

# Improving English Vocabulary through Interactive Play: The 'Siapa Cepat' Game in the Penaraga Village

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## Article Info

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## ABSTRACT

This community-based program was conducted in the Penaraga Village to enhance English vocabulary acquisition among children aged 3–9 through interactive, game-based learning. Core activities included vocabulary introductions focused on household and daily-life items, team quizzes, and a fast-paced guessing game called *Siapa Cepat* (“Who’s Fast”). These play-based methods provided a dynamic, low-pressure environment that engaged visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. As a result, children demonstrated improved vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and confidence in using English. Observations and informal assessments confirmed these learning gains. The program also fostered social development, promoting communication, cooperation, and leadership especially as older children supported younger peers. Shared meals reinforced participation and bonding. The use of familiar community spaces and family involvement further extended learning outside the formal sessions. Overall, the activity proved effective in supporting early language development and strengthening community engagement in education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an indispensable international language across numerous facets of life, including education, commerce, and daily communication. In this digital era, English proficiency is not only a tool for participating in global networks but also a necessity for accessing knowledge, technology, and opportunities worldwide. In Indonesia, English is mandated as a compulsory subject within educational institutions, yet achieving adequate proficiency remains a significant challenge. This difficulty is particularly evident among children in rural or semi-rural areas where daily interaction with the language is minimal. Limited exposure, scarcity of qualified teachers, and a lack of engaging learning resources often hinder young learners from developing a strong foundation in English [2][3]. Consequently, the design of innovative and enjoyable learning methods becomes a crucial component in overcoming these challenges and fostering more meaningful language acquisition.

Children aged 3-9 years are in what is often referred to as the critical period of language development. The critical period hypothesis emphasizes that during this stage, children possess heightened neurological plasticity, which facilitates the acquisition and imitation of sounds, words, and grammatical structures [4][5]. Their innate ability to absorb new vocabulary rapidly enables them to learn multiple languages simultaneously, provided they are given sufficient stimulation and opportunities for active engagement. Research has consistently shown that effective learning experiences during this stage, particularly those that are interactive and contextual, significantly enhance language retention and application [7][8][9]. However, when learning is presented in monotonous or overly abstract formats, children tend to lose interest quickly, which may impede progress. This highlights the importance of pedagogical strategies that combine cognitive stimulation with enjoyable, meaningful activities.

One promising approach is the integration of games into the learning process. Games create a relaxed and stimulating environment that promotes engagement, motivation, and participation, which are essential for young learners [10][11]. Game-based learning not only allows children to practice language skills in a natural, interactive manner but also caters to different learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. According to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, language development is heavily influenced by social interaction, making collaborative and competitive games a powerful educational tool [23]. Similarly, Piaget’s theory of cognitive development underlines

that children in the preoperational and concrete operational stages learn best through active exploration and hands-on experiences [24]. Games, particularly those designed to be competitive and time-bound, enable learners to engage cognitively while practicing real-time problem-solving and decision-making.

In this context, the *Siapa Cepat* guessing game was strategically chosen as an innovative method for teaching English vocabulary to children. This game emphasizes speed, quick recall, and interaction, which align with the learning needs of children in early developmental stages. It focuses on vocabulary drawn from the home environment, objects, places, and activities that children encounter in their daily lives. By connecting new words to familiar experiences, the game promotes meaningful learning that can be reinforced outside the classroom [15][18]. The choice of home-centered vocabulary also strengthens the role of family involvement, as children can easily practice and share newly acquired words at home [17][20]. Additionally, the competitive nature of *Siapa Cepat* keeps learners attentive and motivated, while the structured game format allows immediate feedback and correction in a low-stress environment.

Another critical consideration in designing the *Siapa Cepat* activity is the balance between time pressure and learning outcomes. Time constraints can heighten focus and engagement, yet excessive pressure may disrupt learning quality. Eye-tracking studies have shown that overwhelming time limits can hinder information processing and lead to errors, making it essential to carefully calibrate the duration of each round [16]. The facilitation of this game incorporates supportive scaffolding, ensuring that children are guided through the vocabulary without being overwhelmed by the competitive element. This approach aligns with constructivist learning principles, where learners actively construct knowledge through guided experiences, and errors are seen as natural opportunities for growth [14][21].

The use of *Siapa Cepat* as a community-based English learning initiative also underscores the importance of extending educational opportunities beyond formal school settings. Rural communities often lack structured extracurricular programs that address language learning needs, making such interventions invaluable. By implementing the game during school holidays and in familiar community spaces, the activity leverages local resources and builds a sense of collective ownership among parents, facilitators, and children. This strengthens the sustainability of the learning process and encourages continued practice at home [20].

Ultimately, this study not only addresses the gap in English vocabulary acquisition among children aged 3-9 years but also demonstrates how playful, community-driven initiatives can yield significant educational outcomes. Through a structured, interactive, and theory-informed design, *Siapa Cepat* represents an effective model for integrating language learning with enjoyable activities that resonate with young learners' developmental needs and everyday experiences.

## 2. METHOD

Community service is packaged in the form of learning to improve English language skills through games. This community service activity was conducted through several structured stages: Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation. The approach was designed to improve children's English vocabulary mastery using the interactive "Siapa Cepat" (Who's Fast) guessing game while also fostering family engagement.

### 2.1 Preparation

In the preparation stage, the facilitator developed a vocabulary list consisting of 50 common English words related to household items, daily activities, and familiar objects (e.g., "chair," "table," "apple," "dog," "brush"). The vocabulary was selected based on three criteria: (1) frequency of appearance in the children's daily environment, (2) age-appropriateness for children aged 3-9 years, and (3) availability of corresponding visual aids or physical objects. The educational tool used was the New Ideal Dictionary with Pictures of English-Indonesian, supplemented with printed flashcards and household items for real-life demonstrations.

Children were grouped by age range (3-5 years and 6-9 years) to ensure that the game mechanics and vocabulary difficulty were suitable for their developmental stages. Each group was further divided into two teams of two to three children. The oldest child in each team was designated as the leader to encourage responsibility and group coordination.

### 2.2 Implementation

The activity began with an introductory session where the facilitator presented the selected vocabulary using flashcards and real-life objects, showed pictures, and pronounced the English words aloud. Children repeated each word to ensure correct pronunciation and comprehension. The main activity was the "Siapa Cepat" guessing game, where children competed to identify objects shown by the facilitator. The game mechanics were as follows:

- The facilitator displayed either a flashcard or a real object while giving minimal verbal clues.
- Each team was required to guess the English word as quickly and accurately as possible.
- Points were awarded for correct answers, and the team with the highest score at the end of the session was declared the winner.

The game was adapted for different age groups by adjusting vocabulary difficulty (e.g., basic nouns for younger children and descriptive words or simple phrases for older children) and providing more time or visual cues for younger participants. To foster family engagement, children were encouraged to share newly learned vocabulary

at home with their parents or siblings. Parents were also given a simple guide on how to practice the vocabulary with their children outside the activity sessions.

### 2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted using a combination of observation notes, pre/post vocabulary tests, and feedback sessions.

- Observation Notes: During the activities, the facilitator documented children's participation, pronunciation accuracy, social interaction, and responsiveness to instructions.
- Pre/Post Vocabulary Tests: A simple picture-based vocabulary test (10 items) was administered before and after the program to measure improvement in vocabulary recognition and pronunciation.
- Feedback Sessions: At the end of each session, a question-and-answer segment was held, allowing children to ask about unfamiliar vocabulary. Parents were also invited to share observations of their children's progress at home.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively to evaluate the effectiveness of the method in improving vocabulary mastery and social skills.

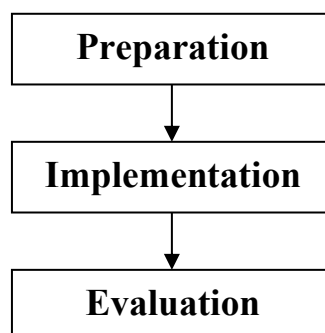


Figure 1. Research Flowchart (Method)

### 3. RESULTS

The community service activity yielded positive results in enhancing children's English vocabulary mastery and engagement in the Penaraga Village. Before the intervention, most children had limited vocabulary and often mispronounced words, such as incorrectly using "I am" instead of "I." However, after participating in game-based learning sessions including vocabulary introduction, quizzes, and the interactive "Siapa Cepat" (Who's Fast) game, the children showed noticeable improvement. Observations revealed that they became more active and confident in using new words, demonstrating better pronunciation and retention. Informal assessments through quizzes and Q&A sessions further confirmed their progress, particularly among children aged 3–9, who exhibited greater enthusiasm for learning English.

Beyond vocabulary development, the activity also strengthened the children's social skills by encouraging collaboration, communication, and mutual support, key aspects of early social development. However, challenges emerged, such as difficulties in grasping abstract vocabulary, highlighting the need for more diverse teaching strategies, like visual aids or interactive games. Additionally, parental involvement was identified as crucial for reinforcing language learning at home. Overall, the activity successfully boosted both linguistic and social competencies, though further adjustments in methodology and home support could enhance its effectiveness.



Figure 2. Learn the names of the days

Figure 2 shows the introductory stage where children learned basic vocabulary, such as the days of the week. In this session, the facilitator used flashcards and real objects, encouraging children to match visual images with English words. This approach enabled children to connect words to their everyday surroundings, which helped build familiarity and improved recall. In addition to vocabulary learning, Figure 2 also demonstrates the role of the facilitator in modeling correct pronunciation and ensuring that children repeat the words together. This method helped reduce pronunciation errors and gave children the opportunity to practice multiple times, which was especially beneficial for younger participants.



**Figure 3. Quiz preparation and execution**

Figure 3 depicts the preparation and execution of the team-based quiz. During this session, children were divided into small groups and encouraged to work collaboratively to answer vocabulary-related questions. The quiz format allowed the children to apply the words they had learned in a competitive yet supportive environment. The atmosphere shown in Figure 3 illustrates how competition can motivate children to engage more deeply in the learning process. Each team member contributed to the answers, which enhanced cooperation and communication. The team leaders, chosen from the oldest children in each group, played an important role in guiding and supporting their younger teammates.



**Figure 4. Eat with the children of the participants**

Figure 4 captures the group meal activity conducted as a form of positive reinforcement for children's effort and participation. Sharing a meal together after completing learning sessions served as both a reward and an opportunity for social bonding. This practice increased children's motivation to actively participate in future sessions. The shared meal shown in Figure 4 also fostered informal interactions between the facilitator and participants. These interactions allowed the facilitator to receive feedback from children about which activities they enjoyed the most, providing valuable insights for improving future sessions.





**Figure 5. Guess the game object**

Figure 5 highlights the "Guess the Object" game session, where children enthusiastically participated in identifying objects in English using visual and verbal clues. This activity required quick thinking, promoted vocabulary recall, and encouraged children to use the words they had learned in context. In Figure 5, it is evident that the children's enjoyment was a key factor in maintaining focus and participation throughout the session. The game format also catered to different learning styles; visual learners benefited from seeing the objects, auditory learners from listening to clues, and kinesthetic learners from physically pointing to or handling the objects.

This stage of the activity also demonstrated how the game's interactive nature strengthened both individual learning and teamwork. Children were observed helping their peers by offering hints in English, which reinforced peer-to-peer learning and boosted their confidence in using the new vocabulary. The competitive yet friendly atmosphere kept children motivated and encouraged active participation from all group members, including those who were initially shy. The facilitator played an important role by guiding the game, providing immediate feedback, and praising correct answers, which further enhanced the children's learning experience. Additionally, the use of familiar household objects ensured that the vocabulary learned could easily be practiced at home, supporting continuity in learning. This alignment between the classroom-like setting and the home environment increased the relevance and retention of the vocabulary introduced during the activity.

In Figure 5, it is evident that the children's enjoyment was a key factor in maintaining focus and participation throughout the session. The game format also catered to different learning styles; visual learners benefited from seeing the objects, auditory learners from listening to clues, and kinesthetic learners from physically pointing to or handling the objects. Here are some of the benefits of this game, with a focus on the English vocabulary used in the game:

1. Vocabulary Development
  - a. New Word Recognition: Children can learn the names of objects in English, such as "apple," "car," "book," and "ball."
  - b. Word Variations: In addition to nouns, children can also be introduced to adjectives that describe objects, such as "red," "big," or "soft."
2. Improved Speaking Ability
  - a. Practice: consonant pronunciation errors among preschool children, suggesting that targeted practice focusing on phonological features aids in identifying and overcoming common mistakes in pronunciation [22].
  - b. Description: Children's Pronunciation
  - c. : learn to describe objects using simple sentences, such as "It is round" or "It is used for writing."
3. Improved Listening Comprehension
  - a. Listening to Clues: When listening to instructions from a friend or adult, children practice understanding spoken English, which helps improve their listening skills.
  - b. Context of Use: Children learn how words are used in different contexts, strengthening their language understanding.
4. Social Interaction in English
  - a. Communicate with Friends: This game encourages children to interact and communicate in English when giving clues and guessing.
  - b. Cooperation: Children learn to work in groups, using English to communicate and help each other.
5. Improves Cognitive Skills
  - a. Problem-Solving: Children must think critically to give the right clues and guess objects correctly, which involves active use of English.

- b. Creativity: They can use their imagination to describe objects interestingly, exercising their creativity.
- 6. In-Game Noun Vocabulary Material  
Here are some examples of noun vocabulary in English that can be used in the game "Guess the Thing":
  - a. Fruits: apple, banana, orange, grape
  - b. Animals: dog, cat, elephant, tiger
  - c. Toys: doll, car, ball, puzzle
  - d. Household Items: chair, table, lamp, spoon
  - e. Clothing: shirt, pants, shoes, hat
  - f. Stationery: pen, pencil, notebook

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results show that interactive and game-based learning activities can effectively promote English vocabulary exposure among young learners in community settings. By combining structured vocabulary introduction, quizzes, and cooperative games, the activity provided a dynamic and low-pressure environment that kept children motivated and engaged. These findings support previous research stating that play-based learning significantly enhances early language acquisition [21].

The analysis of the figures also highlights how each stage of the activity contributed to both learning and social development. Figure 2 and Figure 3 clearly illustrate how structured vocabulary sessions followed by team quizzes improved children's ability to work together and communicate effectively. The team leaders' role in guiding their peers provided opportunities for children to practice leadership and cooperation.

Figure 4 underscores the importance of reinforcement strategies. Positive reinforcement through shared meals not only celebrated children's achievements but also fostered group bonding. This aligns with educational best practices, where rewards and informal interactions are known to increase learner motivation and sustain participation over time. Figure 5 further demonstrates how the integration of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements within the "Guess the Object" game allowed children with different learning preferences to fully engage. This multisensory approach ensured that each child had a fair opportunity to practice and retain the target vocabulary.

Despite these successes, certain challenges emerged. Some children struggled with abstract or less familiar vocabulary and required additional support. The limited number of participants also means that the findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. Additionally, parental involvement varied; children whose parents practiced vocabulary at home showed stronger retention compared to those who did not receive such support.

For future programs, more structured parental engagement and the inclusion of a greater variety of media, such as tactile learning tools, could further enhance outcomes. Nevertheless, the positive feedback from both children and parents suggests that this model is promising for replication in other community settings, particularly as it combines language learning with opportunities for social development.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

A community engagement program using the Who's Fast game demonstrates the potential of interactive game-based learning to improve English vocabulary in the Penaraga Village environment. While notable improvements were observed in children's vocabulary recognition, pronunciation, and willingness to use English actively, these outcomes were not uniform across participants. Variability in home support, differences in learning readiness, and challenges in abstract word comprehension influenced the depth of learning achieved. The integration of social elements such as peer collaboration, role assignment, and shared meals contributed positively to children's motivation and social development, though the extent of these gains varied. Family involvement emerged as a critical yet inconsistent factor; children with active parental reinforcement showed stronger retention and confidence. Furthermore, the informal nature of the learning environment, while effective in reducing pressure, posed challenges in ensuring consistent instructional quality and sustained focus. Despite these complexities, the program provided valuable insights into how community-based, culturally relevant, and age-appropriate strategies can contribute meaningfully to early language education. Future implementations should consider differentiated instruction, enhanced parental engagement strategies, and more structured monitoring mechanisms to support long-term impact and scalability.

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