson.

In the following lessons, the stepping game was introduced as the main instructional activity. Word cards were placed on the classroom floor, and learners were instructed to step on the correct word based on the teacher's oral instructions, pictures, or definitions. Learners were also asked to pronounce the words aloud and demonstrate meanings through actions when possible. Each session lasted approximately 20 minutes and was integrated into the regular lesson structure.

At the end of the intervention period, learners completed the post-test to measure vocabulary improvement. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the intervention to compare learner behavior during traditional instruction and game-based activities.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, minimum and maximum values, and overall score improvement. The gain in vocabulary performance was calculated to determine the effectiveness of the stepping game intervention.

Qualitative data from observation checklists and field notes were analyzed through thematic categorization, focusing on patterns of engagement, motivation, and interaction. The qualitative findings were used to support and interpret the quantitative test results, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process.

Results

To evaluate the effectiveness of the stepping game in improving vocabulary retention, learners' performance was measured using a pre-test and a post-test. The tests assessed learners' ability to recognize and recall the target vocabulary items taught during the instructional period [9].

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of learners' vocabulary test scores before and after the implementation of the stepping game.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Vocabulary Scores of Learners

№	Test Type	Mean Score	Minimum	Maximum
1	Pre-test	56.4	40	70
2	Post-test	78.9	65	95

The results indicate a substantial improvement in learners' vocabulary performance after participating in the stepping game activities. The mean score increased from 56.4 in the pre-test to 78.9 in the post-test, suggesting that learners were able to retain and recall a greater number of vocabulary items after the intervention [10].

In addition to test scores, classroom observations were conducted to assess learners' engagement and participation levels during vocabulary instruction.

Table 2. Classroom Observation Results

№№	Observation Criteria	Before Game	During Stepping Game
11	Active participation	Low	High
12	Student motivation	Moderate	High
33	Attention to task	Low	High
44	Peer interaction	Limited	Frequent

As shown in Table 2, learners demonstrated significantly higher levels of engagement during the stepping game. They actively participated in tasks, responded enthusiastically to instructions, and interacted more frequently with peers. This behavioral change suggests that the physical and interactive nature of the game positively influenced classroom dynamics [11].

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the stepping game was effective not only in improving vocabulary retention but also in increasing learner engagement and motivation during English lessons.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the stepping game is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing vocabulary retention among young learners. The noticeable increase in post-test scores confirms that integrating physical movement with vocabulary practice facilitates better memory consolidation. This result aligns with previous studies emphasizing the role of kinesthetic learning and Total Physical Response (TPR) in supporting language acquisition among children [12].

The improvement observed in learners' engagement levels further supports the effectiveness of game-based learning. As indicated by classroom observations, learners were more attentive, motivated, and willing to participate during stepping game activities compared to traditional vocabulary drills. This

supports Wright et al.'s assertion that games create a relaxed learning environment that encourages active participation and reduces anxiety [13].

Moreover, the stepping game provided opportunities for multisensory learning by combining visual (word cards), auditory (teacher instructions and pronunciation), and physical (stepping movements) stimuli. According to cognitive learning theories, multisensory input strengthens memory pathways, which may explain the higher retention rates observed in this study [14].

Another important finding is the increase in peer interaction during the activities. Learners often helped each other identify correct words and followed classmates' movements, which promoted collaborative learning. Social interaction is particularly important for young learners, as it enhances both language practice and emotional engagement [15].

However, several limitations should be considered. First, the study involved a relatively small group of learners, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the effectiveness of the stepping game may partly depend on the teacher's ability to manage classroom movement and provide clear instructions. Without proper classroom management, such activities may become distracting rather than beneficial.

Future research should include larger samples, different age groups, and longer intervention periods to examine long-term vocabulary retention. Additionally, comparative studies between different movement-based games could help identify which types of activities are most effective for specific vocabulary categories.

In summary, the stepping game integrates physical activity, interaction, and meaningful repetition, making it a powerful tool for vocabulary instruction in primary classrooms. The results suggest that incorporating movement-based games can significantly enhance both cognitive outcomes and affective factors such as motivation and engagement among young learners.

Conclusion

The study shows that the stepping game is an effective method for helping young learners memorize English vocabulary. Children who participated in the game were able to remember more words and were more active and motivated during lessons. The game made learning fun and engaging, which helped learners focus and enjoy the class. Teachers can use movement-based games like the stepping game to improve vocabulary lessons and increase students' participation. Future studies can explore this game with different age groups, larger classes, or other types of vocabulary activities to see if similar results can be achieved. Overall, the stepping game combines learning and play in a way that supports both memory and motivation for young learners.

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