

## **Enhancing Eleventh-Grade Students' Vocabulary Mastery Through Crossword Puzzle: A Pedagogical Innovation at MA Miftahul Qulub Pamekasan**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to explore pedagogical innovation by implementing crossword puzzle to enhance students' vocabulary mastery of XI IPA students at MA Miftahul Qulub Pamekasan. From the problems that has been found on the observation before, like: Monotonous Teaching Method, Limited Practice Opportunities, Difficulty in Retention, Lack of Active Learning, and Ineffective Assessment in teaching vocabulary so that the Classroom Action Research can be the solution. Some steps of CAR: Reconnaissance, Planning, Action and Observation, and Reflection. The result of research found that the mean score in pre-test =61.42 cycle 1= 62.14, cycle 2=91.78. There were 28, 6% students passed KKM on pre-test, on cycle 1 just 42, 8% students and 100% students passed the KKM on cycle 2. It proved the implementation of crossword puzzle can enhance the students' vocabulary mastery of XI IPA class at MA Miftahul Qulub Pamekasan

**Keywords:** *Enhancing, Vocabulary Mastery, Crossword Puzzle, Pedagogical Innovation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, in the world of education, the development of English language skills especially vocabulary mastery plays a central role in shaping students' academic success. Good vocabulary mastery is not only the basis for effective communication, but also a core skill that supports achievement in various fields of study. Therefore, this research aims to explore pedagogical innovation with a focus on enhancing eleventh grade students' vocabulary mastery at MA Miftahul Qulub, Polagan Galis Pamekasan. Language as a social phenomenon is a communication tool used by humans in a community. One of the languages that have a significant influence in interaction over the world is English. It is used in many aspects of International relationship; people use English for business, technology, even in educational interaction.

Taking into account the benefits of English, Indonesia has organized English to be taught in formal school as a compulsory subject. As stated in the standard of content by the Ministry of Education and Culture 2013, the teaching of foreign languages, specifically English,

is aimed at developing students' ability to communicate with world society. Therefore, it is taught at different kinds of grade levels. The teaching includes the teaching of the four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing and each of the micro skills.

Vocabulary is one of crucial aspects to support those skills . As stated by Syafrizal & Haerudin (2018) vocabulary is core component of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Vocabulary is very important to be learned by the students who want to master a language. English vocabulary as one of the language skill elements has an important role for young learners in learning foreign languages. It is in line with Nur Rahmah, Muh. Tahir (2023)said that in learning English four aspects of skills must be mastered by students at school, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. To master these four skills, it is important to master the basics of English, namely vocabulary. In English learning, the first thing a teacher does is teach their students vocabulary so that they know how to compose sentences orally or in writing that they can use to communicate. The vocabulary mastery will affect someone's ability in using the language either in spoken or written form (Rahayu et al., 2021). Zahiroh (2021) stated that vocabulary mastery refers to an ability to understand and use words. The students are required to have knowledge about words, which are knowing and understanding the meaning first before they can use the word to be applied in one of language skill. In highlighting the importance of vocabulary particularly in all English skills, understanding the meaning of words and sentences is indeed essential for comprehending spoken and written language. Additionally, being able to arrange words effectively is crucial for conveying one's own thoughts and ideas, whether orally or in writing. It can be mentioned that while arranging words is important, paralanguage and context also play significant roles in communication. Overall, vocabulary is indeed a fundamental aspect of language skill, but it is important to recognize the interplay of other factors such as paralanguage and context in effective communication. Nopitasari (2019) state that the students should have enough vocabularies as the basic requirement to master those four language skill, because vocabulary is very important to language learning and vocabulary is one of important language elements to support the learners to use the language well. Wefi et al. (2023) Vocabulary teaching is one of the essential elements of language learning. Without know-how of vocabulary, youngsters will now no longer be capable of specific and writing their thoughts the usage of grammar, and organizing them into significant sentences. Iman (2016) argued that Learning vocabulary is likely to be one of the biggest challenges that student will face in their studies. Among all language skills vocabulary learning is as significant in

language learning as its challenging.

Based on the observation result that has been done in XI IPA class at MA Miftahul Qulub Pamekasan, it was known that there was a problem related to teaching-learning method, the teacher usually only used the monotonous traditional method, which is to translate words isolated from English to Indonesian. In the beginning of each meeting the teacher wrote ten words on the board and the students were asked to translate them to Indonesian. The students sometimes find it difficult and they are also discouraged in learning vocabulary. The students were also rarely given opportunities to practice the words that had been given in other activities. They learn the words naturally at the different opportunities of teaching-learning. Therefore, they only knew the words meaning and forgot the words easily. Therefore, based on the problems, the concluded that, the eleventh grade students of MA Miftahul Qulub Pamekasan still have problems in different kinds of research aspects of vocabulary mastery There are several ways that can be used to solve vocabulary problems, one of them by implementing attractive games in teaching vocabulary. There are so many vocabulary games proposed by some experts like Crossword puzzle game to encourage students to be more active in the class so that they can improve their vocabulary mastery. Rahayu et al. (2021) explained that crossword Puzzle is a game consisting of a row of squares with the same side that can be drawn with an across or down pattern, where each box has a different color, namely black and white. Crossword puzzle game is a game that encourage students to solve and complete the puzzle so that they can learn new words, their meanings, and their usage within the context of the puzzle. Furthermore students can get involved in active engagement with language and enhance their vocabulary mastery in fun and challenging way. Rochmadhoni et al., (2022) added that the use of the crossword puzzle game media affects the vocabulary achievement. Crossword puzzle games and teaching vocabulary helped students increase their vocabulary of nouns related to things in the classroom. Pohloh & Ma'rifatulloh (2023) said that crossword puzzle has become one of the alternative games in teaching-learning, including language learning that has sets of grids to be filled with words or letters. Crossword puzzle is a popular game, and among other games, crossword puzzles seem to be more attractive than others . It is in line with Harry & Dhand in Nopitasari (2019) stated different kinds of benefits for using crossword puzzles included, it is as a fun and raise students' motivation, it can be easily made by the teacher and even the students themselves, encourage the use of dictionary and can be used for different types

of classroom activities. So, the researchers and collaborator decided to use crossword puzzles to help the students to enhance their vocabulary mastery. Crossword puzzles will be modified using contextual sentences, the use of a dictionary, and interesting group work .

The innovative approach proposed in this research is the use of crossword puzzles as a learning media that can improve students' vocabulary mastery. Crossword puzzles are not only considered a fun game but also an interactive means of deepening contextual understanding of vocabulary. Through this approach, it is hoped that students will not only expand their vocabulary, but also be able to integrate new words into everyday use more fluently. There are some previous studies discuss about the implementation of crossword puzzle game in increasing students' vocabulary . The first come by Nopitasari (2019) the result showed that using crossword puzzles could improve the first grade students' vocabulary mastery and their active participation at SMP Lab.School Arar. Therefore, the English teacher at the school have to use crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary, since it can improve the students' vocabulary mastery and also their active participation. The second previous study by Rochmadhoni et al. (2022) that the use of the crossword puzzle game media affects the vocabulary achievement of the seventh graders at SMPN 2 Bojonegoro in the 2021/2022 academic year. Thus, it can say that there was any significant difference in teaching vocabulary between the students taught through crossword puzzle games and those taught using the direct method through pictures in the seventh graders' students at SMPN 2 Bojonegoro in the academic year 2021/2022. Students taught through the crossword puzzle games improved more than those taught through the direct method using pictures. It provides that teaching vocabulary using crossword puzzle games is more effective. The last research from Sina et al. (2023) Crossword puzzles facilitate vocabulary augmentation, enhance cognitive abilities, bolster self-assurance, and expedite acquiring knowledge. Consequently, the integration of crossword puzzles as an instructional tool proved beneficial, as indicated by the majority of students, who positively influenced their learning disposition, subsequently leading to improved academic outcomes. The researchers propose the incorporation of crossword puzzles as a pedagogical tool, intending to enhance the overall appeal and interactivity of the classroom environment.

Thus, through this research, it does not only seek to evaluate the positive impact of using crossword puzzles on students' vocabulary mastery, but also to detail new insights in designing effective and relevant teaching strategies. So this research had purpose to explore how the implementation of crossword puzzle can enhance students vocabulary mastery of XI IPA

students at Miftahul Qulub Polagan Galis as pedagogical innovation . It is also expected the students to have a pleasure atmosphere in learning English so that the students' low motivation and confidence, and the problem of vocabulary mastery can be solved.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is about enhancing vocabulary mastery of the students of MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan through the implementation of crossword puzzles as kind of an action research. Action research is done by and for the people taking the action and relates to the action they are taking. Its purpose can be to improve the practice of an individual researcher, or of collaborative research; it can focus on school goals. Teachers raise questions about classroom practice, carefully document procedures and gather data on student performance, then reflect on that data and practical experience to determine what to do next. Action research cycles often start with a question. The steps that often follow problem formulation are theory development, design intervention, data collection, and data analysis (Siyaswati, 2011). From the problems that has been discussed before like: Monotonous Teaching Method, Limited Practice Opportunities, Difficulty in Retention, Lack of Active Learning, and Ineffective Assessment in teaching vocabulary so the researchers use Classroom action research to solve those kinds of problems. Since it is typically collaborative action research, the research members worked together with a collaborator who is an English teacher of grade XI IPA students by implementing crossword puzzle to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. The researcher applied the cycle model by Kemmis and McTaggart (1999) on (Lutfi, 2020) of action research for each cycle, as presented below:

### ***Determining the Thematic Concern (Reconnaissance)***

This step was carried out at the first week. The researcher and the collaborator collected as much information as they can about the teaching and learning process and students' problems through conducting interviews and classroom observation.

### ***Planning***

The planning was initiated from the discussion with the collaborator regarding the existing problems during the reconnaissance. The purpose of this action was to find out the relevant problems and planned some actions as follows:

*Selecting materials based on the basic competency.*

The research was conducted in the second semester. Following discussions with the English teacher and review of the syllabus, the topics covered included "Back to School," "Amazing Animals," "The Clothes," and "The Food."

*Designing Lesson Plans*

Based on the materials above, there were two lesson plans designed and planned to be implemented during the first cycle of the research. The second was implemented in the second cycle with some revisions based on the first cycle reflection.

*Action and Observation.*

The actions were carried out in two cycles. Each cycle took two meetings which applied two lesson plans. In each cycle, the reserachers implemented the action.They implemented the teaching-learning using the lesson plans that had been designed and implemented some discussions of teaching guidelines with the english teacher before the classes began. The researchers completed the observation checklist, made some observation notes, and took pictures during the implementation of the lesson plans.

*Reflection*

At the end of each cycle the researcher and the collaborator held a discussion about the whole process of the action. Surely, the discussion is considered by the teacher, researcher, and students' opinions, ideas and suggestions that are important for the next cycle. The actions which were considered to be successful were maintained in the next cycle. However, the actions which were considered to be less successful were revised to be implemented in the next cycle.

*Participant and Instrument*

The researchers have conducted research in MA Miftahul Qulub polagan on XI IPA that consist of 28 students .The researchers used some intruments to collect data from tests, observation checklist and interviews.

*Data Analysis*

In analyzing the data, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data is

used to describe the situation during the teaching process. The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data analysis conducting different analysis, moving deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. The qualitative data is analyzed from observation checklist. Quantitative data was used to analyze the scores of students. The quantitative data was collected and analyzed by computing the score of the vocabulary test. To know the mean score, the researchers applied the following formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N} \times 100\%$$

M: mean score

$\sum x$  : total score.

N : the number of the students.

As mentioned above, in order to evaluate the students' vocabulary mastery by using crossword puzzle, the researcher has calculated the data using vocabulary test which is crossword puzzle test. Applying quantitative analysis, the researcher used the formulation of the mean score. To obtain the percentage of class that passed KKM, the researchers used the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P: The class percentage

F: Total students get passing grade

N: Number of students

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Findings***

From the result of pretest that has been conducted on the previous meeting, it is known that the mean score of pre-test just 61, 42. There were only 8 or 28,6% students who can passed the KKM (Minimum Mastery Criterion) and 20 students were still under KKM. So it can be proved that the XI IPA students were still lack of vocabulary mastery.



### *First Cycle*

The first cycle was conducted for two meetings. Two meetings here mean that It was conducted over two lesson plans and a test during the final meeting (Lesson Plan 1, Lesson Plan 2, and Test). Each meeting lasted 2 sessions of 35 minutes, totaling 70 minutes per meeting. Therefore, across two meetings, the total time amounted to 4 sessions of 35 minutes each, totaling 140 minutes. In the planning stage of Cycle 1, all materials were prepared, including organizing the lesson plans and selecting Lesson Plan 1 and Lesson Plan 2 on "Back to School" and "Amazing Animals." During the implementation, the researcher attended the class alongside a co-teacher, who was an English teacher from grade XI at MA Miftahul Qulub.

The researcher conducted the action on the first meeting the material was about Back to School topic.the researchers and english teacher introduced words by spelling, pronouncing and giving the meaning of words. The researcher also observed all the activities in the classroom by using observation sheets. The teacher asked students doing the exercise about crossword puzzle that relate to the topic individually. The researchers has prepared some clues in written form that can lead students to fill the suitable word on the blank space in turn.

On the second meeting the researcher prepared the different topic and with a bit different activities. the material was about Amazing Animal . The researchers and english teacher introduced words by spelling, pronouncing and giving the meaning of words. The researcher also observed all the activities in the classroom by using observation sheets. . Then the researchers and teacher give another kind of crossword puzzle by asking students to do the exercise and dictated the clues to lead the students in completing the blank space of the puzzle on the board.The students look enthusiastic about carrying out the activities eventhough there are some students who are not focused on learning. There were also some students who can not answer the answer well because they felt confused about the clues and they also felt that some vocabullaries were still unfamiliar for them. Finally the students could finished the exersize by the researcher's guidance.

After the first cycle has been done, the first post test was conducted to evaluate the students' learning result in vocabulary mastery. The means score was 62.14, it was still into enough categories. It appears that most of the students did not achieve high scores in the vocabulary assessment set by the researcher. Specifically, 4 students scored 45, 5 students scored 50, 1 student scored 55, and 2 students scored 60, falling into the category of sufficient proficiency. In contrast, 4 students scored 65, 6 students scored 70, 5 students scored 75, and



only 1 student scored 80, indicating a higher level of proficiency categorized as good. There were only 12 or 42,8% students who can passed the KKM (Minimum Mastery Criterion) and 16 students were still under KKM. Although the students' achievement on this stage got improvement than the result of pre-test but it proved that the XI IPA students were still lack of vocabulary mastery. It means that they were still far from good, even excellent or very good category so that the researchers had to continue the research to the next cycle.

### *Second Cycle*

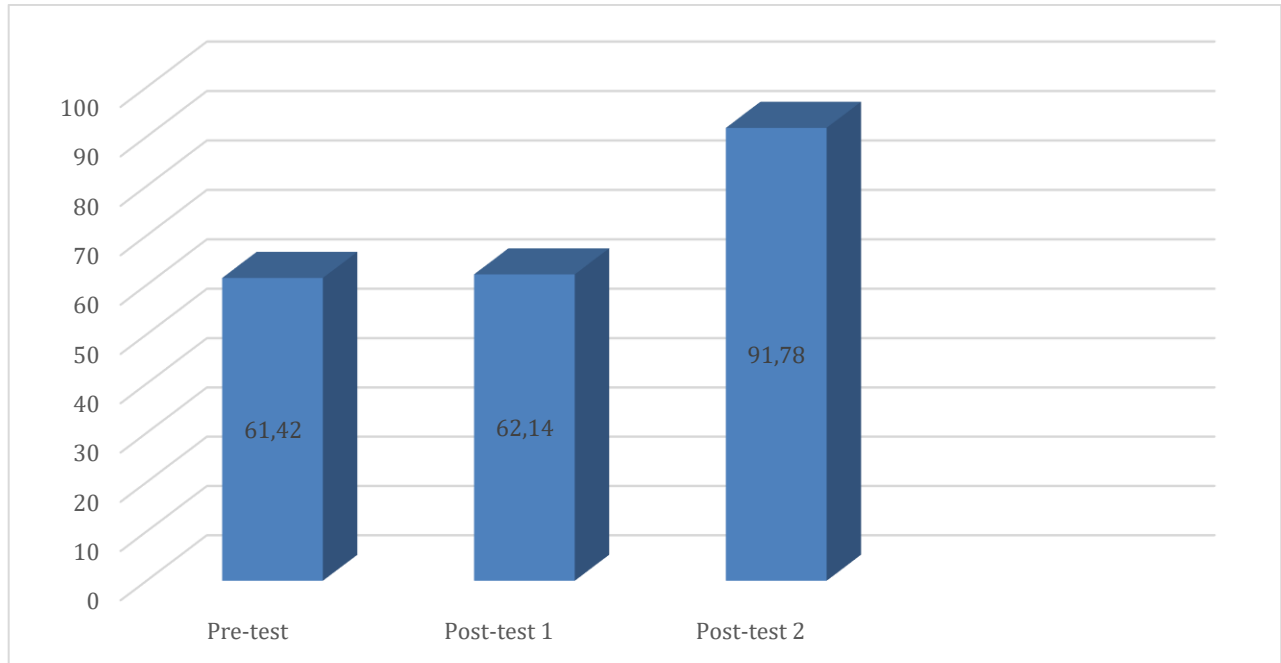
The second cycle was conducted for two meetings, too. Two meetings here mean that it was conducted for two lesson plans and test in the last meeting (Lesson Plan 3, Lesson Plan 4 and Test). Then, every meeting was done for  $2 \times 35$  minutes or 70 minutes. So, two meetings were done for  $4 \times 35$  minutes or 145 minutes. Based on the reflection result of the first cycle The different conditions were designed by the researchers to motivate the students so that they should be enthusiastic, not too (rather) enthusiastic, but very enthusiastic and active, the researchers redesigned the lesson plan and change the material into "The cloth we wear" for the first meeting and "The food we eat" on the second meeting. The researchers changed the worksheet to be more colorful and also changed the clues into questions form so that students can fill the puzzle them easily by reading detailed questions. The researcher also changed the activities by dividing students in pairs and groups so that they can be more enthusiastic because they had partners to support them in finishing the puzzle. it is the researcher's effort to make the students' vocabulary mastery can turn into good, even into very good category.

On the first meeting, the researchers and english teacher introduced words by spelling, pronouncing and giving the meaning of words. The researcher also observed all the activities in the classroom by using observation sheets. The students were divided in pairs so they can sit with their partners and doing the exercise about crossword puzzle that relate to the topic. The researchers has prepared a piece of paper that contain of a crossword puzzle with some detail questions as the clues to make the student be easier in understanding the clues. They are made in the colorful form to attract students's enthusiasm. The questions can lead students to fill the suitable word on the blank space in turn.

On the second meeting the researcher prepared the different topic and activities. the material was about "the food we eat" topic. the researchers and english teacher introduced words by spelling, pronouncing and giving the meaning of words. The researcher also observed all the activities in the classroom by using observation sheets. Then the researchers and teacher divide students into some groups and give another kind of crossword puzzle by drawing crossword puzzle on the board and they dictated the clues to lead the students in completing the blank space of the puzzle on the board. From the result of the second cycle, it brought the new atmosphere because the students tend to be more active than before. It means that almost all students focused on the learning activities. They also did not seem confused anymore because they can discussed with their partner and group in completing the puzzle. The detailed questions also help them to be more easy in finding the answer quickly so that the class become condusive.

After the second cycle has been done, the second post test was conducted to evaluate the students' learning result and the improvement in vocabulary mastery. The means score was 91.78, most of the students had been improved in all the aspects of vocabulary. It can be looked into which 7 students got 80 score or categorized into good category. There were one student

got 85 score, 5 students got 90 score, 5 students got 95 score and 10 students got 100 score or categorized into excellent or very good category. It can be concluded that 28 students or 100% students could pass the KKM, there was not a single student who got score below 70.



*Figure 1. The Comparison of the mean score on Students' Vocabulary Mastery*

It can be concluded that the students' vocabulary mastery turn to very good or excellent category after the last cycle treatment. The students get motivation during teaching learning process furthermore the english teacher give positive responds and comments for this strategy because it can attracted students' attention in learning vocabulary. The students also enjoyed the activities during the implementation. Crossword puzzle encouraged students to remember vocabulary deeply and they can also be more active in learning vocabulary. It means that that the implementation of crossword puzzles can enhance the students' vocabulary mastery of XI IPA at MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan.

### **Discussion**

This Section discusses how the implementation of crossword puzzle on teaching vocabulary. The topic of discussion is how crossword puzzle can help students to enhance students' vocabulary mastery and help the english teacher to be easier in teaching. The research discover that crossword puzzles can encourage students to remember vocabulary

and help them to be more active participatively in the class so that they can enhance their vocabulary mastery. It is different to the previous situation that indicate students were low in vocabulary score. But after implementing crossword puzzles, students's score of vocabulary test got improvement. It is founded based on the mean score of pre-test that was 61.42 then after the treatment of cycle 1, the mean score was 62.14 become 91.78 in cycle 2. It is also supported by Sina et al. (2023) stated that it could be seen that before giving treatments, student's vocabulary mastery is got low score. It showed that majority of the students got low score, most of the students got Fair, Poor, and Very Poor. Then, after giving treatments The students vocabulary mastery is improve. It is also in line with Nopitasari (2019) stated that. The implementation of crossword puzzles effectively enhanced students' active participation in the vocabulary teaching and learning process. Students engaged enthusiastically during vocabulary sessions using crossword puzzles due to their genuine interest in the materials presented. Rochmadhoni et al also emphasized that Students who were taught using crossword puzzle games showed greater improvement compared to those taught through the direct method using pictures. This indicates that using crossword puzzle games to teach vocabulary is more effective. From all the research result have discussed it can be conclude that the implementation of crossword puzzles is not only can enhance students vocabulary but it is also can motivate students to be more active and give positive impact to both english teacher and students in teaching vocabulary.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### ***Conclusion***

The conclusion of the research is that the implementation of the crossword puzzle can give a positive effect on students' achievement. The technique attracts and motivates the students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Based on the results of the classroom action research, It is founded based on the students' vocabulary mastery mean score in which was in pre-test 61.42 then after the treatment of cycle 1, the mean score was 62.14 become 91.78 in cycle 2. The KKM was passed by 28, 6% students on pre-test then it got improvement on the first cycle because the KKM was passed by 42, 8% students. Fortunately, on the second cycle the students' achievement reach excellent level, it means that 100% students who passed the KKM. It proved that the implementation of crossword puzzle can enhance the students'

vocabulary mastery of XI IPA class at MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan Galis Pamekasan. Beside that the students were encouraged to be more enthusiastic than before by completing crossword puzzle furthermore the english teacher give positive respond because he can saw the new atmosphere that students bring into the class and he felt that students bcome easy in remembering vocabulary at the time they did the activities. The students tend to be active and participate the class amazingly. So The crossword puzzle can be a pedagogical innovation to bring good impact in enhancing students vocabulary of XI IPA at MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan Galis Pamekasan.

### ***Suggestion***

Based on the explanation above, it is suggested that both English teachers and students can implement the crossword puzzle to be a good strategy in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery in English subject. English teachers can also redesign some activities to be a bit difference with this research for the improvement in teaching learning process. So that this strategy can be a pedagogical innovation that can help english teacher and students in facing 21th century that demand to be able to keep up with the current developments. Beside that the next researchers can chose this research to be one of beneficial reference to next research relate to english subject especially about students' vocabulary mastery. The next researchers also can try to implement this strategy into another focus of english skills for further research.

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