Teaching Vocabulary for Elementary School Students
(A Literature Review)

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the teaching strategies to develop elementary students' vocabulary. In conducting the study, a literature review was conducted. The findings showed that in teaching vocabulary for elementary school, teachers are required to use interactive media such picture, game, and song. Literature studies also found that interactive media greatly influences students' motivation and engagement toward vocabulary learning process. Teachers are encouraged to use interactive teaching media in developing students' vocabulary. Discussions and suggestions of study are further presented.

Keywords: *Elementary Students, Teaching, Vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning English, students' abilities in using target language both spoken or written are indicators of the success of mastering English language skills. But in fact, the English skills of students in Indonesia are in the low category. This can be reflected in the results of the 2020 English Proficiency Index with a score of 453. Indonesian students' English proficiency is ranked 74 out of 100 countries. In Southeast Asia, the highest EFI scores were obtained by Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia. The results EFI indicates that there are problems and needs for improvement.

Teachers sometimes give too much attention on teaching grammar (Uysal & Bardakci, 2014). Grammar has an important role in the process of forming the language itself, but the most important thing is vocabulary mastery (Alqahtani, 2015). Without good vocabulary mastery, the meaning or message to be conveyed will not be well received (Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, & Mustafa, 2018; Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013). Therefore, in addition to focusing on grammar, the teacher must also be able to improve students' abilities in terms of vocabulary. In developing students' vocabulary skills, the teacher needs to use an innovative teaching strategy. However, in fact, the teacher still uses the translation method which has been proven to be less effective in improving students' vocabulary skills (Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018; Sinhaneti & Kyaw, 2012). The use of the translation method only helps students remember the vocabulary. Whereas students are said to have good vocabulary skills if they are capable of spelling, pronouncing, understanding the meaning and using it in context (Çiftçi & Üster, 2009; Nation, 2013).

In addition, vocabulary teaching needs to be implemented as early as possible since elementary school. Teachers should also know that teaching

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vocabulary for primary school children is different from teaching for adult levels (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Habibi & Sofwan, 2015; Juhana, 2014). This is because children in primary schools have different characteristics from adult learners. Children in primary schools prefer to learn using interactive media such as video, game, songs and physical activities such as singing and dancing (Biesaga, 2017; Pratama & Permana, 2018; Smith, Sanchez, Betty, & Davis, 2016; Ulfa, Salim, & Permana, 2017; Vitasmoro, Chandra, & Jatmiko, 2019).

A different situation is seen in one private primary school in Singaraja. English teachers in teaching vocabulary still use the translation method. In addition, the teacher also still uses the drill method where the teacher will pronounce a word and ask students to repeat the word. The teacher realizes that this method has not been effective in improving students' vocabulary skills. The limitations of the teacher on the methods and strategies of teaching vocabulary for elementary school children are an inhibiting factor in developing student vocabulary. Therefore, this study aims to identify vocabulary teaching strategies that can be used by teachers for elementary school children.

METHOD

The current study is literature review studies. Results of studies were analyzed to identify the teaching vocabulary strategies that is effective for elementary students. The studies analyzed were conducted in the last 5 to 7 years.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Zhao and Lornklang (2019) identified that using picture word inductive model was effective in teaching vocabulary for young learners. They identified that students after learning with picture word, the result of posttest was significantly higher than the pretest. They claimed that picture word provides the students an attractive visual content and encourage the students to think inductively. The example of picture word inductive model can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Picture Word Inductive Model
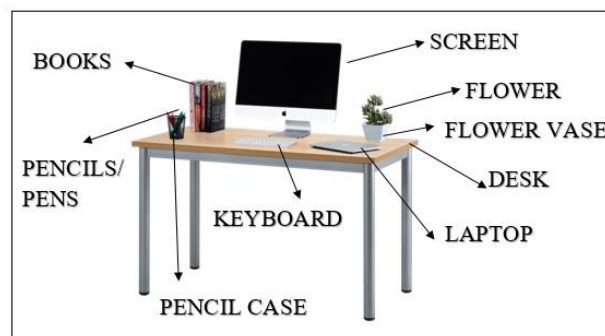
Utku and Dolgunsöz (2018) studied the effect of online games on 5th grade students' vocabulary mastery. They believed that the students are digital native and familiar with online gaming. The result of the study found that online games environment significantly affected students' vocabulary mastery. They also

identified that students are motivated when learning with online games. Bakhsh (2016) adds that games is an effective tool in teaching vocabulary when they are designed to help the students memorize and understand meaning. It also able to boost students' motivation and confidence in learning vocabulary.

Pavia, Webb and Faez (2019) found that song could be beneficial for students to enhance their vocabulary mastery. Through song, students can imitate the pronunciation of words. The more frequency of using song in teaching can help the students to recognize meaning and exposure to target language. Ma'rifat (2017) supports that the students enjoyed the teaching and learning process when song was implemented in classroom. From the research results, it can be said that there are three effective vocabulary teaching strategies for elementary school children, namely teaching using pictures, games and songs. These three strategies generally provide opportunities for students to learn using the target language. The results of this study also reveal that pictures, games and songs can increase student motivation in learning English. English teachers are advised to use these strategies in teaching vocabulary to elementary school children. English teachers are also advised to be creative in the teaching process so that maximum results can be achieved. Future research is suggested to explore more deeply about effective vocabulary teaching strategies for young learners.

CONCLUSION

The result of the current study concluded that vocabulary is important points in language learning process. Teachers are required to use effective strategies in order to help students enrich their vocabulary. Strategies used by teachers should be fun, encouraging and motivating students. Using interactive media such as pictures, games and songs had been studied to be beneficial in creating positive learning environment and fun ways of learning.

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