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Exploring Lecturer-Implemented Strategies for Vocabulary Instruction in an Indonesian EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates teaching strategies implemented in a vocabulary class for second-semester students at the English Department of Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of strategies used by the lecturer, describe how the strategies were implemented in classroom practice, and explore students' responses toward the strategies. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with the lecturer and students, field notes, and documentation. The findings reveal that six main strategies were implemented in teaching vocabulary: word wall, spot dictation, Google Classroom, discussion and discovery learning, reading stories, and vocabulary presentation. These strategies were supported by techniques such as repetition, retrieval practice, cognitive depth, memorization, attention, and motivation. Students responded positively to the strategies and showed enthusiasm during the learning process. The study concludes that communicative and varied teaching strategies contribute to an engaging learning environment and support students' vocabulary development.
Keywords: teaching strategies, vocabulary teaching, qualitative study, English education

INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language that plays a significant role in global communication, education, science, and technology. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is an important component of the national education system, from secondary school to higher education. At the university level, English departments aim to prepare students to master both language skills and language components.

Vocabulary is one of the most essential components of language proficiency. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners face difficulties in developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary mastery enables learners to understand texts, express ideas, and participate actively in communication. Therefore, effective vocabulary instruction is a crucial responsibility of English lecturers.

Teaching vocabulary, however, is not a simple task. Lecturers must carefully select strategies that help students understand, remember, and use new words meaningfully. Previous studies emphasize that vocabulary learning is closely related to memory, repetition, contextual use, and learner engagement. Consequently, lecturers are required to employ varied and interactive strategies to make vocabulary learning effective and motivating.

At Universitas Bhinneka PGRI, vocabulary is taught as a compulsory subject for second-semester students in the English Department. Observations indicate that lecturers apply various strategies to help students develop vocabulary knowledge. This study focuses on identifying and describing the strategies implemented by the lecturer in teaching vocabulary, as well as examining students' responses toward those strategies.

The research questions guiding this study are: (1) What teaching strategies are implemented by the lecturer in teaching vocabulary? and (2) How are these strategies implemented in the vocabulary classroom?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the strategies implemented by a lecturer in teaching vocabulary to second-semester students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows an in-depth understanding of classroom practices, participant perspectives, and the natural setting in which teaching and learning occur (Creswell, 2012).

The research was conducted at the English Department of Universitas Bhinneka PGRI during the 2024-2025 academic year. The participants consisted of one lecturer responsible for teaching the vocabulary course and second-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the class. The lecturer was selected as the primary subject because of her direct involvement in designing and implementing vocabulary instruction.

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure credibility and triangulation. Classroom observations were carried out to document teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and student engagement during vocabulary lessons. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer and used an observation checklist and field notes to record instructional activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the lecturer and several students to gain deeper insights into the rationale behind strategy selection, instructional challenges, and students' perceptions of the learning process. In addition, documentation such as lesson plans, learning materials, student assignments, and online classroom records was collected to support the observational and interview data.

The data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, irrelevant information was eliminated, and essential data related to teaching strategies and implementation were coded and categorized. The reduced data were then displayed in descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and themes across data sources, and these conclusions were continuously verified through data triangulation.

FINDINGS

The analysis of observation and interview data revealed that the lecturer implemented six main strategies in teaching vocabulary.

The first strategy was the word wall. In this strategy, important vocabulary items were written on paper and displayed on the classroom wall. Students interacted with the words through group activities, such as creating sentences using selected vocabulary. This strategy helped students repeatedly encounter new words and supported memorization.

The second strategy was spot dictation. The lecturer read short texts aloud while students completed missing words in written texts. This strategy required students to focus on

listening and recall vocabulary accurately. Spot dictation encouraged attention, retrieval practice, and active participation.

The third strategy involved the use of Google Classroom. This online platform was used to distribute materials, assignments, and feedback. Google Classroom allowed students to access learning materials outside the classroom and supported independent learning.

The fourth strategy was discussion and discovery learning. Students were encouraged to read texts, identify unfamiliar words, and discuss meanings collaboratively. This strategy promoted learner autonomy, peer interaction, and deeper understanding of vocabulary.

The fifth strategy was reading stories. Students read selected storybooks and discussed the content with the lecturer. They were also asked to translate parts of the text. This strategy helped students learn vocabulary in context and increased motivation through meaningful reading activities.

The sixth strategy was vocabulary presentation. Students worked in groups to prepare and present vocabulary-related topics. This strategy required students to select appropriate words, organize ideas, and explain vocabulary concepts, thus supporting cognitive depth and productive vocabulary use.

Interviews indicated that students responded positively to these strategies. They reported feeling more motivated, confident, and engaged during vocabulary lessons.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the lecturer employed a range of instructional strategies that reflect communicative and learner-centered principles in vocabulary teaching. The use of multiple strategies suggests an awareness that vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure, contextualization, and active learner involvement (Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002).

The word wall strategy functioned as a visual and repetitive learning tool that supported students' memory and recall of new vocabulary items. Consistent with Linse and Nunan (2005), repeated exposure to written words in a meaningful context helps learners internalize vocabulary more effectively. By involving students in sentence construction activities, the lecturer encouraged both receptive and productive vocabulary use.

Spot dictation emphasized listening skills and retrieval practice. This strategy required students to pay close attention to spoken input and actively reconstruct missing words, aligning with Thornbury's (2002) assertion that attention and retrieval strengthen long-term vocabulary retention. The activity also created an interactive classroom atmosphere in which students were actively engaged in the learning process.

The integration of Google Classroom demonstrates the lecturer's use of technology to extend learning beyond the physical classroom. This strategy facilitated flexible access to materials, promoted learner autonomy, and supported continuous interaction between lecturer and students. Previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of digital platforms in enhancing vocabulary learning and student motivation (Lari, 2014).

Discussion and discovery-based learning allowed students to explore vocabulary independently and collaboratively. Through reading, identifying unfamiliar words, and discussing meanings, students were encouraged to activate prior knowledge and negotiate

meaning with peers. This approach aligns with constructivist views of language learning, where knowledge is built through social interaction and meaningful engagement.

Reading stories provided contextualized vocabulary input and supported affective engagement. Learning vocabulary through stories enabled students to associate words with narratives, emotions, and mental imagery, which are known to enhance retention (Thornbury, 2002). Similarly, vocabulary presentations required students to process vocabulary deeply by selecting, organizing, and explaining lexical items, thereby strengthening productive vocabulary knowledge.

Overall, the strategies implemented by the lecturer contributed to a dynamic and supportive learning environment. The positive student responses indicate that varied instructional approaches can enhance motivation, engagement, and vocabulary development in tertiary EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the lecturer implemented six main strategies in teaching vocabulary: word wall, spot dictation, Google Classroom, discussion and discovery learning, reading stories, and vocabulary presentation. These strategies were supported by various techniques that enhanced student engagement and vocabulary retention. Students responded positively to the strategies and demonstrated enthusiasm during the learning process.

The findings suggest that varied and communicative teaching strategies are effective in vocabulary instruction at the tertiary level. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the effectiveness of these strategies in different contexts or using quantitative approaches to measure vocabulary gains.

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