



STRATEGIES OF TEACHING VOCABULARY FOR 8TH-GRADE SMPN 25 SURABAYA

Azzahrawani Asy-Syifaa' Qalb Aisyah Amanda¹, Muhtarom²,
& Junaenik Latiefah Gunairawati³

^{1,2}UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, ³SMPN 25 Surabaya

¹azzahraw1504@gmail.com, ²mmuhtarom@uinsby.ac.id, ³junaenik1980@gmail.com

Abstract:

Vocabulary is a basic thing that must be mastered when learning English. However, the teaching methods employed by teachers may often be boring for grade 8 students, leading to a lack of motivation to learn new vocabulary, how teachers introduce vocabulary is crucial to how many words students can recognize and understand. This study aims to investigate the vocabulary teaching strategies used by teachers and the strategies preferred by grade 8 students at SMPN 25 Surabaya, focusing on the impact of these strategies on students' academic achievement. This qualitative research utilized questionnaires and interviews with both teachers and students to gather data. The data analysis of data from interviews and questionnaires involved a systematic approach. Including transcription and coding of the responses. The teacher employs various vocabulary teaching strategies, including games like the word chain game, which fosters an interactive learning environment and helps students understand and remember new vocabulary by relating it to other materials, such as tenses. Students express a preference for digital media, such as videos and games, noting that these methods enhance their understanding and engagement. They also highlighted the effectiveness of conversation practice in the form of role-playing for vocabulary acquisition, although some strategies, such as using movies and songs, were not utilized in their lessons.

Keywords: *Teaching, Teaching Strategies, Vocabulary*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learners that have a limited vocabulary can really hold them back when it comes to expressing their thoughts, whether in spoken or written. When students have limited words, it not only makes it harder for them to understand what they hear or read, but it also affects their ability to communicate in everyday situations. Whether someone is learning their first language or a second language, vocabulary is crucial for effective communication. Learning new words can be challenging for everyone whether they are native speakers trying to expand their vocabulary on second language (L2) learners facing a completely new set of words. It is not just about memorizing words but also about understanding the meaning behind them and how they fit into different contexts. Learning vocabulary involves grasping the details, nuances, and subtle differences in meaning that can vary significantly from one language to another. Because vocabulary instruction can be complex, it is important for teachers to use strategies that help students practice using language in real-life situations. This way learners can become more confident and skilled in their second or additional languages. With this understanding of how vocabulary and language learning, research questions that can be developed:

1. What vocabulary teaching strategies do teacher use?
2. What vocabulary teaching strategies do students prefer?

Vocabulary is really important for learning a language, but many students find it challenging to master. This struggle often gets worse because some teaching strategies don't connect with students' needs. Vocabulary learning is not simply a matter of



memorizing word lists or definitions; it requires a deeper engagement with the language and the ability to use new vocabulary in meaningful and authentic context (Nasri, 2022). Without the right teaching strategies, students may find it difficult to retain new words or use them correctly in speech and writing. One of the primary reasons students struggle with vocabulary acquisition is the overwhelming amount of vocabulary they are expected to learn, to particularly in second language learning context (Nurislam et al., 2023). For example, English language learners must not only learn thousands of new words but also grasp the often-subtle differences in meaning, usage, and register that native speakers intuitively understand. This can be particularly daunting when students are presented with high-frequency words or academic vocabulary that is essential for academic success but may be difficult for them to understand without proper instruction.

In addition to the large number of words students need to learn, they also face challenges with the complexity of those words. Some advanced words can be especially tough to grasp, particularly if students introduced without enough context or explanation. Because of this, students may have difficulty to remembering or using these words correctly when they speak or write. To help students overcome these strategies, teachers need to use strategies that not only introduce new vocabulary effectively but also the strategies that students can understand and use new words in real-life situations.

The existence of student challenges when learning vocabulary shows that teaching strategies can affect students' language skills. traditional vocabulary teaching strategies, such as memorizing words or repetitive drills, are more helpful for students in recognizing new vocabulary (Teng, 2020), but not only that because there are also students who think that interactive and interesting strategies can make vocabulary lessons more effective and enjoyable.

The teaching strategies that best in helping students remembering and using the words have become the focus of this research. There are teaching strategies that directly explain the meaning and how to use the word. There is also learning that is associated with broad language activities. As explained by Teng (2020) that teachers must focus on high level words that are important to use when communicating and gaining knowledge. By teachers using words that are relevant to students' lives in learning, that is where teachers can make learning more meaningful for students. Teachers also need to apply receptive and productive strategies. The use of these two combinations can help students better understand the words they learn and be able to use it in real-life situations.

Effective vocabulary teaching strategies have been found in several studies. Strategies such as memorization, presentation, use of pictures, flashcards, games, translation, and dictionaries are the most common strategies used by teachers (Munawwarah, 2021). This is shown by Delmayanti & Al Hafizh (2013) that the use of translation, dictionary, game, and storytelling methods is considered effective. Which is then supported by Farizawati (2016) who said that the use of teaching methods such as translation, dictionary, games involves students and makes learning more interactive.



These strategies can help students understand not only the meaning of newly acquired words but also the use of these words in real contexts.

Games such as crosswords, jigsaw puzzles, and vocabulary bingo are effective for young learners or students who are used to learning using interactive media (Ramadani, 2015). Using a variety of games can make vocabulary learning more fun and interesting. For visual learners, flashcards and the use of images are the right tools to make it easier for them to remember vocabulary. Flashcards can also be used as a tool for effective memorization techniques in vocabulary learning (Priyanti, 2021). Although memorization is often considered as a passive technique, memorization can be very beneficial when combined with repetition and recall. Reviewing words that students have learned makes their memories stronger and the new vocabulary is sure to stick for a long time.

There is also another way to teach vocabulary, storytelling. A series of new words that form a story is something that gives students context and meaning (Delmayanti & Al Hafizh, 2013). By telling stories, teachers show students how the words can be related to each other. This can improve students' ability to use new words in writing or speaking. Students who prefer a structured approach will be more suited to traditional vocabulary teaching such as dictionaries and translation exercises. Both are considered to help students understand the meaning of words clearly (Farizawati, 2016). By using a dictionary, in addition to looking up unfamiliar words, students can also learn the definition, pronunciation, and even the use of the word. This can improve students' overall language skills.

This research aims to explore and analyze the vocabulary teaching strategies that teachers use and compare them to the strategies that students prefer. By looking at both teachers' and students' perspective, we can figure out which strategies work best for different types of learning styles. This understanding allows teachers to adapt their methods to better meet their students' needs. Knowing what students prefer is important for creating an effective learning experience. When students are engaged and active in their vocabulary learning, they more likely to remember what they have learned for the long time.

2. METHOD

The research is qualitative research. According to Cresswell (2013), in qualitative research, the researcher collects data from study participants and develops forms or protocols for data collection as part of the study process. The purpose of the research is to collect data about vocabulary teaching strategies that the teacher used from 8th-grade students and teacher through questionnaires and interviews with a focus on the students' preferred vocabulary teaching strategies. Subject of this research are English teacher of SMPN 25 Surabaya and 8th grade students of SMPN 25 Surabaya, researcher choose 1 class contain of 34 students to answer the questionnaire and 12 students to be interviewed.



The method of the questionnaire is based on previous studies, literature reviews, and observing the class. The researcher used a Likert scale to identify and categorize students' preferred vocabulary teaching strategies. The method of interview is based on earlier research and literature reviews. In order to have the flexibility to ask additional questions to the respondents and their answers, the researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews.

The data analysis for the interview used transcribing, coding the keywords, and describing the code (Creswell, 2013). While the questionnaire, due researcher used Google Forms to distribute the questionnaire, the analysis was already given by Google Forms in the form of diagrams that showed the categories of the answers.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Used by The Teacher

Based on the interview with the teacher, the researcher obtained data that the teacher used games as a vocabulary teaching strategy. One of primary strategies highlighted by the teacher was the use of games as a tool for vocabulary instruction. For instance, a word chain game, the teacher gives a theme then each student mentions one word and the word cannot be the same as their friends' words. This activity not only encourages students to think quickly and creatively but also fosters an atmosphere of collaboration and learning from one another. The word chain game is an engaging method for reinforcing vocabulary. The teacher connects the word chain game activity to other language materials, such as tenses material. After all the students mention their vocabulary, the teacher will give an example of how to put the word into a sentence but before that the teacher always makes sure that the students understand the words that have been mentioned. This process is essential for helping students move from simply learning individual words to actually using them in real-life conversations.

As Gultom et al. (2022) and Nasri (2022) pointed out, using games in vocabulary learning is not only enjoyable but also creates an engaging and interactive environment that enhances language education. For example, the chain word game allows students to learn from each other's vocabulary and introduces them to new words while playing the game. This game allows students to learn from each other and is a place where they can discover words, they may not be familiar with. The collaborative nature of the game encourages students to actively participate and pay attention to their classmates, which increases engagement. Additionally, using themes in the word chain game helps students to organize their thoughts and vocabulary around a specific topic. This strategy is beneficial because it reflects real-world situations where language is often used in context, depending on the topic of conversation or discussion.

In addition to games, the teacher also used a strategy called observation and reporting, which involves group activities that supports contextual learning. In this strategy, students observe their surroundings or to do a specific activity and then report back on what they have seen or experienced. This strategy is effective for



teaching vocabulary because it encourages students to connect new words with real-life situations. When students observe and report, they are not just learning vocabulary but are connecting words and their real-world reference and helps deepen the meanings of new vocabulary and makes it easier for them to recall and use these words in the future.

Contextual learning, as Nasri (2022) pointed out, is particularly beneficial because it allows students to see the relevance of the vocabulary they are learning. By linking new words to real-life situations, students are more likely to understand and remember them. For instance, if students are asked to observe their school and report on what they see, they might learn new vocabulary related to school facilities, people in school, school activities, or school supplies. This vocabulary is immediately contextualized, which makes it easier for students to recall and use these words in the future.

Moreover, the group-based nature of the observation and reporting activity encourages collaboration among students. When working in groups, students can share their observations and learn from one another. This peer-learning aspect is crucial because it exposes students to a wider range of vocabulary and perspectives that they might encounter if working individually. It also fosters a sense of community in the classroom, as students work together to complete the task. Group work encourages communication, which in turn requires the use of language, thus providing more opportunities for students to practice their speaking and listening skills while acquiring new vocabulary.

The teacher's strategy of conducting observation activities outside the classroom is noteworthy. Learning that takes place outside of the traditional classroom setting can be highly engaging for students to a variety of real-world contexts. Outdoor learning is interactive, which makes it an effective way to teach vocabulary. It also caters to different learning styles. For visual learners, seeing objects or actions in the real world can help solidify their understanding of new vocabulary. For kinesthetic learners, physical moving around and interacting with the environment can make the learning into the vocabulary curriculum, the teacher is addressing the diverse needs of students and providing them with multiple avenues for understanding and retaining new words. Additionally, outdoor learning can make vocabulary acquisition more relevant to students' lives. When students learn words in the context of their own environment, they are more likely to see the value of the vocabulary and to use it in their daily lives. For example, learning the names of plants, animals, or objects they encounter outside of school gives students practical reason to remember these words, as they are words they might use in conversations with friends or family.

The strategies employed by the teacher such as the use of games, observation, and contextual learning are highly effective in promoting vocabulary acquisition. These methods not only make learning fun and engaging but also ensure that students are actively involved in the learning process. By connecting vocabulary learning with grammar learning, learning between students (acquiring vocabulary



from each other), and learning outside the classroom shows that teachers implement an interactive learning environment and it can encourage students' understanding of new vocabulary deeper. These strategies are supported by Deny and Fahriany (2020) who highlighted that it is important for teachers to make vocabulary learning more meaningful, relevant, and interesting for students. If students can use vocabulary in real-world situations, that is where they can see how the vocabulary they learn is used in everyday life.

3.2 Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Preferred by Students

Each student has their own learning style and students will tend to succeed when learning vocabulary if the teaching strategy is in match with their learning style (Nurislam et al., 2023). For example, there are some students who like vocabulary learning with interactive activities such as group discussions, games, or role-playing because these activities are considered fun for students and can help them practice new words in real context. However, there are also students who prefer more traditional strategies, such as using dictionaries, translation exercises, or memorization techniques because for students these strategies help them in understanding and remembering new vocabulary. For example, using dictionaries allows students to look up definitions, synonyms, and usage examples on their own. This process not only helps students a deeper understanding of each word better but also encourages students to actively searching for information and making connections with other words they already know.

The vocabulary teaching strategies used by teachers can help students understand the new vocabulary more easily. However, it is still necessary to know what kind of strategies students like. The results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that as many as 19 students consider that vocabulary learning using digital media can help them understand new vocabulary. As stated by Deni and Fahriany (2020) that the use of videos is important for students with auditory and visual learning styles, making learning more interactive and fun. Students interviewed by the researcher also reported that summarizing the content of videos and then presenting their summaries in front of the class further helped them internalize the new vocabulary. The use of multimedia resources such as video appeals to students who learn best through auditory or visual input, when students watch videos, they are exposed to both visual representations of words and audio pronunciation, which helps reinforce their understanding of vocabulary in context. The combination of seeing and hearing words in action allows these learners to make stronger connections between the vocabulary and its meaning. The act summarizing forces students to think critically about the words they have learned and how to use them effectively. Moreover, presenting their summaries to the class encourages students to practice speaking the new vocabulary, thus enhancing both their comprehension and production skills.

Teachers believe that learning with games makes the teaching and learning process more fun, increases student engagement, and makes the learning experience more interactive and effective (Gultom, et al. (2022), Nasri, 2022). Likewise, the



students said, that as many as 17 students agreed that the use of games during learning made it easier for them to understand the material, especially in vocabulary acquisition. It also supports the teacher's statement that using games as a learning strategy which is then connected to related material. This supports the idea that playful learning environments can effectively foster vocabulary acquisition, as students are more likely to be engaged and attentive when they are having fun.

In addition to games, students also mentioned that they consider that learning with conversation practice, particularly through role-playing, helped students to add new vocabulary besides that it can improve speaking skills. By engaging in role-play activities, students are able to use new words in conversation, making the learning process more dynamic and practical. Role-playing scenarios provide a safe space for students to experiment with new vocabulary and apply it in real-life. This strategy helps students become confident in using new words, which is important for both language acquisition and communicative competence.

Although the strategies used by the teacher were successful, students indicated that there were some strategies that they found very helpful when learning new vocabulary that were not or had never been used by their teacher. For example, many students said that they would like to be able to learn vocabulary through movies, short films, or songs. Students felt that these media provided the impression of relevant learning experience that is not always found in textbooks or formal lessons. Watching movies or listening to songs in the language being learned (target language) can help students see vocabulary in a real context and they will hear how the words are used in everyday conversation. Students also added that the use of more varied strategies and interesting games was still rarely used by teachers and this sometimes made students bored during lessons which then had an impact on not being motivated to learn English, especially in vocabulary acquisition.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, learning vocabulary is an important thing to consider when learning a new language. It also means that the right teaching strategy is also important because students can benefit from teaching strategies that match their individual learning styles. There are students who prefer interactive activities such as games, discussions, and role-playing, while other students prefer traditional strategies such as using dictionaries, translation exercises, and memorizing. In addition, the use of digital media and real-life contexts can also help students learn new understanding of vocabulary such as from using movies or songs. Therefore, teachers must also adjust the teaching strategies that they consider effective in accordance with the students' learning styles and meet students' learning needs.

The strategies used by teachers can directly affect students in understanding and remembering new insights. What teachers need to remember is that not all students have the same learning style, they have different levels of proficiency and their own learning methods. Therefore, there is a need to correlate the strategies that teachers use to teach vocabulary with the methods that students find most effective. By



understanding students' preferences and adapting teaching strategies accordingly, teachers can create a more personalized learning experience that meets the needs of all learners and promotes greater success in vocabulary acquisition.

From the data from interviews and questionnaires, it can be concluded that teachers have used vocabulary teaching strategies following what students consider to make it easier for them to deepen their vocabulary, such as using word games, digital media in the form of videos related to the material, as well as direct explanation by the teacher to students by connecting the material to the surrounding situation. There are still some teaching strategies that students consider to make it easier for them but have never been used by teacher such as the use of digital media in the form of movies, short movies, and songs.

However, there was a slight contrast between teachers' and students' opinions regarding vocabulary teaching strategies that had been used in class. Teachers said that strategies such as playing games and out-of-class learning had been done to increase vocabulary but some students said they felt that there had never been any vocabulary learning that used games or out-of-class learning. Students said that the strategy most often used by teachers was summarizing and presenting the summary in front of the class.

Teaching strategies that suit students' learning styles and make it easier for students can increase students' motivation in learning English, which is currently still considered difficult for some students, so that teachers always try as much as possible to use teaching strategies that make it easier for students, especially in vocabulary acquisition but it would be better if teachers could explore other strategies by approaching students which can be started from knowing about students' learning styles. That way, students would feel involved and the future teaching-learning process would be more enjoyable and effective for both students and teachers.

5. REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE. <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB23657151>
- Delmayanti, D., & Al-Hafizh, M. (2013). Teaching Vocabulary to Junior High School Students Through Snake -WORD GAME. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 1(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.24036/JELT.V1I3.1758>.
- Deni, R., & Fahriany, F. (2020). Teachers' Perspective on Strategy for Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners. *VISION: Journal for Language and Foreign Language Learning*, 9(1), 47–60. <https://doi.org/10.21580/VJV9I14862>.
- Farizawati, F. (2016). Using Storytelling for Teaching Vocabulary. *English Education Journal*, 7(2), 246–259. <http://www.jurnal.unsyiah.ac.id/EEJ/article/view/3737>
- Garwan, H. N., & Priyanti, H. (2021). An Analysis of the Teachers' Strategies in Teaching English Vocabulary at the Seventh Grade of MTsN 7 Kebumen in the Academic Year 2019/2020. *English Education and Literature Journal (E-Jou)*, 1(02), 72–84. <https://doi.org/10.53863/ejou.v1i02.141>.
- Gultom, R. J., Simarmata, J. N., Purba, O. R., & Saragih, E. (2022). Teachers Strategies in Teaching English Vocabulary in Junior High School. *JOURNAL OF ENGLISH*



LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION, 7(1), 9–15.

<https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v7i1.182>.

Munawwarah, M. (2021) *Teachers' Strategies in Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners*. [UIN Ar-Raniry]. <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/16985>.

Nasri, C. (2022). Effective Vocabulary Teaching Strategies to Enhance EFL Learners' Reading Abilities: A Case Study. *Journal of Education, Language Innovation, and Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 66–78. <https://doi.org/10.37058/jelita.v1i2.5196>.

Nurislam, D. P., Waluyo, U., & Putera, L. J. (2023). Exploring English Teacher's Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary: A Study in Selected Junior High Schools In Central Lombok. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 8(3), 1013–1025. <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v8i3.10734>.

Rahmadhani, P. A. (2015). Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners at LIA English Course. *TELL-US Journal*, 1(2), 1–8.

Teng, F. (2014). Strategies for Teaching and Learning Vocabulary. *Beyond Words*, 2(2), 40–56.