

# Integrating the 'Snakes and Ladders' Board Game with Collaborative Learning to Enhance Young Learners' Vocabulary

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## ABSTRACT

Learning vocabulary is considered the most important component in mastering English, especially for students at the elementary school level who are young learners. However, many students often have difficulty pronouncing English words, making it difficult to memorize English vocabulary. In addition, students easily feel bored when learning vocabulary, so creative and innovative learning is needed to create students' interest in attending vocabulary classes. The traditional game 'Snakes and Ladders' has been innovatively adapted to create an engaging learning experience to improve vocabulary skills. This study explores the effectiveness of integrating the 'Snakes and Ladders' board game with collaborative learning strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition among students at SDN Getasblawong through the Kampus Mengajar 6 program. The quantitative method with pre-experimental design. The findings indicate a significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition among students who participated in the game-based learning activities compared to those who did not. This study highlights the potential of integrating traditional board games with collaborative learning strategies to create innovative and effective learning environments. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on gamified learning approaches and provide practical insights for educators seeking to enhance vocabulary acquisition in elementary school settings.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning; Snakes and Ladder; Vocabulary; Young Learners

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a language component that students must master, encompassing the collection of words in a language and their usage by speakers (Hatch & Brown, 1995; Schmidt, 2020; Lutfiyah et al., 2022). Mastering vocabulary is essential for English language learners since it improves their comprehension and communication skills (Agustianti et al., 2021; Sari & Aminatun, 2021). Ideally, vocabulary mastery entails mastering word definitions, perfect pronunciation, spelling, and appropriate usage in varied settings. As mentioned by Ramzan et al., (2023), without an adequate vocabulary, students struggle to understand others and communicate their thoughts.

The significance of vocabulary acquisition requires effective learning strategies. According to Yazidi (2023), effective learning strategies can substantially aid vocabulary acquisition, allowing students to develop their word bank and apply these terms in context, thus improving their overall language competence. However, sometimes the process of teaching vocabulary can be challenging for teachers, as different student characteristics and preferences can affect the effectiveness of different vocabulary learning strategies (Tantri et al., 2025). Therefore, as a teacher, it is necessary to know the type of students before determining the learning strategy.

Teaching young learners differs from teaching adult learners because they have different perspectives and characteristics. Older learners intend to learn and study for a certain goal, whereas young learners simply enjoy

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their own life and style, but they are also highly motivated, enthusiastic, and energetic (Pertwi et al., 2020; Fajarina, 2017; Ilmuddinovich, 2020). However, when presented with difficult tasks, young learners might quickly lose interest, become bored, and struggle to stay motivated (Güneş & Sangöz, 2021; Naharuddin & Megawati, 2018). During pre-observation at SDN Getasblawong, as part of the Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6, students struggled with English language learning. Students often mispronounce phrases, have difficulty remembering vocabulary, and get bored quickly with traditional teaching methods. Ambarini, (2018) states that an English teacher needs to pay attention to several strategies that can be used to enhance English language ability, especially for young learners.

In this case, traditional methods, such as memorization and repetition, prove insufficient to overcome these challenges (Abdelrady et al., 2022). Students often become confused, struggle to understand the material and find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings, which results in low competence and comprehension. In addition, assigning students to memorize words individually often leads to disinterest. Effective vocabulary learning requires innovative and engaging strategies that go beyond memorization. Interactive media, such as games, movies, songs, and physical activities like singing and dancing, help maintain engagement and motivation among young learners (Permana, 2020).

Games are often meant to excite young learners to learn, achieve goals, and express themselves authentically, as well as encourage interactivity (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022). Incorporating games into education can reduce feelings of anxiety and fear while increasing positive learning outcomes. As noted by Kadwa and Alshenqeeti (2020), educational games are a practical approach to vocabulary acquisition as they provide a useful context for vocabulary learning while adding fun to the classroom. One of the appropriate educational games for young learners is board games. According to Rapiasih et al., (2024), Board games can be considered as educational games that motivate students to engage in the learning process, as they allow students to focus on learning instead of feeling obligated to learn.

One of the media that will be used by the researcher is the "Snakes and Ladders" board game, tailored to suit the playful nature of elementary students. This game-based approach aimed to increase student engagement and create a joyful learning atmosphere, thereby enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Through the game, students would actively participate, experiment, and interact with their peers, facilitating a deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary. As Ifayatun & Fajarina, (2022) describe, the board game "Snakes and Ladders" is played by several groups of students. It is divided into squares, with ladders and snakes in some squares. The "Snakes and Ladders" board game is a great, and playful media for students to make strides and hone their communication skills (Arfani & Sulistia, 2019).

Previous research has shown the positive impact of using snakes and ladders as a media. For example, Sembiring et al., (2023) evaluated the adequacy of snakes and ladders media in improving English vocabulary among third-grade students at SDN 105308 Namo Bintang. The program was well received and successfully implemented, resulting in students improving their speaking skills and mastering a wide variety of English in their environment. Another study, conducted by Nuridayanti, (2024), evaluated the effect Snakes and Ladders game on vocabulary learning among fourth-grade students at SDN Kalipang 1, Indonesia. The results showed a significant increase in vocabulary scores between the pre-test and post-test, indicating the game is effective as a vocabulary teaching tool in elementary school.

Based on some of the previous studies, snakes and ladders had a positive impact as interactive media to improve vocabulary for young learners. Through this media, students can engage in a more dynamic and enjoyable learning process, which encourages active participation and reduces the monotony of traditional, teacher-centered instruction. The interactive nature of the game fosters a collaborative learning environment where students can learn from each other while enhancing their vocabulary skills.

The Snakes and Ladders game will be more fun and effective in groups. So in its implementation, a collaborative learning strategy is required. According to Listianingsih et al., (2023), collaborative learning involves social interaction in small groups to foster shared understanding and knowledge. Students in the classroom will interact with each other, collaborate, and exchange information to create a meaningful learning experience. Group learning can be an effective way to address student problems during the teaching and learning process (Anwar et al., 2023). Collaborative learning has been explored intensively in elementary and secondary schools as the younger age of students is considered an important instructional strategy in higher education (Kouhsarian et al., 2023). Many students are passionate about studying while playing and working with their peers since it delivers more benefits than learning individually.

Given these insights, integrating game-based collaborative learning strategies, such as the "Snakes and Ladders" board game, is a novel and effective approach to teaching vocabulary in elementary school. Unlike traditional methods that rely on rote memorization, this study incorporates interactive gameplay and peer collaboration to create a more engaging and student-centered learning experience. The game supports long-term vocabulary

retention through repeated exposure, enhances pronunciation and spelling by integrating oral and written practice, and reinforces contextual usage by requiring students to apply words meaningfully. Additionally, the collaborative nature of the game encourages peer support and motivation, fostering a positive and interactive learning environment. This research seeks to address the specific vocabulary learning challenges identified in previous observations by implementing this innovative and interactive teaching method.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed the quantitative research design. Kinyua, (2023) mentioned that Quantitative research deals with numbers that can be measured. Researchers determine what to investigate by asking specific and narrow questions, which leads to collecting quantifiable data from many participants and utilizing statistics to evaluate the data and explain phenomena. This study used a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test. The design is described as follows (Saifuddin, 2020):

$$E = O1 \times O2$$

Where:

E = Experimental Class

O1 = Pre-test

X = Treatment

O2 = Post-test

### Participants

The participants in this study were students from the fourth grade at SDN Getasblawong. The sample was selected using a cluster sampling technique. The number of students is 20, consisting of 6 female and 14 male. During the treatment, they divided into five groups of four students each, with vocabulary learning implemented using a Snakes and Ladders game.

### Data Collection

To collect data and respond to the problem statement, the researcher employed a test as an instrument. The test measures the individual's or group's skill, knowledge, and ability. The test consists of two parts: a pre-test and a post-test.

1. Pre-Test: Assesses students' initial vocabulary knowledge before the treatment. This provides baseline data to assess progress after the treatment. The question test consisted of 20 questions (10 multiple-choice questions, and 10 matching questions) with the material about profession and transportation terminology; students had 20 minutes to complete the test.
2. Treatment: The researchers provide treatment after giving a pre-test. For this treatment, the researcher will give two meetings. In the first meeting, the researcher introduced game-based interactive English learning to the students, through snakes and ladders game. After that, she divided the students into groups and explained the procedure of playing the game while conducting the trial. Students were divided into small groups of 4 members so that there were 5 groups in one class. Each group will play the snakes and ladders game together, with each group member playing a role in the game. Each time one of the group members stepped on a box containing a picture with a vocabulary word underneath, he/she had to practice the pronunciation of the word in English and Indonesian, then write the vocabulary word on paper. In addition, when stepping on an exclamation mark which means there is a challenge inside, the challenge is predetermined and related to English, including singing in English, dancing, and counting in English 1-20. Other group tasks require cooperation to complete. This encourages discussion and knowledge sharing among group members. In the second meeting, the researcher invited students to play while learning again using the snakes and ladders game board that had been explained at the previous meeting with Profession and Transportation vocabulary material. Students who have been formed into several groups are ready to play while increasing students' memory of vocabulary and also giving confidence to students to say or guess vocabulary in front of their friends.



Figure 1. Snakes and Ladders Board Game Media

3. Post-Test: After the treatment, students' vocabulary development was assessed by post-test. The post-test consisted of 20 questions (10 multiple-choice questions and 10 short answer questions). The post-test results were compared with the pre-test results to assess the effectiveness of the treatment. The test materials corresponded to what had been learned previously.

**Data Analysis**

The data was examined by comparing students' pre- and post-test scores. The data was further examined using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as normality tests and paired sample t-tests, with IBM SPSS Version 21, to determine the usefulness of Snakes and Ladders media in teaching children vocabulary and to compare pre- and post-test findings. The normality tests were used to determine whether the data had a normal distribution, hence ensuring the validity of parametric statistics. A paired sample t-test was then performed to see whether the differences in pre-test and post-test scores were statistically significant. This study improves our understanding of the influence of the Snakes and Ladders game, validating the claimed increases in vocabulary proficiency.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders board game in improving vocabulary knowledge in fourth-grade students at elementary school. Data was collected using a test administration approach. The test was given twice, before and after the treatment. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics v21.

Before analyzing the data with SPSS, the researcher conducted a detailed classification of each score using [Brown & Abeywickrama, \(2020\)](#) framework to gain a better understanding of the scores and percentages associated with the pre-test and post-test findings. This was done to ensure that all components of the assessment criteria were thoroughly investigated and correctly classified for reliable data interpretation to compare the classification between the pre-test and post-test scores.

No	Classification	Score	Frequency	percentage
1	Excellent	85 – 100	0	0%

2	Good	70 – 84	3	15%
3	Fair	60 – 69	7	35%
4	Poor	50 – 59	5	25%
5	Fail	< 50	5	25%
Total			20	100%

**Table 1.** The Results of Pre-test Data

Table 1 shows that 25% of the students in the pre-test data were in the poor and fail category. In addition, 35% of the students were in the fair category, 15% were in the good category, and 0% were in the excellent category, indicating that their vocabulary competence was still inadequate.

**Table 2.** The Results of Post-test Data

No	Classification	Score	Frequency	percentage
1	Excellent	85 – 100	17	85%
2	Good	70 – 84	3	15%
3	Fair	60 – 69	0	0%
4	Poor	50 – 59	0	0%
5	Fail	< 50	0	0%
Total			20	100%

Table 2 shows that in the post-test data, 15% of students were classified as good. In addition, 85% of students scored excellent, indicating that their vocabulary proficiency had improved considerably, showing a strong understanding of the content and a better level of competence than the previous pre-test. The significant increase in the number of students in the excellent category demonstrates the effectiveness of the adopted instructional approach of using snakes and ladders board games in improving vocabulary acquisition.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistic

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.dev
Pre-Test	20	35	75	56,00	11.653
Post-Test	20	80	100	89,25	6.129

Based on table 3, shows the results of data analysis using SPSS, which includes a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test had a minimum score of 35 and a maximum score of 75, with a total sample of 20 students. The standard deviation was 11.653, and the mean score was 56. The post-test has a total sample of 20 students. The minimum score was 80 and the maximum score was 100. The mean score was 89.25 and the standard deviation was 6.129.

In addition, based on the findings of the SPSS calculations presented above, it can be concluded that combining snakes and ladders game with collaborative learning methodology can improve students' vocabulary comprehension. The difference in results between the pretest and posttest is 33.25 points. This shows that teaching using the Snakes and Ladders Board Game is helpful in improving students' English vocabulary skills.

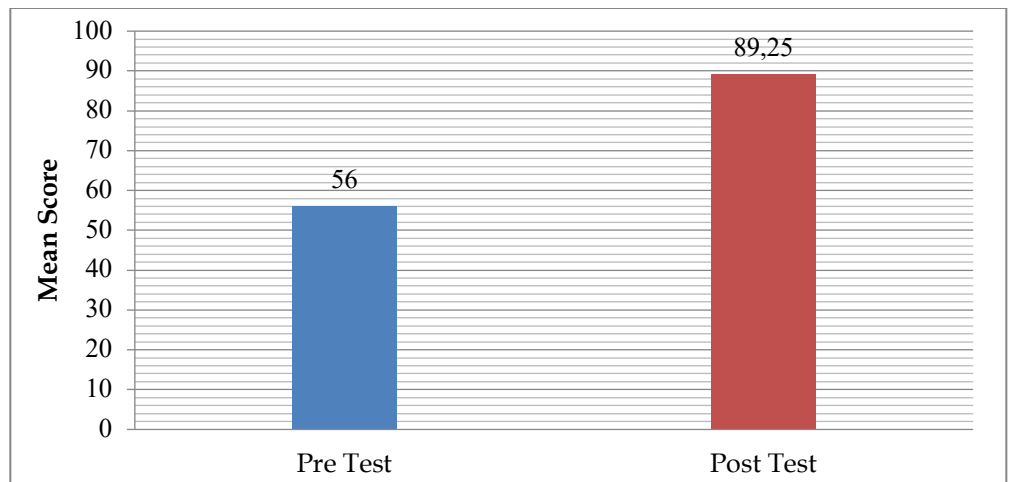


Figure 2. The Comparison of Mean Scores Pretest and Posttest

The figure above shows a significant rise in the mean scores of the pretest and post-test, providing the efficacy of the intervention. The improvement in scores implies that using snakes and ladders as a learning method improves students' vocabulary mastery. This increase shows that the students were able to recall and use the new vocabulary learned during the game, indicating a clear improvement over their original baseline performance on the pretest. The statistical difference between the two scores supports the concept that interactive and engaging methods such as these can greatly improve learning results when compared to more traditional approaches.

The normality test determines whether the pre-test and post-test data are normally distributed; or not. This test is carried out before calculating the t-test. The researcher used Lilliefors Significance Correlation in statistics SPSS 21 as presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
PRE-TEST	.134	20	.200*	.952	20	.404
POS-TEST	.156	20	.200*	.926	20	.128

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the results in Table 4, it is clear that all data from the Shapiro-Wilk test (0.404; 0.128) and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (0.200; 0.200) have significance values (sig) more than 0.05, indicating that the study's data distribution is normal. Before conducting the paired sample t-test, it is necessary to perform a normality test to ensure the data meets the assumptions for parametric statistical analysis. Since the significance values are greater than the 0.05 threshold, we can conclude that the data is normally distributed. Therefore, parametric statistics, such as the paired sample t-test, can be used to analyze the study's data. This allows for a more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders media in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

After the data collected proved to be normal, the researcher used the t-test to determine the significant difference between students' vocabulary knowledge through the Pre-test and Post-test scores, the researcher used the paired sample t-test. Paired sample t-test is an analysis to statistically compare the **data** of two sample groups. After testing the data, the results of the t-test provide answers to research questions regarding whether or not Snakes and Ladders Board game is significant in this study. The data can be seen as follows:

**Table 5.** Paired Sample T-Test

	Paired Sample Test					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest Posttest	-33.250	11.035	2.468	-13.475	19	.000

The significance values were 0.000, which is less than 0.05 based on the output shown in Table 5 above. Since the mean score on the pre-and post-tests differs significantly, it may be concluded that vocabulary learning through the use of Snakes and Ladders media had a positive impact on students' performance. The p-value is less than the threshold of 0.05 indicating that the differences in scores before and after the intervention are statistically significant.

Therefore, the writer concludes based on the calculation data above that there are significant differences in the results of learning English vocabulary before and after using Snakes and Ladders Board Game. On the other hand, it demonstrates that using the Snakes and Ladders Board Game can help students enhance their English vocabulary skills.

### Discussion

Elementary school students are beginner English learners, so they need to learn vocabulary as a basic ability in learning English. Students would have difficulty in mastering English if they didn't have an extensive vocabulary. Students can't understand words, sentences, instructions, or texts in English (Sari et al., 2023). Therefore, focusing on vocabulary acquisition is essential to ensure students build a strong foundation for future English learning and communication. Students who build a strong vocabulary will be more prepared to engage with various components of the language, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sardi, 2022). This basic knowledge is essential as it allows children to grasp more complicated linguistic concepts and improves their capacity to engage in meaningful conversations and learning activities in English.

However, in some situations, students' mastery of English vocabulary is still lower than the minimum competency standard. This is influenced by teachers' teaching methods that do not use appropriate media and 'methods, and rely more on memorization in English teaching and learning activities to help students obtain English vocabulary. It will make students uninterested in learning English and not pay attention to the lesson because the teaching and learning activities are not interesting. This learning is considered ineffective, as in the research conducted by Mailasari, (2018) who analyzed the types of difficulties faced by grade 1 students of SDIT Amal Insani Jepara in the aspect of memorizing vocabulary in direct vocabulary teaching in English language learning. The finding is that students easily forget because learning events do not touch feelings or emotions. This needs to be built on English subjects. Lessons that give an impression, are fun, interesting, useful for enriching knowledge, are more efficient, and are stored longer.

A study conducted by Sumartini, (2023) investigated the use of pictures as learning aids in improving English vocabulary for third-grade students at SD Santo Yoseph 1 Denpasar. The findings suggest that pictorial aids assist in vocabulary acquisition and foster a more motivating and engaging learning atmosphere, which is crucial for improving English vocabulary among elementary school students. Although there are still challenges in learning English vocabulary, visual aids can significantly enhance students' interest and performance, thus requiring further research and policy development to support this approach in educational settings.

Based on previous research, it is proven that pictures can be used as media in vocabulary learning in elementary school. However, by adopting modified pictures in a traditional game, it will make students much more interested in learning vocabulary. The innovative approach of using the "Snakes and Ladders" board game with collaborative learning strategies stands out as a unique solution. This method leverages the playful nature of elementary students to create a joyful learning atmosphere, thereby enhancing vocabulary acquisition. The game-based approach encourages active participation, experimentation, and interaction among peers, facilitating a deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary.

This study used a group pretest post-test design that has been previously designed. In the first method, a pretest design was conducted to see how the students' vocabulary mastery level was before the treatment. From the results obtained, it can be seen that the level of students' vocabulary mastery is still very low. Furthermore, the treatment was carried out using the Snakes and Ladders Board Game to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The writer provides Profession and Transportation Vocabulary. In this case, students are assigned to memorize the vocabulary and pronounce the vocabulary aloud. From the observations made, it can be seen that students still have difficulty in memorizing and pronouncing words correctly. Therefore, the task is given by giving a test

contained in the Learn English Vocabulary, because the task can be repeated so students are assigned to get a score of 100 on the test. For the last method, a post-test is given to student learning outcomes after treatment using the Snakes and Ladders Board Games. On the other hand, the writer also conducted interviews and open questionnaires after all learning ended.

The study's findings revealed a substantial rise between the pretest score before treatment and the post-test score after treatment using the Snakes and Ladders game. Data analysis revealed a significant rise in average score from 56.00 pre-test to 89.75 post-test. Tables 3 and 5 show how the researcher utilized the normality test and paired sample t-test to evaluate the hypothesis. The data analysis revealed a strong influence of "Snakes and Ladders" media on vocabulary instruction. The use of "Snakes and Ladders" media has been recognized for its ability to provide an engaging and participatory learning experience (Kasanah et al., 2022). Students can improve their vocabulary by playing Snakes and Ladders and putting words in the boxes. Reading the words in the box helps students improve their pronunciation and remember the meaning of the language (Manurung et al., 2021). According to Rohayati & Rizkyanti, (2019), using snakes and ladders game in the classroom helps students increase their vocabulary and improve their learning ability; students are motivated, enthusiastic, and happy with the learning experience.

According to Zikriyati & Syafei, (2018), Using the Snakes and Ladders game to teach vocabulary to students has a variety of benefits. Snakes and Ladders is a traditional game that is popular among students. Teachers may find it easier to incorporate the game into the classroom as students are already familiar with the original rules, so they only need to give a brief overview of the game. In addition, the Snakes and Ladders game board is also visually appealing. This game board has various colors that motivate students to learn. They will be more relaxed and enthusiastic about learning the material. Another benefit of the Snakes and Ladders game is that it enhances the learning experience while lowering stress, as the game is played in groups, students will be able to seek help from their peers in anticipating the correct answer, reducing anxiety and increasing a sense of security. This will help boost their confidence to speak up in class. Lastly, the game can increase student participation and remove barriers to people who are bored with the traditional classroom setting (Mafrudloh, N., Ahsanah, F., & Khoiriyah, K., 2024).

The contributions of this study lie in its practical applications and theoretical implications. Firstly, it provides a feasible and fun method for teaching vocabulary that can be implemented in various educational settings. The collaborative nature of the game encourages students to support each other, therefore enhancing their vocabulary acquisition, which aligns with the principles of collaborative learning. Secondly, this study confirms the effectiveness of integrating traditional board games with modern educational strategies. The unique contribution of this study lies in its specific application to elementary school students and the incorporation of collaborative learning strategies, which enhances the overall learning experience.

## CONCLUSION

The "Snakes and Ladders" board game combined with collaborative learning practices was shown to improve vocabulary acquisition among elementary school children. This game-based strategy effectively engaged students, resulting in a considerable gain in their vocabulary knowledge, as indicated by higher post-test results. This strategy not only makes learning enjoyable, but it also promotes active involvement and peer interaction, which are critical for improving vocabulary understanding and retention.

However, this study has limitations such as a small sample size and a brief intervention. These factors may influence the results' generalizability to a larger population or different educational situations. Furthermore, because this study solely focused on professional and transportation vocabulary learning, it did not cover a wide range of vocabulary. Future research should use a more complete strategy, including a larger sample size, increasing the duration of the intervention, and exploring a more extensive vocabulary.

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