



Enhancing Students' Vocabulary Mastery through Team Race Game: A Pre-Experimental Study

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Abstract

This study examined whether the Team Race Game could enhance the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Panca Rijang. A quantitative pre-experimental approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. The population consisted of 99 seventh-grade students distributed across four classes in the 2018/2019 academic year, while Class VII.2, comprising 25 students, was selected through cluster sampling. Data were collected using a vocabulary pretest and posttest, classroom observation, and a 20-item interest questionnaire administered after the treatment. The intervention was implemented in four 80-minute meetings over two weeks. Descriptive statistics showed that the students' mean score increased from 34.80 in the pretest to 67.16 in the posttest. The paired-sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than the 0.05 significance level, indicating a statistically significant improvement after the treatment. The questionnaire results also revealed a mean interest score of 73.88; most students were categorized as interested in learning vocabulary through the game. These findings indicate that Team Race Game can provide an active, competitive, and enjoyable classroom environment that supports vocabulary practice and retention. The technique may therefore be used as an alternative strategy for teaching vocabulary in junior secondary EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Team Race Game, vocabulary mastery, pre-experimental study, student interest, EFL learning.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency because it supports learners' ability to understand and produce spoken and written messages. Students need words to express ideas, interpret texts, participate in conversations, and develop the four language skills. When vocabulary knowledge is limited, learners may understand grammatical rules but still experience difficulty communicating clearly and effectively. For this reason, vocabulary instruction occupies an important position in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

In the Indonesian junior secondary school context, vocabulary is commonly taught through explanation, memorization, textbook exercises, and written assignments. These practices can provide basic knowledge, but they may not offer sufficient opportunities for students to use new words actively. The source study observed that students at SMP Negeri 2 Panca Rijang were often reluctant to pronounce English words, worried about making mistakes, and embarrassed when speaking in front of classmates. Such conditions may reduce participation and make vocabulary lessons feel monotonous.

An effective vocabulary lesson should therefore give students repeated exposure to words and allow them to recall, pronounce, and use the words in meaningful activities. Linse (2005) emphasizes that vocabulary includes the words known and used by a learner, while Soedjito (2009) describes vocabulary as the collection of words in a language and the lexical resources owned by speakers or writers. These perspectives show that vocabulary mastery involves more than recognizing a definition; learners must also develop the ability to retrieve words when communicating.

Games can support this process by transforming practice into an active and motivating classroom experience. Fauziati (2005) notes that games can create dynamic learning conditions in which students use previously learned language in a relaxed situation. In a game-based lesson, repetition is embedded in a task or competition, so students

can practice words without experiencing the activity as routine drilling. Games may also encourage learners who are usually passive to contribute to a group because responsibility is shared among team members.

Team Race Game is a competitive activity in which students work in small teams and race to complete vocabulary tasks. In the source study, teams consisted of approximately five to seven students, and each race lasted about five to six minutes. The activity required learners to retrieve vocabulary quickly, cooperate with peers, and respond to a common challenge. The competitive element was expected to increase attention, while teamwork was intended to create a supportive atmosphere and reduce the fear of making mistakes.

The present article reports a pre-experimental study investigating the use of Team Race Game for vocabulary instruction among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Panca Rijang. It addresses two questions: (1) Does students' vocabulary achievement improve significantly after learning through Team Race Game? and (2) How interested are students in learning vocabulary through the technique? The study is expected to provide practical information for English teachers who need an inexpensive and participatory strategy for vocabulary practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary Mastery in EFL Learning

Vocabulary mastery refers to the learner's knowledge of words and the ability to recognize and use them appropriately. This knowledge includes meaning, spoken and written form, grammatical behavior, collocation, and connotation. Linse (2005) explains that vocabulary is a core element of language learning because words provide the basis for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without adequate vocabulary, students may be unable to understand input or express intended meanings even when they have learned basic grammar.

Vocabulary development requires continuous exposure and practice. Learners need to encounter words repeatedly, connect



them with meanings, pronounce them, and retrieve them in different tasks. A teaching strategy is therefore more effective when it creates multiple opportunities for active recall rather than relying only on teacher explanation. The repeated reading and rewriting of vocabulary reported in the source study were combined with competition so that students practiced the same lexical items through varied actions.

Games and Team-Based Competition

Language games are structured activities with goals, rules, and outcomes. They can make practice more purposeful because students focus on solving a problem or winning a challenge while using the target language. Hadfield (2001) and Lee (1979) describe games as useful resources for language practice because they encourage participation and provide opportunities for repetition. In vocabulary learning, games can support word recognition, spelling, pronunciation, and recall.

Team-based games offer an additional social dimension. Students can discuss answers, observe peers, and receive immediate feedback. Competition may increase effort when it is managed positively, whereas teamwork can prevent the activity from becoming threatening. The Team Race Game used in this study combined these features by organizing students into small groups that competed to complete vocabulary tasks accurately and quickly. The teacher controlled the duration, monitored participation, and reviewed answers after each activity.

Previous studies cited in the source article indicate that games and other word-focused techniques can support vocabulary learning. Huyen and Nga's work on learning vocabulary through games reported positive learner reactions and improvement in vocabulary-building skills. Rosadi (2017) similarly found that anagram activities encouraged vocabulary learning and learner self-direction. These findings suggest that game-based tasks can be useful when learners need an alternative to conventional memorization.

Student Interest in Vocabulary Learning

Interest influences the degree to which students attend to classroom activities and persist in completing tasks. Syukri (2009) describes interest as a positive response that appears when learners recognize and value an object or activity. In vocabulary instruction, enjoyment and perceived challenge may increase students' willingness to repeat words, answer questions, and cooperate with classmates. Because Team Race Game combines movement, time limits, teamwork, and competition, it was expected to generate a stronger affective response than individual written exercises.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using one group with a pretest and posttest. The pretest measured students' vocabulary achievement before the intervention, while the posttest measured achievement after the implementation of Team Race Game. Because the same participants completed both tests, the difference between the two sets of scores was analyzed using a paired-sample t-test. Students' interest was examined descriptively through a questionnaire administered after the treatment.

Population and Sample

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Panca Rijang during the 2018/2019 academic year. The population comprised 99 seventh-grade students distributed across four classes: VII.1, VII.2, VII.3, and VII.4. Cluster sampling was used to select one intact class. Class VII.2 was chosen as the sample and consisted of 25 students. All students in the selected class participated in the pretest, treatment, posttest, and questionnaire.

Research Instruments

The main instrument was a vocabulary test administered as both the pretest and posttest. The tests were used to measure changes in students' vocabulary scores before and after the intervention. Classroom observation and documentation were used to support the



description of the learning process. A 20-item questionnaire, consisting of 10 positive and 10 negative statements, was administered after the posttest to measure students' interest in the technique. Questionnaire responses were scored using a Likert scale and classified into five categories: strongly interested, interested, moderate, uninterested, and strongly uninterested.

Treatment Procedure

The study began with an explanation of the testing procedure and administration of the vocabulary pretest. The treatment was then conducted in four meetings over two weeks, with each meeting lasting approximately 80 minutes. During the treatment, students were organized into teams of about five to seven members. The teacher introduced the target vocabulary, explained the race rules, and presented tasks requiring students to recognize, recall, read, write, or respond to vocabulary items. Teams completed the tasks under a short time limit, and points were awarded for accurate responses. After each race, the teacher reviewed the answers and reinforced the meaning and form of the words. At the end of the intervention, students completed the posttest and the interest questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Pretest and posttest scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. A paired-sample t-test was applied using SPSS 21.0 to determine whether the difference between the mean scores was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Questionnaire scores were summarized using frequencies, percentages, and the mean interest score.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Vocabulary Achievement

The pretest results indicated that the students entered the study with low vocabulary achievement. All 25 students (100%) were classified in the poor category, and no student reached the fair, good, or very good classifications. After the treatment, the score distribution changed substantially. One student

(4%) achieved the very good category, six students (24%) were classified as good, seventeen students (68%) were classified as fair, and only one student (4%) remained in the poor category.

Table 1. Classification of pretest and posttest scores

Category	Score	Pretest f (%)
Very good	90-100	0 (0)
Good	75-89	0 (0)
Fair	60-74	0 (0)
Poor	0-59	25 (100)

The descriptive statistics also showed a clear increase in achievement. The mean pretest score was 34.80 with a standard deviation of 6.98, whereas the mean posttest score was 67.16 with a standard deviation of 10.30. The mean gain was 32.36 points. This increase indicates that the students were able to recognize and recall considerably more vocabulary after participating in the Team Race Game activities.

Table 2. Descriptive and inferential statistics

Measure	Pretest
Mean	34.80
Standard deviation	6.98
Mean gain	-
Significance (p)	-
Alpha	-

The paired-sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000. Since this value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Thus, the students' vocabulary scores after the treatment were significantly higher than their scores before the treatment. The statistical result supports the conclusion that Team Race Game was effective in enhancing

vocabulary mastery in the participating class.

The improvement can be explained by the learning processes embedded in the activity. First, students repeatedly encountered the target words while listening to instructions, discussing answers, reading prompts, and writing or saying responses. Second, the time-limited race required rapid retrieval, which encouraged students to recall words rather than simply copy



them from a textbook. Third, teamwork allowed learners to obtain help from peers and observe how other students pronounced or used vocabulary. These conditions made practice more intensive and interactive than conventional explanation followed by individual exercises.

The result is consistent with the general view that games can improve vocabulary learning by combining repetition with meaningful participation. The findings cited in the source article, including research on vocabulary games and anagram techniques, also suggest that learners benefit when lexical practice is organized around a clear challenge. However, the improvement should be interpreted within the limits of the one-group design. Without a comparison group, the study cannot completely separate the effect of Team Race Game from other influences such as repeated testing, regular classroom instruction, or students' growing familiarity with the vocabulary items.

Students' Interest in Team Race Game

The questionnaire data showed a positive response to the technique. One student (4%) was categorized as strongly interested, twenty-one students (84%) were interested, and three students (12%) were in the moderate category. No student was classified as uninterested or strongly uninterested. The total questionnaire score was 1,847, producing a mean interest score of 73.88, which fell within the interested category.

The interest findings support the classroom rationale for using the game. Students were not required to respond alone throughout the lesson; instead, they worked with peers and contributed to a shared team goal. The competitive format provided a clear purpose for completing each task, while the short duration of each race helped maintain attention. The activity also created opportunities for students to participate without being exposed to prolonged individual performance in front of the class. This may have reduced anxiety among learners who were previously afraid of making mistakes.

Student interest is important because vocabulary growth requires sustained practice.

A technique that improves scores but creates boredom may be difficult to use regularly, whereas a technique perceived as enjoyable can encourage learners to repeat words and participate more actively. The mean score of 73.88 suggests that Team Race Game was acceptable to most participants. Nevertheless, interest was measured only after the treatment, and the questionnaire relied on self-reported responses. Future studies could combine questionnaires with systematic observation or interviews to obtain a more detailed account of students' engagement.

Pedagogical Implications

Team Race Game can be implemented with simple materials such as word cards, worksheets, a board, and a timer. Teachers should select vocabulary appropriate to students' level, explain the rules clearly, and ensure that all team members have opportunities to answer. Competition should remain supportive rather than punitive; points can be awarded for accuracy, cooperation, and improvement, not only speed. A short review after each race is essential so that students confirm correct meanings, spelling, and pronunciation instead of remembering incorrect responses.

The technique is particularly suitable for consolidation after new vocabulary has been introduced. It may also be adapted for matching words and meanings, identifying pictures, arranging letters, completing sentences, categorizing vocabulary, or producing short oral responses. To strengthen the evidence, future research should involve a control group, a larger sample, delayed posttesting, and instruments that examine different dimensions of vocabulary knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Team Race Game significantly enhanced the vocabulary mastery of the seventh-grade students in Class VII.2 at SMP Negeri 2 Panca Rijang. The mean score increased from 34.80 on the pretest to 67.16 on the posttest, and the paired-sample t-test yielded a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than the 0.05 criterion. The posttest distribution also showed that most students moved from the poor category to the fair, good, or very good categories.

Students responded positively to the technique, as indicated by the mean interest score of 73.88 and the finding that 88% of participants were classified as interested or strongly interested.



Team Race Game therefore offers a practical way to combine repetition, cooperation, competition, and active recall in vocabulary lessons. Because the study used only one group and involved 25 students, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Even so, the results support the use of Team Race Game as an alternative classroom strategy and provide a basis for more rigorous experimental research.

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