

**USING NUMBERED HEADS TOGETHER TO IMPROVE STUDENTS'  
VOCABULARY LEARNING OUTCOMES : A Classroom Action Research with  
The Students of SMP Islam Al - Hadi Sukoharjo**

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**Abstract**

This research is conducted to fulfill the following aims: 1) to describe a cooperative learning method namely Numbered Heads Together, 2) the effectiveness of Numbered Heads Together to improve student learning outcomes in the seventh grade students of SMP Islam Al - Hadi Sukoharjo in 2020/2021 Academic Year. This research was conducted by applying Collaborative Action Research. The procedure of this research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of two sessions. The procedure of action research is conducted in 4 steps namely planning, action, observation and reflection. There are two kinds of data namely non test, which consists of observation, interview, documentation and photograph; and test which conducted by giving a pre-test before the research begins and post-test at the conclusion of the research. The quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS 23 Statistic Software to calculate the non-independent t-test. The qualitative data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The research shows the improvement of mean score from pre-test which is 57.41, to 67.05 on post-test 1 and finally 76.82 on post-test 2. Therefore, it can be concluded that: 1) Numbered Heads Together as a cooperative learning model is a learning strategy which emphasized student's individual accountability, 2) Numbered Heads Together is effective in improving student learning outcomes in vocabulary.

Key words: Numbered Heads Together, Vocabulary Mastery, Classroom Action Research.

**INTRODUCTION**

The main goal of English teaching in Junior High School is to foster students' ability to develop "language accompanying action"; with this model, English is expected to be

used in interactions in the "here and now". In order to achieve this ability, students should be accustomed to associate language with actions and situations as a base to develop a higher interactional ability in English.

There are multiple factors causing the low level of word acquisition at the Junior School. The main factor is that students have low motivation in studying English, especially in memorizing what seem like strange and difficult vocabulary. Another factor is differing abilities among the students when it comes to language mastery; some students learn faster than the other students, and may become bored. Also, students often get easily tired when they have had several “hard” lessons in a row.

Another identified factor is that teachers are still using conventional methods which are not innovative or interesting to students. For example, some teachers do not use or are unable to operate multimedia technology as their teaching aid. Instead, they only use common text books or *Lembar Kerja Siswa* (Students’ Worksheet) as their source of teaching material. Also, many

teachers are not well-prepared with the lesson plans, so that the teaching and learning process is not well-organized. Some teachers are still using the teacher-centered method in which students never get the opportunity to be involved in the teaching and learning process; they never get asked whether they have opinions or questions on the material given.

Vocabulary is “the language component that contains all information about meaning and use of words in a language”. It is possibly the most important aspect of second-language learning. Indeed, developing a broad lexical knowledge is essential, for the more words a person knows, the better chance for them to understand, to make themselves understood and the more complex their level of understanding. However, low vocabulary mastery is a common problem in many Junior High Schools.

This issue occurs in SMP Islam Al-Hadi Sukoharjo where the research was conducted. The main issue is that students often have difficulty in applying new and unfamiliar words, understanding the meaning of words and arranging words into sentences. The teacher must give the meaning of words and translate sentences at all time, making for an inefficient use of study time. Students are also unable to form English sentences, especially because they do not know how to select the correct words to use.

Teachers play a central role in the classroom and should pay special attention to the techniques they employ and also how they implement their techniques with the students' characteristics as young learners in mind. The purpose is to create an appropriate and interesting teaching learning method in order to reach the learning goal; which is to increase

students' motivation in mastering vocabulary.

Numbered Heads Together (NHT) is a learning strategy developed by Kagan in 1992 which makes the students the center of the teaching and learning process, rather than a teacher-centered method (Arends, 1998: 322). NHT is understood as "a cooperative learning strategy that holds each student accountable in learning the material." "It allows students to be actively involved in discussion, fostering positive interdependence among groups and developing communicative skills".

NHT is "a technique where students are placed in groups and each person is given a number (from one to the maximum number in each group)". The numbering system in NHT can motivate students to take responsibility for their own vocabulary mastery. They have an equal chance of being called by the teacher to participate in solving the

vocabulary problems. The numbering system has the potential to make the students energetic and always ready.

NHT is effective to teach vocabulary because all students in the group hold equal responsibility and can motivate one another to learn better. Therefore, “it is possible to create high learning motivation and good social interaction”. This strategy emphasizes co-operation, teamwork and socialization which will construct knowledge and conceptualization in vocabulary learning.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The subject of the research was the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Islam Al-Hadi Sukoharjo in 2020/2021 Academic Year. The class consisted of 17 students with 9 boys and 8 girls. This research was conducted by applying Collaborative Action Research. The procedure of this research was

conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of two sessions. The procedure of action research is conducted in 4 steps namely planning, action, observation and reflection. There are two kinds of data namely non test, which consists of observation, interview, documentation and photograph; and test which conducted by giving a pre-test before the research begins and post-test at the conclusion of the research. The quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS 23 Statistic Software to calculate the non-independent t-test. The qualitative data analysis consists of “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification”.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Low vocabulary mastery is a common problem in many Junior High

Schools. This issue occurs in SMP Islam Al-Hadi Sukoharjo where the research was conducted. The main issue was that students often have difficulty in applying new and unfamiliar words, understanding the meaning of new words and arranging these words into sentences. Teacher must give the meaning of words and translate sentences at all times which led to an ineffective use of classroom time. The students are also unable to form English sentences, especially because they do not know how to select the correct words to use.

The research shows that Numbered Heads Together has been proven to be effective at teaching vocabulary. It can be seen by the improvement of mean score from pre-test which is 57.41, to 67.05 on post-test 1 and finally 76.82 on post-test 2. The wilcoxon signed ranks test for pre-test, post-test 1 dan post-test 2 has given

significant results of  $0.00 \leq 0.05$  which means that there was a significant improvement in using Numbered Heads Together to improve students' vocabulary learning outcomes. Therefore, the action hypothesis of "Numbered Heads Together can improve vocabulary mastery of the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Islam Al-Hadi Sukoharjo" is well-proven with significant level of 5%.

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Based on the observation on Class VII E students, the researcher has found three outcomes of teaching vocabulary using Numbered Heads Together. First, NHT is effective to promote individual and group accountability. “The group supports each member and provides equal opportunities for practice, rehearsal and discussion of the learning materials”. The numbering system in NHT motivates students to take responsibility for their own vocabulary mastery.

Secondly, NHT can be an appropriate and interesting teaching learning method which increases students’ motivation in mastering vocabulary. NHT has made students feel involved and valued, and they have the opportunity to experience and experiment for themselves. They also learn easier through acquiring information and observing familiar topics about the everyday context.

Third, NHT is effective to teach vocabulary. It is beneficial in checking students’ understanding of word content because it emphasizes observing, experimenting, and practice in using words. Therefore, it will help students’ problem in applying new and unfamiliar words.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher has drawn two conclusions. The first conclusion is using the Numbered Heads Together strategy improved students’ vocabulary mastery in Class VII E SMP Islam Al – Hadi Sukoharjo in the 2020/2021 Academic Year. This improvement could be seen with the significant increase of the mean score from 57.41 on pre-test, to 67.05 on post-test 1, and finally 76.82 on post-test 2 which was above the school's minimum score target.

Secondly, the implementation of Numbered Heads Together in Class VII E increased students' motivation in learning English. The opportunity to work in a heterogenous group can help the students learn English words in a fun and easy way. Information acquisition is transferred not only by through a perhaps monotonous explanation from the teacher but also by peer mentoring and discussion, The group also provides the opportunity to develop social skills such as communication, cooperation, understanding, compassion and tolerance.

NHT is effective to create high learning motivation and good social interaction. The heterogenous groups provide more opportunities to ask questions, receive information, and gain confidence in sharing ideas. It can make the process of learning English words fun and easy for the students.

In conclusion, this research shows that: 1) Numbered Heads Together as a cooperative learning model is a learning strategy which emphasized student's individual accountability, 2) Numbered Heads Together is effective in improving student learning outcomes in vocabulary.

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