

Implementation of the TGT (Team Game Tournament) Method to Improve Students Vocabulary Mastery

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Abstract

Vocabulary mastery is essential for developing students' English language skills; however, many elementary school students still experience difficulties in learning and retaining English vocabulary because of conventional teacher-centered instruction. This study aimed to investigate whether the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improves the vocabulary mastery of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design involving 30 Grade 5A students. Data were collected through a 20-item multiple-choice vocabulary test administered before and after the treatment and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. The results showed that the students' mean score increased from 43.33 on the pre-test to 82.67 on the post-test. The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two tests ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the TGT method significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. These findings suggest that TGT is an effective cooperative learning strategy for enhancing vocabulary learning through active participation, teamwork, and enjoyable classroom activities.

Keywords: Teams Games Tournament (TGT); Vocabulary Mastery; Cooperative Learning

Abstrak

Penguasaan kosakata sangat penting untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris siswa; namun, banyak siswa sekolah dasar masih mengalami kesulitan dalam mempelajari dan mengingat kosakata bahasa Inggris karena pengajaran konvensional yang berpusat pada guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki apakah penerapan metode Teams Games Tournament (TGT) secara signifikan meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa kelas 5 di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain pra-eksperimental satu kelompok pretest–posttest yang melibatkan 30 siswa kelas 5A. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kosakata pilihan ganda 20 item yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan dan dianalisis menggunakan IBM SPSS Statistics Versi 27. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata siswa meningkat dari 43,33 pada pretest menjadi 82,67 pada posttest. Uji t sampel berpasangan mengungkapkan perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik antara kedua tes ($p < 0,001$), menunjukkan bahwa metode TGT secara signifikan meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa TGT merupakan strategi pembelajaran kooperatif yang efektif untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata melalui partisipasi aktif, kerja tim, dan aktivitas kelas yang menyenangkan.

Kata kunci: Turnamen Permainan Tim (TGT); Penguasaan Kosakata; Pembelajaran Kooperatif

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Received 16 July 2026, Accepted 22 July 2026, Published 28 July 2026

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian education keeps changing to keep pace with globalization and advances in science and technology. English plays an increasingly important role in Indonesian education as schools prepare students to meet the demands of globalization and rapid developments in science and technology. Among the four language skills, vocabulary mastery serves as the foundation for successful language learning because it enables learners to understand and express ideas effectively through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Brown (2007) emphasizes that vocabulary is one of the essential

components of communicative competence, while Nation (2013) argues that learners cannot achieve meaningful progress in language learning without an adequate vocabulary base. In addition, Thornbury (2002) argues that vocabulary learning should involve meaningful repetition and continuous exposure to words in different communicative situations. Likewise, Harmer (2007) emphasizes that vocabulary instruction should provide learners with opportunities to practice and recycle newly learned words so that they can retain and use them effectively over time. Furthermore, Webb and Nation (2021) explain that repeated encounters with vocabulary in meaningful contexts strengthen long-term vocabulary retention. Therefore, developing students' vocabulary knowledge should become a primary objective of English instruction, particularly at the elementary school level, where learners establish the basic language skills needed for future learning.

Despite its importance, vocabulary mastery remains one of the major challenges in English learning in many Indonesian elementary schools, including Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. Many students experience difficulty remembering, understanding, and appropriately using new English words in different contexts. These difficulties are often associated with conventional teaching practices that rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction, memorization, and translation, resulting in low student participation and limited classroom interaction. Cameron (2001) explains that young learners acquire vocabulary more effectively when learning activities are meaningful, enjoyable, and appropriate to their developmental stage. Similarly, Hatch and Brown (1995) argue that vocabulary acquisition develops through repeated exposure and meaningful language use, while Schmitt (2010) states that vocabulary retention requires repeated encounters with words in various contexts before learners can use them confidently in communication. More recently, Teng (2023) highlights that vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of overall English language proficiency because it supports learners in both language comprehension and production.

To address these challenges, English teachers should adopt learner-centered instructional approaches that actively involve students in the learning process. Richards and Renandya (2002) argue that effective language teaching should provide learners with opportunities to interact, collaborate, and use the target language in authentic situations. Likewise, Ur (2012) maintains that language learning becomes more effective when students actively participate rather than passively receive information. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (2013) further explain that cooperative learning promotes positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, interpersonal skills, and group processing, all of which contribute to students' academic achievement and social development. Therefore, creating an engaging classroom environment through interactive learning activities is essential for improving students' vocabulary mastery and increasing their motivation to learn English.

One cooperative learning model that supports active participation is Teams Games Tournament (TGT). Developed by David DeVries and Keith Edwards in 1972 and later refined by Slavin (1978), TGT combines teamwork, academic games, tournaments, and group recognition within a structured learning process. Students work collaboratively in heterogeneous groups to master learning materials

before participating in friendly academic competitions. According to Slavin (1995), TGT promotes positive interdependence, individual accountability, and active participation, leading to improved academic achievement. Kagan and Kagan (2020) further explain that cooperative learning models such as TGT enhance language learning by encouraging communication, peer interaction, and collaborative problem-solving. The integration of educational games into cooperative learning also provides meaningful opportunities for students to practice vocabulary repeatedly in enjoyable learning situations. Previous studies have shown that cooperative learning strategies improve vocabulary acquisition, classroom participation, and students' motivation to learn English (Bilen & Tavil, 2015; Hidayat & Sari, 2019). Through these features, TGT creates an enjoyable learning atmosphere that increases students' motivation, confidence, and vocabulary retention.

Previous studies have reported positive outcomes from implementing the Teams Games Tournament model in English classrooms. Slavin (1995) found that cooperative learning strategies significantly improve students' academic performance by encouraging collaboration and shared responsibility among group members. Lie (2002) also reported that cooperative learning creates a more interactive classroom environment, increasing students' motivation and engagement in learning activities. Furthermore, Kagan and Kagan (2020) concluded that cooperative learning strengthens students' communication skills and language development through meaningful social interaction. Johnson et al. (2013) also emphasize that cooperative learning enables learners to construct knowledge collaboratively while developing both academic achievement and interpersonal skills. Likewise, Bilen and Tavil (2015) and Hidayat and Sari (2019) reported that cooperative learning contributes positively to students' vocabulary acquisition, classroom participation, and learning motivation. These findings suggest that TGT has considerable potential to improve English learning outcomes, particularly vocabulary mastery.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TGT in improving students' learning achievement, research specifically examining its impact on vocabulary mastery among students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie remains limited. Most existing studies have focused on general English achievement or have been conducted in different educational settings, such as junior or senior high schools. Differences in educational context, learner characteristics, and classroom conditions may influence the effectiveness of TGT. Therefore, further investigation is needed to determine whether the implementation of TGT can significantly improve vocabulary mastery among elementary students in this specific context. This gap provides the rationale for conducting the present study.

Based on the identified gap, this study aims to investigate the effect of implementing the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method on students' vocabulary mastery at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective vocabulary teaching strategies and provide practical guidance for English teachers in elementary schools. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research question: *Does the implementation of*

the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improve the vocabulary mastery of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie?

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design to investigate the effect of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method on students' vocabulary mastery. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is appropriate for objectively measuring variables through the statistical analysis of numerical data. In this design, one group of students completed a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment to determine whether the implementation of the TGT method significantly improved their vocabulary mastery.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie, Aceh, Indonesia. The participants were 30 students from Class VA (Grade 5A) who were selected through purposive sampling based on the recommendation of the English teacher. The selected class represented students with varying levels of English vocabulary proficiency and was considered appropriate for implementing the TGT method. Since the study employed a pre-experimental design, only one class participated in the study without a control group. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principal and the English teacher before the research was carried out.

The research instrument was a teacher-developed vocabulary achievement test administered as both the pre-test and the post-test. The test consisted of 20 multiple-choice items, with each correct answer worth 5 points, resulting in a maximum score of 100. The test items were developed in consultation with the English teacher and were designed based on the principles of vocabulary assessment proposed by Nation (2013) and Schmitt (2010). The test was aligned with the Grade 5 English curriculum and the learning objectives of the study. It measured students' vocabulary mastery related to the topic of animals, including animal names, characteristics, habitats, sounds, and simple descriptions. The vocabulary covered familiar animals such as dogs, cats, giraffes, elephants, lions, tigers, monkeys, rabbits, birds, and other common animals that had been taught during the learning sessions.

The treatment was implemented using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method based on the cooperative learning model proposed by Slavin (1995). The implementation consisted of six stages: class presentation, team formation, group discussion, games, tournament, and group recognition. During the class presentation, students were introduced to English vocabulary related to animals, including their names, characteristics, habitats, sounds, and simple descriptions. They were also given opportunities to practice the pronunciation and meaning of the target vocabulary before participating in the learning activities.

Following the presentation, the students were randomly assigned to heterogeneous groups through a lottery system. Each group consisted of students with different levels of vocabulary proficiency. After the groups were formed, the members of each team stood in a line facing the

whiteboard according to their respective groups. Before the tournament began, students discussed the learning materials with their teammates to reinforce their understanding of the target vocabulary. The tournament activities were adapted from the original Teams Games Tournament (TGT) procedure proposed by Slavin (1995) to suit the learning characteristics of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie while maintaining the essential principles of cooperative learning, teamwork, academic competition, and group recognition. During the tournament, a series of vocabulary questions related to the animal topic previously taught was presented. The first student in each group answered the first question. If a student was unable to answer a question correctly, he or she moved to the back of the line, and the next student took a turn to answer the following question. This rotation continued until all of the questions had been answered. Through this activity, every student was encouraged to participate actively, cooperate with teammates, and recall the vocabulary learned during the lesson in an enjoyable and competitive learning environment.

At the end of the tournament, the students' answers were checked, and each group's total score was calculated. The group that obtained the highest number of correct answers was declared the winner and received a reward as a form of group recognition. The reward was intended to enhance students' motivation, confidence, and active engagement in learning English vocabulary.

The data were collected through the administration of the pre-test before the treatment and the post-test after the implementation of the TGT method. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test results. Before the hypothesis was tested, the normality of the data was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test as a prerequisite for parametric analysis. After the data were confirmed to be normally distributed, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The level of significance was set at 0.05. A significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of less than 0.05 indicated that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the students' vocabulary mastery.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the vocabulary mastery of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The students completed a pre-test before the implementation of the TGT method and a post-test after the treatment. The results of both tests were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The mean score increased from 43.33 on the pre-test to 82.67 on the post-test. The minimum score also increased from 30 to 70, while the maximum score increased from 60 to 95. These findings indicate that the

students achieved higher vocabulary scores after participating in learning activities using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method.

To determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores ($t = -44.274$, $df = 29$, $p < 0.001$). Since the significance value (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000) was lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings indicate that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the students' vocabulary mastery.

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Pre-test	30	30	60	43.33	8.743
Post-test	30	70	95	82.67	6.530

Table 2 presents the results of the paired-samples t-test. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores ($t = -44.274$, $df = 29$, $p < 0.001$). Since the significance value (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000) was lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings indicate that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the students' vocabulary mastery.

Tabel 2. Paired-Samples t-test

Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-39.333	-44.274	29	0.000

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method had a statistically significant positive effect on the vocabulary mastery of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The substantial increase in the mean score from the pre-test to the post-test, together with the significant t-test result, indicates that learning through the TGT method effectively enhanced students' English vocabulary mastery.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the vocabulary mastery of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The significant increase in the students' post-test scores demonstrates that learning vocabulary through cooperative games and tournament activities provided meaningful learning experiences and enabled students to understand, remember, and use English vocabulary more effectively. These findings answer the research question, indicating that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery.

The improvement in students' vocabulary mastery can be attributed to the interactive and collaborative nature of the TGT method. During the learning activities, students worked together in heterogeneous groups, discussed the learning materials, and actively participated in games and

tournament sessions. These activities encouraged students to become actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information from the teacher. Most of the students showed noticeable improvement in their vocabulary knowledge after participating in the TGT activities. They became more confident in identifying the names of animals, describing their characteristics, recognizing their habitats, and recalling the sounds produced by different animals. For example, some students who were initially unable to identify that a cat says "meow" or that a dog says "bark" were able to answer these questions correctly after participating in the learning activities. Similarly, they demonstrated better understanding of other animals and their characteristics, indicating that repeated exposure to vocabulary through discussion, games, and competition strengthened their vocabulary retention.

Another important factor contributing to the improvement was the enjoyable and motivating classroom atmosphere created by the TGT method. Throughout the learning process, the students enthusiastically answered questions, discussed their ideas with teammates, and competed to earn the highest score for their groups. The opportunity to receive rewards at the end of the tournament motivated every student to participate actively and cooperate with other group members. As a result, the classroom became more interactive, enjoyable, and student-centered. This positive learning environment increased students' confidence and encouraged them to participate more actively in English vocabulary learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with the cooperative learning theory proposed by Slavin (1995), who stated that students achieve better learning outcomes when they work collaboratively toward common goals through teamwork and academic games. Likewise, Kagan and Kagan (2020) argued that cooperative learning enhances language development by promoting interaction, collaboration, and positive interdependence among students. Furthermore, Nation (2013) emphasized that vocabulary mastery develops through repeated exposure and meaningful use of words in different contexts. Similarly, Schmitt (2010) explained that learners need multiple encounters with new vocabulary before they can use it confidently in communication. In the present study, students repeatedly encountered and practiced animal-related vocabulary during class presentations, group discussions, games, and tournament activities. These repeated learning experiences helped students retain new vocabulary more effectively and use it with greater confidence.

The results of this study also support previous research demonstrating that the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method improves students' English learning outcomes and classroom participation. While earlier studies mainly focused on students' general academic achievement, the present study specifically demonstrates that TGT effectively improves English vocabulary mastery among Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The adaptation of the tournament activities to suit the learning characteristics of elementary school students enabled every student to participate actively while maintaining the fundamental principles of cooperative learning, academic competition, teamwork, and group recognition.

The findings of this study have practical implications for English teachers, particularly those teaching at the elementary school level. The Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method can serve as an

effective alternative instructional strategy for creating a more interactive, enjoyable, and student-centered classroom environment. By combining cooperative learning with educational games and friendly competition, teachers can increase students' motivation, participation, confidence, and vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method is recommended as an effective instructional approach for teaching English vocabulary to elementary school students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improved the vocabulary mastery of Grade 5 students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Blangpidie. The findings showed a substantial increase in students' vocabulary achievement, as reflected in the improvement of the mean score from the pre-test to the post-test. Furthermore, the paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the findings answer the research question by confirming that the implementation of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method significantly improves students' vocabulary mastery.

The improvement in students' vocabulary mastery was supported by the interactive and cooperative learning activities provided through the TGT method. During the learning process, students actively participated in group discussions, educational games, and tournament activities, which encouraged them to practice and recall English vocabulary in meaningful contexts. As a result, most students demonstrated better understanding of animal-related vocabulary, including animal names, characteristics, habitats, and sounds. The enjoyable and competitive learning atmosphere also increased students' motivation, confidence, participation, and engagement in learning English vocabulary.

Based on these findings, the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method can be recommended as an effective instructional strategy for teaching English vocabulary, particularly at the elementary school level. English teachers are encouraged to incorporate cooperative learning activities, educational games, and friendly academic competition into their classroom instruction to create a more engaging and student-centered learning environment. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct studies involving larger samples, different educational settings, or experimental designs with control groups to provide broader evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) method in English language learning.

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