



# Enhancing Vocabulary Learning of Young Learners through Collaborative Strategies in English Classroom

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026-01-22 Revised: 2026 04-30 Accepted: 2026 05-30</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Collaborative learning; young learners; vocabulary acquisition; English classroom</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.24256/ideasv14i1.9408</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Amelia Nurjihaan Amelajihaan004@students. unnes.ac.id Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Jawa Tengah</p>	<p><i>The language development of young learners depends on their acquisition of fundamental English vocabulary. However, a lot of Indonesian elementary school students still have problems learning new words, especially those who live in rural regions. The purpose of this study was to investigate how well collaborative learning enhances young learners' vocabulary in English. Students in the second grade at SD Negeri 2 Pogung were included in a mixed methods study. While qualitative data came from student interviews and classroom observations, quantitative data was gathered using a pre-test and post-test design and examined using descriptive statistics and a paired samples t-test. The results showed that students' vocabulary achievement had significantly improved, with the mean score rising from 49.4 in the pre-test to 76.6 in the post-test. Additionally, the improvement was statistically significant (<math>p &lt; .001</math>) according to the paired samples t-test. In addition to the quantitative improvements, qualitative findings revealed that students thought peer interaction and group activities were beneficial for learning, remembering, and using new vocabulary. The findings indicate that collaborative learning could serve as a useful educational strategy for improving vocabulary growth and student engagement for young learners, especially in elementary school settings that lack access to technology.</i></p>

## 1. Introduction

English is considered an essential subject in Indonesia because it enables learners to access knowledge, communicate internationally, and prepare for future opportunities. However, English proficiency in Indonesia remains relatively low

compared to other countries in Asia (EPI, 2025). National assessments also indicate that many primary school students still struggle to acquire basic English vocabulary, which is a fundamental component of language development. This condition highlights the need for more engaging and effective teaching strategies, particularly for young learners at the primary school level.

English also plays an important role not only in education but also in global business and communication, as it functions as an international language used widely across different fields (Athirah Mohd Nasir & Abd. Aziz, 2020). In primary education, learning English helps children develop fundamental communication skills while building a foundation for mastering a foreign language. Effective English instruction for young learners involves several important language components, including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Among these components, vocabulary plays a crucial role because it supports the development of other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Deni & Fahriany, 2020; Indriyani, 2019).

Studies in language teaching also emphasize that integrating these four skills is important to help young learners develop comprehensive language competence (Lingu & Fenuku, 2024). Vocabulary learning, however, can be challenging for many students. Vocabulary plays an essential role in language acquisition because it enables learners to understand and produce language effectively (Abdulrahman & Jullian, 2020). Nevertheless, acquiring vocabulary knowledge is often a complex process, particularly for beginner learners who have limited exposure to English. Many students experience difficulties in memorizing and retaining new words, which may reduce their motivation to learn (Luthfiyanti, 2023).

Traditional teaching approaches, such as rote memorization, are often ineffective for young learners because repetitive activities can easily lead to boredom and reduced attention in the classroom (Ganesan et al., 2025). Evidence of these challenges can also be seen in international assessments. According to the EF English Proficiency Index report, Indonesia ranked 80th out of 116 countries with a score of 468, placing it in the “Low Proficiency” category (EPI, 2025).

In addition, results from the Programme for International Student Assessment indicate that Indonesian students still face difficulties in literacy skills. The PISA 2022 report shows that only around 25% of Indonesian students achieved at least Level 2 in reading literacy, which is significantly lower than the OECD average of 74% (PISA, 2022). These findings suggest that many students experience challenges in reading comprehension, which may also affect their ability to develop vocabulary knowledge effectively. To address these challenges, more engaging and meaningful learning approaches are needed.

One approach that has been widely recommended is collaborative learning, where students actively interact, discuss, and work together to solve problems and construct knowledge (Suci Din Awdilah Nur & Pratiwi, 2024). In collaborative learning environments, students are encouraged to participate actively in learning

activities, which can increase motivation and promote deeper understanding. Previous studies have shown that collaborative learning not only improves language learning outcomes but also enhances students' confidence, motivation, and social interaction during the learning process (Syawaluddin & Aeni, 2025).

Through collaborative interaction, learners can also develop receptive vocabulary knowledge, which refers to the ability to recognize and understand the relationship between word forms and meanings (Richardson, 2025). Research also shows that students tend to be more engaged when they participate in collaborative tasks rather than teacher-centered activities (Aliyu et al., 2022). Through collaboration, students can exchange ideas, support each other's learning, and practice using language in meaningful contexts (Kos, 2025; Suci Din Awdilah Nur & Pratiwi, 2024).

Social interaction within collaborative classrooms allows students to construct knowledge together while improving their language skills (Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021; Alahdal & Al-Ahdal, 2019). Activities such as group discussions, games, and collaborative projects enable learners to develop vocabulary through authentic experiences and shared learning (Ha et al., 2022; Syaya, 2024). These activities also promote important social skills such as teamwork, empathy, and communication among young learners (Latifah & Kartika, 2023).

Despite the growing use of educational technology in language learning, its implementation in many Indonesian schools remains challenging, particularly in rural areas. Limited internet connectivity and inadequate technological facilities often restrict the use of digital learning tools (Syathroh et al., 2021). Reports also indicate that digital infrastructure and internet access are still unevenly distributed across regions in Indonesia, especially in rural areas (Farhan Arda Nugraha, 2025; Stephanus Aranditio, 2025).

As a result, technology-based learning approaches may not always be feasible in rural school environments. This study was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Pogung, a public primary school located in a rural area in Kecamatan Cawas, Kabupaten Klaten, Central Java. Similar to many rural schools in Indonesia, the school has limited access to stable internet connections and technological learning facilities. Therefore, collaborative learning strategies that rely on direct interaction and group activities are considered more practical and contextually appropriate for this learning environment.

Although previous studies have examined collaborative learning or digital tools in language education, relatively few studies have explored the effectiveness of collaborative strategies in improving vocabulary acquisition among young learners in rural elementary school contexts with limited technological resources. Addressing this gap is important to provide practical teaching strategies that are suitable for schools with limited infrastructure. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether collaborative learning strategies can improve vocabulary acquisition and classroom engagement among young learners in rural Indonesian

elementary schools.

## **2. Method**

### ***Research Design***

The application of collaborative learning techniques in enhancing young students' engagement and vocabulary growth in English classroom was studied in this study using a mixed-methods research design, the quantitative component evaluated students' vocabulary growth have before and after collaborative learning activities were implemented using a solo pre-test and post-test system. Using classroom observation and interviews, the qualitative component investigated how students participated, interacted, and worked together during the learning process. The researcher was able to get an improved understanding of the classroom interactions and learning results by using a mixed-method approach. This design was thought to be suitable for analyzing social interaction and cooperative conduct that occurred during collaborative tasks in the classroom, in addition to the quantitative progress in vocabulary learning.

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study consisted of all second-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Pogung, a one of elementary schools located in Kecamatan Cawas, Kabupaten Klaten, Central Java. This school serves as an example for a rural learning environment where students rarely interact with English and educational activities usually take place without technological assistance. This context works well for evaluating the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies. All 26 students from a second-grade classroom at SD Negeri 2 Pogung participated in this study.

Each participant of the selected class participated as a research subject using all of the sample techniques. This approach was chosen to ensure that the collected data accurately represented real classroom settings and as the class size was very limited. In terms of age, educational background, and English language learning experience, the participants showed similar characteristics. Many students had little vocabulary skills and were at a basic level in English. These characteristics made them ideal subjects for evaluating how collaborative strategies affect vocabulary growth and classroom participation. Additionally, the students had become used to participating in group activities and direct discussions, which made it easier to apply collaborative learning throughout the treatment session.

### ***Data Collection***

Vocabulary tests, classroom observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, and other methods were used to collect data. Students' basic vocabulary knowledge was first assessed using a pre-test. Students were required to identify and write the appropriate English words for ten vocabulary topics

related to animal names. After the change, the maximum score was 100, with each right response worth one point. The researcher used cooperative learning activities as treatment after the pre-test. Three class meetings were used to carry out the instruction. Students engaged in interactive exercises throughout these sessions, including using flashcards to identify animal vocabulary, discussing their responses with classmates, and working in small groups to create a “mini zoo”.

Through these activities, students were encouraged to communicate, share ideas, and assist their classmates in understanding new vocabulary. During activities, observations were made in the classroom to evaluate the student’s engagement, communication abilities, and collaboration. A post-test with comparable vocabulary questions was given to students following the treatment for evaluating their progress in vocabulary acquisition.

Focus groups and brief interviews with chosen students were used in addition to the quantitative data in order to understand more about their opinions on group learning, their participation in cooperative activities, and their experiences acquiring vocabulary with classmates. In order to capture participant opinions and offer deeper insight beyond numerical data, these qualitative methodologies are frequently employed in educational research (Safrodin et al., 2024). An English teacher evaluated the vocabulary test’s validity to make sure the items were suitable for the students’ proficiency level. The pre-test and post-test used identical frameworks, which supported the instrument’s reliability.

**Data Analysis**

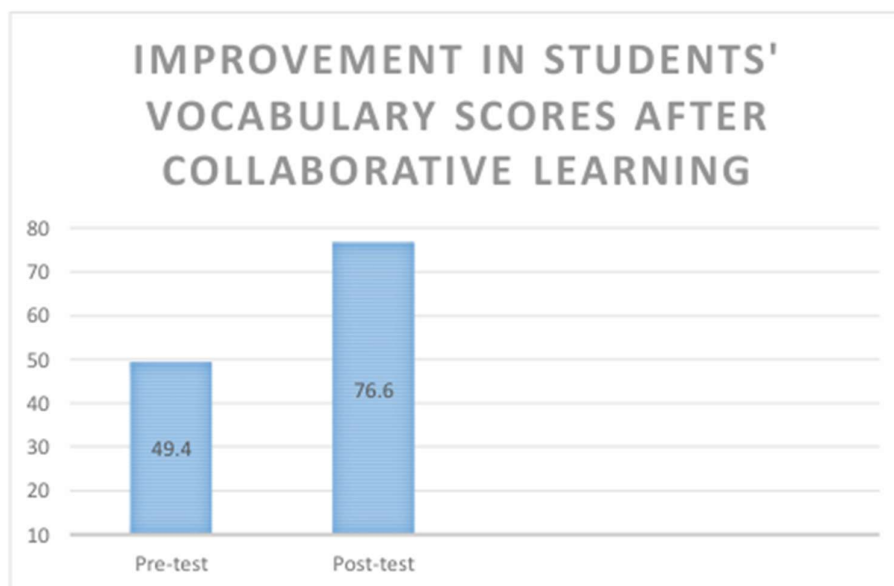
Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in this study. The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using Jamovi statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean score, minimum score, maximum score, and standard deviation of students’ vocabulary performance. In addition, a paired samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students’ scores before and after the collaborative learning treatment. The qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and interviews were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The researcher examined patterns of students’ participation, communication, and peer interaction during collaborative activities. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings, the study was able to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of how collaborative learning strategies influence vocabulary acquisition and classroom engagement among young learners.

**3. Results**

**Findings**

<b>Test</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Pre-test</b>	26	49.4	40	60	5.81
<b>Post-test</b>	26	76.6	70	88	5.11

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students’ Vocabulary Scores*



The results indicate a clear improvement in students' vocabulary performance after the implementation of collaborative learning activities. The mean score increased from 49.4 in the pre-test to 76.6 in the post-test, suggesting that students achieved higher vocabulary scores after participating in collaborative classroom activities. In addition to the increase in the mean score, the minimum score improved from 40 to 70, indicating that students with lower initial vocabulary knowledge also made substantial progress. Similarly, the maximum score increased from 60 to 88, showing that higher-achieving students also benefited from the collaborative learning activities.

Furthermore, the standard deviation decreased from 5.81 to 5.11, suggesting that the distribution of students' scores became more consistent after the intervention. This reduction indicates that the performance gap between students decreased, meaning that collaborative learning helped support both lower-performing and higher-performing learners. Classroom observations also supported the quantitative results.

During the pre-test, many students experienced difficulties in spelling English animal vocabulary correctly. Several spelling errors reflected Indonesian phonetic patterns, such as writing "elepent" for "elephant", "tigger" for "tiger", "monkei" for "monkey", and "jiref" for "giraffe". These patterns suggested that students relied heavily on phonetic guessing rather than accurate vocabulary knowledge. However, during the collaborative learning activities, students actively interacted with their peers while completing group tasks such as identifying vocabulary using flashcards and creating a "mini zoo" project.

In these activities, students frequently discussed spelling, corrected each other's mistakes, and shared vocabulary knowledge. As a result, many students

were able to spell the vocabulary items correctly in the post-test. To determine whether the improvement in vocabulary scores was statistically significant, a paired samples t-test was conducted.

Test Pair	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	-27,2	-29,30	25	< .001

Table 2. Paired Samples t-Test Results

The paired samples t-test results show that the improvement in students' vocabulary scores was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The mean difference of -27.2 indicates a substantial increase in vocabulary performance after the collaborative learning intervention. This result suggests that the improvement in students' vocabulary skills was unlikely to occur by chance and may be attributed to the collaborative learning activities implemented during the study. Qualitative data from interviews also supported these findings. Out of the 26 students, 23 students reported that learning vocabulary through group activities helped them better understand and remember new words. Many students stated that working with classmates allowed them to ask questions more freely, share ideas, and receive explanations from peers when they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that collaborative learning strategies significantly improved young learners' vocabulary acquisition. The increase in students' vocabulary scores suggests that learning through peer interaction and group activities can enhance vocabulary development in elementary school English classrooms.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be explained through Vygotsky's social constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. According to this perspective, students learn more effectively when they interact with peers who can support their learning process. In collaborative learning environments, students can exchange ideas, discuss meanings, and provide explanations that help deepen their understanding of vocabulary. The results of this study also reflect the concept of peer scaffolding, where learners support each other in completing learning tasks.

During collaborative activities, students with stronger vocabulary knowledge were able to assist their classmates by explaining word meanings, correcting spelling errors, and providing examples of word usage. This interaction helped less proficient students develop a better understanding of vocabulary in a supportive learning environment. In addition, the findings support the interaction hypothesis, which suggests that language learning improves when learners actively interact and negotiate meaning during communication.

Through group discussions, collaborative projects, and peer feedback,

students were exposed to repeated vocabulary usage in meaningful contexts. These interactions enabled students to process vocabulary more deeply and retain new words more effectively. The results of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that collaborative learning can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition in English language classrooms.

For example, studies have shown that students who participate in collaborative language activities tend to demonstrate greater vocabulary growth compared to those who learn through teacher-centered instruction (Ariffin, 2021; Suci Din Awdilah Nur & Pratiwi, 2024). Similar findings were also reported by Santoso (2025), who found that group-based learning activities improved vocabulary comprehension and Din reduced performance disparities among elementary EFL learners.

Another important finding of this study is that collaborative learning benefited both high-achieving and low-achieving students. Students with lower initial vocabulary knowledge showed notable improvement after participating in group learning activities. This suggests that collaborative environments allow weaker students to receive assistance from peers while still actively participating in the learning process.

Despite these positive findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size of 26 students, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Second, the research was conducted in only one rural elementary school, meaning that the findings may not fully represent other educational contexts. Third, the intervention period was relatively short, which may not fully capture the long-term effects of collaborative learning strategies on vocabulary development.

Future research could involve a larger number of participants, include multiple schools, and extend the duration of the intervention to examine the long-term impact of collaborative learning on vocabulary acquisition among young learners.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings of study showed that using collaborative strategies effectively enhances the English vocabulary skills of young learners in elementary schools. The results demonstrate a notable improvement in students' vocabulary proficiency following engagement in collaborative learning activities, as shown by elevated post-test scores and confirmed by the paired sample t-test outcomes. In addition to improving vocabulary effectiveness, collaborative strategies also positively influenced students' participation in class, communication skills, and interactions with classmates. With collaborative strategies "mini zoo project", students were motivated to participate actively in learning and assist their classmates.

These engagements facilitated the development of a dynamic and

encouraging educational atmosphere for young learners. importantly, this study demonstrates that advanced technology is not a necessary requirement for effective English learning. Collaborative strategies provide a practical and contextually appropriate solution for enhancing English vocabulary acquisition in rural educational environments with limited access to technology.

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