

## **Crosswords as a Technique to Enhance English Vocabulary**

**P. Manimaran**

Research Scholar (Ph.D.)

Bharathiar University

Coimbatore

[manimarannk14@gmail.com](mailto:manimarannk14@gmail.com)

**Dr. M. Kasirajan**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Bharathiar University

Coimbatore

[rajankasi32@yahoo.in](mailto:rajankasi32@yahoo.in)

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to find the effectiveness of crossword technique to develop the English vocabulary among school students. This technique is assumed to provide a new learning experience. Crosswords are normally found in newspapers and magazines. This technique is not only used in the language but in other sectors of learning. There are infinite websites which provide crosswords. This paper offers an idea on how to utilize the crossword technique which helps to enhance the vocabulary. It enhances vocabulary as well as analytical skill.

**Keywords:** Language Teaching, Crossword, ICT, Vocabulary, Newspapers, Communication

Language is the basic factor of human communication. Letters are the cells and words are the tissues of a language. An effective language teaching method should arouse interest in a learner's mind. To be an effective communicator, vocabulary plays an important role. An enriched vocabulary speaks volume of a person's command over a language.

English is the second language to the learners. UNESCO defined the second language as "A language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue" (Vivan Cook 16). Mother tongue is the first language where the language acquisition is possible, but it is impossible in learning the other language. But the process of acquisition could be utilized for the language learning process which is considered as second language acquisition.

Crossword is defined as “a game in which you have to fit words across and downwards into spaces with numbers in a square diagram” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary).

Crossword puzzles motivate thinking. It is a mental exercise which induces the learner to search for the answers by using the clues. It helps to develop the usage of pronouns, modal auxiliaries and so on. Here, the answers are the grammatical words and the clues might be the incomplete sentences. It is a game which helps the learner to know new words. Crossword puzzles concern mainly on vocabulary and spellings.

In a crossword puzzle, squares will be provided either with questions or with clues. It might be a question, definition, picture or even incomplete statements. The simple procedure focuses to offer crossword puzzles with interesting clues and make the learner to solve them. Regular practice leads to achieving a better result. The instructor can divide the learners into groups and provide them with written clues. Group activity works out in this process.

Words carry meanings in itself. With the help of crossword puzzle technique, the learner can identify the answer with the help of those clues. The learner is induced systematically by this technique because he gets the chance to identify the words and their meanings as well as its background. Vocabulary is essential to achieve effective learning and teaching. The learner cannot understand the ideas without proper words. Learning enhances new ideas and encounters new words in which he feels hard to grasp those views.

The text is the only source of vocabulary. It is of different kinds and so the learner should be aware of word meaning whenever he uses a word. Reading helps more to enhance vocabulary. Grasping the unknown words and looking at its meaning is the better solution. In the crossword puzzle, the teacher and the learner should be careful in handling the words. Appropriate words are necessary. Usage of dictionaries and index cards induces word learning. Continuous review of vocabulary is needed, and it should be utilized in daily conversations. Crossword puzzles make the learner to remember the word with its context and content.

Vocabulary is of two types such as active and passive. Active vocabulary refers to the current usage of words in speech and writing. Passive vocabulary refers to the known words which are not used in regular. Crossword technique arouses interest and maintains curiosity in learning new words. The puzzle forms could be utilized in many aspects. It helps in the identification of colours, birds, animals and pictures. It is used in the language perspective to identify the parts of speech i.e., verb, noun, preposition and so on. The other factors such as identification of countries, books which enhance the general knowledge. This game can be played individually or in pair or in groups. This technique introduces new words in a meaningful

context. Creativity plays a major role in stimulating the learner as well as the instructor towards the language learning process.

### **Problem of the Study**

Lack of vocabulary is a barrier to enrich knowledge. The students in the rural background are still performing poorly in their studies. There is no systematic study of words and use them in their regular conversation which is essential for vocabulary enrichment. It should be rectified where crosswords act as a solution.

### **Origin of the Study**

Recently, the High Court of Madras questioned the possibilities to implement Spoken English Classes in the Government Schools. It shows the essence to develop the language competency of the students. Teaching new words in traditional methods are ineffective. Reading literature by the students is also impossible. So, the researcher assumed to test the crossword technique to enhance vocabulary.

### **Background of the Study**

There were several previous researches in implementing crosswords, games and interactive techniques in language enrichment. The researcher chose a school in a rural locality and planned to implement a crossword technique. The school is located in Eranapuram, a rural location in Namakkal District, Tamilnadu.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To enrich the vocabulary of the students in an entertaining and interesting manner.
- To develop confidence in learning new words.

### **Methodology and Analysis**

The researcher had chosen about 30 school students for the experiment. They were separated into two groups. Each set consists of 15 students. The sample for the study is 30 students. A Pre-test was conducted, and the students were interested in the learning process. Through the observation, it is proved that there is an improvement in learning new words and the students are curious about playing crossword games. When the post-test is conducted there is a significant difference in the scores between the pre-test and the post-test. This study shows the importance of using puzzles in teaching English vocabulary.

The data analysis is done by using the percentage of scores in the pre-test and in the post-test. The simple and the necessary words are the answers to the questions. Questions are framed in that manner to make the learning interesting and easier. Before the pre-test, students were

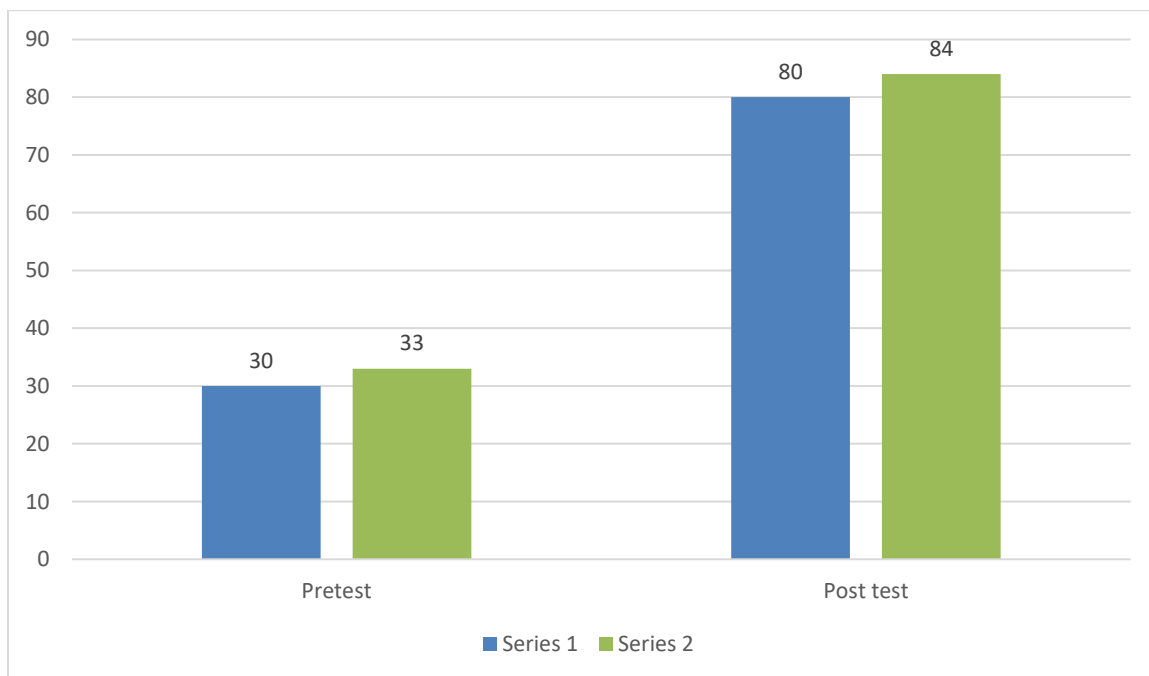
taught about crosswords and how to answer them. It aroused interest in their minds. Initially, students were helped by the teachers and later, several tests were conducted that shown the improvement in vocabulary skill.

### Results

Approximately,80% of the students improved their vocabulary skill in the post-test. A Continuous observation was made to analyze the skill development. In the pretest,30% of students answered the questions and, in the post-test, 70% of the questions were answered correctly. Out of 30 students, 26 students improved their vocabulary skill

**Table and Chart**

S.No	Tests	Total No. of Students	Percentage
1	Pre-test	30	30
2	Post-test	30	80



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