

USING STORYTELLING FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY

By
Farizawati*

Universitas Jabal Ghafur, Sigli, Aceh

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of using the Storytelling Technique for teaching vocabulary to fifth grade students at Primary School, SDN 1 Peukan Pidie, Sigli. An experimental design was used in this study and the data was collected through a test as the instrument. The population of this study was all the fifth grade students at SDN 1 Peukan Pidie, Sigli and two classes were taken as the sample, one as the experimental class and the other as the control. The experimental class was taught using the Storytelling Technique, whilst the control class was taught by memorizing words. A pre-test and a post-test were used to collect the data. The data was then analyzed using statistical processes. The results showed that the mean score of the post-test from the experimental class was significantly higher than that from the control class ($77 > 65$). Furthermore, the result of the t-test from the experimental class was higher than that from the control class ($10.98 > 7.45$). These results showed that the students taught using the Storytelling Technique achieved better scores than those taught by using the Memorizing Words Technique.

Key Words: *Storytelling, Vocabulary, Young Learners.*

INTRODUCTION

Talking about language means talking about vocabulary. Language is very important for communication in human life. In other words, there is no life without communication. After humans are born, they start to use sounds to communicate. For example: when babies are hungry and thirsty, they cry and make sounds to indicate they want for

* Corresponding author: farizawati83@gmail.com

something. They use baby sounds or baby language, and that language is formed by some simple words or vocabulary. Moreover, vocabulary is present in all aspects of language (speaking, writing, reading, and listening). In Indonesia, English has been taught from elementary school to university level. Based on the 2006 curriculum (Depdiknas, 2006) English at elementary school is taught to serve the needs of the local community. At this level students learn English for the first time. In this case, the skills of the teachers are very important, not only for speaking, writing, listening, and reading, but also for motivating their students. Actually, young learners are very easily influenced and motivated in the teaching-learning process. Learning all of these skills depends on the techniques and the stimulation or enthusiasm and skills of their teachers. Based on the basic competencies from the 2006 curriculum, vocabulary is probably the most important aspect for learning speaking, reading, listening and writing English ESL: Without mastering vocabulary, students cannot understand and cannot say anything especially like telling a story.

Vocabulary is one of the elements of language that cannot be separated from learning English. It is hard to master the four language skills without mastering or understanding a number of words because vocabulary is a fundamental of language learning. This is an important conclusion because it affects the way in which learners deal with language learning. It affects the amount of learning expected, the type of learning, receptive or productive needed. Nation (1990:4) states that "the goal that teachers or learners set for learning English will affect the way vocabulary is selected".

Vocabulary is one of several basic aspects of language along with grammar, collocation, structure and continuity in content plus enunciation, speed, emphasis, vocal variety and body language for speaking. Vocabulary plays an important role in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Developing the vocabulary of students is one of the most important responsibilities for an English ESL teacher. Vocabulary should be taught from the beginning; that is from kindergarten on to give students the best chance to learn English. The techniques used by their teachers make English lessons more exciting if they are related to the real world. Thus outdoor activity techniques can be used for teaching vocabulary using pictures, songs, games, puzzles and so on. When the writer was doing preliminary research at SDN I Peukan Pidie, Sigli, she met with some problems both from the teachers and from the students. Firstly from the English teachers, one English

teacher told the writer that the teachers do not use various methods and techniques. When the writer asked some teachers about the teaching techniques they used they said that they do not have enough books about teaching-learning methods besides they did not have enough time to read since they were very busy with the administration, training and other educational programs for the school. Secondly from the students, most of them could not talk about their daily activities in English. This meant that they had not mastered much vocabulary. When the writer talked with the students, some of them told the writer that they really wanted to be able to study English more but the facilities at the school were very limited, for example, there were few books and dictionaries: The background and environment of the students also influenced their English ability. Most of the students came from relatively poor families and many of the parents did not care about their learning English because they did not fully understand the advantages of learning English.

Why did the writer want to apply the Storytelling Technique? This is because children, and indeed everyone, love stories. Young children are great at mimicking and imitating sounds is a natural part of children's play and culture. Young children are less self-conscious and not afraid of making mistakes, and they are naturally curious and want to try out new things.

This research is also supported by other previous research. One was a library research qualitative study by Arum (2013). It focused on the desires of students to learn by using the Storytelling Technique to increase children's interest in reading and adding vocabulary and was done at the Islamic Kindergarten DPW at the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta. The result of her research was that storytelling was proven to increase the interest of children to read especially in mastering vocabulary when using a book as the media.

A second action research study was conducted by Rahmawati (2013) at SDN Mangunsari, Semarang with the second grade students. She wanted to increase students' ability in understanding folktales through Storytelling Technique by using *Wayang* cartoons. The results showed that the Storytelling Technique could improve the ability of the students to understand the tales in the stories.

The purpose of this present study was to find out if there would be any significant difference in the increase in vocabulary of students taught using the Storytelling Technique compared with those taught by the Memorizing Words technique. The population for the study was the

fifth grade students at SDN I Peukan Pidie, Sigli. The main purpose of the study was to answer the following research problem: Is there any significant difference in learning vocabulary between students taught by using the Storytelling Technique and those taught by the Memorizing Words technique?

This study focused on using the Storytelling Technique in teaching vocabulary to young learners, students in the Fifth Grade at SDN I Peukan Pidie, Sigli. The experimental group students sat in a group, listened to and discussed the story, and retold the story within their group. In the discussions, the students got new vocabulary from the story. After that they had to retell the story using their own words. The learning material was about *"My Hobby, Are You Hungry, Parts of the Body and a Monster"*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Vocabulary

Langan (1997:451) says that a good vocabulary is a vital part of effective communications. A large stock of words can make a better speaker, listener, reader, and writer. In learning English, students shall understand what they should do when they receive a language assignment. They should be guided to understand the assignment and make it a habit to use more new language to enrich their vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the elements in language that cannot be separated from learning English. It is hard to master the four language skills without mastering or understanding a large number of words, because this is fundamental to learning a language.

Vocabulary is a number of words or phrases; that are usually arranged and translated systematically. Ur (1996:60) states that vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we use to teach in the foreign language. Wright (1995:697) defined vocabulary as follows: (1) a stock of words used by a person, class of people, profession, etc. (2) a collection or list of words, usually in alphabetical order and defined.

From the definitions above, we can conclude that vocabulary is a number of words or phrases which can help learners to communicate and understand the teaching-learning process of a language. People can say a lot with words. There is not much you can say with grammar only. This means that, vocabulary is an important element needed for the four skills in English: reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Accordingly, Nation (1990:51) states that vocabulary is not just words. When talking about vocabulary, it includes meanings and using words in appropriate structures. There were four different ways to think about words: Meaning, when a new word is found, the first thing we need to know is: what does it mean? Pronunciation, when a new word is learned, we need to learn how to say it well. Make sure of the stressing of each syllable. Use a dictionary or ask the teacher how to pronounce the words. Collocation, collocation is the way to combine a word with other words. There is little point in knowing the word *risk*, unless one also knows other words which go with it via *take a risk*, *to risk all/everything*, *risk-reward-ratio*. Thus *take* collocates with *risk* as a noun, *all* collocates with *risk* as a verb and *risk-reward-ratio* is a collocation from economics. In the same way *deep* and *shallow* are adjectives which collocate with water and also with emotions. Expressions, expressions are groups of two, three, four or more words which always go together. For example, when someone is surprised by something, he could widen his eyes and open his mouth and could say something like for example, “*WOOW!!!*” Or “*What a beauty!*” and talking about it later he may say, “*You’re not going to believe this but this really happened...*”.

Storytelling

“Storytelling is the art or craft of narration of stories in verse and/or prose, as performed or led by one person before a live audience; the stories narrated may be spoken, chanted, or sung, with or without musical, pictorial, and other accompaniment and may be learned from oral, printed or mechanically recorded sources, one of its purposes may be that of entertainment” (Wright, 1995:4). Bailey (2005:18) says that “storytelling is the art of sharing aloud mythology and legend, fables, folk, and fairy tales, family stories and original tales in the oral tradition”. Moreover, Shorrocks (1995:60) states that “storytelling Technique is the act of using voice and body language to communicate a narrative directly from one person to another”. In addition, story is the full sequence of events in a work of fiction as we imagine them to have taken place, in the order in which they would have occurred in life. Furthermore, Leung (2004:24) argues that “storytelling is about organizing information into a meaningful context, conveying emotions and building community”. Based on those definitions, it can be inferred that Storytelling is retelling a literary text that has a sequence of events

including the act of using voice and body language to communicate the text from one person to others in colorful ways to create scenes.

There are various types of stories (Munden & Myhre, 2007:83): myths, epics, legends, folktales, fairy tales, fables, ballads and religious stories. In conclusion, stories can be used in ESL learning to teach the language, to entertain, and to open a window on cultures. When using stories in the classroom, teachers shall consider the importance of the story, the characteristics of a good story, and the types of stories which are most suitable for the students being taught. Teaching English through stories needs good technique. According to Wright (1995:10), “the teacher should consider technique before telling the story, the ways of the beginning, the manner, the voice, the language, the accent and the body”. Teachers can use stories to teach language and to introduce other subjects such as culture and society. Stories from around the world are excellent to use in the classroom, but teachers also need to use stories from the students’ own culture and heritage. “Using local or national stories insures that the students know their own background culture indeed they may already know the story” (Mixon & Temu, 2006:14). The Storytelling Technique offers not only personal experiences but also universal experiences encompassing world cultures. Through the Storytelling Technique students acquire cultural literacy to make their language learning meaningful. According to Thompkins and Hoskisson (1995:316), “stories give meaning to the human experience, and they are a powerful way of knowing and learning”.

Procedures of Teaching with Storytelling Technique

There are some steps that can be followed by teachers in applying Storytelling. In his works, Harmer (2001: 35) explains the steps as the following.

The teacher divides the teaching materials into two parts. She will write the topic on the whiteboard and ask the students what they know regarding to the topic. Then she puts the students into pairs, the first part of the material is given to the first pair in a group while the second material will be given to the second pair in the group. Then the students are asked to read or listen to their respective parts. After that, she asks the students to take notes and enlist some keywords or phrases in their respective parts. The number of words or phrases can be adjusted in accordance with the length of reading text. While remembering or paying attention to parts that have been read or heard, each student tries

to compose other parts that have not been read or heard. The students' own version of the composition is, of course, not necessarily the same with the actual material. When they complete their writing, some of them may be given the opportunity to read their essay results. This activity can be done with a discussion on the topic of the instruction material. The discussions can be carried out between a couple (a pair) or with the whole class. In accordance with the explanation, it can be clearly seen that Storytelling Technique is closely related to using vocabulary. The main reason is that because students are actively engaged in oral production by telling and retelling the story.

The Advantages of Storytelling

Students develop an understanding about stories as they read and write stories during learning activities at school. Jalongo (2000:143) says sharing stories with students is an essential part of their growth in literacy because stories:

- (1) increase students' knowledge and understanding of other races and beliefs,
- (2) introduce students to a wider range of story sharing experiences,
- (3) stimulate students' imagination,
- (4) expand vocabulary and provide students with good models of structure, usage, and enunciation,
- (5) encourage students to listen, concentrate, and follow event-structured material,
- (6) challenge assumptions and introduce new ideas in a non-threatening way,
- (7) develop students' thinking skills,
- (8) nurture and encourage a sense of humor, and
- (9) increase students appreciation of literature and
- (10) reinforce cultural values.

Jianing (2007:61) provided some reasons that make the Storytelling Technique a recommended technique for use in EFL speaking classrooms, they are:

- (1) Stories can motivate and make students interested because the contexts of the stories can attract listeners and promote students' attention to communicate,
- (2) Stories are regarded as the models of language and treasures of the culture because for hundreds of years thousands of stories have been created. So, from the stories, learners at various language

levels and ages can find suitable stories to read and to tell. Besides, stories are inexpensive and can be easily accessed,

- (3) The lively and real life contexts created in a story can encourage readers and listeners, especially students to talk and discuss the stories with each other.

It means that the speaker can ask the listener to tell and communicate a story because they have own favorite story in their life that is always shared and communicated to their friends, either at school or other place.

Young Learners and Their Characteristics

Young language learners are those who learn a foreign or second language during the first six or seven years of formal schooling or even earlier. In the education systems of most countries, young learners are children who are in primary or elementary school. "In the terms of age, young learners are between the ages of approximately five and twelve, most young language learners can be called bilingual" (McKay, 2011:1). "There were three general categories of characteristics of young learners: growth, literacy and vulnerability" (McKay, 2011:5). Children bring their own personalities to their language learning, their likes and dislikes, their interests, their individual cognitive styles and capabilities and their own strengths and weaknesses. Multiple intelligences are from a theory from Gardner (1993). Following him, McKay (2011:5) has stated that "children vary individually across nine types of intelligence- linguistic, musical, logical, mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic". Furthermore, because of differences in their socioeconomic, cultural, and family backgrounds, children's experiences and knowledge of their individual world, therefore, with regard to individuality, children were no different from older learners.

Young learners mean children from the first year of formal schooling (5 or 6 years old) and even from pre-school to eleven or twelve years of age i.e. the end of primary school. Young learners have their own special characteristics that differentiate them from adult learners. Their teachers should know and understood this in order to improve the quality of their teaching-learning processes. In relation to this, Halliwell (1992:3-5) clarifies the characteristics of children:

- 1) Children are already very good in interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual word.

- 2) Children already have great skill in using limited language creativity,
- 3) Children frequently learn indirectly rather than directly,
- 4) Children take good pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do,
- 5) Children have a ready imagination, the worlds of children are full of imagination and fantasy and this is more than simply a matter of enjoyment.

Furthermore, the characteristics of young learners are also mentioned by Clark (1981:6-8), because children are developing conceptually, therefore:

- 1) they develop their own way of thinking from the concrete to the abstract thing,
- 2) children have no real linguistics, different from the adult learners that already have certain purpose in learning language, for instance - to have a better job, children rarely have such needs in learning a foreign language. They learn subjects that their school provides for them,
- 3) children are still developing; they are developing common skills such as taking turns in talking and the use of body language,
- 4) young children are very egocentric, they tend to think the world revolves and resolves around themselves,
- 5) children get bored easily. They have no choice but to attend school. The lack of choice means that class activities need to be fun, interesting and as exciting as possible by setting up interesting activities.

In relation to different kinds of learning styles, Gardner (1993:2) has stated that “young learners have three ways of learning. Firstly audio, the young learners learn by listening in order to understand and memorize easily. Secondly visual, the young learners more focus on eyesight in the learning process. Thirdly kinesthetic, the young learners learn based on an experience and they feel the learning is valuable.

Furthermore, because of differences in their socio-economic, cultural and home backgrounds, children bring with them an experience and knowledge of the world that is individual. Thus, with regard to individuality, children are no different from older learners. These characteristics fall into three general categories: growth, literacy, and vulnerably. As children progress from 5 years old to 12 years old, they are developing abilities to think in new ways and are moving towards being able to reason in a systematic and logical fashion in adolescence.

Children are novices as they learn, with help from others, to become more expert in solving problems, in reading and in many more activities. In early elementary grades, from age five to seven, children are continuing to learn from direct experience. They are developing their understanding of cause and effect, for example: *I will be cleverer if I study diligently*. They are continuing to expand the use of their first language to clarify thinking and learning. Slavin (1995:17) says “as children move into upper elementary grades they move towards more objective thought, being able to recognize logic”. They are still gaining understanding from direct experience with objects and visual aids. At 11 to 13 years of age, they are beginning to develop the ability to manipulate thoughts and ideas, but even at this age they still need hands on experience. Knowledge of children’s cognitive stages of development is important for the effective assessments of young language learners. Young learners are also growing socially and emotionally as they are learning language in their elementary school years. They are gradually developing from a main interest in self towards greater social awareness. They are also developing a growing understanding of the self in relation to others and an ability to function in groups. Their need for love, security, recognition and belonging accompanies a gradual shift from dependence on adults to peer group support and approval. “Socially, most children are gaining in confidence and reducing dependency as they progress: From 5 to 12 years of age the young learners learn to interact with their peers, to deal with hostility and dominance, to relate to a leader, to lead others, to deal with social problems and to develop a concept of self” (McKay 2011:8). This means that they are developing the ability to take part in small group tasks. The young learners are beginning to develop feelings of independence but may become anxious when separated from familiar people and places. By the time they are around 11 years of age, the young learners have become sociable, spending time with friends of the same sex.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

In this study the writer used an experimental research method. This study tried out one variable which could influence another variable. According to Ary, Jacob, and Razavieh (2002:276), “experimental research is a scientific investigation in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables, controls any other

relevant variables, and observes the effect of the manipulations on the dependent variable”. In this study, two classes were used for the sample, one class (Va) was the Experimental Class (EC) and the other (Vb) was the Control Class (CC). Two treatments were used aimed at finding out information about the development of vocabulary amongst young students. In this study, the Technique for Teaching-learning Vocabulary was the independent variable, whilst Young Learners Development of Vocabulary was the dependent variable.

The first step in the study was starting data collection with a pre-test. This consisted of 50 questions that were given to both classes, each correct answer was scored 2. The pre-test took 45 minutes. Then the writer gave the EC four treatments, teaching them using the Storytelling Technique. Meanwhile the CC was taught for four meetings using the Memorizing Words Technique. The EC students were asked to listen to a short story and to write the words that they knew. Then they had to retell it in their own words. The materials were adapted from the text books “Fun with English” (Muhammad, et al., 2004) and “Grow with English” (Mukarto, et al., 2004). The experimental class was treated by applying Storytelling Technique in which the students were given a short story and retold it to improve their vocabulary, and they learned in groups. The next phase was doing the experimental teaching for four times. Firstly (in this section) the writer introduced shortly about the Storytelling Technique and how to use it in teaching-learning process to improve their vocabulary. After implementing the treatment to the EC for four times, at the end of the fourth treatment the post-test was given to both classes. The aim of this test was to know whether the vocabulary of the students had increased or not. In this case, the test was in the form of a jumble of pictures which the students had to arrange and then each student had to make a short story using their own words based on the sequence of pictures. Data from this study was analyzed quantitatively using standard statistical procedures: the quantitative analysis was done to answer the research questions using the data from the pre-tests and the post-tests.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Firstly, according to the analysis, a significant positive difference in the post-test vocabulary between the students who were taught using the Storytelling Technique and those who were taught with the Memorizing Words Technique was found. The mean of the EC post-

test scores was 77 while the CC post-test mean score was 65. By comparing t-test score and t-table scores, this showed that the result from the t-test was 6.03 while the result from the t-table at a level of significance with $\alpha = 0.05$ was 1.671. So, $t_{\text{test}} > t_{\text{table}}$, since $6.03 > 1.671$. Thus, as the t-test was higher than t-table score H_a was accepted. Thus, there was a significant improvement in the vocabulary of the EC students taught by using the Storytelling Technique compared with those in the CC who were taught with the Memorizing Words Technique.

Secondly, the result of the t-test indicated that there was a significant effect between the pre-test and post-test scores in the EC after applying the Storytelling Technique. The result from the t-test of the EC was 10.98 and the result from the t-test from the CC was 7.45. Meanwhile, the result from the t-table with the level of significance with df (α) 0.05 was 1.697. This indicated that the score from the t-test from the EC was higher than that from the CC ($10.98 > 7.45$). Consequently, it could be inferred that the treatment used caused an effect on the EC students whereby they were better able to master vocabulary.

Thirdly, the data had normal distribution and homogeneity as the result from the normality test was $\chi^2_{\text{count}} = 6.04$ and χ^2_{table} with the level of significance with df (α) 0.05 = 11.1 in which $6.04 < 11.1$. Thus this data had a normal distribution. And the homogeneity test showed that both the experimental and the control class were $F_{\text{table}} = 1.14$ and F_{table} with the level of significance with df (α) 0.05 = 1.85 in which $1.14 < 1.85$ it could be concluded that both variances were homogeneous for the pre-test. Consequently, H_0 which postulated that “the variances of the experimental and the control class are homogeneous” was accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a significant improvement in the vocabulary of the EC students taught by using the Storytelling Technique compared with those in the CC who were taught with the Memorizing Words Technique. The results showed that the mean score of the post-test from the experimental class was significantly higher than that from the control class ($77 > 65$). Furthermore, the result of the t-test from the experimental class was higher than that from the control class ($10.98 > 7.45$). These results showed that the students taught using the

Storytelling Technique achieved better scores than those taught by using the Memorizing Words Technique.

REFERENCES

- Arum, Y. S. S. (2013). *Peran Bercerita (Storytelling) dalam Menumbuhkan Minat Baca Anak di Roudlotul Athfal Darma Wanita Persatuan (RA DWP) UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta*. Unpublished Master's thesis. UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta.
- Ary, D. Jacob, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to Research in Education*. Stanford: Wadsworth Group.
- Bailey, K. (2005). *Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking*. New York. McGraw-Hill.
- Clark, C. (1981). *Activity Book for Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Depdiknas. (2006). *The Fifth Grade Students' Syllabus*. Jakarta: Dinas Pendidikan Pusat.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practices*. New York: Basic Books.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Halliwell, S. (1992). *Teaching English in the Primary Classroom*. Harlow: Longman.
- Jalongo, M. R. (2000). *Early Childhood Language Arts*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Jianing, B. (2007). Storytelling in the EFL speaking classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*. Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Jianing-Storytelling.html>
- Langan, J. (1997). *English Skill*. Roeley: McGraw-Hill.
- Leung, C. (2004). Developing Teacher Assessment: Knowledge, Practice, and Change. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 1(1), 19-41.
- McKay, P. (2011). *Assessing Young Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mixon, M., & Temu, P. (2006). First Root to Learning: Language through Stories. *English Teaching Forum*, 43(2), 14-17.
- Mukarto, et al. (2004). *Grow With English Book 4: An English Course for Elementary School Students*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Munden, J., & Myhre, A. (2007). *Twinkle Twinkle (2nd Ed.)*. Hoyskoleforlaget: Norwegian Academic Press.

- Nation, I.S.P. (1990). *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Hillsdale: Heinle and Heinle.
- Rahmawati, A. (2013). *Peningkatan Keterampilan Menyimak Dongeng melalui Model Paired Storytelling dengan Media Wayang Kartun pada Siswa Kelas II SDN Mangunsari Semarang*. Unpublished Master's thesis. Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang.
- Shorrocks, D. (1995). The development of children's thinking and understanding. In C. Brumfit, J. Moon and R. Tongue (eds.), *Teaching English to Children*. Harlow. Essex: Longman.
- Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative Learning*. London: Longman.
- Tompkins, G. E., & Hoskisson, K. (1995). *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, A. (1995). *Storytelling with Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.