Comparison of The Expository Approach and The Inquiry Approach in Improving Vocabulary Learning Outcomes Used by State Elementary School 10 South Rantau Labuhan Batu Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to compare the effect of the expository and inquiry approaches in improving vocabulary learning outcomes in sixth-grade students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency, in the 2025-2026 academic year. Vocabulary is an important material in teaching Indonesian, and is the focus of this study. The expository approach involves the presentation of teaching materials that have been neatly prepared by the teacher, whereas the inquiry approach focuses on learning that demands active student involvement through the discovery process. The research method used was an experiment with an objective test instrument, totaling 40 questions given after students have participated in learning using both approaches.

This study aimed to determine the differences in vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using expository and inquiry approaches. The results showed that the average value of the vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using the expository approach was 72.57, which can be categorized as good. Meanwhile, the learning outcomes of students taught using the inquiry approach obtained an average value of 85.07, which can be categorized as very good. Based on data analysis and statistical tests, there was a significant difference between the two approaches; the inquiry approach showed a 17.22% increase in vocabulary learning outcomes compared to the expository approach. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of the inquiry approach is more effective in improving vocabulary learning outcomes of grade VI students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency in the 2025-2026 academic year

Keywords: Vocabulary, Expository Approach, Inquiry Approach, Learning Outcomes

I. INTRODUCTION

Language skills, including vocabulary, are one of the fundamental skills that students must master at the elementary level. A good grasp of vocabulary provides a crucial foundation for other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In elementary school, vocabulary mastery plays a strategic role in helping students understand and express ideas effectively (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Language is the primary means of human communication and expression and serves as a bridge for conveying ideas, thoughts, and information. In elementary schools, language skills are fundamental competencies that every student must master. Vocabulary is a crucial component in language acquisition. Adequate vocabulary mastery not only helps students understand reading texts, but also supports their ability to construct sentences, express ideas, and communicate effectively. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is a fundamental aspect of learning Indonesians'.

The goal of language learning is to help students develop language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are closely related and are equally important. However, for certain purposes, one skill is often emphasized more than another (Saaty, 2023).

Other skills. For example, understanding someone's ideas verbally requires listening skills. Speaking skills are required to express thoughts and feelings verbally. Furthermore, reading skills are required to broaden horizons and increase knowledge. Writing skills are required to publish or disseminate ideas in a written form.

The language used by a person reflects their thoughts. The more skilled a person is in speaking, the clearer and more focused their thoughts will be. In other words, speaking concretely expresses one's opinions and thoughts. Vocabulary is one of the main topics of the Indonesian language taught to elementary school students. Learning vocabulary requires students to recognize and use general and specific words, standard and

non-standard words, concrete and abstract words, scientific and popular words, borrowed words from foreign languages, and terminological and reference vocabulary. This can be achieved by studying and practicing Indonesian as a means of communication in everyday life (Orabi, 2026).

There are various approaches that teachers can use to teach vocabulary, but often, the approaches chosen are not aligned with the desired learning objectives. After the lesson was completed, students lacked the ability to develop their vocabulary creatively. This occurs because of a lack of motivation from teachers to use and experiment with existing vocabulary learning techniques. The community then blames this for the unsatisfactory results of Indonesian language learning in schools (Abdul Pisal et al., 2025).

So far, vocabulary teaching has only focused on delivering new vocabulary, so often the approach used only involves one-way teacher activities. This causes students' vocabulary learning outcomes to tend to be low, and they are unable to use vocabulary appropriately when speaking and writing. However, if teachers are willing to try a learning approach that involves not only one-way but also two-way interaction, then in addition to achieving vocabulary learning goals, students are also able to increase their creativity by developing their existing vocabulary (Azisa et al., 2025).

Teachers are considered sufficiently professional to choose or use an approach that is appropriate for the goal of smooth, effective, and effective learning. However, this study will test two teaching approaches that are believed to improve students' vocabulary-learning outcomes: the expository approach and the inquiry approach (Kaulēns, 2022).

The expository approach is a way of presenting lesson material in which the teacher has prepared the teaching material in advance in an orderly, systematic, and complete manner, so that students only need to listen and digest it in an orderly and organized manner. Meanwhile, the inquiry approach is a learning approach that requires students to learn largely through active engagement with concepts and principles, and teachers encourage students to have experience and conduct experiments that allow them to discover principles for themselves.

In inquiry, students acquire knowledge, skills, and values by searching for or doing so. However, in expository learning, students are expected to be good listeners, requiring them to be able to grasp and remember the information the teacher has provided, as well as to re-express or reproduce what they have learned through their responses when the teacher asks questions (Al-Saadi & Yahya, 2025).

Field observations indicate that sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency, still lack optimal vocabulary mastery. Observations and teacher reports indicate that many students struggle to understand the meaning of new words, both in reading contexts and everyday use. This situation contributes to poor learning outcomes, particularly among Indonesians. One contributing factor to this low vocabulary mastery is learning approach, which tends to be monotonous and lacks active student engagement.

An appropriate learning approach is essential to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The expository approach, which emphasizes direct explanation by the teacher, is often used in Indonesian language learning. This approach has the advantage of quickly conveying information in a structured manner. However, this approach often fails to engage students actively in the learning process (Istiqomah & Sopian, 2025).

Many students struggle to understand the meaning of words in specific contexts, identify the meaning of new words, and appropriately use vocabulary in speaking and writing. This negatively impacts student learning outcomes, particularly in Indonesian language lessons, where vocabulary mastery is the foundationof various other language skills.

The factors contributing to low vocabulary mastery are quite diverse, ranging from students' lack of interest in learning, limited time available for vocabulary development, to a lack of varied learning methods. In practice, vocabulary learning in elementary schools often uses conventional approaches such as providing lists of words to memorize without creative and interactive learning strategies. This quickly leads to students becoming bored and less motivated to learn vocabulary in depth (Assyifa et al., 2023).

To improve vocabulary learning outcomes, the use of an appropriate learning approach is crucial. for example, teachers have long used the expository approach in Indonesian language instruction. This approach prioritizes direct explanations from the teacher to the students and is often considered effective for conveying information quickly. The advantage of the expository approach is its systematic and easy-to-follow structure. However, a weakness of this approach is the lack of active student involvement in the learning process, resulting in passive learning and limited opportunity for students to explore their understanding independently (Syukri et al., 2025).

As an alternative, the inquiry approach offers a more student-centered learning model. This approach engages students in an active learning process, such as exploring information and analyzing and independently discovering vocabulary meanings. In the inquiry approach, students are encouraged to ask more questions, experiment, and solve problems, making the learning process more meaningful and fostering curiosity. The

inquiry approach is believed to help students internalize vocabulary meanings more effectively than memorization alone.

Research on the effectiveness of learning approaches in improving vocabulary learning outcomes is important, especially in determining which approach is more effective in the context of elementary school students. In this study, the expository and inquiry approaches will be compared to examine their impact on the vocabulary learning outcomes of sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency in the 2025-2026 academic year. This study is expected to provide evidence-based recommendations regarding optimal learning strategies to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Indonesian language learning methods that are more creative, effective, and relevant to students' needs.

On the other hand, the inquiry approach offers a more interactive and student-centered learning process. In this approach, students are encouraged to engage in exploration, discovery, and problem-solving activities. This approach is believed to increase student engagement in learning, thereby helping students understand and master vocabulary better.

Therefore, this study is important for comparing the effectiveness of the expository and inquiry approaches in improving the vocabulary learning outcomes of sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of a more effective approach for vocabulary learning, thereby significantly improving student learning outcomes.

II. METHODS

A. *Research Design*

The research design can be defined as a clear depiction of the relationships between variables. Sugiyono (2019) states that research design can be defined as a clear depiction of the relationships between variables, data collection, and data analysis. Therefore, with a good design, researchers and other stakeholders have an idea of how the variables in the research context are related and what a researcher intends to do in conducting the research.

Based on the above opinion, the research design will provide a clearer picture of the formulation of hypotheses, with actions to be taken in the subsequent research process. The design used in this study is a quasi-experimental design that involves the learning process for students, namely the provision of treatment using an inquiry and expository approach, the implementation of which is diagrammed by Sugiyono (2019) as follows (Sugiyono, 2019).

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Treatment	Posts
Experiment I	X1	T1
Experiment II	X2	T2

X2   : Treatment using an expository approach
T1   : Vocabulary learning outcome test for experimental group I.
T2   : Vocabulary learning outcome test for experimental group II

B. *Population*

Population is the total number of subjects to be studied, as stated by Sugiyono (2019), and is a group of individuals who represent one or more general characteristics that are the focus of research. A normal population consists of all individuals who represent a certain behavioral pattern or part of that group."

Based on this understanding, the population is the entire research subject, which is the unit of analysis. The population of this study was 68 sixth-grade students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan, Labuhan Batu Regency, in the 2025-2026 academic year, spread across two classes (Sugiyono, 2019).

C. *Research Variables*

The research variables are also referred to as the research objects. Arikunto (2010:96) states, "A variable is the object of research, or what becomes the focus of a study."

Based on the above opinion, the variables referred to in this study are objects, points of interest, or changeable phenomena that serve as the basis for this research. Therefore, the focus of this study was as follows.

1. Independent variable 1 is vocabulary learning using an inquiry approach (X1).
2. Independent variable 2 is vocabulary learning using an expository approach (X2).

D. *Data Collection Technique*

Data collection techniques must be carried out when conducting research. The data collection techniques used in this study were as follows:

1. Preparation Stages
    a. Develop a research schedule
    b. Creating a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP)
    c. Preparing for the test
2. Implementation Stages
    a. Determine the sample class from the existing population.
    b. Carrying out the vocabulary teaching and learning process which was carried out using an inquiry approach in experimental class I and an expository approach in experimental class II.
    c. Give a final test.
3. Data collection stage

The data in this study were collected after the students were given the tests. After the data were examined, scores were obtained, constituting the research data. The steps in data processing were as follows:

    a. Tabulate data related to students' vocabulary learning outcomes.
    b. Finding the mean and standard deviation.
    c. Assessment of test results.
    d. Hypothesis Testing.

E. *Data Analysis Technique*

The research data were analyzed quantitatively to arrive at conclusions or solutions to research problems. Therefore, the technique used to analyze the data was a comparative analysis of unrelated data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Result

The data referred to in this study were the scores of two sample groups, the inquiry approach group and the expository approach group, who took the vocabulary learning achievement test. The following research data for each group were analyzed separately for ease of reading, as described below:

Table 2. Vocabulary Learning Outcome Assessment Categories

No	Value Interval	Final score		Category
		Letter	Number	
1	80 – 100	A	4	Very well
2	66 – 79	B	3	Good
3	56 – 65	C	2	Enough
4	40 – 55	D	1	Not enough
5	< 39	E	0	Not enough

Based on the table above, the value interval used in the study was in the range of 0 – 100 with letter categories E, D, C, B, and A. Vocabulary learning outcome test data obtained from the two learning groups are described below.

Based on the vocabulary learning outcomes using the inquiry approach, the distribution of scores was 72.5 95. The lowest score was 72.5, and the highest score was 95. Therefore, the average score of student learning outcomes was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of students.

It was concluded that the vocabulary learning outcomes using the inquiry approach were in Category A (very good) with an average score of 85.07. The frequency distribution of the obtained scores is shown in the following table.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Vocabulary Learning Outcome Scores
Inquiry Approach Group

X	F	fX	X	x2	fx2

72.5	1	72.5	-12.57	158.00	158.00
75	2	150	-10.07	101.40	202.81
77.5	2	155	-7.57	57.30	114.61
80	3	240	-5.07	25.70	77.11
82.5	3	247.5	-2.57	6.60	19.81
85	6	510	-0.07	0.00	0.03
87.5	9	787.5	2.43	5.90	53.14
90	5	450	4.93	24.30	121.52
92.5	2	185	7.43	55.20	110.41
95	1	95	9.93	98.60	98.60
	34=N	2892.5=$\sum fx$			956.07=$\sum fx2$

Based on the calculations above, the average and mean values were 85.07, 5.3, and 0.92, respectively.
Based on the above table, vocabulary learning outcomes using the expository approach ranged from 55 to 87.5. The lowest score was 55 and the highest was 87.5, so the average student score was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of students. It was concluded that the vocabulary learning outcomes using the expository approach were in category B (good) with an average score of 72.57. The frequency distribution of the obtained scores is shown in the following table

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Vocabulary Learning Outcome Scores
Expository Approach Group

X	F	fX	X	x2	fx2
55	1	55	-17.57	308.70	308.70
57.5	2	115	-15.07	227.10	454.21
62.5	3	187.5	-10.07	101.40	304.21
65	3	195	-7.57	57.30	171.91
70	4	280	-2.57	6.60	26.42
72.5	5	362.5	-0.07	0.00	0.02
75	4	300	2.43	5.90	23.62
77.5	4	310	4.93	24.30	97.22
80	3	240	7.43	55.20	165.61
82.5	2	165	9.93	98.60	197.21
85	2	170	12.43	154.50	309.01
87.5	1	87.5	14.93	222.90	222.90
	34=N	2467.5=$\sum fy$			2281.07=$\sum fy2$

Based on the above calculations, the average or mean value was 72.57, standard deviation = 8.19, and standard error = 1.43. Based on the above calculation, the standard error of the difference between the mean of group X1 and the mean of group X2 was 1.70.
The average vocabulary learning outcomes showed a difference between the use of the inquiry and expository approaches. The average score for the inquiry approach group was higher than that for the expository group. The difference was 17.22%, with the inquiry approach being better than the expository one. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a difference in vocabulary learning outcomes for students taught using inquiry and expository approaches. Thus, the inquiry approach is better.
To determine the range for the value of the level of tendency of the research variable data, the following value classification criteria are used:

Table 5. Value Classification Criteria

Score	Criteria
Mean + 1 SD and above	Tall
Mean – 1 SD to Mean + 1 SD	Currently
Mean - 1 SD and below	Low

To identify the level of tendency of the variable of students' vocabulary learning outcomes using the inquiry approach, a mean value of 85.07 (rounded to 85) and a standard deviation of 5.30 (rounded to 5) were used. The level of tendency of the variables is shown in the following table.

Table 6. Level of Tendency of Vocabulary Learning Outcomes Using the Inquiry Approach

No	Interval Class	Frequency	Percentage %	Criteria
1	90 – and above	8	23.53	Tall
2	80 – 89	21	61.76	Currently
3	79 – and below	5	14.71	Low
	Total	34	100	-

From the table above, it can be seen that the vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using the inquiry approach are mostly in the medium criteria of 21 students or 61.76%, then eight students or 23.53% are high, and the remaining five students (14.71%) obtained the low criteria. It is concluded that those with the highest percentage are in the medium criteria, so the vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using the inquiry approach tend to be moderate.

To identify the level of tendency of the vocabulary learning outcome variable of students using the expository approach, the mean value of 72.57 (rounded to 73) and standard deviation of 8.19 (rounded to 8) were used. The tendency of the variables is shown in the following table.

Table 7. Level of Tendency of Vocabulary Learning Outcomes Using Expository Approach

No	Interval Class	Frequency	Percentage %	Criteria
1	81 - and above	5	14.70	Tall
2	65 – 80	23	67.65	Currently
3	64 – and below	6	17.65	Low
	Total	34	100%	-

From the table above, it can be seen that the vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using the expository approach are mostly in the medium criteria of 23 students (67.65%), then six students (17.65%) who are low, and the remaining five students (14.70%) obtained the high criteria. It is concluded that those with the highest percentage are in the medium criteria, so the vocabulary learning outcomes of students taught using the expository approach tend to be moderate.

B. Discussion

The inquiry approach group obtained an average score of 85.07 in argumentative writing learning outcomes, which fell into category A (very good), while the expository approach group obtained an average score of 72.57, which fell into category B (good). These average scores indicate that the inquiry approach had higher learning outcomes in understanding vocabulary than the expository approach group.

Based on the calculation with the "t" test, the t count value = 7.353 was obtained, then consulted with the t table at a significance level of 0.05 with dk = (N1 + N2) - 2 = 66, it turns out that the t count obtained is greater than the t table, namely 7.353 > 1.668 so that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and rejects the null hypothesis (Ho). This means that the results of learning vocabulary using the inquiry approach were different from those of students who used the expository approach.

After obtaining the results of this study, the next discussion is why the inquiry approach is better than the expository approach for vocabulary learning. This can be explained by the inquiry approach, which emphasizes optimal student activities. This means that this learning approach requires a balance between physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual activities. Meanwhile, when viewed from the perspective of learning outcomes, this

approach requires balanced and integrated learning outcomes between intellectual abilities (cognitive), attitudes (affective), and skills (psychomotor). Such a thing is rarely found in the expository learning approach; therefore, in such circumstances, the expository approach has difficulty controlling student activities and success because it clashes with student learning habits, as learning success is determined by student ability. However, vocabulary learning is important for the development of creativity. Using the inquiry approach, student competencies are used to maximize vocabulary learning outcomes (Berry et al., 2025).

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the inquiry approach is superior to the expository approach in terms of improving vocabulary learning outcomes. The inquiry approach can be used as an alternative learning method that influences students' learning outcomes.

IV.CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the data analysis and statistical tests in the fourth chapter, the following conclusions were drawn. The vocabulary learning outcomes of sixth-grade students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan in the 2025-2026 academic year who were taught using the expository approach obtained an average score of 72.57, which can be categorized as good. The vocabulary learning outcomes of grade VI students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan in the 2025-2026 academic year who were taught using the inquiry approach obtained an average score of 85.07, which can be categorized as very good. There was a difference in vocabulary learning outcomes between students taught using the inquiry and expository approaches. The inquiry approach was 17.22% better than the expository one. Based on the calculation with the "t" test, the t-count value is obtained > t-table at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ with db = (N1 + N2) - 2 = 66, namely 7.353 > 1.668 so that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is declared true and accepted. This means that vocabulary learning using the inquiry approach is better than using the expository approach for grade VI students of SD Negeri 10 Rantau Selatan in the 2025-2026 academic year.

Data Access Statement

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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