

IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF WORD WALL STRATEGY TO THE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA GKPI PAMEN MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

Learning vocabulary is important for learners because the mastery of certain words would motivate them to express themselves clearly. In reality, vocabulary becomes a problem to almost all of students at any level of education. This study is aimed to improve students' vocabulary mastery through Word Wall Strategy. This strategy is one of appropriate strategies in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The subject of this study is the students of Class X A of SMA GKPI Pamen Medan in the Academic Year of 2017/2018. This study was conducted by applying Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was performed in two cycles (cycle I and cycle II) and each cycle consisted of three meetings, excluding pretest and posttest. The instruments of collecting data are vocabulary tests, field notes, observation sheet, documentation, and questionnaire. The results of vocabulary tests showed that the mean of the students' score increased continuously from pretest is 59 with 15% of students who got score ≥ 75 , in formative test in cycle I is 67.63 with 45% of students who got score ≥ 75 , and in the posttest is 83.33 with 91% of students who got score ≥ 75 . It showed that there is a significant mean score increase from pretest to posttest, namely about 76%. The field notes, observation sheet, photograph evidence and questionnaire showed that the students are interested in the learning teaching processes through the application Word Wall Strategy. It was found that Word Wall Strategy could improve students' vocabulary mastery. It is suggested that teachers of English apply Word Wall strategy as one of the strategies in teaching vocabulary mastery.

Key words: *Vocabulary Mastery, Word Wall Strategy, Classroom Action Research*

INTRODUCTION

English as an international language is spoken almost all over the world. In the global era, English plays an important role as communication used in many sectors of life, such as trading, bilateral relationship, politic, science, technology and many others. English has become the language used by many people over the world to connect and share with one another. Therefore, people should understand and master English in order to gain broader knowledge, information and technology. In order to be successful in learning English language, a learner must have positive language attitude. It is in line with Fakey's opinion (in Sari, 2016:38) who states that the matter of learner's attitude is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impacts on learning a language. Like other languages, English

also has vocabulary which is required to enrich the language use. Therefore, one should have adequate stock of vocabulary in order to communicate well.

Mastering vocabulary is the ability to get or to receive a lot of words. Having and mastering vocabulary make us easier to understand English texts well. It can also help us avoid making mistakes in understanding written texts. In order to understand the language, vocabulary is crucial to be mastered by the learner. Manullang, Lumban Raja, and Sari (2018:128) state that communication will not flow if one has only a small number of vocabularies. Therefore, it is obligatory for him to develop his vocabulary for better communication. Learning vocabulary is important for learners because the mastery of certain words would motivate them to express themselves clearly. Schmitt (2009: 21) states, "Teaching vocabulary must consider some principles by integrating the new one with the previous one". In reality, vocabulary becomes a problem to almost all of students at any level of education. It is advisable that teacher brings the real situation in the classroom by giving activities that support students to practice English (Turnip, Rumapea, and Sari, 2017:103). Vocabulary is assumed as one of the major difficult aspects of language to be mastered since there are many students who still struggle with mastering vocabulary. There are many reasons why students have problem in vocabulary. One of the most obvious is simply that they have problems in pronouncing the words and it makes them facts lazy to study English.

Based on the observation done by the writer to the tenth grade students of SMA GKPI Pamen Medan Class XA in the Academic Year of 2017/2018, it was found that the students faced many problems in learning vocabulary. The students showed that the difficulty of learning English comes from their vocabulary mastery. In addition, the writer found a problem about the students' vocabulary mastery such as difficulties in understanding the meanings of words. The factors that cause these problems are the way how English words are written is different from that they are pronounced, for example the word chaos is mistead of keias. Besides, the students lack of motivation in learning English.

The writer interviewed Mrs. ED, the English teacher at the school about the students' vocabulary mastery. She said that the students' vocabulary mastery was poor. It is difficult for them to master English vocabularies when they find difficult because they have only a few. The writer interviewed three students about that case. They are PS, AS and BA. They said that English is a difficult subject and many words of English are unfamiliar to them so they faced difficulties in mastering the English vocabularies.

These problems motivated the writer to find a strategy in order to solve them. The appropriate strategy for teaching English vocabularies is very important. The writers chose this strategy because some research findings have shown good results of teaching English vocabularies through word wall strategy and other advantages are students will be interested in this strategy because of learning while playing so that students do not get bored. The first research was conducted by Anggriani (2012) entitled *Improving Students' Vocabulary Achievement Through Word Walls Strategy*. The research findings show that the students' vocabulary mastery improved after word wall media was applied. The mean score of the students in the pretest is 59. After word wall media was applied the mean score of the students became 67,63 in post test cycle I and in the post test cycle II the mean score of the students became 83,33. She concluded that the implementation of word

wall media in teaching vocabulary could make the students active in the learning teaching process.

The second one was conducted by Istianto (2013) entitled *Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery Through Word Wall Media*. The research findings show that the students' vocabulary mastery improved after word wall media was applied. The mean score of the students in the pretest is 54,00. After word wall media was applied the mean score of the students became 81,07 in post test cycle I and in the post test cycle II the mean score of the students became 94. He concluded that the implementation of word wall media in teaching vocabulary could make the students active in the learning teaching process.

The third one was conducted by Sari (2015) entitled *The Making of Word Wall to Improve Elementary School Students English Vocabulary*. The research findings show that the students' vocabulary mastery improved after word wall media was applied. The mean score of the students in the pretest is 53. After word wall media was applied the mean score of the students became 73,4 in posttest cycle I and in the posttest cycle II the mean score of the students became 80,3. They concluded that the implementation of word wall media in teaching vocabulary could make the students active in the learning teaching process.

This study is important to conduct because if it is not conducted, teachers will not be able to know students' problems in mastering English vocabularies. If language teachers do not know the students' problem in mastering English vocabularies, so students will not get feedback from their teachers in order to improve their English vocabularies. Meanwhile if this study is conducted, it will give some positive impacts. As a result, teachers will be able to develop curriculum design and chose and appropriate treatment to help students improve students' vocabulary mastery. Considering the research background, the writers decided to conduct a research entitled *Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery through the Application of Word Wall Strategy to the Tenth Grade Students of SMA GKPI Pamen Medan*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important part of a language. In learning a language, students should have enough vocabularies to communicate. The more words the students learn, the more they can understand and express the language. Realizing the importance of vocabulary in learning English, a teacher should be able to apply an appropriate teaching technique to teach English vocabulary. The aims of using a variety of ways and teaching technique are to make the students understand the lesson easily, in learning teaching process they will enjoy and will not got bored.

Vocabulary is essential for students as their first step to go on studying English. Vocabulary is important because word carries the content of what we want to say. The more words we know, the more we are able to communicate. Mallery (1944:1) states, "Your vocabulary is the stock of words on which you can draw in expressing yourself". From the definition above, it is concluded that vocabulary is the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speaker's meaning.

Vocabulary Mastery

The vocabulary mastery is one of the important things in learning a new language. Grabe (2015:279) states, “Raising the students’ awareness of the new words that they encounter in texts represents an important learning goal. The students must be aware of the vocabularies”. It means that the students must be able to recognize its meaning and the pronunciation.

Mastering English vocabulary in the process of learning teaching English in Senior High School is very important. By having or mastering a stock of words, someone will be able to communicate with other people easily and fluently. Vocabulary as one of important component in learning English language cannot be ignored. Without mastering English vocabulary, the students cannot master English language easily.

Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary has such an important role in English as a foreign language in classroom, and it should therefore be part of the syllabus and taught on regular base. Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the learning teaching process takes places, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfactory results. The teachers should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. Teachers need to be able to master the material in order to be understood by students and make them interested and happy in the learning teaching process in the classroom.

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Thornbury (2002:13) states, “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary.

Communication is supported by large vocabularies mastery as a basic competence. It is difficult for the students to comprehend the spoken and written English without mastering English vocabularies. By having a lot of vocabularies, we can improve our English. Vocabulary buildings are very important in any language learning not only because it has a close correlation with the intellectual maturity of the learners but also it helps the learners improve the four language skills. The students are given an opportunity to analyze the new words that are enlarged in sentences.

Types of Vocabulary

Talking about vocabulary is necessary to present the types of vocabulary when one speaks to others. She needs some words to express her idea and desire or when she listens, she must be able to catch the meaning. Mittal and Rathore (2015:7) state, “There are four main types of vocabulary. The first is speaking vocabulary, the second is writing vocabulary, the thirth is listening vocabulary and the last is reading vocabulary”. Speaking vocabulary is the words we use in everyday talk at home or at work. Writing vocabulary is the words we use in notes,

letters, or any other kind of writing. It is somewhat larger because we have time to stop and find the right word. Listening vocabulary is still larger. It consists of words that we understand when we hear them. Learning vocabulary is the largest. It consists of all the words we recognize when we see them.

Strategy

Strategy is a method or a plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem. Brown (2001:210) states, “Strategy as specific methods of approaching a problem or task, mode of operation for achieving a particular end, planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information.” Language teachers are expected to know how to incorporate these implicit and explicit Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) into their lessons. Implicit learning is typically defined as acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation, and explicit learning is characterized by more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure. Explicit teacher instruction on intentional vocabulary learning strategies is also an area explored where by the teacher consciously teaches cognitive, meta-cognitive and socio strategies during regular lessons. Cognitive strategies are more limited of specific learning task and learning material itself, meta cognitive strategies involve planning learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one’s production or comprehension, and evaluation learning after an activity is completed and socio strategies have to be done with social mediating activity and interacting with others.

There are a number of strategies in teaching English specially to improve the students’ vocabulary mastery. They are (1) Mind mapping - this strategy teaches students the meaning of key concepts by helping them understand the essential attributes, qualities, or characteristics of a word’s meaning, (2) Missing Words – an adaptation of the cloze procedure – engages students in reading a selection with certain words deleted, and then predicting in writing the missing words. It helps students learn to draw upon prior knowledge, use meta-cognitive skills, think inferentially, and understand relationships, (3) Vocabulary notebook or journal - After reading or discussing, students keep track of their vocabulary development in a notebook or journal by recording how a word is used in different contexts, sketching what it means, and providing meaningful examples which links to their lives. Notebook and journals can be shared with peers, (4) Word wall strategy is organized alphabetically, with words printed on card stock, and taped or pinned to the wall/board. Teachers are encouraged to be creative in designing word wall so that it engages the students and enhances their learning. Building a word wall can be easily integrated into daily activities. Key words and/or terminologies relate to the lesson or unit of study can be added gradually as they are introduced. Word wall should be organized in a way that is useful to students with additions reflecting the skills or concepts being taught. The writers chose Word Wall strategy because it is one of appropriate strategies in order to improve students’ vocabulary mastery.

The Word Wall Strategy

A word wall is a literacy tool composed of an organized collection of words which are displayed in large visible letters on a wall, bulletin board, or

another display surface in a classroom. It helps to facilitate students to improve their vocabulary. It is definitely adaptable to any subject and any grade level and has been proven to be extremely effective learning and teaching tools. Tompkins (2002:622) states, “Word walls strategy is alphabetical list of words created in the classroom for the purpose of word study and vocabulary development”. The words are printed in a large font so that they are easily visible from all student seating areas. Additionally, when students use the word wall they become more conscious of words and definitions. This supports content comprehension. It also helps students become aware of vocabulary in the world around them. Words wall serves as a reference for students as they write or interact verbally. Types of word wall strategy and suggestion for displaying them are as follows:

a. High – frequency words

High – frequency words are the words that appear most often in printed materials. High – frequency words are hard for students to remember because they tend to be abstract, these words often present a special difficulty to early readers. The steps of high frequency words are:

- 1) Alphabetical list on large sheets of butcher paper.
- 2) Large bulletin boards into which individual words are added in alphabetical order.
- 3) Clotheslines which strung across the room into which large cards with a single alphabet letter are attached. Word cards are then stapled to the alphabet letter to form the word list for each letter.

b. Literature Word walls

Literature word wall including genres use in classroom ready to be hung complete with header. The forms of the literature word walls are :

- 1) Interesting, difficult, and unusual words from the story being the studied are placed in a pocked chart and arranged alphabetically.
- 2) The words may be arranged on a sheet of butcher paper in the shape of something related to the story like a covered wagon or hot – a ballon.
- 3) The words may be collected in a container that relates to the story such as a witch’s cauldron or miniature windmill.

c. Content – area word walls

The content – area word walls can be applied as follows:

- 1) Interesting words area written on cards and displayed on a pocket.
- 2) Words are collecting by entering them in the computer and printing out a large poster that is updated periodical.

The writers created high – frequency words which were used by students as a reference to write sentences. They were asked to pronounce and spell the words from the word walls. The writers guided the students to write down their own sentences.

The Advantages of Using Word Wall Strategy

There are many advantages that we can get in by using Word Wall strategy in teaching vocabulary. Word wall teaches students to recognize and to spell high frequency words, see patterns and relationship in words, build phonemic awareness skills, and apply phonics rules. Word wall also provides reference to support students during reading and writing activities. Students learn to be independent as

they use the word wall in daily activities. All the advantages of word walls strategy above helped the writers improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Steps in Implementing Word Wall Strategy

According to Thomkins (1997:12), there are three steps of implementing Word Wall strategy. They are: (1) Beginning word study, in this step the writer decides the format that will be used and begin by brainstorming. The writer arranges the words in alphabetical order to make the students easier to see the words, ask the students to write their words on their individual them on a wall or place them in a pocket chart, and ask the students to involve in selecting words to be added to the word walls. (2) The writer makes words accessible by putting them where every student can see them. The writer is selective about the words that go on the world wall. The writer tries to include words on the word walls that students will use most commonly. (3) Using the word walls, this step refers to the word walls whenever a word is discussed. The writer provides enough practice so that words are read and spelled automatically and makes sure that word walls are always spelled correctly.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This is Classroom Action Research (henceforth, CAR). Burns (2009:2) states, "Action research is a part of a broad movement that has been going on in education generally for some time. It is related to the ideas of reflective practice in the teacher as researcher". It means that CAR is a process of research done by the teacher for repairing and improving the learning teaching process in the classroom. Based on the definition above, the writers conclude that CAR is a form of research in which an idea in a social or educational situation is applied in order to improve something to be better, or to get real effect on the situations.

The Procedures of Classroom Action Research

The writers implemented CAR in carrying out the research. Burns (2009:8) states, "The steps in action research are planning, action, observation and reflection". The CAR model used by them was developed by Kemmis and McTaggart. This CAR was arranged into two cycles. They are cycle I and cycle II. Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns 2009: 7) state, "Action research typically involves four broad phases in a cycle of research. The four phases in a cycle are planning, action, observation and reflection". It can be seen in figure 3.1

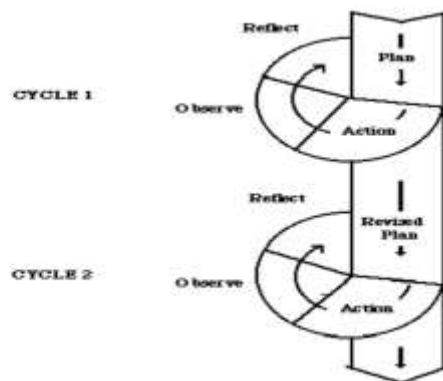


Figure 1. Cyclical Classroom Action Research (CAR) Model based on Kemmis & McTaggart (in Burns, 2009: 9)

Cycle I

Cycle I consists of four steps: planning, action, observation and reflection. They are described as the following.

1. Planning

In this phase, the writers identified all problems and develop a plan of action in order to bring about improvements in a specific area of the research context. The following are the forward-looking phases the writers considered: 1) What kind of investigation is possible between the realities and constraints of her teaching situation and 2) What potential instruments they thought are possible. In this study, the writers prepared everything which was needed during conducting the CAR. Some preparations are:

- a. Interviewing the students in order to obtain their problems in mastering English vocabularies,
- b. preparing the pretest as an instrument to collect the data about the students' vocabulary mastery before action/treatment was given,
- c. identifying the students' problems in learning vocabulary,
- d. preparing the suitable material,
- e. making lesson plans,
- f. designing the scenario of learning teaching process through Word Wall strategy,
- g. preparing equipment needed in the scenario of learning teaching and process, and
- h. developing an observation sheet.

The preparations above were done by the writers in order to collect the data of the students' vocabulary mastery before action was given. The writers also did the preliminary observation in order to find the students' problems on vocabulary mastery.

2. Action

After forming the planning, the writers implemented the Word Wall strategy. Based on the discussion with the teacher before, the first writer acted as the teacher in the class while the second and the third writers acted as observers who observed the learning teaching activities, namely pre activities, whilst activities, and post activities. In the pre activities, the teacher gave an English text and the students read it. The students identified ten difficult words from the text and then the teacher selected difficult words from the students' words in order to be added to the word wall. In the whilst activities, the teacher pronounced the difficult words from the word wall and the students repeated after the teacher. The teacher asked the students to make a sentence from each word from the word wall. The teacher and students kept the word wall interactive and then students matched the words with the right meaning. In the post activities, the teacher gave a test which was constructed in the form of multiple choices consisting of 25 items with options: A, B, C and D and the score of each correct answer is four points.

3. Observation

Observation was done at the same time with action. The second and the third writers observed the teacher's and students' activities and took notes every finding in the classroom activities, such as the students' activeness and the teacher's

ability in managing the class. All the notes were used as a consideration for the next cycle. The collaborators (the second and the third writers observed the classroom activities by using observation sheets which were prepared in the planning phase).

4. Reflection

Reflection is the final phase. After completing planning, acting, and observing phases, the writers analyzed and evaluated the results or the findings (quantitative and qualitative data) in order to find out the strength and weakness of the implementation of Word Wall strategy in improving students' vocabulary mastery. If the result of the first cycle was unsuccessful, the writers continued to the second cycle with the same procedures and some adaptations.

Cycle II

After conducting all phases in cycle I, the writers conducted cycle II in order to make some improvement for getting better results. This cycle was focused on solving the problems that were found in cycle I. The second cycle also has four steps. They are: planning, action, observation and reflection. The second cycle was revised from the first cycle. This cycle is also focused on increasing the number of the students who get the standard score ≥ 75 in the first cycle.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings show that Word Wall strategy could help students improve their vocabulary mastery. By applying this strategy, the mean score of the students in vocabulary tests kept increasing from the pre test to the post test. The students' mean score in the pre test is 59, 67.63 in the formative test, and 83.33 in the post test. The qualitative data analysis showed that the students agreed that Word Wall strategy could help them improve their vocabulary mastery. The students really enjoyed the class. They are very interested, enthusiastic, and active during the learning teaching processes of vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the results of the students' responses in the questionnaire. They all agreed that the use of Word Wall strategy could helped them improve their vocabulary mastery. In brief, they experienced an enjoyable learning atmosphere through the application of Word Wall strategy. Implementing Word Wall strategy can be a solution for them in facing difficulties in learning English vocabulary.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

After discussing and analyzing the data, the writers drew the following conclusions:

- 1) The application of Word Wall strategy can improve the students' vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from the students' mean score which increased continually from the pre test, formative test, and post test. The students' mean score in the pre test is 59, 67.63 in the formative test, and 83.33 in the post test. Meanwhile, the students' mean score percentage who passed Mastery Minimum Criteria (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM)*) from the pre test is 15%, the formative test is 45%, and the post test is 91%. To sum up, the application of Word Wall strategy is effective to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

- 2) Based on the results of the field notes, observation sheets, and questionnaire, it was found that the students felt overjoyed and enthusiastic in the learning teaching processes of vocabulary mastery. In brief, they really enjoyed learning English vocabularies through the application of Word Wall strategy.

Suggestions

In this part, the writers would like to give some suggestions as follows:

- 1) The English teachers should be more creative and innovative to select an appropriate strategy to deliver their learning materials. They may apply Word Wall strategy to get their students' interest and motivation in learning teaching English, especially in learning teaching English vocabulary mastery.
- 2) The students must have excellent English vocabulary so that they have great English proficiency. They may use Word Wall strategy as one of alternatives to improve their vocabulary mastery.
- 3) The research findings are expected to be able to provide other writers valuable information about how to improve students' vocabulary mastery through the application of Word Wall strategy so that they can carry out much deeper similar studies.

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