



## Group Discussions Practices in Improving English Vocabulary Learning among ESL Learners



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**Abstract:** *Enhancing English language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary, is vital for students' academic success. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted to examine students' perspectives on the strategies employed by their teachers to improve English vocabulary learning through group discussions. The study included all enrolled high school students in two schools in Hyderabad, and 20 students were selected through convenient sampling for interview data collection. The findings highlight the importance of group discussions in expanding ESL learners' vocabulary knowledge through various means. These include the active engagement of learners, their exposure to different perspectives, opportunities to practice speaking, and constructive feedback they receive from teachers. Therefore, ESL instructors are encouraged to incorporate group discussion practices in their classrooms. Educators can include those activities that stimulate active involvement, allow for peer relationships, and provide constructive feedback.*

**Key Words:** Group Discussions, English Vocabulary, ESL Learners, Active Engagement, Constructive Feedback

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### Introduction

English is widely regarded as the most understood language globally, with an estimated 1.5 billion people speaking it, including both native and non-native speakers. This language has become a universal mode of communication for people from diverse cultures and regions, and its importance in various fields cannot be overstated (Coleman, 2010). Thereby,

learning English is essential for individuals who seek to succeed in today's globalized world.

One of the primary reasons why English is considered the most important language to learn is its dominance in international business, politics, and education. English is the official language of the United Nations, which is the primary forum for international diplomacy (Beshaj, 2015). It is also the

language of international trade, and most business communication is conducted in English. In addition, English is the primary language used in higher education, with many top universities across the world using it as the language of instruction (Zainuddin et al., [2019](#)). Thus, learning English provides individuals with access to global opportunities in these fields.

Furthermore, English is the language of the internet and technology (Akram & Abdelrady, [2023](#); Al-Adwan et al., [2022](#)). The majority of websites, software, and applications are developed and maintained in English, making it an essential tool for communication and accessing information online (Akram et al., [2021](#); [2022](#)). In addition, English is the language of science and research, with a vast majority of scientific papers published in English. Thus, proficiency in English is crucial for individuals who seek to pursue careers in these fields.

Moreover, English is the language of popular culture, including music, films, and literature. Learning English enables individuals to access a vast range of entertainment and media from different parts of the world, which would otherwise be inaccessible to them (Rao, [2019](#)). It also facilitates cross-cultural communication and understanding, as people from different cultures can share and appreciate their art and literature through a common language.

In addition, English is the primary language of academia and research, and proficiency in English is necessary for academic and professional success. Many universities and research institutions require academic writing in English, and international academic conferences are conducted in English (Zein et al., [2020](#)). Thus, being able to write and communicate effectively in English is essential for academic achievement and advancement. In addition

to the professional benefits, being able to write and communicate effectively in English has significant personal advantages. It allows individuals to engage with a broader range of literature, music, and film, as well as connect with people from different cultures and backgrounds. This can broaden one's horizons and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world (Em et al., [2022](#)).

In order to communicate and write in an efficient manner, vocabulary is an essential component. According to González-Fernández and Schmitt ([2017](#)), it is the collection of words and phrases that an individual use when communicating in a given language. A strong vocabulary enables individuals to articulate their ideas and thoughts in a way that is both clear and effective, as well as to comprehend the nuances that are present in both written and spoken language.

The ability to write well and communicate effectively is improved in a number of different ways by having a large vocabulary. In the first place, it enables people to use language in a manner that is suitable and accurate (Vu & Peters, [2021](#)). This guarantees that their writing or communication is easy to understand, accurate, and successful in conveying the message they aim to express. According to Arkamy et al. (2022), using suitable vocabulary is one of the best ways to display a high degree of language ability and acquire the respect of the reader or listener.

Secondly, an individual's capacity to grasp both written and spoken language is enhanced when that individual has a vocabulary that covers a wide range of topics. It gives individuals the ability to comprehend the meaning of words with which they are not familiar, which is especially helpful when reading or listening to material that is

academic, technical, or legal in nature (Khan, [2022](#)).

Thirdly, an individual's capacity to express themselves in a manner that is both vivid and creative can be improved by expanding their vocabulary. According to Bahri et al. ([2022](#)), this enables people to effectively communicate their thoughts by making use of a greater variety of evocative words and phrases. Writers, poets, and other creative workers who rely on their linguistic abilities to captivate their audience may benefit from this in a particularly significant way.

Moreover, having a sound vocabulary is an essential component of success in academic and professional fields. In academia, it is important to use technical vocabulary to express ideas and to understand the vocabulary used in academic research (Schmitt, [2019](#)). In the professional world, using the correct vocabulary is crucial in various fields, such as law, medicine, and engineering, where precise and accurate language is necessary for success (Schmitt, [2019](#)).

Many students in Pakistan have difficulty with vocabulary, despite the fact that it is considered to be an essential component of English language instruction in the classroom. This is due to a number of different factors. To begin, the instruction of the English language in many Pakistani schools is not of a high enough standard. According to Akram and Yang ([2021](#)), it's possible that educators lack the skills or resources necessary to properly instruct students in English vocabulary. Additionally, class sizes can be large, making it challenging for teachers to give individualized attention to each student (Fareed et al., [2016](#)). Secondly, students in Pakistan may not have adequate exposure to English outside of the classroom. In many cases, English is not spoken at home or in the local community (Jadoon et al., [2020](#)). This limits

opportunities for students to practice and improve their vocabulary in natural settings. Moreover, many students in Pakistan may lack the motivation to learn English vocabulary (Hambali, [2018](#)). They may not see the practical value of English in their daily lives, or they may find the learning process boring or difficult.

Addressing the challenge of English vocabulary learning in classrooms is crucial to improving the language proficiency of students. One potential solution to this problem is to incorporate interactive group discussion activities into English language classrooms. Interactive group discussion activities involve students working in pairs or small groups to review and provide feedback on each other's writing or speaking English (Lim & Griffith, [2003](#)). This approach has several potential benefits for vocabulary learning. Firstly, interactive group discussions can increase student engagement and motivation (Zhang et al., [2016](#)). By providing students with an opportunity to collaborate with their peers, they can become more invested in the learning process. Secondly, by reviewing and providing feedback on their peers' work, students' critical thinking and analytical skills may be developed, which can help to enhance their own vocabulary knowledge and understanding (Liang & Fung, [2021](#)). Thirdly, by receiving feedback on their own writing or speaking, students can identify areas for improvement and work on refining their language usage (Liaw, [2009](#)) as Muhammad, R. et al. (2020) have elucidated that different intended meanings are sometimes loaded in the statements of language. Nawaz, S. et al. ([2020](#)) have also suggested adopting the tone of native speakers in the use of correct stress patterns in the group discussion session. Dr Jabeen Bhutto and Muhammad Ramzan ([2021](#)), have also expressed that powerful people use language for collusive and pacifier stances in the exploitation of ideology which is helpful to enhance English vocabulary.

Research on the effectiveness of group discussions in language learning has primarily been conducted in Western countries, and there is limited research on its use in ESL contexts in Pakistan. This lack of research highlights the need for further investigation into the benefits of group discussions as a tool for improving vocabulary learning outcomes for ESL learners in Pakistan. To address this gap in research, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of group discussion practices in improving vocabulary learning outcomes for ESL learners in Pakistan. The study aims to accomplish the following questions: statements are loaded with different intended meanings.

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How do students perceive the effectiveness of group discussion strategies used by teachers to improve their English vocabulary learning?

1. What are the best practices for teachers to design and facilitate group discussions that promote ESL learners' vocabulary development?

## **Research Method**

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The researcher used a qualitative technique and conducted student interviews to investigate students' impressions of what and how their teachers employ peer feedback strategies to improve their English vocabulary. The interviews were semi-structured (i.e., a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions) and directed by probing questions, allowing the researcher to collect in-depth information (Kallio et al., 2016). As a result, it is regarded as the most appropriate approach to investigating in depth the peer feedback procedures used by teachers to cultivate English vocabulary among pupils.

## **Sample Size and Population**

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The population of this study included all of the students enrolled in two schools of high schools in Hyderabad. The researcher employed a procedure known as convenient sampling to collect the data, and 20 students were chosen at random to do so. Following that, the researcher personally performed all of the interviews after gaining permission from the different school principals. Furthermore, in order to safeguard the anonymity of those who participated in the study, their genuine names were replaced with fictitious ones.

## **Data Analysis**

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A semi-structured approach was taken to recording and transcribing each individual interview. The researcher went through the process of listening to and analyzing each recorded interview with a student to determine how well it matched the various categories of student interviews. Follow-up interviews were carried out by the researcher in order to gain a detailed and all-encompassing picture of the ways in which students see the challenging components of academic writing. The creation, processing, and categorization of transcriptions were all aspects of the qualitative analysis technique that were required as part of the process. It was essential to track down the data, give it a more precise definition, place it in the appropriate categories, and add to it (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). We looked at motifs from interviews as well as motifs from other pieces of literature. When the coding was finally done, detailed descriptions were provided for each of the themes. Following the clarification, organization, and integration of the primary themes, the primary issues, as well as maybe a variety of findings, were brought to light (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A narrative provided an account of the evolution of ideas when they finally came around.

## Results and Discussion

The comments made by the participants, which were directed by the research objectives of the study, pointed out a number of benefits with regards to the English vocabulary learning they gain while engaging their selves in group discussions. These benefits are listed below:

### Active Engagement

Group discussions are an effective way of promoting active engagement among ESL learners, as they encourage learners to actively participate and engage with the learning process. This benefit was also highly highlighted by the participants of the study, According to a student:

"Group discussions help me to be more engaged in the learning process. It is a great way to learn new vocabulary and to reinforce what we have already learned."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to encourage group discussions in the classroom as a regular part of the learning process and assign topics that are relevant and interesting to the learners to promote active engagement. In addition, the instructor should also provide clear guidelines and expectations for group discussions to ensure that all learners are actively participating.

Some students linked active engagement with their level of motivation to learn new vocabulary. Sari (2020) also acknowledges that one of the benefits of group discussions in improving English vocabulary learning among ESL learners is that it can increase their level of motivation. As students actively engage in group discussions, they become more interested and invested in the topic being discussed. This, in turn, can increase

their motivation to learn new vocabulary words and apply them in their communication. According to a student:

"When I am actively participating in a group discussion, I am more focused and motivated to learn. I am also able to learn from my peers, as we share our knowledge and ideas."

Another student noted:

"When we discuss a topic in a group, I feel more motivated to learn new words and phrases because I want to be able to participate in the discussion and express my opinions effectively. This makes learning new vocabulary more enjoyable and less intimidating."

In addition, when learners are actively engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to remember and retain the new vocabulary they learn. This benefit of group discussions in vocabulary learning has been supported by research studies as well. For instance, Lin (2018) specified that when learners are actively engaged in the learning process, they are able to make deeper connections between new vocabulary words and their existing knowledge, which enhances their overall understanding and retention of these words. In the same manner, a student stated:

"During the group discussions, I am able to learn and remember new vocabulary words more easily. When we discuss the meaning and usage of these words in a group, it helps me to reinforce my understanding and retain them for longer periods of time. It also helps me to use these words more confidently in my speaking and writing tasks."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to incorporate technology tools, such as online discussion forums or video conferencing, to promote group discussions inside and outside of the classroom.

### Exposure to different Perspectives

Group discussions provide learners with exposure to different perspectives and ideas,



which can be a valuable way to broaden their understanding of the English language. This benefit was also highlighted by the participants of the study, According to a student:

"Group discussions helped me learn new words and phrases that I had never heard before. It was interesting to hear different perspectives from my classmates and it gave me a better understanding of the English language."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to set clear learning objectives for each group discussion session to ensure that learners understand what they are expected to achieve. This can help learners to focus on the topics discussed and make the most of the learning opportunity. In addition, teachers can provide learners with diverse topics for group discussions. This will help learners to broaden their understanding of the English language and develop a more diverse vocabulary.

As learners interact with their peers, they get the chance to hear different opinions, beliefs, and experiences, which can help them to view the world in new ways. Through this exchange of ideas, learners can also develop a more diverse vocabulary as they are exposed to new words and phrases that they may not have encountered before. Komaruddin et al. (2021) also identify that when learners are exposed to different perspectives, they are also encouraged to think critically and reflect on their own understanding of the language. This can help them to become more confident in their abilities to express themselves in English and to communicate effectively with others. A student expressed this sentiment, stating:

"group discussions help me to learn different ways of expressing the same thing, which makes me more confident in using English."

Another student stated:

"I never knew the word 'emergence' before my group discussion. My peers used it in their conversations, and I asked them about the meaning. They explained it to me, and now I have learned a new word that I can use in my writing."

Furthermore, exposure to different perspectives can help learners to become more culturally aware and sensitive. As they learn about different cultures and perspectives, they can become more empathetic and understanding towards others. This can be particularly important for ESL learners, who may be from different cultural backgrounds and maybe learning English to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, facilitators should try to ensure that there is a mix of learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in each group. A student stated:

"I feel like group discussions have helped me to learn more about different cultures and perspectives. Through these discussions, I have been exposed to new ideas and beliefs that I may not have otherwise encountered."

Another student mentioned:

"This has helped me to become more culturally aware and sensitive, which I think is an important aspect of language learning."

### Opportunity to Practice Speaking

Group discussions offer a comfortable and supportive environment where ESL learners can practice speaking English, which can be highly beneficial in improving their speaking skills. This benefit was also mentioned by the participants of the study, as one student noted:

"Group discussions allowed me to practice speaking in English without fear of being judged or making mistakes."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to promote active engagement among learners, it is essential to encourage learners to actively participate and engage with the

learning process. Teachers can provide opportunities for learners to share their perspectives, ideas, and experiences on the topic of discussion. In addition, teachers should also encourage learners to practice speaking English and to gain confidence in their ability, teachers should create a safe and supportive environment for group discussions. Learners should feel comfortable making mistakes and receive constructive feedback from their peers and the facilitator.

Susanti et al. (2021) also specified that group discussions, provide opportunities for learners to speak in a non-threatening environment where they can express their thoughts and ideas without fear of judgment. This can help them to overcome their anxiety and gain confidence in their ability to speak English.

Moreover, group discussions can also help learners to improve their pronunciation, intonation, and overall speaking fluency, as they receive feedback from their peers and the facilitator, as one student stated:

"Participating in group discussions has helped me to improve my pronunciation and intonation in English. When I speak, my peers and the facilitator give me feedback on my pronunciation and help me to identify areas for improvement. This has made me more aware of my own pronunciation and has helped me to speak more fluently and confidently in English."

Yasmin (2022) also specified that through the active participation and feedback of their peers in the group discussions, learners can identify areas of improvement in their speaking skills and work on them accordingly. This can lead to improved speaking proficiency and increased self-confidence. It is therefore important for teachers to provide learners with opportunities to practice their speaking skills through various activities, such as debates, role-plays, and group presentations. In addition, teachers should also offer feedback

and guidance on pronunciation, intonation, and overall speaking fluency, to help learners identify areas for improvement and develop their language skills.

## Constructive Feedback

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In group discussions, learners have the opportunity to give and receive feedback on their language use, pronunciation, and grammar. Through this process, learners can identify areas where they need improvement and work on developing their language skills, as one student stated:

"When I participate in group discussions, I feel comfortable making mistakes because I know my peers will give me constructive feedback. This helps me to identify my weaknesses and work on improving my language skills. I also enjoy giving feedback to my peers, as it allows me to help them improve their language use."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to use group discussions as a way to identify areas where learners need improvement and to tailor future lessons and activities to address these areas. In addition, teachers should also provide specific feedback on language use, pronunciation, and grammar, and offer suggestions for improvement. Yu and Lee (2016) also mentioned that Constructive feedback, ESL learners receive during group discussions can be particularly helpful for them, as it can help them to recognize their errors and weaknesses and take steps to address them.

In addition, during group discussions, learners can also receive feedback from their facilitator. The guidance and feedback received from the facilitator can be extremely valuable in promoting the English vocabulary learning of the learners. The facilitator can correct errors in language use, pronunciation, and grammar, and offer suggestions on how learners can improve their language skills, as one student stated:

"During group discussions, our facilitator always corrects our errors and suggests better ways of expressing ourselves. This has helped me to become more confident in my ability to speak English and to use new vocabulary correctly."

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to provide learners with opportunities to receive feedback from the facilitator and to ask questions about areas where they may need improvement. This can help learners to identify areas for growth and to work on developing their language skills more effectively. Kuyyogsuy, S. (2019) also specified that the facilitator can also help to create a supportive learning environment, where learners feel comfortable practising their English-speaking skills and taking risks with new vocabulary.

## **Conclusion**

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The study emphasizes the significance of group discussions in increasing ESL learners' vocabulary knowledge. According to the findings, group conversations motivate learners to actively interact and engage in the learning process, resulting in improved retention and recall of new terminology.

Learners who actively participate in group conversations are more motivated to learn and retain new terms, which can aid in the development of a larger vocabulary over time. Group conversations expose students to a variety of opinions and ideas. Learners can improve their comprehension of the English language, learn new terms and phrases, and become more culturally aware and sensitive through interactions with their peers. Another advantage of group discussions is that they create a safe and supportive atmosphere for ESL students to practice speaking English. Finally, group discussions provide an opportunity for ESL students to provide and receive constructive comments on their language use, pronunciation, and grammar. Based on these findings, instructors can increase ESL learners' vocabulary understanding by encouraging group discussions in their English language lessons. Educators might include activities that stimulate active involvement, allow for peer relationships, and provide constructive feedback. This can assist ESL students in expanding their vocabulary, being more culturally aware and sensitive, and improving their speaking skills.



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