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Teachers' Strategy in Teaching Vocabulary

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Abstract

Nowadays, English vocabulary has been taught since the first grade of elementary schools. It shows that one of the crucial aspects of English is vocabulary. Vocabulary as one of the language component is very important in language skills namely writing, reading, listening, and speaking. It will be very difficult to master these four basic language skills without sufficient words. Mastery of words is very important in language learning. If we listen, we listen to words, if we speak we speak or use words, if we read, we encounter words, if we write we use words. Considering the importance of words, teachers have to find ways to teach words or vocabulary. It is known that vocabulary plays an important role in learning a new language. In teaching vocabulary, teachers should be creative in implementing strategies in order to motivate students to learn. So, the writer was going to investigate the teachers' strategies in teaching vocabulary at SDN 102 Pekanbaru and what are the considerations that make the teachers apply certain strategies in teaching vocabulary.

Keywords: vocabulary, teaching strategies

A. Background

This Study is intended to explore English teachers' strategies in teaching vocabulary at SDN 102 Pekanbaru. This first chapter of this study specifies purpose of the study, a brief theoretical foundation, presents relevant previous research, thesis statement, research questions and significance of the study.

B. The Nature of Vocabulary

Wehmeier, et al., (2005:1707) define vocabulary as one of language elements considered necessary for language mastery and as all the words in a particular language. Vocabulary is one of the basic and important aspects in language. It is really important in order to acquire a language. It is more crucial than other aspects in learning a language because it is the basic component. Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a language. Limited vocabulary will inhibit students to use language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). In other words, to be good at those language skills, the students have to have more vocabulary.

An important goal of a vocabulary teaching for students on any level is to get students interested in new words so that they will notice new words, use

strategies to identify their meanings, and take pride in remembering and using them.

The status of vocabulary has been considerably improved based on natural approach stated that in the early stages of learning and using the second language, one is better served by vocabulary than grammar (Nunan 1991:117).

According to Nuttal (1982:24) vocabulary's proficiency effect not only the students' reading skill but also speaking, listening and writing skill. It is true that vocabulary plays an important role in learning foreign language, having a strong vocabulary recycling will help not only someone's fluency in speaking skill but also toward other skills.

From the discussion above it can be concluded that the mastering of vocabulary of a foreign language is the most important thing before learning grammar, since vocabulary is needed in oral communication. The speed of speaking depends on how much vocabulary someone knows. The lack of experience of the appropriate context makes understanding the meaning of the words used it extremely difficult. The students need an adequate mastery of vocabulary as well as grammar and phonology in order to be able to communicate effectively.

As stated before, vocabulary is very important part in language because there is no sentence without vocabulary. Vocabulary always appears in language such as reading, speaking, writing and listening skill. For this reason, the students should study about vocabulary more than other skill because the more vocabulary that student gets the more skill that they can master in English.

C. Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays important part in learning a foreign language especially in the early stage of elementary school. Without knowing the vocabulary, students will not be able in the four language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening and writing. The students' lack of vocabulary make students cannot communicate their ideas as clearly as they would have to.

Teachers know those students who are learning to read and write and those who are reading to learn. This is especially true for classrooms where students have small number of vocabularies and are English language learners. Knowledge of words is acquired incidentally, where vocabulary is developed through immersion in language activities. Words are also learned through direct instruction, where students learn words through a structured strategy.

Teaching vocabulary should be integrated to the four language skills. The integrated teaching means there is no certain time for teacher to teach vocabulary. Thus, the teacher teaches vocabulary within teaches speaking, reading, listening or writing to support the students' ability in developing their language skills. Moreover, achievement or acquisition vocabulary is essential for successful in

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second or foreign language because without an extensive and enlargement vocabulary and functions which the students may have learned for comprehensible communication society. Vocabulary teaching according to Furneaux (1999:367) aims at enabling learners to understand the concepts of unfamiliar words, gain a greater number of words and use words successfully for communicative purposes.

There are many strategies in teaching vocabulary. According to Harmer (1991:161) teachers can use presentation, discovery techniques and practice methods to teach vocabulary.

There are several types of vocabulary presentation techniques.

1. Visual techniques. These pertain to visual memory, which is considered especially helpful with vocabulary retention. Learners remember better the material that has been presented by means of visual aids (Zebrowska in Matriel 2008:6). Visual techniques lend themselves well to presenting concrete items of vocabulary-nouns; many are also helpful in conveying meaning of verbs and adjectives. They help students associate presented material in a meaningful way and incorporate it into system of language values.
2. Verbal explanation. This pertains to the use of illustrative situations, synonym, opposites, scales, definition, and categories.
3. The use of dictionaries. Using a dictionary is another technique of finding out meanings of unfamiliar words and expressions. Students can make use of variety of dictionaries: bilingual, monolingual, pictorial, thesaurus, and the like.

Graves (2006:4-8) offers a framework for successful vocabulary teaching. They are by providing rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words, teaching word-learning strategies and fostering word consciousness. Other essential strategies for teaching vocabulary can be implemented by language teacher as follows:

1. Vocabulary self-collection strategy. It is introduced by Haggard (1986). This strategy is an interactive learning instructional strategy that promotes word consciousness, as students are actively engaged in identifying important words from their reading to share with members of their class. Students select words from their reading that are new and interesting, use the context to determine the meaning of the words and nominate the words to be learned by others in the group or class.
2. Word mapping. This strategy is to promote the students' deeper understanding of words through depicting varying relationships between and among words. It is referred to by different names, such as semantic mapping, concept mapping and word clusters (Margosein, et al.,1982:185-194)

3. Graphic morphemic analysis. According to Hiebert and Lubliner (2008:106-129), graphic morphemic analysis is a strategy to word learning that will help readers unlock the meaning of new and challenging words by analyzing the meaningful parts within a word. Hiebert and Lubliner add that this strategy employs a systematic approach to deconstructing a word into its meaningful parts (morphemes) to figure out what the word means through the use of a graphic.
4. Interactive word wall strategy. This strategy is proposed by Wagstaff (1999:95-122). This strategy promotes a vocabulary-rich classroom environment where walls are alive with words; it helps young learners learn high-frequency words as well as developing academic vocabulary or specialized words in content-area classrooms with older students.
5. Vocabulary journals. Vocabulary journals help students explore the meaning of words that they encounter while reading (Popp, 1977:1). These journals are specific type of learning log where students record their ideas and information.

In teaching vocabulary, McCarten (2007:18) states that a language teacher should consider the things that students need to know about a word before s/he can say that students have learned it. They consist of the meaning of the word, its spoken and written forms, what word parts it has, its grammatical behavior, its collocation, register, what association and connotations it has and its frequency. As an instance is the word *watch* in English. The meaning of *watch* cannot be claimed at once since the form of the word does not tell anything about its meaning. Intended meaning is a *small clock*. But it is still questionable whether its meaning is a *small clock* the noun or *to look at* the verb. In fact in can be both—so part of knowing the meaning of *watch* knows its grammatical function. However the word *watch* means not only a *small clock* or *to look at* but also *be careful* or *to stay with something*.

Thus, the meaning of *watch* depends on its form and its context. it can be concluded that knowing the meaning of a word cannot just have its dictionary meaning, but also requires knowing the words commonly associated with it (its collocation) as well as its connotations, its register and its grammatical behavior its spoken and written forms and what word parts it has.

Harmer (1991:154) adds that there are two criteria for the teacher in selecting words to be taught for the students; First, frequency, the teacher should teach first the words which are most commonly used (high frequency words). Second, coverage, the chosen words are most useful if they cover more things. In the 2007 curriculum (KTSP/ school based curriculum) for elementary school, ability to store English vocabulary is a basic requirement for elementary school students. Teachers, therefore, should really help the students in acquiring English vocabulary.

D. Instrumentation

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According to Wallace (2000:124), questionnaire and interview can be used when we want to tap into knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences of learners, teachers, parents and so forth. Based on this theory, the researcher used both instruments in collecting the data. Questionnaire was developed by set out ten statements and it sent to the respondents via electronic mail.

Interview is the most rewarding component of a well-established tool in qualitative research. It was an act of communication which provides rich and substantive data for the researcher. The main aim of interview in research, according to Henning (2004:52), is “to bring our attention, what individuals think, feel do and what they have to say about it in an interview, giving us their subjective reality in a “formatted” discussion, which is guided and managed by an interviewer and later integrated into a research report”. She further calls this tool “talk-in-interaction” because it focuses on the analysis of conversation in everyday setting, in this research was teaching and learning activities.

In interviews, the respondents were allowed to state their own views, opinions, thoughts and ideas without manipulation or interference, and without imposing the researcher’s structures and assumptions. Respondents could share their own experiences in a relaxed mood and were given a chance to say whatever they want to say. The researcher has to always be alert to record or notice “the context in which some of this experience has been played out” (Henning, 2004:37).

Questions in an interview schedule were open-ended, neutral, sensitive and clear, so that the respondents were able to formulate their responses. Britten (1995:4) avers that “the researcher needs to remain open to the possibility that the concepts and variables that emerge may be very different from those that might have been predicted”. English teachers as respondents were allowed to state their ideas and reasons for choosing certain strategy in teaching vocabulary. The researcher used schools as the concrete natural setting to elicit educators’ daily experiences. The respondents spoke for themselves, without interference from the interviewer, leading to a rich stream data and building on the understanding of why things happen in the ways they do.

The interview guide or schedule included questions on aspects such as students’ problem in learning new vocabulary and teachers’ problems in teaching new vocabulary. More questions were introduced during interview process as the interviewer became more familiar with the topic being discussed.

Observations was also used to reveal more about data acquired through interviews, to gain a deeper understanding and to provide more knowledge of the context in which events occur. Verbal and non-verbal cues were monitored with the observation tool. Actual behavior and not what people said was recorded. Teachers’ activities were observed naturally and not in a controlled environment by the researcher’s conditions. This was compared to their interview statements,

to check for validity of their interview responses and whether the strategies of teaching vocabulary fully implemented.

Observation in this research took place while things are happening. It enables the researcher closer to the action. This tool was used to observe the environment in which interviews were conducted, to see if there were signs that confirmed or contradicted what the respondent were saying. It is used to uncover, describe and analysis the ways in which “social order is ongoingly produced, achieved and made recognizable in and through the practical actions of members of a society.

Observation in this research was guided by an observation schedule within which the researcher located what was observed. Aspects such as physical setting within which teaching takes place, the social environment of the teachers and the students (interactions) and students’ participations, what are the problems they are encountering and how do they deal with them, what are the teachers’ experiences regarding the subject, notable non-occurrences (determining what is not occurring although the expectation is that it should occur as it might appear in teachers’ portfolios of planning or noting the absence of some particular activity/ factor that is noteworthy and would serve as added information) and the non-verbal communication about what is happening in the project.

The researcher jotted down field notes and recorded as much as possible the events, the actions and the behaviors of all respondents. The notes included the responses of the teachers and students.

E. Data Presentation

This research is qualitative research. The purposes of this research are to find out the teachers’ strategies in teaching vocabulary at SDN 102 Pekanbaru and to find out what are the considerations that make the teachers apply certain strategies in teaching vocabulary. In collecting the data, the researcher used questionnaire, classroom observation and interview. Questionnaire was arranged to gather information about the teacher’s strategies in teaching vocabulary. Classroom observations were done to observe the teachers’ strategies in teaching vocabulary and they were interviewed to know their considerations in choosing a certain strategy.

There were two samples in this study; teacher A and B. Teacher A taught English at first grade up to third grade while teacher B taught English at fourth grade to six grade. According to data from questionnaire, teacher A got score 25 while teacher B got 38. This score shows that teacher B applies more strategies in teaching vocabulary than teacher A. This finding also supports by data from interview and observation.

Based on the data analyzing, it was found that first, the use of visual technique is applicable for students at elementary school. By bringing the real object to the

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classroom can motivate the students to learn vocabulary. It could be seen when teacher A used things in the classrooms to introduce the students the English words of each items in their classroom. According to the researcher's observation to teacher B, in the first meeting the teacher brought the real clock to the classroom.

Second, the use of picture can interest the students. Teacher A drew things in the classroom on whiteboard to evaluate the students' vocabulary mastery. It happened in the second and last meeting in grade two. Another variety in applying picture to teach vocabulary is by showing moving pictures through LCD Projector. It was done by teacher B when teaching in grade five.

The last is the implementation of mime and pantomime. Based on the data of the researcher's observation of teacher A, it was found that the students seemed enjoyed the learning when the teacher used gestures and facial expression in promoting vocabulary.

In teaching vocabulary, it cannot be separated to teaching pronunciation. According to the interview, teacher A preferred to applied direct corrections because the students in grade one until grade three tend to make a noise when the teacher gave opportunity to other students to check their friend's error or mistake. Here, this situation indicated that teacher-centered still existed, while teacher B applied peer correction in correcting the students' error or mistake, because the students understood their teacher's instruction. In grade four until grade six, students-centered existed. The teacher provides good learning atmosphere, so that the students were feel free to express their ideas. It could be seen when the teacher asked the students to guess a meaning of a new vocabulary based on context. They also could appreciate their friends' correction by not laughing nor joking. In another meeting, teacher B used LCD Projector to promote a new vocabulary to the students. It seemed the students were interested and enjoyed the learning process. When the researcher asked teacher A have teacher A ever used LCD Projector in teaching vocabulary, she said that she had problems in classroom management. Most of the students in grade one and two were difficult to handle. They liked to walk around the classroom while the cables of the LCD Projector were on the floor. She thought it would be dangerous to use this kind of media. She also said that to use this media she needs another teacher to manage the students in the classroom.

In the last meeting of observation of teacher A, the students looked enjoy the learning activity. They learned adjective. The teacher implemented mime and pantomime in promoting new vocabulary. In motivating the students, she gave a candy for students who could guess the meaning of vocabulary through mime and pantomime.

In another interview, teacher A said that she had used LCD Projector in grade three but it did not work. The students were more interested to see the

computer and LCD Projector than the teaching material in it. Based on the information from the school principle, most of the students at SDN 102 Pekanbaru were not from “the have” family, they think that computer and LCD Projector are something new for them. To overcome this, teacher A preferred to applied visual technique in the classroom in teaching vocabulary.

An efficient language teacher can use selected vocabulary activities or can use integrated activities. All this depends upon ability and level of understanding and interest of the learners. There is no sure fire remedy or strategy to enhance vocabulary in a day or two. A student’s vocabulary bank can be enriched on a gradual basis and one should always show keen interest and enthusiasm in finding, learning and understanding new words.

F. Conclusion and Implication

Based on the findings in Chapter IV, it can be concluded that the teachers’ strategies in teaching vocabulary at SDN 102 Pekanbaru are visual technique, the use of pictures, mime and pantomime.

In connection with the findings of this research, there are several implications for the next teaching and learning process:

1. Visual technique can be implemented in teaching vocabulary. It is done by bringing real objects to classroom (like postcard, book, pen, schoolbag, vegetables and everything that is worth to be brought to the classroom).
 2. Pictures can motivate students in learning vocabulary. This is very effective in the way that it facilitates the process of learning for kids
- Mime and pantomime are also useful in teaching vocabulary. It is done through gestures and facial expressions and also via actions.

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