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THE EFFECT OF 3N (*NITENI, NIROKKE, NAMBAHI*) ON ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Penguasaan kosakata yang kuat merupakan dasar penting dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh metode 3N (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi), yang berakar pada filosofi pendidikan Ki Hadjar Dewantara, terhadap penguasaan kosakata Bahasa Inggris siswa sekolah dasar. Dengan menggunakan desain satu kelompok pre-test dan post-test, sebanyak dua belas siswa kelas lima yang mengikuti program les privat Bahasa Inggris di Yogyakarta berpartisipasi dalam sesi pembelajaran terstruktur. Penguasaan kosakata diukur melalui empat indikator: pelafalan, ejaan, tata bahasa, dan makna, berdasarkan kerangka Cameron. Metode 3N diterapkan melalui tiga tahap: mengamati (Niteni), meniru (Nirokke), dan mencipta (Nambahi), dengan dukungan input yang dapat dipahami (*comprehensible input*). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan pada semua indikator, dengan skor tertinggi pada makna (gain 0,75) dan ejaan (gain 0,60). Perubahan perilaku juga diamati, termasuk meningkatnya kepercayaan diri dan penggunaan kosakata dalam konteks. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa metode 3N efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan kosakata baik secara kognitif maupun perilaku. Penelitian ini memberikan bukti empiris baru mengenai integrasi model pembelajaran berbasis budaya lokal dengan kerangka pengukuran linguistik, sehingga menawarkan alternatif valid untuk pembelajaran kosakata pada pendidikan Bahasa Inggris anak usia dini.
Kata Kunci: *Kosakata, Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Dasar, 3N (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi)*

ABSTRACT

A solid vocabulary foundation is essential in learning English as a foreign language. This study examines the impact of the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi), rooted in Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy, on English vocabulary mastery among elementary students. Using a one-group pre-test and post-test design, twelve fifth-grade students in a private English tutoring program in Yogyakarta participated in structured sessions. Vocabulary mastery was measured through four indicators: pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning, based on Cameron's framework. The 3N method was delivered in three stages: observing (Niteni), imitating (Nirokke), and creating (Nambahi), supported by comprehensible input. Results showed gains across all indicators, with the highest in meaning (gain 0.75) and spelling (gain 0.60). Behavioral improvements were also observed, including increased confidence and contextual vocabulary use. The findings indicate that the 3N method effectively enhances vocabulary skills both cognitively and behaviorally. This study provides novel empirical evidence on the integration of a culturally grounded instructional model with a linguistic measurement framework, offering a validated alternative for vocabulary instruction in early English education.
Keywords: *Vocabulary, English, Elementary School, 3N (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi)*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental aspect of language skills, particularly in learning English as a foreign language. It includes knowledge of word meanings, usage, and associations that are crucial for comprehension and communication (Webb & Nation, 2017).

Vocabulary supports the four main language domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. When vocabulary is limited, students often struggle to understand content and express their thoughts clearly (Schmitt, 2014). In the context of globalization, English proficiency especially vocabulary knowledge plays a strategic role in education, technology, and intercultural communication. English continues to serve as a global lingua franca and remains one of the most widely studied second languages worldwide. However, in Indonesia, English is used only in educational settings and not in daily life. This limited exposure leads to low retention and limited application of vocabulary in real-world contexts.

Young learners often find it difficult to develop contextual vocabulary knowledge due to rigid and mechanistic teaching methods. These methods are commonly disconnected from students' real-life experiences and cultural background. Khasanah et al. (2024) reported that students struggle to recall and apply vocabulary learned through memorization-based instruction. Furthermore, monotonous strategies such as rote learning or reading aloud reduce student motivation. To address these challenges, a meaningful and culturally relevant learning method is required. This study applies the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi), which is rooted in Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy. *Niteni* means to observe attentively, *Nirokke* means to imitate or model, and *Nambahi* refers to adding or modifying based on students' creativity (Dewantara, 1967). This method promotes an active and participatory learning process that suits elementary learners and has proven adaptable in fostering children's literacy and communication skills within both local and digital learning contexts (Alodia et al. 2025; Muslem et al. 2024; Santosa & Fitriana, 2023).

The 3N approach aligns with Krashen's Second Language Acquisition theory, especially in terms of comprehensible input and meaningful output. Krashen (1982) emphasized that second language learners benefit most from input slightly beyond their current level (*i+1*). Input must be understandable, relevant, and emotionally engaging. This reinforces the role of observation, imitation, and creation as essential components of language learning and is further supported by recent findings highlighting the effectiveness of culturally contextualized and multimodal input for young learners (Shin & Crandall, 2014; Palupi et al. 2025; Hidayat & Nuraini, 2023). Shin & Crandall (2014)emphasized that effective vocabulary instruction for children should include visualization, repetition, and contextual expansion of word usage. Research by Palupi et al. (2025) found that visual media helps improve vocabulary comprehension, memory retention, and learning motivation among elementary school students. These findings support the *Niteni* and *Nirokke* stages of the 3N method, which emphasize structured visual input and repetition. Meanwhile, the *Nambahi* stage encourages creative language production by using vocabulary in new and meaningful contexts.

Read (2000) states that vocabulary assessment aims to measure students' ability to identify, understand, and apply vocabulary to support oral and written fluency. Cameron (2001) identifies four key indicators of English vocabulary mastery: pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning. Previous research by (Muslem et al. 2024)examined the application of the 3N method in improving students' speaking skills. Their findings showed significant improvements in speaking performance after the 3N-based intervention. The method enhanced not only vocabulary but also student confidence, speech imitation, and creative expression during English speaking activities. Unlike previous studies that focused on speaking (Muslem et al. 2024), this research investigates the 3N method in the context of vocabulary mastery using Cameron's four indicators within a structured experimental framework. This study offers new insights by integrating a culturally grounded instructional

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approach with a validated linguistic framework (Cameron, 2001), to support vocabulary learning among elementary students. To date, no prior research has quantitatively tested the 3N method using these indicators in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

This research addresses a critical gap, as vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of future reading comprehension and academic success (Ouellette & Beers, 2010; Nation, 2001). Moreover, studies affirm that culturally responsive and multimodal instruction improves learner engagement and outcomes in second language acquisition (Gay, 2018; Shin & Crandall, 2014). International research also supports the importance of meaningful, student-centered vocabulary instruction for long-term retention and communicative ability (Webb & Nation, 2017; Schmitt, 2008). Effective vocabulary instruction should balance incidental and intentional learning with rich contextual input (Webb, 2008; Hulstijn, 2001).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a quantitative descriptive approach, utilizing experimental research methods. According to (Sugiyono, 2015), experimental procedures can be interpreted as a research method used to identify specific effects or treatments. The use of this method aims to determine the effect of treatment on the independent variable, which in this study is implemented through the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi) to improve vocabulary. In the experimental research method, a treatment is given. The design used in this research is an experimental one, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test design. According to (Sugiyono, 2013), a one-group pre-test and post-test design is a research design that involves administering a pre-test before treatment is carried out, followed by a post-test after treatment is administered. This design aims to investigate how the application of the 3N method improves students' English vocabulary. In this design, only one group was given a pretest, then received treatment in the form of learning using the 3N method, and then underwent a posttest to measure the changes that occurred.

The research subjects consisted of 12 fifth-grade elementary school students enrolled in private English tutoring sessions directly supervised by the researcher. The sample was selected purposively to match the characteristics of targeted intervention research, focusing on students with limited vocabulary skills who consistently attended lessons. Inclusion criteria included: (1) age between 10–11 years, (2) minimum attendance of four sessions, and (3) limited English vocabulary mastery based on preliminary assessment. This design allowed for intensive observation and evaluation of individual progress. However, the study has significant methodological limitations. First, the absence of a control group restricts the internal validity of the findings, as there is no comparison to isolate the treatment effect. Second, the researcher’s dual role as both tutor and observer increases the risk of bias in delivering the intervention and interpreting the outcomes. These factors must be considered when evaluating the strength and generalizability of the results.

According to (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015), research instruments are valuable tools for collecting the necessary data. The research instruments used in this study are: (1) Vocabulary Test (Pre-test and Post-test), in the form of simple multiple-choice questions, which help evaluate vocabulary understanding, and essay questions to assess vocabulary usage; and (2) Student activity observation sheet, which is used to record activities, responses, and understanding when the 3N method is applied in learning. To ensure instrument validity, the test items and observation indicators were reviewed by two experts in English language teaching and educational assessment. These experts evaluated the content, clarity, and alignment of each item with the study objectives and Cameron's vocabulary mastery

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framework. Revisions were made based on their suggestions to improve content validity. Instrument reliability was tested through a pilot with students of similar age and background who were not part of the main study sample. The internal consistency of the vocabulary test was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating good reliability. The observation sheet demonstrated consistent inter-rater agreement during the pilot phase, ensuring dependable use in the main study. To enhance the statistical strength of the analysis, this study also recommends the use of a paired sample t-test to evaluate the significance of vocabulary score differences before and after treatment, even though the sample size is small. This test can support the interpretation of learning gains by confirming whether the observed changes are statistically significant.

The research procedure consisted of several stages. First, during the pre-test, the tutor explored students' existing knowledge by asking questions such as "what is the English word for cat?", followed by a vocabulary test where students identified matching images or objects. This step aimed to determine students' baseline knowledge and vocabulary use prior to treatment. Second, the treatment phase was conducted over four sessions. In each session, students went through the three stages of the 3N method: Niteni (observing visual media like pictures and videos while listening to vocabulary), Nirokke (imitating pronunciation and writing vocabulary through modeling, games, and exercises), and Nambahi (creatively using new words in games, drawings, and sentence constructions). These steps enabled gradual vocabulary development through meaningful and engaging activities. Finally, the post-test was administered to evaluate vocabulary gains after the intervention. Students repeated both oral and written tests, and their learning progress was compared to pre-test results.

Tabel 1. One-group pre-test and post-test research design

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
O1	X	O2

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following table presents the findings of this study regarding changes in student behavior following the application of the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi) to students' vocabulary mastery. Each indicator pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning was observed through structured activities designed to assess both performance and behavioral changes. The integration of comprehensible input throughout the intervention contributed to observable improvements in student engagement, confidence, and output quality.

Tabel 2. Results of student observation sheet

Cameron's Indicator	Application of 3N Method	Role of Comprehensible Input	Changes in Student Behavior	Quantitative Data
Pronunciation	Niteni: Hearing pronunciation from audio/video.Nirokke: Imitating pronunciation with teacher guidance.Nambahi: Saying the word in a new sentence.	Direct feedback from the teacher to correct intonation and word stress.	More confident when speaking, dare to try to say new words even though there are mistakes but the teacher will help	Score increased from 6-->8

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			provide corrections and encouragement.	
Spelling	Niteni: Observing the spelling of words in the video layer. Nirokke: Copying the word while pronouncing.Nambahi: Writing words in homemade sentences.	Collaboration in checking correct spelling and difficult letter patterns.	More careful when writing, often rechecking the writing before submitting it.	Score increased from 5-->8
Use of Language Structure (Grammar)	Niteni: Observe example sentences with the target word.Nirokke: Imitate the sentence structure.Nambahi: Creating new sentences according to grammar rules.	Discuss with friends or ask the teacher	More actively discussing and asking questions to improve sentences.	Score increased from 6-->8
Meaning	Niteni: Listening to the explanation of the meaning of the word through the picture.Nirokke: Using the word in the given context.Nambahi: Connecting the word with personal experience.	Clarification of meaning through question and answer and joint discussion.	Relates the new word more to daily experiences, asking questions frequently to confirm meaning.	The comprehension of meaning score increased from 6→ 9.

Table 2 shows how the 3N learning stages were aligned with each vocabulary indicator. The activities under each stage supported students' ability to internalize vocabulary through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs. In terms of behavior, students displayed improvements in self-confidence, carefulness, curiosity, and communicative ability. The quantitative gain in each indicator further supports these behavioral observations. The following table presents the pre-test and post-test scores analyzed across all four indicators. This quantitative result illustrates measurable learning gains and supports the claim that the 3N method significantly enhances vocabulary mastery.

Tabel 3. Pre-test and Post-test Results

Cameron Indicator	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	% Increase	Normalized Gain (g)
Pronunciation	6	8	2	33,33%	0,5
Spelling	5	8	3	60,00%	0,6
Language Structure (Grammar)	6	8	2	33,33%	0,5
Meaning	6	9	3	50,00%	0,75

Notes: 1) Absolute gain = Posttest - Pretest. 2) Percentage improvement = (Gain / Pretest) × 100%. 3) Normalized Gain (g) = (Posttest - Pretest) / (Maximum score - Pretest)

The table shows the increase in scores on all vocabulary acquisition indicators after the application of the 3N method. The pronunciation and language structure indicators

increased by 2 points (33.33%) with a normalized gain of 0.50, which is classified as moderate. The spelling indicator experienced the most significant increase in percentage terms, namely 60% with a gain of 0.60. Meanwhile, the meaning indicator showed the highest normalized gain of 0.75, indicating a significant improvement in understanding vocabulary meaning.

Discussion

Based on the data, the application of the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi), supported by comprehensible input, improved all vocabulary mastery indicators as defined by (Cameron, 2001). This finding aligns with Krashen (1982) theory of second language acquisition, where learners benefit from comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level (i+1). The method's structured design moving from observation to imitation and creation offered meaningful input and space for guided feedback, both essential for young learners. These learning conditions were further enhanced by the tutor's direct involvement in monitoring, modeling, and discussion, which enriched the input quality. The meaning indicator showed the highest normalized gain (0.75), which is categorized as high. This can be attributed to the ease of personalizing vocabulary meaning by linking new words to students' daily lives, emotions, and familiar experiences. According to Schmitt (2008) and Webb & Nation (2017), vocabulary learning becomes more durable when embedded in meaningful, personalized contexts. This is further supported by Ellis & Shintani (2014), who emphasized that semantic elaboration and emotional involvement enhance long-term vocabulary retention in young learners.

The results of this study are consistent with several international studies. Webb (2008) emphasized that vocabulary acquisition improves when learners are exposed to meaningful and context-rich input. Hulstijn (2001) also concluded that vocabulary is retained more effectively when students combine intentional practice with contextual learning. In addition, Nation (2022) highlighted the importance of integrating visual input, repetition, and output in early vocabulary instruction elements that mirror the Niteni Nirokke Nambahi cycle. These comparisons demonstrate that the 3N method embodies global best practices while offering a culturally localized implementation. Unlike Muslem et al. (2024), who focused on speaking performance, this study provides new empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the 3N method on vocabulary mastery using a validated framework (Cameron, 2001). This study contributes by showing that the 3N approach is not limited to speaking but facilitates the development of multiple vocabulary dimensions: pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning. The integration of observation, imitation, and creative use fosters both cognitive understanding and behavioral application of new vocabulary. This distinguishes the present research as one of the first to quantify the gains of 3N within a comprehensive, indicator-based vocabulary framework.

However, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the lack of a control group reduces the internal validity of the findings and limits the ability to confirm causality. Second, the small sample size (n=12) restricts statistical generalizability beyond the study population. Third, the dual role of the researcher as both tutor and evaluator may have introduced observer bias, despite efforts to standardize instruction and assessment. Future studies are encouraged to use randomized controlled designs to further validate the impact of the 3N method. Future studies are recommended to adopt quasi-experimental designs with randomized control groups to verify these findings more rigorously and to assess long-term vocabulary retention. Additionally,

implementing this method in varied educational contexts (e.g., formal classrooms with diverse demographics) will enhance understanding of its practical application and scalability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the 3N method (Niteni, Nirokke, Nambahi), supported by comprehensible input, effectively improves elementary students' English vocabulary acquisition across all four indicators: pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning. The method not only strengthens vocabulary knowledge but also enhances students' confidence, engagement, and ability to use vocabulary meaningfully through personalized contexts. These findings support Krashen's Input Hypothesis and confirm that integrating local cultural values in language instruction can promote active, meaningful, and child-centered learning. Practically, the 3N method offers a culturally relevant, low-cost, and adaptable strategy that can be integrated into formal and informal English learning programs, especially for early grade students. However, this study has key methodological limitations**.** The absence of a control group limits the internal validity and prevents causal conclusions. Additionally, the small sample size and the researcher's dual role as tutor and observer may introduce bias in data interpretation. These limitations highlight the need for future research using larger, randomized samples and controlled experimental designs to validate the method's effectiveness at scale.This study supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis by showing that culturally-based comprehensible input leads to observable vocabulary gains. The integration of local educational values through the 3N method promotes meaningful, engaging, and personalized learning that is suitable for young learners, especially at the elementary school level.

However, the study has several limitations. The small sample size (n=12) restricts the generalizability of the findings. The absence of a control group limits the internal validity of the results, as comparisons with other instructional methods were not possible. Additionally, the dual role of the researcher as both tutor and observer introduces a potential for bias in implementation and data interpretation.Future studies should adopt a quasi-experimental design with randomized control groups to strengthen the validity of the findings. Broader participant sampling and longer observation periods are also recommended to assess the long-term effects and scalability of the 3N method in diverse educational settings. Despite its limitations, this study contributes valuable insights into vocabulary development through culturally responsive and student-centered instruction.

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