

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES TO TEACH ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO  
EARLY CHILDHOOD ISLAMIC EDUCATION( PIAUD) PROGRAMAT  
STATE ISLAMICUNIVERSITY RADEN FATAH PALEMBANG

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**Abstract:** an English teacher in such a location has a unique challenge in teaching the target language. This study was conducted to early childhood islamic education (PIAUD) class programat state Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang. There is one primary question to be answered in this study, which is what strategies were used by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to early childhood islamic education (PIAUD) at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang. Knowing that learning English vocabulary is important, the researchers conducted this research by observing the class times teacher. Class observations, which included the strategies used by the teacher and the learning and teaching process used to collect the data. Besides that, The results of the study presented some various teaching strategies which were used to teach English vocabulary. From a class observation and three main strategies were identified. The three primary strategies used by the English teacher in teaching English vocabulary to early childhood islamic education (PIAUD) class Program were the use of teaching media, the implementation of appropriate methods and approaches, and the use of fun activities to create a more engaging class. Therefore, given the unique condition of each school, English teachers need to be creative yet wise in choosing the most appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of the learners.

**Key words:** teaching strategies, vocabulary, and UIN.

## **INRODUCTION**

This study is entitled Teachers' Strategies to Teach English Vocabulary at Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) class Program at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang . Nowadays as an international language, English has been playing an essential role in many aspects of life such as education, research, business, social media worldwide interaction, culture, travel or tourism, as well as other fields. There is a growing interest in introducing English as early as possible such as to Kindergarten children in order to prepare them in facing competition in the globalization era.

In learning English, there are four skills to master. These skills are the cornerstones of learning English, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Reading and listening are examples of receptive a language. While writing and speaking are examples of productive a language. One of the most fundamental components to learn a language is learning its vocabulary. Vocabulary is the most critical content in a language because the development of four language skills depends heavily on vocabulary development. Teaching English to early childhood

may require different strategies from teaching the language to older learners. One of the characteristics of childhood is their short attention span.

Seeing the trend to teach English to young learners and the psychological development of childhood , the researchers conducted this research to find out teachers' strategies to teach English vocabulary at Early Childhood Islamic Education at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang. The language of instruction of the school is Indonesian, and English is taught as a foreign language. This research is also hopefully useful to identify the most effective strategies to teach English vocabulary to childhood that can be applied by teachers in general. In this research, teaching strategies refer to the use of media, the choice of methods and approaches, and the learning engagements in teaching English vocabulary to childhood.

The purpose of this study was to find out the strategies used by the teachers in teaching English vocabulary to PIAUD Program. The result of this research

provided some considerations for English teachers in choosing strategies for teaching vocabulary. Specifically, this research offered some considerations for teaching English vocabulary to young learners, considering the learners' psychological development. The researcher hopes the finding of this study will be useful for:

1. English teachers

Teachers can find the varieties, the most effective, and appropriate strategies of teaching English vocabulary to young learners.

2. Students

Students can get benefit from the strategies used by the teachers to improve their vocabulary.

There is one question to be answered in this study: What are the strategies used by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to PIAUD Program at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Teaching Young Learners*

Brand (2004, as cited in Linse and Nunan, 2005), stated that the aim of using a variety of strategies is to develop the learners' understanding of the words in context with a playful situation. The strategies will improve the learners' word retention. In the teaching and learning process, teachers should remember their jobs; firstly to provide care and secondly to provide instructions. Kinds of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies The Use Media The advancement in the modern world has called for progress in teaching and learning strategies.

The use of media has become equally important in the teaching and learning process. English teacher can use the media to teach English vocabulary to PIAUD Program. There are several media such as realia, pictures, songs, videos, and video games.

1. Realia

First, one of the strategies used by the teachers to teach English vocabulary to young learners is by using realia as the teaching media. Hubbard

(1983:115) defined realia as real-life objects that teachers can bring to teach English vocabulary to young learners.

## 2. Pictures

The second strategy is using picture as the media of teaching English vocabulary. Sadiman et al. (1993) quoted a Chinese Aphorism stating that a picture says more than a thousand words. Many Kindergarten teachers use pictures for their teaching media. Sometimes, they show some pictures related to the materials. For example, when an English teacher teaches English vocabulary about animals, he/ she will show some flashcards or a PowerPoint with pictures of the animals. Christen and Murphy (1991) stated that the visual image provides the learner with a frame of referral to recall the definition of an object, verb, and other parts of speech. Teaching English by using this strategy will attract young learners' attention.

## 3. Songs

Other than using realia and picture, Teacher can use song as an audiovisual media for teaching vocabulary. Young learners can listen to the song and watch the music video on LCD. The teacher can play a music video and sing together with the learners. Alternatively, the teacher can sing a song in a class and invite the students to sing together.

According to Green as cited in Nelson (1997), the rhythm of a song can improve the development of young learners' language fluency. There are some benefits of using song as the media of teaching English vocabulary to young learners. First, song is useful to build young learners' confidence. Then, young learners can get new vocabulary from song. Besides that, song helps young learners to focus on the pronunciation.

## 4. Videos

Another strategy is using video as the media. Video is also an example of audiovisual media. Nation (2003), as cited in Linse and Nunan (2005) stated that when teaching vocabulary, the teachers should facilitate the learners by using a variety of teaching strategies to assist the learners to discover the meanings.

Kindergarten teachers can use videos as the media to attract the learners' attention. English teachers can introduce new words by playing videos in the class. Some examples of such videos are children stories, songs, and films.

#### 5. Video Games

Besides those strategies, teacher can use video games as the media of teaching. Pribilova (2006) stated that, there are many different methods and approaches on how to teach vocabulary in a foreign language. One of the methods is using video games as the media.

The use of video games in teaching English vocabulary to young learners can attract their attention because young learners in this millennial era like to play video games on their smartphones. Thus, the use of the English language in video games can improve their vocabulary.

#### ***Methods and Approaches for Teaching Vocabulary***

##### 1. Total Physical Response

Besides using media such as realia, picture, and song to teach English vocabulary to young learners, according to Muhren (2003), the basic technique of TPR is simple. Learners act out commands given by the teacher or their fellow pupils at a later stage. Total Physical Response has some types and varieties that can be applied in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. There are some Total Physical Response activities: TPR songs and finger plays, TPR storytelling and drawing.

##### 2. Total Physical Response Songs and Fingerplays

There are some types of Total Physical Response. In a book entitled *Practical English Language Teaching to Young Learners* by Linse and Nunan (2005) stated that teachers can use Total Physical Response songs and finger plays to teach English vocabulary to young learners. Learning English vocabulary by doing this activity will give the learners an understanding of some vocabulary in English.

#### ***Previous Studies***

Liyaningsih (2010) aimed to describe the implementation, the problems, and the solution of teacher's strategies in teaching English vocabulary to young learners at MI Kedungharjo, Ngawi Regency, East Java. The subjects of

this study were third-grade students of MI Kedungharjo in Academic Year 2015/2016. The study focused on the process of teaching vocabulary to young learners. The study found that the strategies used by the teacher were using media such as pictures, realia, video, and students' English books. The techniques are using translation, memorization, games, and songs

## **METHOD**

This research was qualitative research. Qualitative research seemed appropriate to collect the data. It was because data collected through class observation find out her reason in choosing a particular vocabulary teaching strategy applied in the class on the day of the observation.

This study was conducted in a kindergarten at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang. The location is Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri No. KM 3, Rw. 5, Pahlawan, kec. Kemuning, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan 30126.

One of the reasons why this school is chosen is because English is offered as an obligatory afterschool program here. For PIAUD Program. The reason why this University was chosen is because it is a unique school with unique teaching and learning process that have connectivity with nature. The researcher thought that this school could be chosen as the context of the study because there would be some various teaching strategies to teach English vocabulary to PIAUD.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

This research was qualitative research. The data collection instruments consisted of two main parts, one for the interview and the other for the observation. The data were collected through class observation and interview with the English teacher after the class to find out her reason in choosing a particular strategy applied in the class on the day of the observation. The class observation followed an observation protocol in which both the teacher and PIAUD class and responses in the class were noted.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The following section presents the findings and discussions about what strategies were used by English teacher in teaching vocabulary to Early

Childhood (PIAUD) Islamic Education at State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang. The data was collected from a class observation. The data were analyzed to find out the strategies used by the teacher to teach English vocabulary. The findings and discussion are divided into three parts, namely the use of media, the choice of methods and approaches, and the learning engagements in teaching English vocabulary to PIAUD.

### ***The Use of Media***

As mentioned in the literature review section of this thesis, there were some alternative media for teaching vocabulary to PIAUD Class Program. The English teacher introduced English vocabulary.

### **Realia**

Based on the class observation, the English teacher there used some media as the strategy to teach vocabulary to PIAUD Class Program. One of the media was realia. The teacher used realia as the media to teach English vocabulary five times from ten times class observation. In the third class observation, the teacher brought realia as the media to introduce English vocabulary to PIAUD Class Program. The English teacher there used real fruits and vegetables as the teaching media. She showed real fruits and vegetables such as oranges, spinach, and apples to the learners.

In the whilst-teaching, when the learners ate the fruits, a learner said that, "Miss, apple is sweet" Then, the other learner said something in Indonesian. English teacher corrected the learner and said "Okay, repeat after me, the strawberry is sour". After that, all learners repeated the sentence after the teacher, "The strawberry is sour". All learners were very happy because they could learn English vocabulary about fruits and taste the real fruits. Then, the teacher mentioned the vocabulary and asked the students to repeat another English vocabulary after her. At the end of the learning and teaching process, the teacher asked the learners to point out the realia and say the English words. Then, the teacher gave an orange as a reward if the learners could mention the names of the fruits and vegetables in English.

From the observation, all learners could mention the names of the fruits and vegetables, proving the effective use of realia as the media. From the

observation session, the researcher concluded that students could comprehend the material if the teacher provided media such as realia. In the interview session, she explained her reason for choosing this strategy, "I chose this strategy because the learners can see and taste the real fruits."

What the teacher did was in line with Hubbard's idea (1983). Hubbard defined realia as real-life objects that teachers can bring for teaching English vocabulary to young learners. The use of realia as the media seemed to have an essential role in teaching vocabulary, especially for young learners in the school. According to Kustaryo (1998), as cited in Ersan (2009), learning vocabulary through creativity, such as using realia, will increase the learners' motivation. When the teacher taught the vocabulary of fruits and vegetables, the learners paid attention to the explanation, saw, and touched the real fruits and vegetables. It clearly explained how important to use media, especially realia, for teaching English vocabulary for young learners.

### ***Pictures***

In five out of ten times of observation sessions, the teacher used media as a strategy to teach English vocabulary to young learners. The teacher used pictures to teach English vocabulary about fruits, animals, vegetables, colors, and occupations. Similarly, the English teacher in the school stated that "I often use visual media such as pictures for today's teaching strategy. I choose this strategy because I think that it seems to be the most effective." The English teacher claimed that when she used pictures as the media, the learners seemed to be more interested in the material. All learners paid attention to the pictures and the teacher's explanation.

In the first-class observation, the researchers found some information about the use of picture as the medium to teach English vocabulary. In the middle of learning and teaching process, a learner showed a picture and mentioned "watermelon" in the first language. Then, the teacher asked all learners to pronounce "watermelon" with showing the picture. After that, the teacher continued to teach English vocabulary about various fruits. Whether some learners still used

their first language, the teacher taught them patiently. The teacher always asked the learners to repeat the vocabulary. She stated that, “young learners will remember the new words if we asked them to repeat the vocabulary”. This finding supported the study that conducted by Piaget. In Piaget’s four stages (1936, as cited in Lourenco,2016)kindergarten learners are included in the preoperational stage. These pre-school learners begin to play and learn by symbols or pictures. They also develop memory and imagination to understand the meaning of a language.

In the ninth interview session, the teacher said that,“The use of pictures as media could support the success of the learning and teaching process.” She also stated that “All learners can mention the occupations because I facilitate the learning with pictures." The teacher’s statement is much in line with Nation’s belief. Nation (2003), as cited in Linse and Nunan (2005), stated that when teaching vocabulary, the teachers should facilitate the learners by using a variety of teaching strategies to assist the learners to discover the meanings.Sadiman et al. (1993) also quoted a Chinese aphorism, stating that a picture says more than a thousand words.

After observing the learning and teaching process in the kindergarten, the researchers concluded that English teacher could use media such as picture to introduce English vocabulary and explain the material to young learners. In line with Christen and Murphy (1991) who stated that the visual image provides the learner with a frame of referral to recall the definition of an object, verb, and other parts of speech. Therefore, using pictures as the medium of teaching is appropriate for young learners which include ages from 24 months until early childhood about 7 years.

### ***The Choice of Methods and Approaches***

This section discusses the choice of methods and approaches as strategy for teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten learners. In the fourth class observation, the researcher found that the teacher has four important characteristics of English teacher which stated by Azizinezhad (2011). The expert stated that, “Being an English teacher must be energetic, patient, must encourage the learners, and must know the techniques of teaching”.

In observing the learning and teaching process in a monolingual school in Ambarawa, the researcher found the answer for the research question about the strategies used by the English teacher there. They are as follows.

#### 1. Total Physical Response

There were four out of ten class observations which used Total Physical Response method as a strategy to teach English vocabulary for young learners. From the first meeting, when the teacher taught English vocabulary about animal, the teacher started the class with played a video clip about animal. The title of the video clip is "Rabbit". Before the teacher started the activity, she gave simple instructions to the learners. After that, the English teacher asked the learners to follow her movements. All of the learners jumped and ran like rabbits. In these activities, learners could acquire some vocabulary such as part of the body and some verbs. In this observation session, the teacher was successful to introduce English vocabulary using Total Physical Response as the approach.

In the eighth class observation, the teacher also used TPR as the approach to introduce English vocabulary. The material was about occupations. It could be seen because the teacher played guessing game with the learners. The English teacher gave instructions to the learners. She asked the learners to demonstrate some occupations and the other had to guess. Through the learning engagement, the young learners in the school acquired some vocabulary such as fireman, policeman, teacher, dancer, and farmer. Not only the vocabulary, but they also learned the job of each occupation.

After the learning and teaching process, in the interview session the English teacher added that it is an effective way to introduce new vocabulary for young learners. The way she explained the instruction and asked the learners to act out the command proved that Muhren's opinion is true. It is because Muhren (2003) stated that, the basic technique of TPR is simple. She also stated her reason; the learners could remember the vocabulary easily if she used Total Physical Response as the method to teach vocabulary. In conclusion, Linse and Nunan stated that, the benefit of using TPR is that TPR will give the learners opportunities to use three channels, namely: auditory, visual, and tactile learning.

## 2. Storytelling

Besides using Total Physical Response as the approach in teaching English vocabulary to young learners, in the seventh class observation the researcher found that the teacher chose storytelling as the method. The English teacher in this monolingual school used the method once. In the learning and teaching process, the teacher used a bilingual book entitled "I Love You Mom". The teacher told a story entitled "The Flower Seller's Daughter". All learners listened to the story and paid attention to the pictures in the book. Therefore, the learners can keep up their concentration to learn English vocabulary by using storytelling as the method. She stated that, storytelling is one of strategies to retain the learner's attention. The English teacher's belief is same with Brown (2001) who claimed that the use of storylines, characters, and the situation in the story would make the learners' attention and words retention improve. Her way of teaching through storytelling aligns with what was suggested by Linse and Nunan (2005). The important thing which stated by Linse and Nunan (2005) is the teacher must slow down the telling or reading the story.

## 3. The Learning Engagement

In this globalization era, being an English teacher should be creative and productive. In line with David in Hamruni (2009), who defined teaching strategy as a plan, method, or a series of activities designed to achieve a part of the educational goal. A teacher could introduce English by doing a series of activities outside the classroom. When the researcher observed the learning and teaching process, the researcher found that teachers in that school introduced English vocabulary by doing fun activities. The activities were cooking class and field trips. The learning engagements could build a fun and friendly environment in the learning and teaching process.

### a. Doing Fun Activity: Cooking Class

In the cooking class session, the teacher asked the learners to make some simple meals such as a sandwich, fruit satay, donut, and vegetable pancake. As an example, in an observation session, the teacher provided some fruits and taught the learners to make fruit satay. The learner could acquire new vocabulary about various

fruits by participating in this cooking class. When the learners cooked together, in the middle of the lesson, the teacher showed some vegetables and introduced the English vocabulary. All kindergarten learners tried to pronounce the new words about vegetables such as, onion, leak, and tomato. The English teacher asked all learners to pronounce the vocabulary.

In the interview session, the researcher found the English teacher's reason of asking the learners to repeat the new words. She stated that, "Young learners will remember the English vocabulary and the right pronunciation." According to the teacher, the cooking class activity could attract the learners' attention towards the lesson, while at the same time build the learners' social skills as they work and interact with each other. The teacher's belief is in line with Wagner's (1989). According to Wagner, language skills are acquired naturally by doing things or participating and interacting in a social environment. Besides that, the teacher also chose a field trip as a fun activity in teaching English vocabulary.

#### **b. Doing Fun Activity: Field Trip**

In doing those fun activities, learners could actively participate in and learn English vocabulary related to the material. When the researcher observed the teaching and learning process in the school for the last time, the teacher invited the learners to visit a meatball factory in Ambarawa. In the last class observation, the researcher found the objectives of the lesson. The objective was learners could learn the steps of making meatball and mention the name of some ingredients. All learners learned the process of making meatballs. In this teaching and learning process, the teacher explained the ingredients and the steps of making meatballs. There was some new vocabulary introduced by the teacher and the owner of the factory. Then, the learners pronounced the vocabulary of the ingredients such as, noodle, meat, leak, soy sauce, water, tofu, salt, and sugar. They pronounced some new words while the teacher showed the realia.

Furthermore, in the exit interview session, the English teacher from the monolingual school in Ambarawa stated the advantages of doing a fun activity as a strategy to teach vocabulary. The teacher stated that all learners were happy because they visited a new place and tried a new activity. The teacher also stated

that she would not change anything if she has to teach the same material again. She claimed that teaching English vocabulary to young learners by doing fun activities such as field trips is effective. It was proved in the post-teaching when the teacher had the students recall what they had learned. The learners could mention some new vocabulary related to the ingredients of meatballs.

In observing the learning and teaching process in the kindergarten, the researchers found that the teacher used various strategies to teach English vocabulary for young learners. The researcher found that the English teacher asked the learners to join some fun activities. The activities were cooking class and field trip. Same with Hammer (2007, as cited in Imaniah, 2017) who stated some characteristics of young learners, one of the characteristics was the environment should be fun and friendly for young learners. From the finding, the researcher concluded that, teaching English with doing fun activities such as cooking class and field trip were very appropriate to increase the learners' motivation in learning English.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on class observations and post-teaching interviews, three main strategies were identified. The three primary strategies used by the English teacher in teaching English vocabulary PIAUD Class Program were the use of teaching media, the implementation of appropriate methods and approaches, and the use of fun activities to create a more engaging class.

Regarding teaching media, the teacher used includes realia, pictures, and video clips. Realia was used for teaching English vocabulary such as fruits and vegetables because they are easy to find, and the learners are quite familiar with the items. It was found that the use of realia as the teaching strategy was effective, as seen in the post-teaching assessment in which all learners performed well. Secondly, pictures were the other media frequently used by the English teacher to attract the learners' attention. The teacher claimed that using pictures as the media was the most effective strategy because young learners seemed to be more interested in the material. The last media, video clips, were used as an alternative audiovisual media for teaching vocabulary for its easy access and use by teachers

and its effectiveness for young learners. It was also used to introduce vocabulary to young learners and generate the learners' interest in the lesson.

Besides using media as the strategy to teach English vocabulary, the teacher approach as the strategy to teach new words and their meanings. Total Physical Response, storytelling, and fun, hands-on activities were chosen among others for they were more age-appropriate for the learners. In four out of ten class observations, the teacher chose Total Physical Response as a strategy to demonstrate the meanings of the target words; for example, a guessing game in which a learner acted out what a kind of occupation does and the other learners guess. The teacher also used storytelling as a method to improve the learners' word retention.

In addition, hands-on activities are the last teaching strategy found in The teacher planned a series of activities to engage the learners in the learning and teaching process. Two handson activities were observed in the ten observation sessions, namely a cooking class and a field trip. Those activities are instrumental in achieving a part of the education goal, such as improving the learners' word retention.

To summarize, given the unique condition of each school, English teachers need to be creative yet wise in choosing the most appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of the learners. The findings of the study conducted in show that for the context of the school, three main teaching strategies were applied by the English teacher: the use of media, the implementation of appropriate methods and practices, and the use of fun activities to engage the students. Realia, pictures, video clips, and songs were the media adopted, while Total Physical Response and storytelling were considered as more age-appropriate methods for the young learners of that school. In order to create fun learning and engage the learners, hands-on activities such as cooking and field trips were chosen. The activities were carefully planned to support learning objectives, as well as taking into account learners' interests and, most importantly, their safety.

Future researchers could explore other areas and schools. The findings of the study is hopefully useful for English teachers, therefore the English teachers can

find the varieties, the most effective, and appropriate strategies of teaching English vocabulary to young learners. It is also useful for the students because students can get benefit from the strategies used by the teachers to improve their vocabulary. Lastly, schools can use the findings of the study as an input for improving research related to learning and teaching English in general, and, learning and teaching English vocabulary to young learners in particular.

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