# Evaluating the Vocabulary Building of the Students through Circle Time at ECE

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## Abstract

The present study was designed to intensify student vocabulary building through circle time in Early Childhood Education. All Government students district Lahore kindergarten school were the population of the study. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 25 students from the target population. Researcher designed activities measured vocabulary through circle time with the participants. The fundamental research question that guided the present research study was the intent to identify the highly effective kindergarten activities that facilitate student learning from circle time building vocabulary. Vocabulary was measured with pre-test and post-test results. The data was analyzed by One Sample T-test with use of activities as treatment to diagnose student vocabulary errors. The results of the study revealed that circle time is a great technique to build vocabulary of students. Significant results support circle time use in communicative activities.

*Keywords:* Circle time, Vocabulary building, Pre-test, Post-test

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## Introduction

In this global era, English language is a means of communication and is used for transferring knowledge in English. In the early years of early childhood education, English vocabulary is a vital tool for building competencies like reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It is difficult for learners to master the other competences without mastering and understanding the English vocabulary. According to Fitriani and Isyam (2012) vocabulary is a component of language that provides information about the meaningful use of language. According to National Education Department, Circle time is an approach which is used to train and enhance children's vocabulary by using learning through play approach to focus on form of words. Rydland et al., (2014) is of the view that peer interaction enables young children to develop discursive and socio-pragmatic skills, learn new words, and promote receptive vocabulary. The study was design to investigate the vocabulary building through circle time at (ECE) early childhood education at public school.

## Objectives

1. To investigate the techniques used for vocabulary building by English teacher through circle time
2. To evaluate the specification of vocabulary building through circle time
3. To investigate the vocabulary building techniques used by ECE teachers

### Hypothesis
Ho: There is no significant effect of circle time activities on vocabulary building.

## Review of Literature

### Vocabulary building
Vocabulary building incorporates the use of strategies and teaching materials by teachers to teach word meanings (Abdelrady et al., 2022). The goal of vocabulary building is to help students learn the meanings of lots of words so they can communicate effectively and achieve academically (Butler et al., 2010).

**Circle Time**

Mumcuoglu (2022) observed circle time activity provides an opportunity for teaching effectively following assessment of students' growth within a group. It is a lively and fun activity for instruction of three letter words, sight words, and antonyms.

Circle time is an intervention strategy which focuses on building pupils' vocabulary, and communicative competence. Furthermore, circle time is suitable for channeling the energies of learners with behavioral difficulties (Javadian & Eqlidi, 2022). Circle time facilitates teamwork and develops listening and speaking skills. The circle time variation 'Circle of Friends' program is recommended for emotional and behavioral difficulties of learners. It supports a well-designed, broad, and balanced curriculum which builds learner's self-esteem through personal and social education (Hanaf et al., 2022). Canney and Byrne (2006) remarked on social skills such as turn-taking, careful listening, and good eye contact during conversations is a characteristic of circle time. Students develop deep reflection, ponder deeply before answering, and develop a positive self-image because of circle time activity.

**Importance of Vocabulary**

Jamil, Majoka, and Khan (2014) recommended teaching of vocabulary words as comprehensible units of meaning. Hrmon, Wood, and Kiser (2009) are of the view that vocabulary acquisition is an important bridge to a lifelong commitment to learn the English language. Early childhood educators use circle time in preschools with students taught familiarly by the teacher while they sit in a group around the teacher (Albritton, Stuckey, and Patton, 2021). Circle time is a vital feature of the western education from nursery years to higher education. It targets areas where second language learners have problems such as difficulty in talking in complete sentences because they cannot locate the suitable words in their receptive vocabulary since their productive vocabulary is limited. Circle time relieves vocabulary teaching with use of word images, shapes, pictures, and poems. Consequently, a word being retrieved is in the working memory, and can be recalled through several pathways. Images and associations leave deep impression on the neurons, which are extremely economical while it reduces instruction time (Thornbury, 2004). Words are the basis of any language. Early childhood Education is a priority for countries around the world. An energizing approach to language learning may make a difference of opinion in the of individual leaners regarding the benefits of English language. Students with chemical imbalance and neurological

disorders learn better vocabulary when sound, setting, and visual guides such as pictures and marks accompany the text (Moore and Calvert, 2000). Vocabulary learning highlights the value and importance of the selected words to all learners (White, 1989; Lang and Mosley, 1993). White (1989) has recommended circle time activity-based learning cultivates group identity and cohesion. Wooster and Carson (1982) identified the role of circle time activities in improved self-concept and social interaction in school environment. Early years vocabulary is crucial for academic, social, and intellectual success in the later years (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013; Biemiller, 2012; McKeown, Beck, & Sandora, 2012). Circle time vocabulary building incorporates literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies (Javadian & Eqlidi, 2022). Biemiller (2012) remarked on the vocabulary gap in learners with low vocabulary learners having command over 2,200 root meanings while high vocabulary learners know 4,700 root word meanings. Hence, there is a growing need to work on vocabulary in the primary years, to overcome reading difficulties and low school achievement (Hanaf et al., 2022). Grabe (2009) suggests for L2 learners to learn 2,000 words annually i.e., 50 words per week for 40 weeks per year. The retention of this size of vocabulary is possible only through intensive learning program. The typical approach to vocabulary teaching for comprehension of text is to teach learners a list of words and their meanings, or teaching learners' words and their meanings as they come up in the text. Researchers believe vocabulary building through circle time is more effective compared to reading, speaking, or writing activities (Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007).

**Reasons for the Success of Circle Time**
Children enter kindergarten with varying levels of literacy, coming from diverse backgrounds. Still, certain traits of vocabulary development are shared by all kindergartners. It is highly probable that learners learn new words that they were never taught from access to a print rich environment at home and in the community. Butler et al. (2010) observed children proceed slowly across three processes to learn vocabulary. In the immature phase, learners hear a word for the first time, and form an incomplete representation of the word in their mind. Secondly, incomplete phase, they understand the word but cannot produce it in their speech, followed by a mature accurate representation of the word and its meaning in context. Akramovna (2022) identified the distinction between "learning vocabulary" and "using vocabulary". Circle time is a technique that helps learners take the initiative in a pleasure-full way to form association with a

word and its definition or a synonym. Words help learners to infer the meaning in a text (Mumcuoglu, 2022). Research recommends rich vocabulary oral and written for ensuring learners' command over conceptual knowledge (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013; Biemiller, 2012; McKeown, Beck, & Sandora, 2012). Early Literacy Panel's report (NELP) (2008) found vocabulary development of young children leads to literacy development. Vocabulary development prevents reading difficulties. Literacy experts conclude, after reviewing a considerable number of studies related to teaching vocabulary, that building vocabulary through circle time has a positive impact on reading and learning vocabulary achievement (Butler, 2010). Jones (2022) found circle time vocabulary encouraged indirect, implicit vocabulary instruction. In a print rich environment, kindergarten teachers during circle time encourage children to participate in conversation, sit in circle, ask questions so that other students can respond, and be attentive since their turn could be next. Teachers motivate children through dramatics, mimes, and enactments to act out the meanings and examples associated with a word for the class to guess (Hanaf et al., 2022). Despite rigorous efforts in past researches aimed to identify how effective circle time activity is for learning vocabulary at ECE level. After a detail review of related literature, researcher found that all the past researches were either solely focused on the vocabulary building and circle time. The researchers were carried out the study in public schools at ECE level. The specific emphasis for the present study was linking circle time activities with vocabulary building.

## Methodology

Quantitative research was used to collect data from government school. A sample of 25 students was selected from the population. Pre-test and Post-test was taken from the students to evaluate the differences in vocabulary learning by traditional method and then by circle time.

## Research Paradigm

The study was quantitative by nature and experimental by type. Pretest posttest control group experimental group design selected for the research. The basic purpose of this study was to investigate vocabulary building through circle time in Early Childhood Education. A random sample of 50 (25 control group, 25 for experimental group) kindergarten students were selected from Lahore District Kindergarten. Innovative vocabulary

building activities were adopted for this study. Self-made activities were used to gather quantitative data for analysis. The vocabulary activity included matching, word opposite, three letter name, and sight words. The circle time strategy of teaching vocabulary helps learners to discover the meaning of new words and acquire new vocabulary words independently. The researchers collected data personally. During the first phase, a pre-test was taken from the students to check their level of vocabulary; then activity-based instruction was used to teach students' new vocabulary words through circle time method. The researchers explained the activities to the students and maintained their interest. The learners were keen to connect with the activities and communicate with the researchers. Statistical techniques were used to obtain information from the activities and the statistically significant results from the sample were generalized to the whole population.

Circle time through Early Childhood Development helped a lot of students and enabled the researchers to comprehend the nature of vocabulary learning. Pre-test data helped the researchers to understand the vocabulary level of the students and design learner friendly activities. Students were ready for their turn to tell what they know about the inventory, and this made the class more interesting.

**Research Design**
The quantitative, pretest posttest control group experimental group design was selected. The Experimental Method was used to investigate vocabulary building through circle time at the early childhood education level.

*Population*
The population of the study was all the kindergarten students of Lahore. The kindergarten level students were taught with innovative vocabulary teaching activities.

*Sampling*
Using the purposive sampling technique, one school of Lahore was selected. Randomly (n=50) kindergarten level students were selected as sample of the study.

*Data Collection Procedure*
During the first phase, a pre-test was taken from students. The students of experimental group taught with circle time activities and control group students were taught with traditional method. The total duration of

experiment was two months. After that a post-test was taken from the students of control and` experimental group to evaluate results.

**Tool of investigation**
The researcher collected data personally. The duration of experiment was 2 months. Pretest was taken from control and experimental group before treatment. Then, ECE activities were performed in the (experimental group) classroom through circle time and control group were taught through traditional method. After intervention, posttest was conducted.

## Data Analysis

The study was aimed at collecting the assessment data from activities of students about their vocabulary building through circle time during early childhood education. The instrument used to collect data was an activity and it was analyzed statistically through one-sample t-test. Pre-test and Post-test was taken from students to check their vocabulary growth and development. At first, pre-test was given to participants and then activities for vocabulary building were used through circle time as treatment to teach kindergarten learners vocabulary and this was followed by a post-test which was the same as the pre-test, in which participants clearly showed improvement in the results. The scores in post- test were higher than the pre-test. This result assessed circle time as a great strategy for students to learn new words and build their vocabulary.

For this analysis, the following instruments were used:
- The Pre-test
- Treatment: Explicit vocabulary lessons activities were used in circle time
- The Post-test

## Results

Table 1
*Descriptive analysis of pre-test and post-test scores*

One-Sample Statistics

|  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 50 | 40.25 | 5.478 | .765 |
| Post-test |  | 52.78 | 9.479 | .670 |

The table above shows the pre-test score of prep class before circle time technique. The values of pre-test score of prep class before circle time technique were N=50, M=40.25, SD=5.478 and the values in post-test scores were N=50, M=52.78, SD=9.479. There is a mean difference between these two test scores. It depicts that the post test scores are better than post test scores.

Table 2
*Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores*

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 50

|  | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  | Lower | Upper |
| Pre- test | 6.324 | 49 | .065 | 3.554 | 2.35 | 4.64 |
| post-test | 4.14 | 49 | .037 | 2.775 | 1.45 | 4.10 |

The above mentioned table shows that, "there was a significant difference in the scores of pre-test and post-test, pre-test (M=40.25, SD=5.478) and independent variable of private universities (M=52.78, SD=9.479) conditions; t (6.324, 4.14) = p= .065, .037". The computed p-value of pre-test is greater than alpha 0.05 and computed p-value of post-test is less than alpha 0.05. It means there is a significant difference and it rejects null hypothesis. So, we concluded that there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The post-test scores are greater than pre-test

scores, it depicts that vocabulary building enhances through circle time activities at ECE level.

## Key Findings

Findings of research from an analysis of activities of circle time data and findings from students taught traditionally have been integrated. Researchers took the pre-test from the students to evaluate the level of students' vocabulary. An activity-based test was taken from the students, and they solved the activities themselves. The pre-test shows the scores of students which indicates how many words they knew.

Researchers were allotted fixed time for vocabulary building in their classrooms. They selected productive vocabulary words to build and teach vocabulary, using circle time teaching method consistent with recent research. They assessed the kindergarten children using observation and end-of-unit tests; however, they did not use formal assessments to measure children's progress in vocabulary knowledge. The researcher used the circle time technique to teach and enhance student vocabulary. Student were made to sit in a circle and given activities to build their vocabulary. It was helpful for the learners and kept them attentive and engaged. After these activities, a post-test was taken from the students which researchers had used as a pre-test. The research instrument included items on matching, name of color, sorting words, word opposites, and reading of a poem etc.

Researchers found a considerable difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, which shows that students learn more effectively through circle time because it was interesting and easy.

## Discussion

There are studies about circle time in various fields which take early childhood education at the center are rare. The present study has established the effectiveness of vocabulary building through circle time at ECE level. Jones (2022) carried his research on, "A Look Inside Developing Early Phonic Skills for ESL Preschoolers That Leads to Becoming Successful in Learning English" and found that, early reading development is linked to their academic success and increases their future endeavors in becoming successful in learning English. Preschool is a critical time for English language learners. ESL preschoolers rely heavily on sensory activities that contribute to their cognitive brain development.

Erdemir & Brutt-Griffler (2022) investigated vocabulary development through peer interactions in early childhood through a case study of an emergent bilingual child in preschool and emphasizes the significance of peer interactions to promote vocabulary learning of young children. Also suggest increased exposure to language of monolingual peers mediate L2 development of emergent bilingual children in early childhood classrooms.

The existing study has not been conducted before while relating vocabulary building with circle time at ECE level. Circle time activities were found effective to enhance vocabulary building at ECE level in public schools. Therefore, the study suggests following implications for pedagogical practices:

- Circle time activities need to introduce for all kindergarten students in public schools because it will helpful for the learners and kept them attentive and engaged.
- Students will learn more effectively through circle time as it is an easy and interesting teaching method.

## Conclusion

This descriptive study provides an in-depth study of the benefits of circle time by students. Students' results were recorded following assessment and oral questioning by teachers which support use of circle time for learners 'engagement, vocabulary and teamwork. Moving forward, Researcher and participator alike should focus on how teachers can effectively capitalize on circle time to improve the depth of the vocabulary and the communicative quality of researcher - child interactions.

### Recommendations

- It is recommended that circle time activities should be compulsory at ECE level as they are very beneficial at ECE level.
- Curriculum developers introduce the vocabulary building in text book through circle time activities.
- The teacher at kindergarten level be strengthen within circle time activities and sufficient instructional resources for vocabulary building.
- English teachers training course be updated to integrate sufficient techniques and strategies for vocabulary building circle time because it shows positive results of student's vocabulary development.

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