

Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint: Integrating Fast-Paced Spelling Bee Activities to Enhance Students' Lexical Proficiency

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of a Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint, an instructional approach that integrates fast-paced spelling bee activities with Qur'anic moral values to enhance young learners' English Vocabulary mastery. Forty Elementary school students learning English as a foreign language were divided into an experimental group (n=20), which received Qur'anic-based spelling bee instruction for four weeks and a control group (n=20), which received conventional vocabulary teaching. A pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design was employed to examine vocabulary gains. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests. The findings revealed that students in the experimental group achieved substantially higher vocabulary improvement (M=82.45, SD=5.98) compared to control group (M=74.15, SD=6.21), with the difference statistically significant at p<.05. These results suggest that integrating Qur'anic values such as discipline, effort (ijtihad), and striving for excellence (ihsan) into gamified vocabulary learning motivates students, increases engagement and accelerates vocabulary retention. The Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint therefore offers a pedagogically sound and culturally relevant method for strengthening lexical proficiency among young EFL learners.

Keywords: lexical proficiency, spelling bee, fast-paced, vocabulary sprint

1. Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is one of the most fundamental components of foreign language learning, especially for young learners. Without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot understand spoken input, express ideas, or perform basic literacy tasks in English. In the early stages of language acquisition, vocabulary knowledge grows rapidly when children are exposed to meaningful, engaging and repetitive learning experiences (Nation, 2013). For elementary school students in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, vocabulary learning requires strategies that are age appropriate, enjoyable, interactive, and aligned with cognitive development (Pinter, 2017). Traditional, teacher-centered vocabulary lessons such as memorization, copying words, or rote drills often fail to sustain young learners' interest and do not promote deep processing required for long-term retention (Alqahtani, 2015).

To address this challenge, researchers have increasingly recommended game-based learning to strengthen vocabulary mastery in young EFL learners. As noted by Nation (2013) found that digital game-based learning transforms vocabulary acquisition into an effective, immersive experience, enhancing motivation, confidence and autonomous learning behavior among EFL students through platforms like Wordwall. Among a variety of language learning games, spelling bee activities have shown strong potential. Recent studies highlight that

spelling bee games enhance learners' phonological awareness, spelling accuracy, vocabulary size and confidence in using new words (Saediansa, 2025; bagustian, 2021). For young learners, spelling competitions and elements of excitement and challenge that trigger focus and sustained engagement.

Yet, many traditional spelling bee formats move at a slow, turn-by-turn pace, which may reduce momentum and engagement among energetic elementary students. To overcome this limitation, the concept of a challenge provides a modernized, dynamic approach aligned with children's need for active learning. Fast-Paced Vocabulary tasks have been found to sharpen attention, speed up word retrieval practice mechanisms (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011; Karatas et al., 2025). Research comparing retrieval practice with other vocabulary learning methods demonstrates that retrieval-based approaches, particularly when combined with spaced practice and time constraints, result in better immediate and delayed vocabulary recall (Candy et al., 2020). Vocabulary Sprint activities combine repetition, quick processing, and competition all of which are cognitively stimulating for young learners.

In Islamic education context, the integration of quranic-based values into modern pedagogical activities provides not only academic benefits but also contributes to moral and spiritual growth. Qur'anic-based pedagogy emphasizes literacy, accuracy, perseverance and good manners -values highly compatible with gamified learning. The Qur'an's first command "Iqra" (Read!), serves as foundational motivation for cultivating literacy and learning from an early age (Halstead, 2004). The principle of precision (tahqiq), required in Qur'anic recitation, aligns with the careful pronunciation and accurate spelling demanded in spelling bee tasks. Research on the role of Arabic language to language in strengthening precision directly support both linguistic and spiritual development.

Similarly, values of mujahadah (striving with effort) encourage students to practice diligently, while husn al-adab (good behavior and respect) fosters a positive classroom atmosphere where children learn to take turns, cooperate and encourage each other. Recent studies on integrating Islamic values in English language teaching show that such integration supports emotional well-being, enhances motivation and strengthens children's character development (Haq et al., 2023). A systematic review of digitalized Islamic learning materials in language instruction found that digital platforms combined with Islamic content improve learning outcomes across multiple domains while effectively fostering motivation and strengthening Islamic identity. These qualities are critically important for elementary students who are still in their formative stage of moral, social and spiritual growth.

Despite the existing evidence on the gamified vocabulary learning and Islamic pedagogy in language teaching, studies combining Qur'anic-based pedagogy with fast-paced spelling bee activities for young EFL learners remain limited. Very few models intentionally integrate Qur'anic values to shape the learning process while using modern, child-friendly techniques to strengthen vocabulary proficiency. This gap indicates the need for an approach that not only enhances lexical skills but also nurtures Islamic behavior, motivation and disciplined learning habits in young students.

Therefore, this study proposes the Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint, a pedagogical model that integrates fast-paced spelling bee activities with Qur'anic-inspired values to improve English vocabulary proficiency among elementary school learners. The model aims to foster both academic and spiritual development by connecting engaging vocabulary practice with Islamic values of literacy, precision, perseverance and respectful behavior. This research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of innovative, holistic vocabulary teaching methods in Islamic elementary school, providing both theoretical and

practical insights for educators and researcher.

Naskah ditulis dalam bentuk artikel antara 4000-6000 kata, menggunakan format kertas A4, font Cambria ukuran 11, single spasi dan font Traditional Arabic untuk tulisan berbahasa Arab. Khusus untuk ayat Al-Qur'an, dapat ditulis identitas ayat QS. Nama Surah: ayat (QS. Al-Baqarah: 1-5), tanpa menuliskan semua redaksi ayat dan artinya. Penyantuman teks Arab seperti ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, hadits atau referensi dari kitab berbahasa Arab perlu dibatasi pada redaksi yang sedang didiskusikan.

Format penulisan rujukan atau referensi menggunakan format in-text note (catatan dalam) ASA 6th/7th edition sebagai contoh (Aslam 2014, 1). Mohon menggunakan *referencing tools* seperti Zotero atau Mendeley. Untuk menghindari plagiarisme, tim editor akan melakukan cek similarity dengan ketentuan maksimal 25%.

Istilah asing atau kata dari Bahasa Arab ditransliterasi sesuai standar SKB Menteri Agama dan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI No.158 Th.1987 ditulis tegak.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vocabulary Learning for Young Learners

Vocabulary is the foundation of language proficiency, determining young learners' early success and confidence in foreign language learning (Nation, 2013). In EFL environments, children have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making meaningful vocabulary activities essential (Pinter, 2017).

Elementary students rely on concrete experiences, repetition, visual support and interactive tasks to internalize vocabulary. Research demonstrates that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when learners encounter words multiple times in engaging contexts that encourage active processing and comprehension tasks (Webb & Nation, 2017). Active processing produces deeper more durable vocabulary knowledge than passive exposure.

Traditional teacher who applied centered instruction rote memorization and copy from the board leads to long-term retention among young learners (Alqahtani, 2015). Instead, game-based learning and collaborative activities consistently produce higher motivation and better vocabulary recall. A systematic review found that game-based approaches effectively promote active participation, peer interaction, and long-term vocabulary retention while increasing learning confidence.

2.2 Spelling Bee Activities

Spelling Bee Games are structured vocabulary competition where learners spell the words aloud with accuracy and clarity. Although originally developed for native English speakers, these activities are widely adopted in EFL classrooms due to strong cognitive and linguistic benefits. Some of the benefits are :

a) Phonological Awareness and sound-symbol correspondence:

Spelling Bee tasks require conscious attention to word sounds and mapping them to written symbols, strengthening phoneme-grapheme relationships critical for EFL learners lacking implicit native speakers intuitions (Sardiansa, 2025).

b) Spelling accuracy and pronunciation

Spelling Bee participation directly improves spelling accuracy through repeated, effortful retrieval of correct letter sequences, while simultaneously developing pronunciation skill aligned with standard English Phonetics

(Bagustian, 2021). These dual benefits create synergistic effects on vocabulary quality.

c) Vocabulary retention

Through repeated exposure and retrieval practice across multiple modalities (hearing, pronouncing, writing), spelling bee activities increase both productive vocabulary (words learners can spell and use in speech) and receptive vocabulary (words learners can recognize and comprehend) (Sardiansa, 2025).

2.3 Fast-Paced Vocabulary Tasks: The concept of Vocabulary Sprint

Fast-paced vocabulary activities challenge learners to recall and apply words quickly under time constraints. The theoretical foundation draws from cognitive psychology research on the retrieval practice, which demonstrates that retrieving representations than passive reviews (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011).

A landmark study by Karpicke & Blunt (2011) in science showed that retrieval practice consistently produced superior long-term retention compared to elaborative studying, despite learners perceiving concept mapping as more effective a phenomenon called "fluency illusion". For vocabulary instruction, this means effortful word retrieval under time pressure creates stronger memory encoding. A comprehensive review by Karatas et al. (2025) identified key memory enhancement techniques: spacing effect (distributed over time), retrieval practice (testing and rapid recall), interleaving (mixing word types), and elaboration (meaningful contexts). Comparative research by Cadry et al. (2020) found that retrieval-based practice approaches yielded better immediate and delayed vocabulary recall than wrong writing or control condition.

2.4 The Vocabulary Sprint

A vocabulary sprint combines rapid spelling, quick recall and multiple repetition rounds through five core features:

(1) Time Constraints, word spelled or defined within 10-15 seconds; (2) Repeated Cycles, multiple rounds providing spaced practice; (3) immediate Feedback, rapid error correction; (4) Escalating Difficulty, progressing word complexity; (5) Competitive structure, team or individual scoring. Research indicates that time-limited vocabulary tasks enhance lexical retrieval speed, memory consolidation and cognitive engagement (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011; Karatas et al., 2025). Compared to slow-paced drills, fast-paced sprint tasks maintain momentum, increase exposure frequency and prevent boredom particularly important for young learners with developing attentional capacities.

2.5 Qur'anic-Based Pedagogy

Qur'anic-based pedagogy integrates values and educational ethics from the Qur'an into teaching practice, nurturing both academic competence and spiritual growth, moral behavior and good character (Al-Attas, 2014). This represents culturally sustaining pedagogy that honors learners' religious identities while advancing academic goals.

Four foundation principles directly support vocabulary learning and character development. *Iqra* (Reading and Learning) establishes reading as a religious obligation, framing vocabulary learning as a spiritually meaningful pursuit of knowledge rather than instrumental skill acquisition. *Tahqiq* (Accuracy and Precision) mirrors Qur'anic recitation's demand for precise articulation in

phoneme production, aligning with the accuracy required in Spelling Bee activities for correct spelling and pronunciation. *Mujahadah* (Effort and perseverance) justifies fast-paced cognitively demanding tasks by connecting sustained intellectual effort to Islamic virtue, making Vocabulary Sprint activities spiritually meaningful practice of perseverance and discipline. *Husn Al-adab* (good Manners) transforms competitive classroom games into cooperative endeavors where respectful turn-taking, peer encouragement and honest participation foster collaborative growth rather than individualistic struggle.

3. Method

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of the Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint in enhancing elementary students' English vocabulary proficiency. The participants were two intact classes from MI Ma'arif Kalibeber, with one class assigned as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The experimental group received vocabulary instruction that combined Qur'anic thematic cues such as *Sabr* (patience), *'Ilm* (knowledge), *Amanah* (trustworthiness) and *rahmah* (mercy) with fast-paced spelling Bee sprint activities designed to reinforce vocabulary recognition, spelling accuracy and meaning recall. Meanwhile, the control group was taught using the school's conventional vocabulary teaching methods. The intervention ran for approximately four to six weeks, with sessions lasting 30-40 minutes and emphasized repeated exposure, quick-response spelling rounds and the use of meaningful Qur'anic concepts as semantic anchors to enhance memory retention. All instructional activities were conducted in the students' regular classroom to maintain a natural learning environment.

Data were collected using a validated pre-test and post-test measuring students' receptive and productive knowledge of the target vocabulary. Observation notes and engagement checklists were also used to capture qualitative insights into students' motivation and participation during the sprint activities. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics followed by an independent sample t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group. Qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis to identify patterns of engagement and behavioral responses. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, with parental consent obtained and Qur'anic integration handled respectfully to ensure that the study focused on educational enrichment rather than religious instruction.

3.1 RESULT

The results of the study were obtained from the vocabulary pre-test and post-test administered to 40 students, consisting of 20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group. The descriptive statistics for the pre-test score are presented in table 1, both groups showed similar vocabulary proficiency before the treatment with the experimental group obtaining a mean score of 54.20 and the control group 53.75. The standard deviations also indicated a comparable spread of scores.

4. Discussion

The finding of this study demonstrate that the Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint is significantly more effective in improving elementary students' English vocabulary proficiency compared to conventional teaching methods. The experimental group, which received instruction through Qur'anic-themed semantic anchors combined with fast-paced spelling bee sprint activities, showed a substantial increase in vocabulary performance. Their average score improved from 54.20 in the pre-test to 82.15 in post-test, resulting in gain of 27.95 points. In contrast, the control group taught through regular vocabulary instruction showed a more modest improvement of 13.65 points. This notable difference suggests that the integration of spiritually meaningful content and engaging learning tasks contributes to deeper and more sustained vocabulary acquisition.

One of the key reasons for the experimental group's superior performance may be the mnemonic support provided by Qur'anic concept. Young learners in Islamic schools are already familiar with values such as *sabr*, *amanah*, *rahmah* and *'ilm*. Where English vocabulary items were linked to those familiar concepts, students were able to build stronger cognitive associations. This aligns with theories of meaningful learning, particularly Ausubel's concept of subsumption, which states that new information is retained more effectively when it is anchored to existing knowledge structures. By connecting English words to well-known Qur'anic values, the learning process became more meaningful, personally relevant and memorable for the students.

Furthermore, the use of spelling bee sprint activities appeared to play a critical role in enhancing motivation, engagement and retention. The fast-paced nature of the sprint tasks encouraged repetition, quick recall and focused attention-skill that are essential for vocabulary mastery. Previous studies have found that competitive language games increase learners' motivation, support active processing and enhance long-term retention (Rahman & Hakim, 2020) the current findings are consistent with these studies, showing that game-based learning methods effective for young EFL learners who benefit from movement, repetition and excitement in the classroom.

In addition to cognitive and motivational benefits, the Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint also supported positive classroom dynamics. Observation notes indicated that students in the experimental group demonstrated higher participation, enthusiasm and confidence during learning activities. This reflects the idea that when learning material aligns with students' cultural and religious background, they may feel more comfortable, valued, and connected to the learning process. The integration of Qur'anic values was not only pedagogically beneficial but also culturally appropriate, making the instructional approach well-suited for Islamic school settings where character formation and spiritual relevance are integral to the educational environment.

Overall, the discussion of the result suggests that the Qur'anic-based vocabulary sprint effectively combines meaningful content, engaging game-based strategies and culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach enhances vocabulary learning beyond what is achievable through traditional instruction alone. The findings contribute to a growing body of research supporting the use of contextualized, value-based and interactive techniques for improving English vocabulary proficiency among young learners in EFL contexts.

5. Conclusion

The result of the study demonstrate that the Qur'anic-Based Vocabulary Sprint is a highly effective approach for enhancing elementary students' English vocabulary proficiency. Students who received instruction through the integration of Qur'anic-themed semantic anchors and fast-paced spelling bee sprint activities showed significantly greater improvement than those taught using conventional vocabulary methods. The experimental group's substantial gain from the pre-test to post-test indicates that linking English words to familiar Qur'anic values helped strengthen meaning associations, while the rapid and repeated practice provided by the sprint activities improved retention, recall and learner engagement. In contrast, the control group displayed only moderate progress, suggesting that traditional instruction alone is less effective. The study concludes that combining culturally meaningful content with interactive, game-based techniques offers a powerful pedagogical strategy for Islamic elementary school settings, providing both cognitive and motivational benefits that support more effective vocabulary learning.

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