

## DIFFICULTIES IN OVERCOMING VOCABULARY LEARNING PROBLEMS IN 7TH GRADE STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** In recent years, learning new vocabulary has become important because it plays a key role in improving students' language skills. However, there is limited research on the specific difficulties faced by 7th-grade students in learning new words. The study employed a qualitative design. The participants were 15 seventh-grade students from a secondary school. Data were collected through questionnaires and classroom observations and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students struggle with memorizing and using new words in context. The results also show that a lack of practice and motivation affects their vocabulary learning. The study suggests that interactive methods, different kinds of flashcards, and regular practice can improve vocabulary learning. These findings have implications for teachers and students in enhancing effective vocabulary teaching strategies.

**Keywords:** vocabulary learning, vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary learning difficulties, 7th-grade students, language development, memorization strategies, contextual usage, student motivation, classroom interaction, flashcards, qualitative research, teaching strategies.

## 7-SINF O'QUVCHILARIDA LUG'AT O'RGANISHDAGI MUAMMOLARNI BARTARAF ETISH QIYINCHILIKLARI

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**Annotatsiya:** So'nggi yillarda yangi lug'at birliklarini o'rganish muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda, chunki u o'quvchilarning til ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda asosiy o'rin tutadi. Biroq 7-sinf o'quvchilarining yangi so'zlarni o'rganishda duch keladigan aniq qiyinchiliklari bo'yicha tadqiqotlar cheklangan. Ushbu tadqiqot sifatli tadqiqot dizayni asosida olib borildi. Tadqiqot ishtirokchilari umumta'lim maktabining 7-sinfida tahsil olayotgan 15 nafar o'quvchidan iborat bo'ldi. Ma'lumotlar so'rovnomalar va sinf kuzatuvlari orqali to'plandi hamda tematik tahlil asosida tahlil qilindi. Natijalar o'quvchilar yangi so'zlarni yodlab qolish va ularni kontekstda qo'llashda qiynalishini ko'rsatdi. Shuningdek, amaliy mashqlarning yetishmasligi va motivatsiya pastligi lug'at o'rganishga ta'sir qilishi aniqlandi. Tadqiqot interaktiv metodlar, turli xil fleshkartalar va muntazam mashqlar lug'at o'rganishni yaxshilashi mumkinligini ko'rsatadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** lug'at o'rganish, lug'atni o'zlashtirish, lug'at o'rganishdagi qiyinchiliklar, 7-sinf o'quvchilari, til rivojlanishi, yodlash strategiyalari, kontekstda qo'llash, o'quvchi motivatsiyasi, sinfdagi o'zaro muloqot, fleshkartalar, sifatli tadqiqot, o'qitish strategiyalari.

## ТРУДНОСТИ ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЯ ПРОБЛЕМ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ЛЕКСИКИ У УЧАЩИХСЯ 7-ГО КЛАССА

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**Аннотация:** В последние годы изучение новой лексики приобрело важное значение, поскольку оно играет ключевую роль в развитии языковых навыков учащихся. Однако исследования, посвященные конкретным трудностям, с которыми сталкиваются учащиеся 7-го класса при изучении новых слов, остаются ограниченными. В исследовании использован качественный дизайн. Участниками стали 15 учащихся 7-го класса средней школы. Данные были собраны с помощью анкетирования и наблюдения в классе и проанализированы методом тематического анализа. Результаты показывают, что учащиеся испытывают трудности при запоминании новых слов и их использовании в контексте. Также установлено, что недостаток практики и мотивации влияет на процесс усвоения лексики. Исследование показывает, что интерактивные методы, различные виды флеш-карт и регулярная практика могут улучшить изучение словарного запаса.

**Ключевые слова:** изучение лексики, усвоение словарного запаса, трудности изучения лексики, учащиеся 7-го класса, развитие языка, стратегии запоминания, использование в контексте, мотивация учащихся, взаимодействие в классе, флеш-карты, качественное исследование, стратегии обучения.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid growth of digital and communication technologies has transformed the educational landscape by expanding the scope, nature, and opportunities available for out-of-classroom learning (García Botero et al., 2021; Nunan & Richards, 2015).

Defined broadly, mobile learning is one of the most recent developments in the application of educational technology. It emphasizes the affordances, experiences, and opportunities provided by portable devices for learning at any time and in any place (McQuiggan et al., 2015). Such learning goes beyond the physical devices themselves; tablet PCs, smartphones, laptops, and personal media players can all be used to support mobile-assisted language learning.

Moreover, previous research indicates that in many EFL contexts, vocabulary instruction is neither effective nor efficient, and many learners fail to learn the 2,000 most frequent word families (Webb & Chang, 2012; Webb & Nation, 2017). Vocabulary is an essential requirement in English language learning. According to Rainkamol (2008), vocabulary use is a necessary component of learning English. Aisyah et al. (2020) note that flashcards are one type of visual aid that can be provided to pupils. Small cards containing pictures, text, or symbols are used to help students recall or learn various topics related to visuals.

However, a significant number of students have difficulty learning new words and lack speaking practice.

The objectives of this study are to identify why some 7th-grade students have difficulty learning new words, to examine students' memory in learning new words, and to determine which types of activities make the lesson more enjoyable.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Why do my students have difficulty learning new words?
2. Do they have good memory?
3. Do I use interesting activities to make the lesson more enjoyable?

Classroom-based research is needed to explore seventh-grade students' difficulties in learning new vocabulary and to provide practical guidance for teachers. This study aims to identify the key challenges students face in acquiring and remembering new English words and to examine their attitudes toward vocabulary learning activities. Based on the findings, the study proposes

effective instructional strategies to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and engagement in the classroom.

### METHODOLOGY

The participants of the study were 15 seventh-grade students from School No. 1 in Naryn district. The instructional strategies used to improve vocabulary learning served as the independent variable, while students' vocabulary performance was the dependent variable.

Data were collected through three main instruments. First, a paper-based student questionnaire was conducted to identify learners' attitudes and difficulties in learning new words. All 15 students participated, and the survey was anonymous to ensure honest responses. Second, a teacher questionnaire via Google Forms was used to gather experienced teachers' opinions about common vocabulary learning problems. Third, a reflective journal was maintained by the teacher to record classroom observations over several lessons.

The procedure began with identifying students' initial vocabulary level. Then surveys were administered to determine key challenges. After that, several strategies were implemented, including clear explanation of new words, the use of visual aids, repetition, interactive activities, and continuous feedback. Finally, students' progress was observed and compared with their initial performance.

Before analysis, all collected data were checked for completeness. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using percentages, while qualitative data from the journal were examined thematically to identify common patterns. To ensure reliability and validity, data from different sources were compared. This triangulation increased the accuracy and trustworthiness of the results.

A paper-based questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection tool due to practical considerations. Not all seventh-grade students had access to mobile phones or stable internet connections, which made it difficult to conduct an online survey. Therefore, using a paper-based format ensured equal participation opportunities for all students and increased the reliability of the collected data. Moreover, this method allowed students to complete the questionnaire in a controlled classroom environment, reducing distractions and improving the accuracy of their responses.

The questionnaire was designed to identify students' attitudes, difficulties, and learning behaviors related to vocabulary acquisition. Overall, the questionnaire helped provide a clearer understanding of the key challenges students face and guided the selection of appropriate instructional strategies.

**Student questionnaire items:** Do you like learning new English words? (a) Yes; (b) No; (c) Sometimes. Do you find it difficult to learn new words? (a) Yes; (b) No; (c) Sometimes. What is the most difficult for you when learning new words? (a) Understanding meaning; (b) Remembering words; (c) Pronunciation; (d) Spelling; (e) Using words in sentences. Do you forget new words quickly? (a) Yes; (b) No; (c) Sometimes. How often do you practice new vocabulary? (a) Always; (b) Sometimes; (c) Never. What helps you learn new words better? (a) Pictures; (b) Repetition; (c) Teacher explanation; (d) Games/activities. Do you use new words in speaking or writing? (a) Yes; (b) No; (c) Sometimes. Do you feel motivated to learn new words? (a) Yes; (b) No; (c) Sometimes.

Questions 1 and 2 aimed to explore students' general attitudes toward learning new words and their perceived level of difficulty. Question 3 focused on identifying specific problem areas such as meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and usage. Question 4 examined students' ability to

retain vocabulary over time. Question 5 investigated how frequently students practice new words, reflecting their learning habits. Question 6 aimed to determine which teaching strategies or supports are most effective for students. Question 7 explored whether students actively use new vocabulary in speaking or writing. Question 8 was designed to assess students' level of motivation in learning new words.

**Teacher questionnaire items:**

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. Have you ever faced difficulties in teaching students new vocabulary?
3. Have you ever used flashcards when teaching vocabulary?
4. If yes, did they work effectively?
5. Which method do you usually use to teach new words?
6. Do you give vocabulary as homework or organize peer work during lessons?
7. Do games help students remember new words better?
8. Do your students revise new words outside the classroom?
9. How often do your students forget newly learned words?
10. In your opinion, what is the best way to help students learn new vocabulary?

The teacher questionnaire was used to identify the level of professional experience, common vocabulary teaching difficulties, the use and effectiveness of flashcards, the most commonly used instructional methods, teachers' use of homework or peer work, the role of games in vocabulary retention, students' revision habits, the frequency of forgetting new words, and teachers' practical recommendations for vocabulary learning.

Before conducting the survey and implementing the research, initial classroom observations revealed that many students experienced difficulties in speaking tasks. In particular, several learners were unable to understand instructions or express their ideas clearly, which indicated a lack of vocabulary knowledge. Based on these observations, the research topic "difficulties in learning new words" was selected.

Prior to this study, teaching practices mainly focused on more active and high-achieving students, especially those who attended extra classes. Lessons were conducted without the use of specific instructional strategies for vocabulary development. As a result, the presence of passive learners was not clearly noticed, since stronger students tended to dominate classroom participation.

Recognizing this limitation, the teacher aimed to create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment in which all students could actively participate. The focus shifted toward improving vocabulary learning through interactive and student-centered methods.

To address the identified problem, the use of flashcards was introduced as a key instructional strategy. Students were actively involved in the learning process by creating their own vocabulary cards. They were provided with paper, glue, scissors, and markers. Each student wrote a new word on one side of the card and drew a corresponding picture on the other side to illustrate its meaning.

This activity increased students' interest and engagement, as it resembled a game-like process. In addition, it promoted teamwork and collaboration among students. Over time, preparing vocabulary flashcards became a regular classroom practice, and students developed a positive attitude toward this activity. To reinforce learning, flashcard revision was consistently integrated into lessons as both a warm-up and a wrap-up activity. This helped students review previously learned vocabulary in an interactive way.

## RESULTS

After four weeks of implementing this strategy, noticeable improvements were observed, particularly among previously passive students. Their level of motivation increased, and they demonstrated better vocabulary knowledge. As a result, they became more confident and active during speaking activities.

Overall, the use of interactive techniques, especially flashcards, proved to be effective in enhancing students' vocabulary learning and encouraging equal participation in the classroom.

Before implementing the new strategy, vocabulary teaching was conducted using more traditional methods. Typically, new words were written on the board, and students were asked to copy them into their notebooks. They were then expected to memorize these words at home. During the lesson, the teacher checked students' knowledge by asking several learners to recall the meanings of the words, depending on the available time. After this brief checking stage, the lesson moved on to a new topic.

However, this approach had several limitations. Not all students were equally involved in the process, as only a small number of learners were asked to respond during class. Those who were not questioned often remained passive and unprepared. Over time, this method became repetitive and monotonous, leading to a decrease in students' interest and motivation. Many students appeared disengaged, often listening without active participation or pretending to understand the material.

Through these observations, it became clear that the root of the problem was related to insufficient vocabulary knowledge. The traditional method of simply presenting and memorizing word lists proved to be ineffective and outdated, as it did not support long-term retention or active language use.

In response to these challenges, flashcards were selected as an alternative and more interactive instructional tool. Small cards were prepared from thick paper and designed in a convenient size so that students could easily carry them in their school bags or pencil cases. This portability allowed learners to review vocabulary anytime and anywhere, increasing opportunities for repetition and practice.

Each flashcard contained a new word on one side, while the other side included either a drawing representing the meaning of the word or its translation. Students were actively involved in creating their own flashcards, which made the learning process more personalized and meaningful.

This method significantly increased students' engagement. Many learners showed enthusiasm in collecting and creating more flashcards, and over time, this activity became a regular habit. The process also encouraged collaboration, as students often worked together, shared ideas, and supported each other.

Importantly, this strategy helped address differences in students' proficiency levels. Previously, more advanced learners—especially those attending extra classes—tended to dominate classroom activities. However, through the use of flashcards and group-based tasks, more active students began to support less active ones. This created a more inclusive learning environment where all students could participate and learn together.

To further strengthen vocabulary retention, flashcards were incorporated into lessons as both warm-up and wrap-up activities. These short revision sessions helped reinforce previously learned vocabulary in an engaging and interactive way.

The results show that students made significant progress in vocabulary acquisition after the intervention. In particular, the use of flashcards as a method for memorizing new words proved to

be highly effective. This technique facilitated better retention and understanding of lexical items, enabling students to expand their vocabulary more efficiently.

In addition, the findings indicate that learners developed positive attitudes toward teamwork and collaborative learning. Most participants reported that group activities were engaging and motivating, and they appreciated the opportunity to interact with their peers. The collaborative environment also allowed students to exchange knowledge and support each other throughout the learning process.

Furthermore, students became more confident and active during classroom activities. Passive learners, in particular, showed noticeable improvement, as they were supported and encouraged by more active students during group work. This peer support contributed to creating a more inclusive and interactive classroom atmosphere.

Moreover, the participants acquired new learning strategies and skills, which helped them become more independent learners. By the end of the study, students demonstrated higher engagement and improved participation. Overall, the main finding of this research is that the use of flashcards as a vocabulary learning method was effective and had a positive impact on students' performance, engagement, and overall learning experience.

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have? (Multiple choice)

26 responses

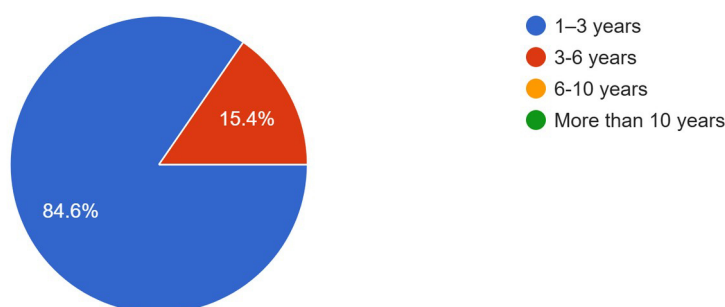


Figure 1. Teachers' years of teaching experience.

2. Have you ever faced problems with students when teaching new vocabulary? (Multiple choice)

25 responses

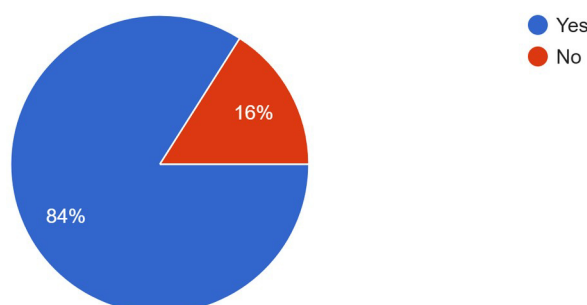
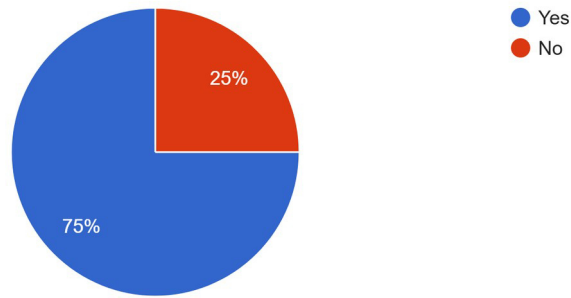


Figure 2. Teachers' difficulties in teaching new vocabulary.

3. Have you ever used flashcards to teach vocabulary to your students? (Multiple choice)

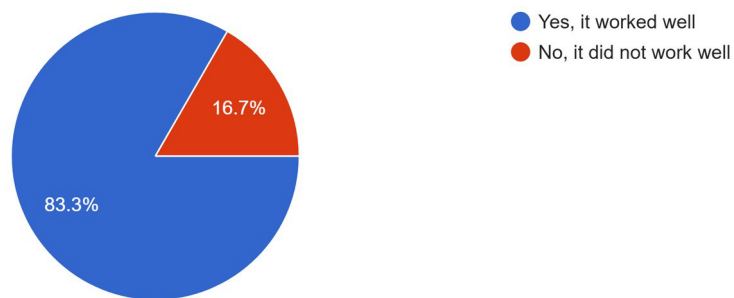
24 responses



**Figure 3. Use of flashcards in teaching vocabulary.**

4. If yes, did this method work well? (Multiple choice)

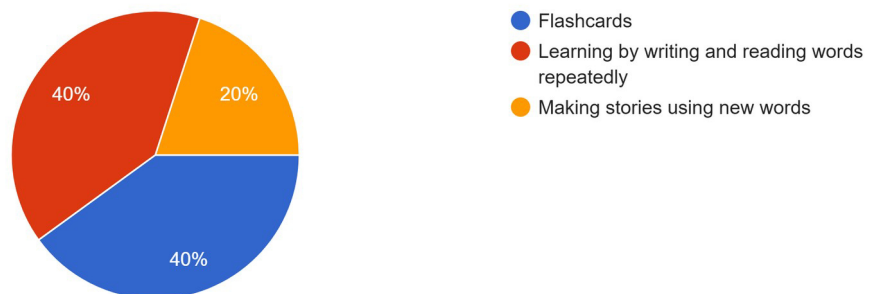
24 responses



**Figure 4. Teachers' evaluation of the effectiveness of flashcards.**

5. Which method do you usually use to help students learn new words? (Multiple choice)

25 responses



**Figure 5. Methods used by teachers to help students learn new words.**

6. How do you usually help students learn new words? (Multiple choice)

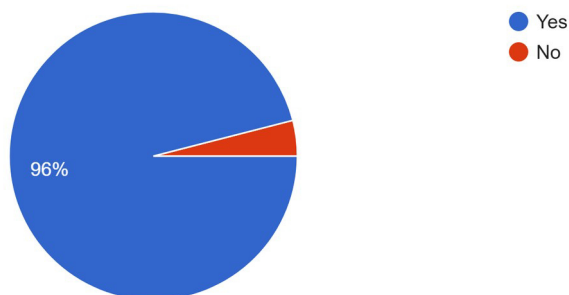
25 responses



**Figure 6. Teachers' use of vocabulary homework and peer work.**

7. Do games help students remember new words better? (Multiple choice)

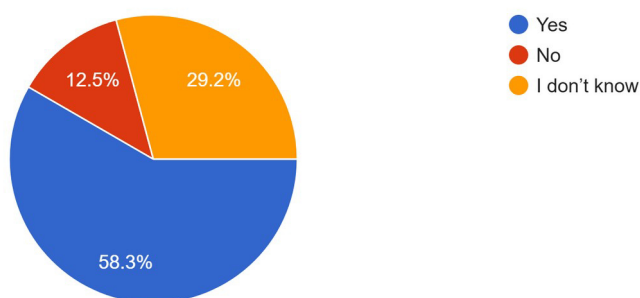
25 responses



**Figure 7. Teachers' views on the role of games in remembering new words.**

8. Do your students revise new words outside the classroom? (Multiple choice)

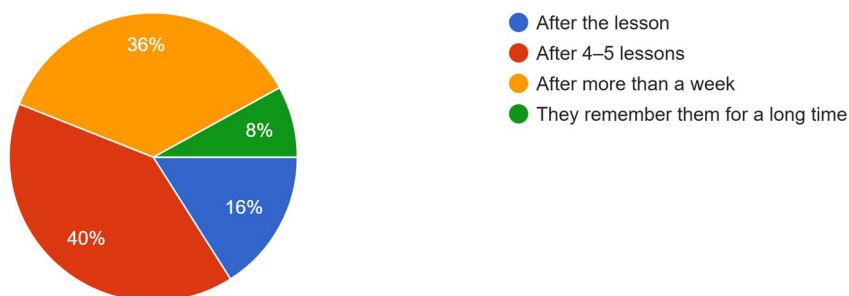
24 responses



**Figure 8. Students' revision of new words outside the classroom.**

9. How often do students forget newly learned words? (Multiple choice)

25 responses



**Figure 9. Frequency of students forgetting newly learned words.**

The survey results provide important insights into teachers' experience and challenges in teaching vocabulary. According to Figure 1, the majority of respondents (84%) have between 1 and 3 years of teaching experience, while only 16% have 3 to 6 years of experience. This indicates that most participants are relatively early-career teachers, which may influence their choice of teaching methods and their openness to innovative techniques.

Figure 2 shows that a significant proportion of teachers (83.3%) have faced difficulties when teaching new vocabulary, whereas only 16.7% reported no such problems. This finding highlights that vocabulary instruction remains a challenging aspect of language teaching, particularly for less experienced educators. It also suggests the need for more effective and practical teaching strategies to address these difficulties.

The survey results in Figure 3 show that the majority of respondents (73.9%) have used flashcards to teach vocabulary, while 26.1% have not. This indicates that flashcards are a widely

used method among teachers. The high percentage suggests that educators consider this tool practical and accessible for classroom use. However, the presence of respondents who do not use flashcards also implies that some teachers still rely on alternative teaching strategies.

The findings in Figure 4 reveal that most respondents (87%) believe that using flashcards is an effective method for teaching vocabulary, whereas only 13% think it is not effective. This demonstrates a strong positive perception of flashcards among teachers. Such a high level of agreement highlights the method's potential in improving students' vocabulary acquisition and supports its continued use in language teaching.

The data in Figure 5 indicate that teachers use a variety of methods to help students learn new words. The most common approach is learning through writing and repeated reading (41.7%), followed by flashcards (37.5%) and making stories using new words (20.8%). This suggests that traditional repetition-based methods remain dominant, while more creative approaches are less frequently applied. It can be inferred that incorporating a wider range of techniques may enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes.

The findings in Figure 6 indicate that 54.2% of respondents prefer organizing peer work during the lesson to help students learn new words, while 45.8% assign vocabulary learning as homework. This suggests that slightly more teachers favor interactive and collaborative in-class activities over independent learning. The use of peer work may enhance communication, increase student engagement, and provide immediate feedback, which are essential factors in effective vocabulary acquisition.

Figure 7 shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.8%) believe that games help students remember new words better, while only a small minority (4.2%) disagree. This strong consensus highlights the perceived importance of game-based learning as a powerful pedagogical tool. Games likely contribute to better retention by making learning more enjoyable, reducing anxiety, and encouraging active participation.

The survey results reveal important trends in students' vocabulary learning. According to Figure 8, most respondents (56.5%) stated that students revise new words outside the classroom, although some are unsure (30.4%) and a small percentage (13%) reported that students do not revise at all. This shows that independent practice exists but is not consistent among all learners.

Results from Figure 9 indicate that vocabulary retention remains a challenge. Only 8.3% believe students remember words for a long time, while the majority reported forgetting after 4–5 lessons (37.5%) or after more than a week (37.5%). Some students (16.7%) forget words immediately after the lesson.

The last closed survey results show that students mainly prefer simple and practical methods for learning new vocabulary. The most common answers were flashcards, spaced repetition, repetition by the teacher, and making stories with new words. Overall, learners believe that repetition helps them remember words better, while flashcards and spaced repetition support long-term memorization. Some also mentioned that using new words in stories makes learning more interesting and easier to understand in context. In general, the responses suggest that students learn vocabulary more effectively through a combination of repetition, visual tools, and contextual practice.

## DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of the implemented method may be explained by several key factors. First, this may be explained by the integration of pair work activities, in which active and passive learners were intentionally paired. This approach allowed less active students to receive peer

support, encouragement, and guidance, which contributed to their increased participation and engagement.

In addition, this result may be due to the structured use of flashcards during both the warm-up and wrap-up stages of the lesson. Regular exposure to and repetition of vocabulary items at different stages of the lesson helped reinforce students' memory and improved the retention of new words. This suggests that the systematic recycling of vocabulary plays a crucial role in effective language learning.

Furthermore, one possible reason is that students were actively involved in the creation of their own flashcards. This can be attributed to the fact that learner-generated materials increase personal involvement and make the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. As a result, students demonstrated higher motivation and interest during the activities.

Overall, these findings suggest that combining collaborative learning, especially pair work, with interactive tools such as flashcards creates a supportive and engaging learning environment. This, in turn, enhances vocabulary acquisition and ensures more effective learning outcomes.

These findings are in line with previous research showing that student-centered and interactive teaching methods significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and learner engagement. This result supports the idea that collaborative learning, particularly through pair work, facilitates deeper understanding and active participation among students.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that the use of visual and repetitive tools such as flashcards improves memory retention and long-term vocabulary recall. These results are also consistent with earlier research on active learning strategies, which emphasizes the importance of learner involvement in the learning process.

In comparison with previous studies, a noticeable improvement was observed not only in students' performance but also in the teacher's professional development. The study contributed to enhancing my teaching skills and helped identify specific areas that still require further improvement. This supports the view that reflective practice plays a crucial role in continuous teacher development.

These findings suggest that effective vocabulary teaching methods should be an essential component of language instruction. The results highlight the importance of integrating interactive techniques such as flashcards and collaborative activities into the classroom.

This has important implications for both teachers and learners. Vocabulary is considered the foundation of any language, and without sufficient lexical knowledge, it is difficult to develop other language skills. This means that implementing effective vocabulary learning strategies can significantly improve overall language proficiency.

The study also demonstrates the value of combining methodological innovation with reflective teaching practice, as it not only benefits students but also contributes to the teacher's professional growth.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implemented method was effective in improving students' vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and participation. In summary, the study confirms that the integration of collaborative learning and flashcard-based activities leads to more meaningful and successful learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The study showed that seventh-grade students experience several difficulties in vocabulary learning, especially in memorizing new words, using them in context, and maintaining motivation. Initial classroom observations revealed that traditional vocabulary teaching methods were not

sufficiently effective for all learners, particularly passive students. Therefore, interactive methods were introduced to make the learning process more engaging and inclusive.

The use of flashcards, pair work, repetition, and regular classroom revision helped improve students' vocabulary acquisition and classroom participation. Students became more motivated, more active, and more confident in using new words. The findings also showed that learner-generated flashcards and collaborative tasks supported long-term retention and encouraged equal participation among students.

In conclusion, the integration of visual, interactive, and student-centered methods is an effective way to overcome vocabulary learning difficulties among 7th-grade students. These strategies can be recommended for English language teachers who aim to improve vocabulary teaching and increase students' interest in learning new words.

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