

## **TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS THROUGH GROUP WORK**

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### **Abstract**

Over the previous few decades, teaching English to young learners has become a phenomenon in our country. English is required in kindergarten and primary school. Young language learners, like other children, enthusiastically embrace new foreign languages, but they rapidly become bored if they are taught using traditional tactics and procedures. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that group work is an effective strategy for young learners' vocabulary development. The study employed a quantitative method with two groups: control and experimental. The class included 48 students. The sample used in this research consists of fifth-grade learners from SD Wojo Yogyakarta, each of which has 24 students. The experimental class is one in which students learn vocabulary through the use of group work, whereas the control class is one in which students engage in more traditional teaching methods. T-test analysis was performed on the data that was obtained. It revealed that the T-test score of 1.68 was lower than the significance level of 0.05. It indicates that learning in groups is significantly more effective than traditional methods for enhancing young learners' vocabulary.

**Keywords:** *cooperative learning, Teaching English to Young Learner, vocabulary.*

### **Introduction**

The implementation of vocabulary instruction needs to start as soon as it is at all possible. In addition, educators need to be mindful that teaching a language to learners in elementary school is quite different than teaching the same language to adults (Permana, 2020). Marulis & Neuman (2010) adds that vocabulary is crucial for oral language comprehension, domain-specific knowledge acquisition, and reading comprehension. The teachers should be aware at young learners must already be familiar with vocabulary because knowing words is a requirement for learning a second language. According to Malle & Yehualawork (2015), these students can communicate more effectively by building a broad and deep vocabulary knowledge base. Due to this, an individual's comprehension skills affect their ability to learn English in all aspects of the language, including listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Bakhsh (2016) states young learners are defined as students in their first year of

primary school who are between the ages of five or six and twelve. Teaching young students is more difficult than teaching adolescents or adults because young students become easily distracted. Children enjoy having fun and playing, so the teacher should select teaching strategies that cater to their nature. Hakim (2019) adds that the teachers should incorporate variety and make the teaching-learning process more engaging when teaching new vocabulary. It is essential to provide students with a wide range of learning opportunities. Moreover, to make vocabulary instruction engaging for young students, the teacher should not only have engaging teaching aids but also employ a variety of teaching techniques. Implementing appropriate teaching techniques for young learners' vocabulary acquisition is one method to make vocabulary acquisition more engaging and improve students' motivation. Group work can be used to increase students' appreciation of learning English, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Using group work to teach vocabulary can increase students' motivation and their enjoyment of classroom vocabulary instruction.

Hatch and Brown (1995) cited in Brewster (2002) list the five basic steps to learning vocabulary: discovering new words and visualizing or hearing their forms, learning their meanings, creating a strong memory association between the forms and their meanings, and applying the words. It has been demonstrated that teaching vocabulary involves significantly more than simply providing pupils with a list of new terms and requiring them to commit those words to memory. Although it is recognized and accepted that words are created in isolation, they are never invented in isolation. Besides, Hakim (2019) states that while instructing students in new terminology, teachers should incorporate some variety into their lessons to make the process of teaching and learning more enjoyable. It must be done to provide learners with an extensive variety of different learning opportunities. In addition, to make it exciting for younger students, the teacher should not only have fascinating teaching aids at their use, but they need also to have a variety of teaching strategies at their service to teach vocabulary. Implementing effective instructional approaches for young learners' vocabulary acquisition is one way to make it more engaging to the students and boost their motivation. This is also one strategy to improve their academic performance. Group work can be used to help students increase their enjoyment of the process of learning English, especially in terms of vocabulary mastery.

Namaziandost et al. (2019) define cooperative learning as a group of teaching methods that encourage schoolwork collaboration. It can also be used to refer to a method of instruction in which students work together in small groups on a particular activity to enhance shared knowledge and accomplish a set of objectives (Nasri & Biria, 2016). Students in collaborative learning frequently collaborate in smaller study groups to better understand course content. Amedu & Gudi (2017) adds that one of the strategies that might be utilized to keep students from being bored in the classroom is the utilization of group work. It plays an important part in the instruction of any foreign language. Students and teachers together are going to learn something from taking part in collaborative projects during class time. When students study together, they try all kinds of different activities from a wide range of categories. Additionally, the use of group work in the classroom, particularly when it comes to the instruction of vocabulary, can help educators reach all of the educational outcomes. According to Harmer (2008), teachers of young kids should devote a significant amount of their time to analysing and comprehending how their pupils function and think.

In teaching vocabulary to young students at Yogyakarta Elementary Schools, instructors typically employ techniques centered on the teacher. In general, students only become inert learners. They passively attend to the teacher's explanation without engaging in any learning activities. As a consequence, it can influence students' attitudes toward learning, as there are no stimuli to increase and motivate their participation in the learning process. Students are more interested in collaborating with their group in the classroom, but they have not had the opportunity to do so. Based on these facts, it is necessary to implement an effective classroom for teaching English, particularly for enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. A technique for teaching students in groups is to select engaging and stimulating activities that encourage group work. Additionally, acquiring vocabulary through group work will allow students to learn from one another. Since each student was a member of the group, they all had responsibilities and assisted one another. In addition, they were active and motivated. Together, they constructed the knowledge. The formation of cordial relationships was yet another advantage of group work. It is strongly supported by Demircioğlu (2010) that group work creates a positive environment and solid rapport. As a result, they were able to take risks without being subjected to negative peer pressure, as students

grew closer to their peers. Moreover, they had opportunities to create diverse objects. Students became aware of their abilities and characteristics. Students will have difficulty organizing classroom activities if their instructors are unaware of their availability.

The previous study has indicated that Group work is important in teaching vocabulary (Mallipa, 2018). According to (Alfares (2017) Saudi learners view group work as effective for learning. Mohd Rick et al. (2022) says that University of Papua English Education Department students liked group work. A large number of studies on junior high schools have been carried out (Satriana, 2020), and the results of these studies reveal statistically significant data analysis. The study's findings validated the author's conclusion that group work help boost pupils' English vocabulary and motivation. Several studies on junior high schools have been conducted (Satriana, 2020), It demonstrates statistically significant data analysis outcomes. According to the analysis, group work improves vocabulary knowledge and motivates students to learn English. In addition, a second study involving college students by Lin (2019) found that students' attitudes toward independent work improved more than their attitudes toward group work, although their vocabulary acquisition improved more with group work. Results indicated that students' vocabulary knowledge improved substantially more with group work than with individual work on immediate post-tests, although both treatments had a positive effect (Lin, 2018). Group work resulted in a 2% increase in long-term retention of vocabulary compared to individual work. In this section, the findings, as well as their interpretations and effects, are discussed.

This study evaluates some of the more complicated questions that have been raised about the effectiveness of utilizing group activities to teach vocabulary to younger students. Additionally, there should be more fun incorporated into the teaching of language, and teachers should try out a variety of various pedagogical approaches. It is important to emphasize this because young students have a variety of distinguishing traits (Cahyati & Madya, 2019). This research was conducted to demonstrate to both readers and teachers that teaching vocabulary to young learners via the use of group activities is a strategy that is both effective and recommended. The study was carried out at an elementary school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in one of the city's institutions. Because this is the first time that the kids at this school have ever

been instructed in English through the use of group work, this elementary school was selected because it is one of the elementary schools that offer English instruction to young learners in the fifth grade. In addition, despite the volume of study that has been done on this subject, there have only been a relatively small number of studies done with young learners. To fill up these gaps, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not participating in a group activity may effectively help young students acquire more vocabulary.

It is necessary to interact with vocabulary and to rehash it regularly through a variety of activities. As a result of these interactions, new information and groups must be accomplished for each usage of a particular word.

There are five different ways of guiding students in vocabulary:

- a. You should equip yourself with resources for learning new terms.
- b. Construct a distinct image in the form of new words, one that is either visual, auditory, or both.
- b. Have a good comprehension of the meanings of words
- d. Establish a solid mental connection in your memory between the forms of words and the meanings of those words.
- e. Making use of the word.

Cooperative learning includes group work. In addition to enhancing knowledge, and general skills, such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, it aims to improve students' attitudes. Learning happens in a group setting. It is intended to accommodate student differences and advance knowledge, general competencies (such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking), and attitudes in students (Satriana, 2020). Students have numerous opportunities to practice speaking English in class through group projects. Since they are more engaged in talking to their friends, exchanging ideas, and using new vocabulary than they are in listening to their teacher speak, students engage in the lesson much more actively. This is essential for better learning in our EFL context, where English is taught in schools as an academic subject to train and develop all language skills (Lin, 2018).

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setting. It is intended to accommodate student differences and advance knowledge, general competencies (such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking), and attitudes in students (Satriana, 2020). Students have many opportunities to practice speaking English in class when they work in groups. Students participate in the lesson much more effectively because they are more motivated in talking with their friends, exchange ideas, and use new vocabulary than they are in listening to their teacher speak. They can certainly assist each other instead of sitting alone and attempting to understand something difficult. If one of the group members has difficulty finding a solution, he or she can always focus exclusively on his friends to assist because there is a larger possibility that at least one member of the group will be able to find a solution to the issue that arises.

This study focused on the influence that working in groups has on the process of teaching vocabulary, hence, the researcher aims to test by the following hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) : Group work is not an effective way to learn vocabulary.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ): Group work is an effective way to help students learn vocabulary.

## **Methods**

The study will be conducted as an experiment. The purpose of an experiment is to gain insight into the cause and effect of a phenomenon by either providing evidence supporting, rejection to, or validation of a certain hypothesis by manipulating a set of relevant parameters (Apuke, 2017). Experiments are used to determine potential cause-and-effect relationships between the independent and dependent variables. 48 fifth-grade students at SD Wojo were divided into two classes for this study. 24 students from class A were chosen for the experimental group, while other 24 students from class B were chosen for the control group. The researchers used the entire population as a sample. According to Arikunto (2019), if the subject is small, researchers can take the entire population. The researchers can take the entire population if the subject is less than 100 students.

The data collection instrument was an English vocabulary test. The examination consists of both multiple-choice and essay questions. Each item on a multiple-choice

exam consists of four options for each question in the first section, and students are also required to correlate answers to questions in the second section. In addition, on the essay exam, students must translate five Indonesian sentences into English. The study conducted in this research was designed to evaluate whether or not there is any significant difference between teaching vocabulary mastery on an individual basis and doing it in a group environment.

The descriptive statistics method was used to analyse the data from this study. The t-test is a method of data analysis that is utilized in inferential statistics. To differentiate between the two groups' outcomes, a sample t-test was carried out. To determine whether or not working in groups helps pupils better comprehend terminology, the researcher compared the findings of t-tests and t-tables. The researcher used the Alpha-Cronbach technique to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instrument-collected data before performing the t-test analysis on the data.

### **Findings and Discussions**

This study examines some of the more complex problems surrounding the effectiveness of employing group activities to teach vocabulary to younger children. Language instruction should be more fun, and teachers should try different methods.

The detailed descriptions of group work stages are as follows:

1. Describe the lesson and gives background information.
2. Explain the list of words that are related to the topic.
3. Dividing the group into 4 Or 5 students
4. Provide an explanation and example of how to pronounce each word that has been provided, as well as ask the students to repeat the pronunciation after the instructor uses the playing card that has been distributed to each group.
5. Ask your children to make a list of terms that describe the picture, and then have them copy the list into their notebooks.
6. Reciting the definition of words together based on the groups asked by the teacher
7. Explaining how to make simple sentences by using the language function “this is...”.
8. The teacher will ask the students to present the vocabulary that they have

acquired, which should include the words' meanings, correct spellings, correct pronunciations, and appropriate usage.

9. Giving feedback and corrective information on the students' presentations.

### Descriptive and Inferential Analysis

#### Normality Test

The normality test was used to analyze the data's normality after the treatment and testing were completed.

If sig. is less than 0.5, it is estimated that the test data have a normal distribution.

If sig. is less than 0.5, it is unlikely that the test data are normally distributed.

The conclusion is displayed below.

Table1. The result of the Normality Test

Group	$X^2 . o$	$X^2 . t$	df	P	Decision
Control Group	4.167	22.4	13	0.70	Normal
Experimental Group	8.667	22.4	13	0.70	Normal

From Table 1, it is known that the score obtained  $X^2 . o$ , in both groups (groups), lower than the obtained t-table score  $X^2 . o$  in the experimental group was 5,167 while  $X^2 . o$  in the control group was 8,667. This shows that the data have a normal distribution:

If sig. is less than 0.5, it is assumed that the test data come from a population with the same variance.

If the significance level is less than 0.5, it is estimated that the test data was collected from populations with distinct variants. The subsequent results:

#### Homogeneity Test Results

Table 2. The result of the Homogeneity Test

Variable	$F_o$	$F_t$	df	P
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Vocabulary Test	2.54	4.08	46	0.118
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Table 2, shows a homogeneous because the observed F value is less than the table value of 4.08 and the probability value (p) is 0.118. This is greater than 0.05. Following the normality and homogeneity tests, The T-test determined if the control and experimental groups differed significantly in classes in terms of imparting vocabulary mastery to students through group work techniques. Listed below are the guidelines for selecting the T-test:

If Sig (2-tailed) is higher than 0.05, then H0 is accepted.

If Sig (2-tailed) is less than 0.05, then H0 is rejected.

Table 3. The Score of the Vocabulary Test

Variable	N	Mean	The Higher	The Lowest	SD
Experimental Group	24	23.48	36	16	6.08
Control Group	24	19.477	33	11	4.77

Table 4. The result of Matched T-Test of the Vocabulary Test

Variable	$t_o$	$t_t$	df	P
Vocabulary Test	2.535	1.68	46	0.15

In Table 4, the experimental group has a higher mean than the control group. It demonstrates that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The probability value (P) is less than 0.05 (0.015 0.05), or the t-observation value is greater than the t-table ( $2,535.8 > 1,68$ ). Thus, group work is effective for acquiring vocabulary in elementary school. Comparing the scores of students in experimental and control classes revealed a statistically significant difference when group work activities were incorporated into the teaching and learning process. From the result findings, it is possible to conclude that group work activities

enhance vocabulary mastery and acquisition among students and are more effective.

### **Discussion**

The results showed that group work techniques are effective in students' vocabulary mastery, especially for young learners. These findings enrich existing research on the use of group work in teaching vocabulary mastery and are expected to be useful for EFL teachers, especially in Indonesia in learning vocabulary for elementary school students. There are several practical recommendations for teaching vocabulary to young learners. It is suggested that teachers use group work to understand vocabulary and attract young learners to be successful in vocabulary mastery. Teachers should also provide students with various exercises on various topics appropriate to their skill level. This research has several limitations. First, this study only involved a small number of young learners. The experimental group's average is higher than the control group's average. This shows that the experimental group's score is significantly higher than the control group's score. The probability value (P) is less than 0.05 ( $0.015 < 0.05$ ), or the t-observation value ( $2.535 > 1.68$ ) is greater than the t-table. Thus, group work is effective in learning elementary school vocabulary."

Young learners have unique qualities that distinguish them from adult learners. It should be known and comprehended by the teacher to improve the quality of the instructional process (Halliwel, 1992). Young learners have distinct characteristics from older learners. At this age, it is difficult for them to comprehend abstract concepts due to their limited vocabulary. We all know that before teaching vocabulary to young pupils, we must create a lesson plan and prepare instructional resources. Every teacher teaches English in his or her manner, but their methods are essentially the same. Furthermore, using group activity as a teaching method for young students is the most effective method for fostering words.

Group work provides a variety of activities that will support the vocabulary acquisition of young language learners. In addition, teachers of young learners encourage their pupils to communicate by emphasizing language meaning in context using the Communicative Language Approach (CLT). Teaching students in a group can be an enriching experience for each student, as they will share information and

study together so that they feel at ease with group tasks. Group work activities such as the jigsaw technique, word card games, and think-pair-share can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition, including meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and use.

The Jigsaw technique will make the students feel good about mastering vocabulary because they will study and assist one another. And the results showed that using the jigsaw technique, think-pair-share, and word cards to teach integrated skills substantially improved the students' vocabulary knowledge. It indicates that there is an effective technique for teaching vocabulary. It has been proved by Nappu & Angraeni (2017) that the jigsaw technique can foster collaboration and cooperation among all students. In addition, it assists each student in expanding their knowledge base. Word cards are also fantastic tools for deliberate vocabulary development and helping you learn a lot of words quickly and remember them for a long time. They do all of these things by providing a visual representation of the words, which makes it easier to learn and remember them (Parez & Alvira, 2017).

According to theoretical literature and empirical studies, group work is beneficial for teaching vocabulary mastery. Karki (2013) claims that students are much more engaged in lessons when they are working in groups, exchanging opinions, and exercising structure and vocabulary rather than listening to their teachers speak. In our EFL context, where English is taught as an academic subject to train and develop all language abilities, this is crucial for improved learning. Despite the positive effects of both interventions, Lin (2018) demonstrates that group work significantly increased vocabulary knowledge on the immediate post-test when compared to individual work. Moreover, the results demonstrate the significance of increasing students' vocabulary acquisition through group work (Lin, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Working in groups is a great perspective strategy for introducing young learners to the English language. The jigsaw technique, word card exercises, and think-pair-share activities helped more students improve their vocabulary knowledge in terms of understanding, pronouncing, spelling, and applying words. Consequently, it is crucial to incorporate group work into the classroom to increase student enthusiasm and assist in their vocabulary development. To manage students' boredom, teachers

must be creative in their choice of the correct activities for an educational process as well. research has to be done in Indonesia on how well working in groups can teach vocabulary to younger students of English as a foreign language (EFL). However, the use of group work in the instruction of vocabulary to younger students should be carried out more creatively and should be based on the requirements of the learners. Future studies should utilize mixed methods of research and collect data utilizing various sorts of instruments such as observation and interviews to achieve a better appreciation of the advantages of using Group Work in teaching vocabulary mastery. This study found that group work was effective in increasing students' vocabulary mastery scores. This research contributes to the current literature on the use of group work in teaching vocabulary mastery. It is hoped that EFL teachers in Indonesia who teach vocabulary mastery to young learners will benefit from this finding.

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