



## Do the Techniques Really Improve Students' Mastery in Vocabulary?

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### Abstract

This study described the techniques applied by teachers in teaching English vocabulary to the tenth grade students at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri. This study aimed to determine and describe the techniques used by teachers on how teachers apply these techniques in teaching English vocabulary, and analyze the responses of students regarding the techniques used by the teachers in teaching vocabulary. The subjects of this study were two teachers and six tenth grade students at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri. The method used was descriptive qualitative. The data were obtained by observation, interview and documentation. This study uses Thornbury's (2002) strategies as the main theory to analyse the data. The results show that five techniques were used by the two teachers in teaching English vocabulary. Teacher A techniques used are: (a) example sentences, (b) word syntaxes, (c) translating with dictionaries, (d) practice (oral drills and practice exercises), and (e) memorization. Teacher B techniques used are: (a) equality of words / opposites, (b) translating, (c) practice, and (e) memorization. However, teacher B sometimes used games in the classroom to increase the students' mastery on vocabulary. The students' responses in general suggests that they could accept the techniques used by both teachers, which can be seen from the attitudes, activeness, and enthusiasm of the students when attending the lessons in the classroom. Students had different responses to the techniques used by teacher A and teacher B regarding which methods were better in helping them increase their vocabulary. To conclude, the techniques applied by the teachers in teaching vocabulary brought improvement to the students in learning English.

**Keywords:** English vocabulary, teacher techniques, teaching vocabulary, student responses.

### Introduction

An English teacher plays a very important role to foster students' skills especially in the classroom. They have to prepare the materials, teaching methods and teaching aids depending what subject they will teach. This is in an attempt to help the students

learn and how to learn English. Larsen (2000) suggests that the students' culture has also to be understood to create a successful learning.

One aspect that a language learner mainly masters is lexical resources or widely known as vocabulary. Lewis (1993) claims that the essence of language is vocabulary. In this sense, to do anything related to assignments and grammatical practices, vocabulary is something that students need to use as a starting point for communicative activities (Wood, 1988). Pursuant to this, vocabulary should be given priority in the teaching learning process in terms of the learning strategies.

Gaeda (2009) found that guessing word strategies used in teaching English vocabulary can make progress to independent learning. Piqué (2000) says that vocabulary learning ball can make learning more enjoyable and memorable. This can encourage students to be active and enthusiastic. Fauziati (2002) four techniques to increase vocabulary: memorization, synonym, translating and finding the blink.

A number of research related to teaching strategies have been conducted by many scholars. Fitria (2017), using Thornbury (2002) and Nation's ideas on vocabulary learning strategies, found that the teachers employed some techniques in teaching vocabulary: sample sentences, opposites, synonyms, consult with dictionaries, practice strategies and memorization. Panji's study (2012) shows that the teachers at a Senior High School adopted some methods namely determine, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive. Thus, strategy collaboration was carried out in the learning process. Meliana (2018) studies the types, strengths, and weaknesses of the strategies implemented by teachers in teaching vocabulary. She found that the strategies implemented by the teacher are understanding, memorizing, using dictionaries and using games. This study suggests that among these strategies, using games is the most effective one. Different from a study conducted by Suryani (2017), the Elementary School teachers used listening and listening and repeating, question and answer, modeling and demonstration techniques as the most effective way in

teaching vocabulary to their students.

Specifically, Graves (2006) mentions four strategies for effective vocabulary mastery: 1) Extensive or extensive independent reading to expand word knowledge, 2) In specific words to increase understanding of the text containing those words, 3) Instruction in independent word learning strategies, and 4) Awareness activities and word games to motivate and improve learning. Whereas, Richard and Rodgers (1999) differentiate vocabulary into two vocabulary classes namely semi-luxury and luxury vocabulary. Semi-fancy vocabulary consists of common expressions in daily life of the target language culture such as clothing, family life, and so on. Fancy vocabulary is a vocabulary that can communicate more specific ideas such as political or philosophical opinions. Brown (2011) clasifies vocabulary as follows: 1) Read vocabulary, a person's reading vocabulary is all words that can be recognized when reading; 2) Listen vocabulary, someone who listens to vocabulary are all words that can be recognized when listen to the conversation. This is a vocabulary that is assisted in size based on context and tone sound; 3) Write vocabulary, someone who writes vocabulary are all words that can be used in writing.

Thus, startegies in teaching vocabulary should be carefully prepared as strategy is a special method or mode of operation task to approach a problem and to achieve a specific design and planned to control and manipulated certain information" (Brown, 2000: 113). Cahyono (2011: 23) states that language teachers can exchange techniques and strategies that refer to actions taken by one to achieve the goals of language teaching. To expedite curriculum transaction teaching strategies are very important and needed (Amita, 2011).

Thornbury (2002: 76-77) categorizes several strategies in teaching vocabulary based on the means of presentation. The strategies comprise translation, real things, picture, definitions, example situation, example sentence, synonyms and opposite. The first technique is translation. The purpose of this technique is that students are asked to find the meaning of new vocabulary by using a dictionary. Real things is a

technique which makes use realia to explain a word. Related to this, picture is a technique that enables the teacher to use pictures to explain the meaning of a word. Definition technique is when a teacher explains a term by giving it the definition. Example situation uses a context to describe a word. However, example sentence technique is a teacher's technique to give new vocabulary in a simple word, sentence, or paragraph that can be understood. Synonym is a technique where a teacher gives the same meaning as a new vocabulary which is vocal and alphabet easily understood by students. Finally, opposite is where a teacher assigns the students to find the versus of a word in order to understand the meaning. Nation (1990) states earlier there are three kinds of vocabulary teaching strategies: presentation strategies, practice strategies and strategies for strategy training.

Nonetheless, students' responses to the teacher's teaching techniques vary. Catapano (2020) mentions a few reasons why students are less interactive during a lesson: students do not know one another or the teacher, students are tired, students are bored, students do not understand the concept and students are expected to speak due to uncomfortable environment. Rahayu (2017) suggests that in order that students will be engaged during a lesson, the teacher should apply various methods such as giving an opportunity to the students to give a question, availing help to the students individually, inviting students' participation both individually and in group.

This study aims to investigate the strategies used by the teachers at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri, Kendal, Central Java, Indonesia. While many other studies merely explored the teachers' techniques in teaching vocabulary or investigated the students' perspectives separately, this study depicts both the techniques used by the teachers and the students' responses to these techniques.

## **Research Methodology**

This study was descriptive qualitative that investigating what strategies the teachers at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri, Kendal, Central Java, Indonesia used to teach vocabulary to the tenth grade students. Two teachers were

observed and interviewed to identify these strategies. One class had 20 to 30 students. Six of them were interviewed to explore their response to the strategies used by the teachers. The students interviewed varied ranging from lower, middle and upper levels of academics and different genders to derive rich data. Strategies in teaching vocabulary from Thornbury (2002) was the main theory used to analyse the data. The data were analysed by using coding and interpreting the data.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Findings**

#### ***Teachers' Technique in Teaching Vocabulary***

The teachers did not only use one technique but several techniques in teaching vocabulary to make students' enjoyable in the teaching and learning activities. This is in line with Rahayu (2017) who suggests that a teacher should apply more than technique so that the students will enjoy the class. Normally, the teachers taught some vocabulary and asked the students to memorize and write it down repeatedly. However, outside the classroom, the students at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri were obliged to memorize vocabulary at least ten words per day given by the senior students and must be tested on the same day. This a compulsory program from the school. This memorizing activity was continued to mid and final tests but executed by the teachers.

However, one teacher adopted teaching strategies from Thornbury (2002) namely: (a) example sentence, (b) synonyms, (c) dictionary, (d) practice (oral drills and written form), and (e) memorization.

For example sentence strategy, the teachers did not directly show words and the meaning of words in bahasa Indonesia, but she included words or words in a sentence or even a simple paragraph to make the students think hard and independently in finding new vocabularies and their meanings. This technique aims to test the students' creativity and ability to understand sentences with new vocabulary. This technique is often used by the teachers in teaching vocabulary, because with

this technique students can learn how to make sentences that are good and right by using new words or vocabulary.

Furthermore, the teachers provided synonyms for new vocabulary. The students would guess the meaning of the vocabulary. The teachers chose words that were often heard and easy for the students. The students would find the correct answer to the meaning of the new vocabulary using this synonyms technique.

In translating activity, the teachers used book dictionaries to teach the students translating skill and make them independent. The teachers trained the students to get used to using a book dictionary so that someday if the students study in college or university, they will get used to using a printed dictionary like the Oxford dictionary. This technique can help the students find more than one meaning of a word. Another advantage when using a dictionary, the students will find similar meanings, how to read, and others.

Practice (oral drills and written form) technique was used by the teachers to find out how far the students understood in learning English vocabulary. To memorize and recall the vocabulary learned at the last meeting, the teacher gave the students a few minutes. Exercises given by the teachers on vocabulary were given in dictation by the teachers, and then students listened carefully. The words were repeated maximum three times then the students wrote write the vocabulary mentioned by the teachers. Sometimes the teacher gave an assignment to the students to make a paragraph using the vocabulary that had been taught.

For memorization technique, the teachers asked the students to memorize some words in a few minutes. The students became more active in learning vocabulary by applying this technique. Based on the application of this technique, the students found it easier to remember vocabulary well. Besides, with this technique the students could easily understand the reading text after they memorized the vocabulary. The teachers often used or mentioned new vocabulary in the teaching and learning activities and in daily communication. It helped the students help memorize more

words easily.

### ***The Students' Responses to the Teachers' Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary***

In general, the students were interested in the various techniques applied by the teachers. In this way, the students were enthusiastic to memorize more vocabulary, find out the meaning of new vocabulary, and answer questions from the teacher.

"Cara mengajar miss A sangat seru, mudah di pahami, jelas dan selalu di ulang jika belum paham."

(The way of Miss A teaching is very exciting, easy to understand, clear and always repeats if you don't understand).

"Cara mengajar miss B cukup asik dan cukup jelas belum mempertanyakan apakah ada yang bertanya."

(The way of Miss B teaching is quite cool and quite clear but sometimes it doesn't explain if someone asks).

The students were also excited and enthusiastic when the teachers delivered the materials using games, English songs, or short films in English with subtitles to get new vocabulary.

"Teknik yang digunakan guru A bisa diterima. Kadang-kadang juga ada game dalam pelajaran atau menonton sebuah cuplikan film dan kadang lagu berbahasa Inggris. Selanjutnya kita disuruh untuk menemukan kosakata yang kita belum tahu."

"The technique used by teacher A is acceptable. Sometimes there are games in the lesson or watching a movie and sometimes an English song. Then we are told to find vocabulary that we don't know yet."

This statement shows that the teachers did not only use the Thorbury's (2002) techniques but they creatively made improvisation in teaching vocabulary.

The researchers also asked a number of questions to the students regarding whether there were improvements they experienced when learning vocabulary with different techniques and teachers. The data obtained by researchers can be seen from the opinions of students, the following:

"Ada peningkatan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris yang saya rasakan. karena saya merasa enjoy dengan pembelajarannya. saya senang dan selalu mempraktikkannya dengan berbicara menggunakan

kosakata yang baru di dalam maupun di luar kelas."

"There is an increase in English language skills that I feel, because I enjoy the learning. I am happy and always practice it by talking using new vocabulary in and outside the classroom."

"Ada peningkatan yang saya rasakan setelah saya mempelajari kosakata, dengan teknik guru yang asik. Saya merasa lebih mudah memahami bacaan yang ada dalam soal-soal ulangan."

"There was an improvement that I felt after I learned the vocabulary, with cool teacher techniques. I find it easier to understand the readings in the test questions." funding agencies), raw data, including study characteristics and individual effect sizes used in a meta-analysis, can be made available on supplemental online archives.

This means that the students improve their mastery in learning English especially in vocabulary since the techniques used by the teachers could make them enjoyable. They were able to practice speaking using new vocabulary they had just learnt both inside and outside the classroom. Other than speaking, the students were also able to understand the meaning of texts more than before.

## **Discussion**

In the discussion section, the researchers present and describe the results of data analysis obtained. Researcher analyzes data from observations, interviews, and documentation. The results of the analysis obtained from this study by researcher are compared with previous studies and theories.

### **Teachers' Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary**

#### **a. Teacher A**

The results of the study were compared with the previous studies. First is a study from Panji (2012). The results of his research conclude that the teacher's techniques in teaching vocabulary are determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive techniques. From this, the researchers found similarities with their research about teacher A techniques in teaching vocabulary. Meliana (2018) suggests that there were several techniques used by the teachers namely:



understanding vocabulary in detail, memorizing vocabulary in each meeting, use of dictionaries, and teaching vocabulary using games. The researchers found similarities with her research about the teacher techniques in teaching vocabulary and teacher techniques are same with Meliana's findings.

b. Teacher B

To make the students interested and excited about teaching and learning activities, the teachers must be innovative and creative. From the results of this study, the researcher found several techniques used by teacher B in teaching English vocabulary. The techniques used by the teacher B are: (a) synonyms/antonyms, (b) dictionary, (c) practices, and (d) memorization.

The previous study was from Pamungkas (2012), with his research entitled "Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary in the First Year at Junior High School 2 Bringin, Semarang District." This research focuses on teacher teaching vocabulary strategies or techniques. The following are the strategies that the teacher uses, namely: memorization, synonym / antonym, translating, and find the blink. These results indicate that the results of previous study these are similarities to the techniques used by teacher B at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri, and one of the techniques is different. Then, Fitria (2017) in her research, she concluded that the very basic teacher techniques used in teaching and learning vocabulary are: opposite, synonym, example sentence, practice strategy, consulting and dictionary, and memorization. The researcher found similarities with this research about teacher B techniques in teaching vocabulary and teacher B techniques are same with Fitria's finding and some are different.

Comparing the data obtained by researcher, the technique used by teacher b is very simple not as complex as teacher A when compared to the basic techniques available in Thornbury (2002). in fact the technique of teacher B is closer to Schumacher and Deshler's theory (1992: 56) in Fauziati (2010: 150) this is "an individual's way of organizing and using a particular set of skills in order to

learn content or accomplish other tasks more effectively and efficiently in school as well as in nonacademics setting. Fauziati (2010: 150) language learning strategy is simply refers to an individual's approach to complete the task.

Researcher will describe it as follows. Based on the theory used by researchers is Thornbury (2002). The researcher classifies the findings of the teachers' technique with the Thornbury theory.

### ***Students' Responses to the Teachers' Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary***

The students agreed to learn vocabulary must be memorized. The students thought the techniques used by the teachers were good, It could be easier for them to solve new words. They are also happy and enthusiastic about the techniques used by the teachers and they are more active in processing the questions and answering the questions given by the teachers. These responses are in line with Pique (2000), Panji (2012) and Meliana (2018) that learning vocabulary are memorable and enjoyable. According to the results of interviews with the students, they gave positive responses. It shows the techniques used by the teachers were successful.

The researchers also derived data from the students' opinions, that they experienced improvement in vocabulary learning with the second technique the teachers used. According to the students, teacher B's techniques were better at improving their English learning than teacher A. Since teacher B did not only use Thornbury's (2002) strategies, who also used games in the classroom, was regarded to have better strategies that those of teacher A. Fitria (2017) agrees with teacher B for various methods may cause students' engagement during a lesson so that interactive activities are built (Catapano, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Teachers techniques in teaching vocabulary

a. Teacher A

Based on the results of research in the teaching and learning process of

English, the teacher in teaching English vocabulary at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri according Thornbury (2002) .The conclusion of the research that the way the teacher A applies techniques are (a) example sentence, this is a technique where the teacher gives the meaning of vocabulary by giving simple example sentences, (b) synonyms, the teacher's technique by giving words that have meanings similar to new vocabulary. Students can increase their mastery of words by knowing words that are similar to new vocabulary. Besides they will not be confused if they get a word that is similar to the new vocabulary. They will easily understand it, (c) dictionary, one of the strategies that teach students to be independent, creative and active in searching for meaning from the new vocabulary given by the teacher. By using a dictionary they will look for the meaning of vocabulary. This technique can be called in other words namely translation technique, (d) Practice (oral drill and written form), the next technique is the teacher's technique to find out how far the students' ability in mastering English vocabulary. Giving practice exercises or sometimes asking students to come forward to present their vocabulary memorization. This technique is similar to the oral drill technique and written form, (e) memorization, the last technique is the teacher asking students to memorize each new vocabulary learned and its meaning.

b. Teacher B

Based on the results of research in the teaching and learning process of English, the teacher in teaching English vocabulary at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri according Thornbury (200) .The conclusion of the research that the way the teacher B applies techniques are (a) synonyms / antonyms, teacher techniques by giving words that have meaning that is similar to the new vocabulary or the opposite of words from the vocabulary. Students can improve their mastery of words by knowing similar words or opposing words with new

vocabulary. In addition they will not be confused if they get a similar word or the opposite of words with new vocabulary. They will easily understand it, (b) translation, one of the strategies that teach students to be independent, creative and active in searching for meaning from the new vocabulary given by the teacher. By using a dictionary they will look for the meaning of vocabulary. This technique can be called in other words namely translation technique, (d) Practice, the next technique is the teacher's technique to find out how far the students' ability in mastering English vocabulary. Giving practice exercises or sometimes asking students to come forward to present their vocabulary memorization. This technique is similar to the oral drill technique and written form, (e) memorization, the last technique is the teacher asking students to memorize each new vocabulary learned and its meaning.

## 2. The Students' Responses to the Teachers' Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary at the Tenth Grade Students at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri, Kendal in 2019/2020 Academic Year

Based on the results of interviews with several students, they agreed to the techniques applied by the teachers' in learning vocabulary. This means students provide positive feedback on the teacher's technique. They responded to this teacher's technique well and enthusiastically. Students' already feel very comfortable with the techniques used by the teachers' in learning vocabulary. They are very happy and interested in each teacher teaching vocabulary by providing synonyms, presenting it with short stories, videos and film footage in English. Therefore, they feel happy to take lessons to find new vocabulary. Thus the teacher's technique is successful in making students more able to follow the lessons and understand them well.

By the techniques applied from both teachers, students' have improvement in learning English. As stated by students, they can better understand and master English language better. Tend to students more agree and more can be

improved with the techniques used by teacher A complex based on basic techniques in Thornbury's theory (2002).

#### B. Pedagogical Implication

This research focuses on the teacher's technique in teaching English vocabulary in tenth grade students at Muhammadiyah Boarding School 1 Weleri. The data collected by the researcher by doing observation of the students, teacher's interview, and documentation in teaching learning process. Based on the result of this research, the researcher describes some pedagogical implication as follows:

1. The key to learn a language is to master the vocabulary. By mastering vocabulary, it will make easier to learn foreign language well especially English. Vocabulary is one of important thing, base of learning English and communication.
2. In teaching learning English vocabulary the teacher must choose and use techniques appropriately and acceptable by the students, because it can affect the level of student understand the lesson and will improve the student ability of English vocabulary.
3. There are several techniques used by teacher in teaching English vocabulary such as example sentence, synonym, dictionary, practice, and memorization.
4. The students responds positive to the teacher techniques. Techniques that can make students enthusiastic and comfortable in every meeting. The teacher using a variety of variation in teaching learning English vocabulary, that is enough to make student exited, enjoy and interested. The technique can be continued and emulated by another teacher in teaching English.

#### C. Suggestions

The researcher would like to give some suggestion, based on the conclusion from the finding. The suggestion will be aimed to the teachers, the other

researchers, and the students.

1. For the teachers

According to the results of observations and interviews with teachers, researchers know the techniques used by teachers in teaching English. The researcher gave some suggestions for teachers in teaching English, namely: First, teachers are expected to be able to maintain the techniques and variations that they already have in teaching English. Second, the teacher must be smart in reading the character of each student because in each generation students have different characters. Third, the use of dictionaries in the form of books is a good thing, but it would be nice for students to be given an occasional assignment using the internet in a language laboratory. Last, the media used may be reproduced more like real objects around and others.

2. For the other researchers

Suggestions for students in following English learning are: First, researchers hope students can be more active and not ashamed to ask if there are difficulties in accepting and understanding the lesson. Secondly, students are expected to be able to practice or use every vocabulary taught in everyday conversation so that they are not forgotten and speak English more fluently. The last, students must be more independent and creative in finding new vocabulary, not always waiting for instructions from the teacher.

3. For the students

Researchers hope to further researchers, so that research on vocabulary teaching techniques is more detailed and in-depth. For future researchers, there may be suggestions for using different objects, theories, methods and subjects. It will make this research more varied and develop in line with the development of education and technology. Besides that it can provide more insight for readers and further researchers.

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