



## IMPROVE ENGLISH VOCABULARY WITH THE HELP OF DOING CROSSWORD PUZZLES FOR A1 LEVEL STUDENTS (ELEMENTARY)

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the improvement English vocabulary with the help of doing crossword puzzles for A1 level students (elementary) Crossword puzzles help with language learning and cognitive development. They engage different learning styles and can be customized for specific subjects, improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**Key words:** vocabulary, infants, speech, word meanings, interactions, crossword puzzles, fun, effective tool, cognitive development, foreign language

English is the most popular language worldwide, and a robust vocabulary is essential for success in various aspects of life. However, many people find it challenging to learn new words and enhance their vocabulary skills. Vocabulary development is the process through which individuals acquire words, starting from babbling as infants to producing their first words around one year of age. Infants gradually build their vocabulary, typically reaching about 50 words by 18 months old and beginning to form word combinations. They must understand the meanings words carry, posing the mapping problem of how infants attach words to referents. Theories like constraints, domain-general views, social-pragmatic accounts, and the emergentist coalition model have been proposed to address this issue. Infants use language early on to communicate, learning societal behaviors from caregivers and family members. They further develop their vocabulary through interactions with peers, receiving cues for word meanings and abstract word learning through conversations and reading. Vocabulary development involves physical context, prior knowledge, social interaction, and semantic support, with the phonological loop and short-term memory also playing important roles.

Learning a foreign language requires a lot of effort, time, and commitment, and often initial interest can fade in students. Teachers must find ways to maintain their interest, including using gaming technology like crosswords in the classroom. Students enjoy electronic tasks, so we introduced electronic crosswords to make learning more engaging. This helps develop interest, increase knowledge, and improve skills. Crosswords also help students use their free time for overall development and can be used during extracurricular activities. We aim to promote language study, broaden students' horizons, and develop memory, intelligence, and independence. Crosswords are a useful tool for reinforcing learning and training mental abilities. They encourage students to remember words and understand their meanings, helping to build vocabulary and improve language skills. Using crosswords at different stages of a lesson can enhance students' knowledge and ensure they remember the material.

Learning a foreign language involves mastering all four language skills, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. English spelling inconsistencies necessitate using phonics rules and linguistic clues to guess words. Crossword puzzles are a popular tool for improving vocabulary, reasoning, spelling, and word attack skills since the early 20th century. They require identifying terms, acquiring new vocabulary, and making inferences and



evaluations. Crosswords cater to different learning styles, engage students actively, and can be tailored for specific subjects. They are loved by all ages, offer a sense of achievement, and are an effective educational tool. Crosswords in lessons aim to motivate students by creating interest in language study and enhancing success and engagement. They help organize lessons, maintain student concentration, aid in vocabulary retention, and benefit ELL/ESL students. Filling in puzzles promotes independence, creativity, and active learning.

Crossword puzzles in the classroom serve multiple purposes. Firstly, they can be used as a check to test students' understanding of grammar or vocabulary. Secondly, they can be used as an award, where students can consolidate new material through a fun game. Lastly, they can be assigned as homework, with the condition that it must be interesting to the student. Creating a crossword can be a creative and enjoyable task for students to express themselves. It is also a great way to review a topic with new concepts before wrapping up a study. Additionally, promoting the best crossword creator and offering speed challenges can further engage students in the learning process.

The article from the "Journal of educational sciences" suggests that students can improve their vocabulary and public speaking skills through the use of crossword puzzles. The questionnaire used to evaluate students is deemed reliable. Research indicates that crossword puzzles can enhance the vocabulary of middle school students. Recommendations include students staying focused, teachers offering extra support, parental involvement, and further research on individual learning challenges. Active learning is emphasized by Mrs. Shetgar and Dr. Thalange, highlighting the importance of student engagement in the learning process. Feedback and application of knowledge are crucial for developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Teaching strategies that engage students' senses are found to be effective in improving learning outcomes. Educational puzzles, such as crossword puzzles, are noted for their ability to maintain interest, excite learners, teach challenging concepts, and develop critical thinking skills. Crossword puzzles specifically help expand students' vocabulary and can aid in exam preparation by reinforcing key concepts. In summary, crossword puzzles are recommended as an active learning tool that benefits students' educational development.

Educational crossword puzzles engage engineering students, enhancing understanding, vocabulary, and confidence. They improve learning environments and English proficiency. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine shows crossword puzzles may reduce dementia risk more than other brain games. Researchers conducted a 78-week trial at Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute and Duke University Medical Center with participants diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment. They received intensive, home-based computer training with web-based cognitive games or medium-difficulty crosswords. Booster sessions were provided for up to 78 weeks. The study involved 107 participants aged 55 to 95, with 51 in the games group and 56 in the crosswords group.

Researchers used various cognitive assessment tools and MRI to measure changes in cognitive function and brain volume in participants at different stages of disease. They found that crossword puzzles were more effective at slowing cognitive decline compared to computerized training. Limitations of the study included a small sample size, lack of a control group, and participant requirements such as English fluency and internet access. Additionally, the majority of participants were female and a lack of diversity in minority populations. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all populations.



One of the main problems in the learning process of English among elementary students is related to the vocabulary. These students do not reach their expected proficiency, and the poor levels of vocabulary are confirmed by low test scores. However, there are ways of improving vocabulary mastery with media such as pictures, videos, and games. There is a study on the use of crossword puzzles as a medium in teaching English in SD Negeri Danau Sadar.

After years of education, English vocabulary still causes trouble for kids in elementary school. This affects exam results. Bad marks on the pre-test word power. Today, information seems to be coming from all around us. To make things easier to learn and remember, a variety of mediums - such as pictures videos! - are used. Crossword puzzles were used as a teaching tool for English in the State Elementary School of Danau Sadar by a study recently undertaken there. Customers of all types are attracted to an ever-popular hobby Hundreds of millions of U.S. players all saying? Crossword puzzles. Words games think magic ready-set-go. After filling in the blanks with letters and collective clues, players are asked to form words WOW! Crossword puzzles improve students' vocabularies, elicit their interest, and train them in memory. According to studies, crosswords are one way to advance in school education. Crossword puzzles are also good at developing analytical skills and making it easier for student to think critically. Now researchers Harrad and Chomphumee state through experimenting with crossword puzzles, students could remember a great deal of vocabulary and thus lay roots for a big vocabulary. In all the above cases, we are to try classroom action research by using the crossword puzzle game to upgrade vocabulary mastery of fourth graders at SD Negeri Danau Sadar. Harrad (Dzulfikri, 2016; Rizki, Rukmini, & Sutopo, 2013) said that students could memorize a large amount of vocabulary after interacting with crossword puzzles, which would affect the development of a larger vocabulary. What was given earlier as an explanation for the study came out on the other side in experiential form as part of the researcher's intent. The researcher is hereby in a position to say that he wants to carry out a type of research called "Research on the Use of Crossword Puzzles to Improve Students' Vocabulary". He believed students had inadequate vocabulary skills in the course of his preliminary research. Thinking that it might be helpful to them, his approach was to put some crossword puzzles to work on grading their vocabularies. Although the initial translation of texts was difficult, quantitative data showed that improvement was seen in vocabulary learning. Students were very active and engaged in their vocabulary studies too. These findings were confirmed by interviews with students and observations from practice sessions. It was a good study as the results showed that post-test scores were higher than pretest scores', meaning this crossword puzzle he played much indeed improved vocabulary learning for his students.

The game of crossword puzzles has been a favorite pastime of many persons. There are millions playing crossword puzzles in the United States. Crossword puzzles are word games where players have to fill in spaces provided with letters to spell out words based on given clues. The puzzles enhance vocabulary levels, they are interesting to students as a game, they sharpen one's memory. The use of the medium in education has some justification in research findings. Furthermore, crossword puzzles develop the students' critical thinking skills. Students were able to memorize more vocabularies after being exposed to crossword puzzles. The finding of the authors could help expand students' vocabulary. All this justifies the writing of this research paper which is entitled "The Use of Crossword Puzzle Game to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery". The purpose, therefore, of the research is to conduct classroom action research using crossword puzzles as a medium to improve vocabulary mastery of the



fourth graders of SD Negeri Danau Sadar. The researcher decided to add the activity of playing the crossword puzzle game to the students. Such activity hopefully will enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

At the beginning of the study, the preliminary study found that students have low vocabulary. The research decided to use the medium of crossword puzzles to improve students' performance. Although the problem of students not understanding the text during translations was confusing and annoying, the data collection proved that they improved in vocabularies. Furthermore, the students became more active involved. Observations and interviews have also confirmed this. Students' post-test scores from crossword puzzle games to test scores are better than the pre-test score which indicates that the crossword puzzle medium can improve students' vocabulary mastery.

The article explores the different types of crossword puzzles to increase students' vocabulary and develop their learning of English. It is important to note that the ability to think is a necessity in the process of learning, as it enables students to make sense of, analyze, assess, solve, and draw conclusions based on understanding. Critical thinking is essential for science subjects, affecting the students' ability to understand, analyze, and apply the science knowledge. The Permendikbud 81 A of 2013 indicates that students should be encouraged to enhance their skills in communication, critical and creative thinking, and moral character. Critical thinking is influenced by various factors, including physical condition, motivation, teacher interaction, and students. As such, the article highlights the importance of media not only for learning but as a constant element of cultivating the skills of critical thinking. In conclusion, the article under analysis explains the benefits of crossword puzzles types and the internet for students, as it allows studying, developing knowledge, enhancing problem-solving and learning abilities, as well as improving the development and growth of the students in general.

The Introduction consists of the components contained in learning. Components contained in learning. According to (Elsovia & Mukhaiyar, 2020) there are objective components, material or material components, strategy components, tools and media components, and evaluation components. To support the success of learning media, the position of media in learning is very important, because the media is not only a messenger that must be fully mastered by human resources, but can also be useful for teachers in presenting learning material. With the benefits of the media, learning can be directly effective and achieve maximum results. Learning media is anything that is used as an intermediary in delivering information from the teacher to students and aim to stimulate students to be motivated to participate in the learning activities and with the meaning fully and meaningfully Hasan. Another opinion says that Learning Media is anything that is used to distribute teaching materials so that they are utilized for learning objectives, because with these media all the attention, thoughts, and feelings of students are focused on learning. From the two opinions, the writer concludes that learning media is an important component in learning, because media is a tool that delivers messages and information to students in learning.

Crossword puzzle is a language game that helps students or students word puzzles to form a sentence which is filled in the available box or row. With this learning strategy, students can understand and have fun learning. One of the applicable forms of learning is the characteristics of living things, especially breathing and moving things. Based on preliminary observations at MIS Farhan Syarif Hidayah, students tend not to be able to concentrate and tend to have low critical thinking skills and are unable to solve the problems given. According





to Filsaime, C. 2008. Critical thinking skills are skills that have been developed in education to be aware of what is right and what is wrong. Because with the development of critical thinking skills will make a student have the ability in creativity, analytical thinking, and balanced thinking. Research conducted by Syifa, I. A. and Supriatna, A. 2022. Crossword puzzles can improve critical thinking. Awareness and Samarinda, A. A. A. 2022. The use of crossword puzzle media can improve students' learning outcomes in the appropriate category.

From the results of the research that has been done, it is known that there is an influence on whether or not crossword puzzles media are applied to students' critical thinking. This is evident from the data analysis with the results of the initial test or the pre-test and final test or post-test. In the post test in the experimental class, the questions given are the same as those in the control class, so that they can be compared for one another. The characteristics of living things pre-test and post-test questions are made according to critical thinking indicators, namely understanding, analyzing, identifying, explaining and applying, an average value is obtained which is better in the experimental class than in the control class. where the average experimental class is 84.50 while the control class was 72.50 with the conclusion that crossword puzzle learning has an effect on critical thinking skills.

The comparison of the pre-test average results for the experimental class and the average post-test results for the experimental class as a whole showed that students' critical thinking skills during the pre-test were good before using the Crossword problem learning media, at the post-test, the average score of the class experiment with the puzzle learning media Crosswords are good though highest than experimental class students using conventional methods. For students this the crossword puzzle was also possible to be used as a good learning tool without removing the essence of such an ongoing lesson. From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the application of crossword puzzle learning media has a significant positive effect on students' critical thinking skills. This is evidenced by the critical thinking test of students in the experimental class after using the crossword puzzle learning media, the average score of the experimental post-test class is 84.50 and the average score of the control class post-test is 72.50. Critical thinking is an intellectual process that is actively and skillfully conceptualized, applied, analyzed, synthesized and evaluated through observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, to guide beliefs and actions. And it emerges after students learn using the Crossword puzzle during the implementation of answering post test questions given by the teacher at the experimental class in the interpretation indicator, there was an increase in student scores.

Crosswords are the most popular word puzzle type, which is primarily known for transporting players to alternative worlds. Crosswords are universal, beneficial for mental health, and age-independent.

Crosswords are puzzles that can be played by anyone, anywhere, anytime. It is a grid filled with squares and blanks used to fill out descriptions of word uses from adjacent clues . It is generally fun and mentally challenging. Various sets of crosswords are available. This includes the American-style grid that blacks out over one-sixth of the entire grid. Meanwhile, British Crossword sets implement a lattice shaped grid with some darkened squares. There are numerous ways to classify crosswords ; however, here it is broken down into the major types of word puzzles, which are; Cryptic crossword puzzles that provide a direct clue to the action or the final answer. However, the final answer to the word puzzle is not often stated; it must be deduced or discovered by the players by figuring the correct interpretations and placing the words in the correct order. The players generally come across this type of word puzzle

crossword in escape rooms or puzzle hunts. The game is majorly played in the United Kingdom because that is where it primarily originated. However, it is also played in the United States, but it is referred to as “British-style” crosswords. Beginners acquire varying skills from constant practice, which can include; deduction, word forming, word arranging, and so on. The games usually are designed, according to its genre, by experts with experiences in the field and intimate knowledge of the audience. They also divide the puzzle set into various difficulty levels, ensuring it ranges from the easiest to the most difficult. The complexity of Cryptic crosswords makes it a favorite among players. The clues provided are often written in a poetic or riddles form to confuse the players. Also, the clues do not give a direct implication of the written words; it always suggests a hidden meaning. The player has to solve the puzzle by giving the best answer to the clues.

Cryptic Puzzles can be divided into three more categories:

1. Blocked Grids puzzles
2. Barred grids
3. Thematic puzzles

Blocked Grids puzzles are the type of puzzles when most people immediately have an image in their mind when they hear the word “crossword.” Blocked grids include a grid of squares, which mark spaces between random squares of words and the ending of the words. Basically, the design is 15 squares by 15 squares, but they can be anything but this. A blocked grid puzzle of a size of 15×15 with blocked grid has about 30-32 words in it. All the squares are assembled in random blockage, and the provided clues must fill in the resulting grid. A Barred grid is another type of word puzzle crossword, but it is significantly different from the blocked grid . Barred grids are labeled with bars at the starting of the words and division as opposed to provisions. In addition, the language used for such type of puzzle is rare, and in many cases, it is cited. It is highly advisable to recognize the Barred grid’s crossword puzzles general design which is 12 squares by 12 squares. Each solution divides the letters share across where cross answering verifies each stipulation. However, the barred grid puzzles are packed with words that have more and dense textual vocabulary, even though in many cases, it looks somewhat smaller. Basically, every puzzle comprises 32-36 words . There are several kinds of thematic puzzles with barred grids, but still, they could follow different grid arrangements, such as a double L shape, rather than squares and rectangles. In addition, these kinds of puzzles are usually based on any specific theme. The best way to learn the rich variety of thematic puzzlers is to attempt at solving them by yourself as opposed to seeking tips.

To conclude, there is no absolute answer when it comes to the issue of the best teaching techniques of English. Some techniques may suit some students at certain levels. The same technique which works well with some students may not be successful with others. As suggested by this research study, learning vocabulary through crosswords is one of the best ways to improve students’ vocabulary. Student motivation to learn English can be increased if the teacher provides them with enjoyable learning environments.

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