


# The Use of Guessing Meaning from Context in Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery

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## A B S T R A C T

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental aspect of language learning as it supports students' ability to understand and use language effectively. However, many students still experience difficulties due to limited vocabulary knowledge and the use of less effective teaching strategies in the classroom. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of guessing meaning from context in improving students' vocabulary mastery. This research employed a quasi-experimental design involving an experimental group and a control group consisting of 49 eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Mepanga. The data were collected through test (pre-test and post-test) used to measure students' vocabulary achievement. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The t-test result revealed that t-count (4.54) was higher than t-table (2.01) at the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, guessing meaning from context is an effective strategy for improving students' vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary Mastery, Guessing Meaning From Context, Contextual Learning, EFL, Junior High School*

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## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in language learning as it supports students in developing effective communication skills. Students with limited vocabulary knowledge often experience difficulties in understanding texts and expressing their ideas in both spoken and written forms. This condition is commonly found in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, where vocabulary becomes one of the main obstacles in language acquisition. According to Asyiah (2017), vocabulary learning is closely related to students' perceptions and strategies, which significantly influence their learning outcomes.

In relation to this issue, vocabulary teaching practice in many classrooms still rely on conventional methods such as memorization without meaningful context. This approach tends to be monotonous and does not actively engage students in the learning process, resulting in low retention and poor understanding. Al Talib (2022) states that effective vocabulary teaching should involve meaningful interaction and appropriate learning strategies to enhance students' comprehension. Similarly, Santosa et al. (2022) emphasize that innovative teaching approaches are needed to improve vocabulary learning, especially in modern educational contexts.

One of the strategies proposed to address this problem is guessing meaning from context. This study enables students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms, examples, and explanations within the text. Kurniawan (2019) found that the use of guessing meaning from context significantly improves students' vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Mart (2012) explains that this strategy helps students become more independent learners and enhances their reading comprehension skills.

Despite its potential benefits, several studies indicate that guessing meaning from context also has limitations. Mokhtar & Rawian (2012) argue that this strategiesy may not always be effective without sufficient background knowledge and proper guidance. Furthermore, Butowska et al. (2021) found that guessing alone does not always lead to strong vocabulary retention, especially for beginners. This findings suggest that the effectiveness of this strategy depends on how it is implemented in classroom intruction.

In addition to these consideration, recent studies hughliht the importance of cognitive processes in vocabulary inference. Izmalkova & Blinnikova (2024) found that students employ various cognitive strategies when guessing word meanings, which can be observed through eye-tracking analysis. Uchihara et al. (2022) reported that combineng contextual guessing with dictionary use contributes significantly to vocabulary development. However, studies focusing on this strategy at the junior high school level in EFL context remain limited.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of guessing meaning from context in improving students' vocabulary mastery at SMPN 1 Mepanga. This research is expected to provide empirecal evidance regrading the use of contextual guessing strategies in EFL classrooms.

## METHOD

This research employed a quasi-experimental design involving an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were given a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. The experimental group received instruction using the guessing meaning from context strategy, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods. This design was chosen to determine whether there was a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the two groups after the treatment.

The population of this study consisted of eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Mepanga, totaling 128 students. The sample consisted of 49 students, selected using simple random sampling. Class VIII A, consisting of 24 students, served as the control group. This sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness and minimized bias.

The instrument used in this study was a vocabulary test designed to measure students' understanding of word meanings in context. The test consisted of multiple-choice and matching items. It was administered twice, as pre-test and a post-test. The validity and realiability of the test were established prior to it use.

The treatment was conducted over six meetings. During the treatment, the experimental group was taught using the guessing meaning from context strategy, where students were trained to identify contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms, examples and explanations. In contrast the control group recieved conventional instruction without applying the strategy.

The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as mean scores, were used to determine student's improvement. Inferential statistics, specifically the t-test, were used to examine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significant. This analysis aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the guessing meaning from context strategy

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that there was a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the guessing meaning from context strategy. The improvement can be seen from the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. Students in the experimental group showed a higher increase compared to those in the control group. This suggests that the treatment had a positive impact on students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

This section presents the results of the data analysis from the pre-test and post-test administered to the experimental and control groups. The data are presented in tables and

explained to show the effectiveness of the guessing meaning from context strategy in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The pre-test was conducted to determine the students' initial level before the treatment was implemented. The results of the pre-test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes

Class	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental	25	48.20	16.78
Control	24	46.67	16.79

The pre-test results showed that the experimental group a mean score of 48.20, while the control group scored 46.67. This indicates that both of group has relatively similiar initial abilities before the treatment. The results of the post-test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes

Class	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental	25	79.40	11.55
Control	24	65.42	9.92

After the treatment, the post-test results showed that the experimental group achived a mean score of 79.40, whereas the control group reached 65.42. This indicates that the experimental group performed better than the control group. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean Improvement of Both Classes

Class	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
Experimental	48.20	79.40	31.20
Control	65.42	65.42	18.75

Futhermore, the mean improvement in the experimental group (31.20) was higher than that of the control grou (18.75). To determine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The result of the statistical analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Samples T-Test of Post-Test Scores

Variable	t-Value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-test	4.54	47.	0.000

To examine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significance , an independent samples t-test was conducted. The result showed that the t-value (4.54) was higher than the t-table (2.01) at the 0.05 significance level in addition the significance value (0.000) was lower than 0.05 this indicates that there was a statistically significance between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, the alternative hyphothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted.

## Discussion

The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group, with the mean score increasing from 48.20 to 79.40, while the control class improved from 46.67 to 65.42. The t-test result ( $4.54 > 2.01$ ) confirmed that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant. This indicates that guessing meaning from context was more effective than the conventional teaching method in improving students' vocabulary mastery

The improvement in the experimental group can be attributed to the active learning process during the treatment. The students were trained to infer word meanings using contextual clues such as surrounding words and sentence structure. This process encouraged

critical thinking and required students to connect prior knowledge with new information, leading to deeper understanding and better retention of vocabulary (Butowska et al., 2021).

In addition, students in the experimental group demonstrated higher engagement and participation compared to those in the control group. They actively analyzed sentences, discussed meanings, and confirmed their answers during the learning process. This interaction fostered a more students-centered learning environment and reduced dependence on the teacher. Such cognitive engagement plays an important role in vocabulary acquisition (Izmalkova & Blinnikova, 2024).

Furthermore, contextual learning helped students understand vocabulary in a more meaningful way rather than through memorization. This approach increased students' confidence in dealing with unfamiliar words and improved their ability to interpret meaning independently. The finding is consistent with previous studies showing that guessing from context supports vocabulary development (Yildiz, 2023). In contrast, the control group showed lower improvement due to passive learning, which limits cognitive engagement (Uchihara et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that guessing meaning from context significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery. The experimental group achieved a higher mean score (79.40) than the control group (65.42), while the *t*-test result ( $4.54 > 2.01$ ) confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. These findings indicate that guessing meaning from context is more effective than conventional vocabulary teaching methods. From a pedagogical perspective, the strategy promotes active learning by encouraging students to infer word meanings through contextual clues rather than relying solely on memorization. It also fosters critical thinking, learner autonomy, deeper vocabulary understanding, and better long-term retention, all of which support language acquisition. The findings suggest that English teachers should integrate guessing meaning from context into vocabulary instruction to create more engaging, meaningful, and student-centered learning experiences. This strategy can serve as an effective alternative to traditional vocabulary teaching approaches. Future research should examine its effectiveness across different educational levels, larger samples, and diverse learning contexts or combine it with other instructional strategies to maximize vocabulary learning outcomes.

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