

# Interactive Vocabulary Learning through VCR (*Vocabulary in Context and Repetition*) Strategy

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## ABSTRACT

Learning English is not merely learning new vocabularies with their meanings in the first language, especially since English is still a foreign language for most of Indonesian students. So, teaching new vocabularies in English do not guarantee proficiency in using English effectively. Therefore, teachers need to think of ways on how to create learning fun and interesting for the students to learn English. Through VCR strategy, teachers involve students to repetitively use the vocabularies learned in different contexts. Teachers need to prepare learning materials and activities that might engage students to use vocabulary in dialogues, songs and movements, stories, and games. Through class observations, interviews, and teaching journals had by 20 English teacher candidates who taught elementary students in a private course in Tangerang, it was found that teaching English vocabulary only was not enough to make students interested in English learning. Unless those vocabularies were taught in real situations as what the students also usually faced in their daily lives, those words will be stored in a short term. The more the students repeated the new words they learned, the more 'real' those words in their lives. Teaching vocabularies through contexts that are relevant to the students and repetitions will help Indonesian students learn English easier and more effectively.

Key words: Vocabulary learning; contexts, repetitions.

## ABSTRAK

Belajar bahasa Inggris seharusnya tidak hanya belajar kosakata baru dan maknanya dalam bahasa ibu, terutama karena Bahasa Inggris masih merupakan bahasa asing bagi kebanyakan anak-anak Indonesia. Hal ini berarti bahwa mempelajari kosakata dalam bahasa Inggris tidak dapat menjamin seseorang dapat menggunakan bahasa Inggris secara efektif. Melalui strategi VCR, guru melibatkan siswa menggunakan kosakata-kosakata baru secara berulang-ulang dalam konteks yang berbeda. Guru perlu mempersiapkan materi dan kegiatan pembelajaran yang melibatkan siswa menggunakan kosakata-kosakata yang baru mereka pelajari dalam dialog, gerak dan lagu, cerita, dan permainan. Melalui observasi kelas, interview, dan jurnal mengajar yang dibuat oleh 20 calon guru yang mengajar anak-anak SD di satu tempat kursus di Tangerang, ditemukan bahwa mengajarkan kosakata dalam bahasa Inggris tidak cukup untuk membuat siswa tertarik belajar bahasa Inggris. Hanya jika kosakata-kosakata baru tersebut diajarkan dalam situasi nyata yang juga dapat dijumpai siswa-siswa setiap hari, maka kosakata-kosakata tersebut akan dapat bertahan lebih lama di dalam pikiran anak. Semakin sering diulang, maka kosakata itu semakin 'nyata' bagi siswa. Belajar kosakata dalam bahasa Inggris melalui konteks yang relevan bagi kehidupan siswa sehari-hari dan adanya pengulangan kata akan membantu anak-anak Indonesia belajar bahasa Inggris lebih mudah dan efektif.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran kosakata, konteks, pengulangan kata

## INTRODUCTION

Students in Indonesia received a minimal exposure to English language at school, this leads to inefficient use of English where learners cannot use English to communicate. Moreover, teachers' competency and approach to English also significantly influence how students perceived it and put their efforts to improve it. For years, the common methods for English learning advocated grammatical and syntactic rules as the first step, and vocabulary as the second step. Still, students continue to face difficulties in using the language properly, due to their inadequate language skills (Ghalebi et al., 2021). This problem has been always the common problem that hinder students to learn English or even get any interest in loving English.

In the context of language learning, vocabulary plays a crucial role in learning English as a second language (L2) or foreign language, given its uncompromised role in language development and mastery (Wang et al., 2021). Nevertheless, learning new vocabularies in English do not guarantee proficiency in using English effectively. Language learners need to get used to use English words or expressions through the similar situations or contexts. Therefore, teachers need to think of ways on how to create learning fun and interesting for the students to learn English and things that they usually find in their daily lives. As confirmed by Mahdi that learning a language means to know how words are used and understand what utterances are used in specific situations (Mahdi, 2018). To give a supportive learning environment and give enough exposure to English words and expressions in short conversations, teachers can put students in groups and repeat the same words or expressions that they have just learned with their group mates. Through VCR (Vocabulary learning through Contexts and Repetitions) strategy, teachers can involve students to repetitively use the vocabularies learned in different contexts and through repetitions.

Especially in teaching English to young learners, teachers need to be creative in using them in different contexts with variety of activities to introduce new words or vocabularies, expressions used to express the intended meaning in English. Teachers need to prepare learning materials and activities that might engage students to use

vocabulary in dialogues, songs and movements, stories, and games. It is hoped that in the longer term, they will be able to use what they know about certain words in English to express intended meaning in the targeted language communication (Sok & Han, n.d., 2020).

## METHOD

The event was held in one of the study courses in Bencong Indah, Tangerang. There were 20 student teachers who participated in the teaching practice, they taught around 30 elementary students from grade 1 to 6. Before teaching, they should prepare the learning materials and activities. They received feedback, specifically on their approach to deliver the materials to elementary students who still need more physical interactions along with the English vocabulary knowledge or learning they received. Then, their teaching practices were also observed and recorded to save both 'incidental and accidental' moments for them to reflect on after teaching. As a part of their learning process, the participants were asked to write reflective journals after they have finished teaching.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through class observations, interview, and reflective journals by the 20 student teachers who played their roles as English teachers, it was found that teaching English vocabulary 'only' was 'not enough' for primary students. There were some insights written by the student teachers on their journals.

"While teaching new vocabulary, we act out all the words that we say in front of the class so that the students can get the meaning of our words from our body language, and to deliver the learning material easily to the young learners."

"I will use songs at the beginning of the class to attract the students' attention and teach them English"

"We try to attract students' attention through verbal and non-verbal activities."



Figure 1. Teaching vocabulary using songs and movements

Based on the interviews with the student teachers, they valued that preparing the young learners to learn English took more than teaching them about vocabulary, but there should be fun activities where they could get involved interactively with the words introduced to them, such as in ‘songs and movements, videos, storytelling, and games where voice intonations, eye contact, and body gestures were all embedded. So, teachers need to consider the learners’ characteristics, prior knowledge, their interests as well as learning styles, especially in teaching young learners, they will need to be more physically involved while learning English. Teachers need to use appropriate learning strategies, so the students are engaged and motivated in teaching and learning process (Luh et al., 2020). One of the most suitable strategies is to teach vocabulary interactively and teachers should introduce the Vocabulary within Context and in Repetitions (VCR strategy).

Based on the interviews with the student teachers, they said that the students were very good in repeating the words that the teacher said, especially when they also moved their bodies while repeating the words. For example: while they’re learning about body parts, they also touched their body parts as they were repeating the names of the body parts mentioned by the teachers. Teaching vocabulary in English to young learners really needs

creativity from the teachers to create a positive and comfortable environment for young learners. The words should also be used in ‘real situations’ as what happen also in daily life, such as words found in conversations between teachers and students, parents and children, and others. The more they find similar words being used in specific situations, they will get used to listening to those words and understanding their meanings. Learning a language means to know how words are used and understand what utterances are used in specific situations (Mahdi, 2018). Repetition is a crucial variable promoting L2 incidental vocabulary acquisition (Uchiyama et al., 2019), it helps learners to obtain deeper insights into the complex relationship between frequency and learning ((Elgort et al., 2018)

Through different contexts, students learn to listen to the same words in different situations, they follow the vocabulary mentioned by the teachers. Through songs, storytelling and dialogues within stories, students repeat the vocabulary they learned from their teachers, but they still need to practice using them in sentences. Therefore, vocabulary is supposed to be taught in context where students can see how the words and their meanings are easier to understand (Mulder et al., 2019).



Figure 2. Vocabulary Learning within Context and Repetitions

Based on class observations, the students seemed very active following the vocabulary mentioned by the teachers. In figure 2, the teachers taught vocabulary about parts of plants, such as roots, branches, leaves, etc. The more the students hear and say the same words repeatedly, the more 'real' those words to them and gradually they will understand the intended meanings of those words and be able to use them in the targeted language in real communications (Sok & Han, n.d., 2020). The teachers prepared a poster about parts of a plant and brought a human doll as interactive media to discuss more about parts of plants and what their functions are (as seen on figure 2).

Based on the interview with the student teachers, it was found that students were excited to follow the words said by the teachers, however, when they were asked to make a sentence using the words that they have learned, they still found it difficult. So, teachers need to be creative in recalling the words that have been taught and put them within a certain context which is familiar to the students. By this, students will gain more vocabulary incidentally and this will influence their L2 development (Sok & Han, n.d.).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Teaching English vocabulary to young learners need more than just preparations of teaching materials or media, teachers need to think of ways on how students learn to use words in contexts and through repetitions using VCR strategy. The more students hear and say the words said by the teachers repetitively, it will influence their vocabulary development. Especially while teaching young learners, teachers need to make sure that the vocabulary introduced will be easier to understand by the students and easy to find in daily life.

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