

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT LEARNT THROUGH THEMATIC PICTURE AND EXPLANATION TECHNIQUES IN SMPN 22 BANDAR LAMPUNG

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is one of language components in English. It has a very important role in communication. Rivers (1970) adds that it is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. But in fact, based on the writer's experience in the three-month-teaching training program in SMP Negeri 22 Bandar Lampung, the students generally have inadequate vocabulary. It is proven with their low score in every vocabulary exercise. Due to this lack of vocabulary, they often encounter difficulties, for example in reading their compulsory books. This statement is also supported by Murcia (1978) who said that some students claim that their primary problem in acquiring English is vocabulary. Clearly students' lack of vocabulary should be immediately treated. Actually the students can learn all the words they need, without help, for example by looking for difficult words in dictionary. But the problem here is how the students are able to know the meaning of new words, remember the words and practice them in real situation. They still find difficulty in remembering words so that they become bored. To overcome the problem, a teacher should be able to find out ways of how to solve the problems that may appear while teaching-learning process is going on. Teacher should be able to choose proper technique and to select the materials which are relevant to the student's condition, needs and age. Among many ways that can be applied in teaching vocabulary, the writer used thematic pictures and explanation. The objectives of this research are first, to know whether there is a significant different of a student's vocabulary achievement between the students who are taught through thematic picture and through explanation and to see which one of the two techniques is more effective for teaching vocabulary at junior school. This quantitative research will be conducted at class VIII A and VIII B of SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung at the first semester. To collect the data, the researcher will administer pre test, treatment and post test.

Keywords: vocabulary, thematic picture, explanation, vocabulary achievement

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of language components in English. It has a very important role in communication. Rivers (1970) adds that it is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. The statement means that the lack of mastery of adequate vocabulary will make a learner feel reluctant to use the target language, English, either in spoken or written communication.

Based on the 1994 Curriculum, it is said that the second year students of Junior High School are expected to master about 250 new vocabularies after they have mastered 750 vocabularies and grammatical patterns that are suitable to the subject matter determined for that level. But in fact, based on the writer's experience in the three-month-teaching training program in SMP Negeri 22 Bandar Lampung, the students generally have inadequate vocabulary. It was proven by their low score in every vocabulary exercise.

Related to a previous study, there are some students who have difficulty in learning vocabulary. Berman (1997:23) found that some students in SLTP Budi Mulia Bandar Lampung had difficulty in mastering vocabulary. The problems he found in his research are; 1) the majority of the students have difficulties in understanding and pronouncing the vocabulary, 2) the students were difficult to remember the words which are being learned, 3) the students were easy to get bored during the class. This condition shows that learning vocabulary is not a simple thing for the students at the junior high school. Due to this lack of vocabulary, they often encounter difficulties, for example in reading their compulsory books. This statement is also supported by Murcia (1978) who says that some students claim that their primary problem in acquiring English is vocabulary. Clearly students' lack of vocabulary should be immediately treated.

Actually the students can learn all the words they need, without help, for example by looking for difficult words in dictionary. But the problem here is how the students are able to know the meaning of new words, remember the words and practice

them in real situation. They still find difficulty in remembering words so that they become bored. To overcome the problem, a teacher should be able to find out ways to improve the teaching-learning process in the class. The teacher should be able to choose proper technique and the materials which are relevant to the student's condition, need and age. Referring to the statement above, Harris (1969) states that some factors that should be considered in order to be successful in the English program refer to the teacher's ability, the methodology used, the teaching materials, facilities, students' ability and technique applied. Learning a language will automatically involve learning its vocabulary. Vocabulary can be developed by using many techniques, and there are many techniques that can be used to teach or improve student's vocabulary. This idea is also supported by Napa (1991) who says that vocabulary can be taught by using many different techniques, for example game, translation, text, picture, etc. Using an appropriate technique will ease the students to understand the lesson. Among the many ways that can be applied in teaching vocabulary, the writer used thematic pictures and explanation. Explanation has been widely accepted as one of techniques that can be applied to present materials in classroom. This technique belongs to the traditional way of teaching vocabulary. With this technique, students were supposed to be able to read a reading passage written in the target language, translate the target language into the students' native language.

On the other hand, vocabulary can also be taught through thematic picture. The teacher can use this technique to motivate students to learn language. Stevick (1951) says that picture is one of visual aids as anything visible, which help our students to learn language more quickly and more accurately. It means that thematic picture can ease students to learn language, since the students see the things being learned. Considering that the two techniques above can be used for teaching vocabulary, the writer wanted to do a research to see which of the two techniques is more effective for teaching vocabulary

(noun and verb) at Junior High School.

The writer focused the research on students' vocabulary achievement because vocabulary is one of the English language components that should be taught to SMP students. Some previous researches have been conducted and nearly similar with this research such as "A comparative study of students' vocabulary achievement between those taught through translation and flash card". This research was conducted in SMP Negeri 22 Bandar Lampung at the eighth grade students. The writer finds that no research about teaching vocabulary (noun and verb) through thematic picture and explanation has been carried out there. The writer also took the eighth year grade as the subject of the research because the materials used in the experiment are relevant with the students' mastery of English and curriculum.

From the explanation above, therefore the writer entitled the research; 'Comparative Study of Students' Vocabulary Achievement Learnt through Thematic Picture and explanation techniques in SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung'.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To know whether there is a significant difference of a student's vocabulary achievement in content words between the students who are taught through thematic picture and those taught through explanation.
2. To see which one of the two techniques is more effective for teaching vocabulary at junior school.

3. Method of the Research

This research is a quantitative research. The population of this research was all students of the eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 22 Bandar Lampung in the year 2008/2009. There were five classes available at the eighth grade; they were class VIII A, class VIII B, class VIII C, class VIII D, class

VIII E in which each class consists of 40 students. Since the researcher used true experimental design there were, therefore, two classes - an experimental class and a control class. The researcher decided that class VIII A as experimental group and class VIII B as control group by using theoretical sample. Experimental group received the treatment that was teaching vocabulary through thematic picture and control group through explanation. To conduct a try-out test, the writer would use class VIII C.

The procedures of this research are determining the population and sample of the research, constructing the tryout items, administering pre-test, conducting the experiment, administering post-test, and analyzing the data. The researcher used the following steps in collecting the data: try out, pre test, post test. The instrument used in this research was multiple-choice test. The number of items was 40 items and each item consists of four options. The 40 items was taken from the try-out test items. The items were about vocabulary that referred to open class; concrete noun and verb.

4. Results and Discussions

To find out whether the objective of the research could be achieved, the researcher analyzed the following tests. In pretest, 100% student got score under 65 in control class and in experimental class there are 36 students (94.7%) who get score less than 65. There are 2 students (5.3%) who get score more than 65. From the result of the analysis, the value of the homogeneity test for the pretest scores both in control and experimental class is 0.782 (see appendix 18). It shows that $Sign > \alpha$ ($0.782 > 0.05$). Therefore the hypothesis is accepted. In short, both classes were equal and the research could be concluded to both classes. In posttest, for control class students scores lower than 65, there are no students scores higher than 65. Comparing the data from the pretest and the posttest from control class, the result shows that the students' scores in control class improve. In the experimental class however, the highest score is 90;

the lowest score is 65. Seeing the data of the pretest and the posttest scores of experimental class, the students' scores increase significantly. In normality test, it could be stated the hypothesis is accepted both in the control and experimental class, which meant that the distribution data in both classes are normal. In short, the data from the control and experimental classes shows the values of two tailed significance are higher than alpha ($Sign > \alpha$), which meant that the data from both groups are random for random test. The teaching of vocabulary needs a right technique to be used in order to make it effective. Therefore, the teacher has to be able to choose the best technique for a certain situation. In this case, the teacher should be creative to encourage the students to learn the vocabulary using the right technique. From the result of the research, the two vocabulary teaching techniques could be implemented in teaching vocabulary. Those vocabulary teaching techniques could facilitate the students to improve their vocabulary achievement. However, the two techniques gave different results.

Firstly, the researcher administered the pretest to both groups. In the control class, the average score is 39.42; the highest score is 60; and the lowest score 15. Meanwhile, in the experimental class the average score is 34; the highest score is 75; and the lowest score is 13. From the results, the two classes had similarity in vocabulary mastery before they were given treatment. In other words, the two groups had met the criteria of equality level of achievement. Secondly, the researcher administered the treatments. In this research, the researcher as the teacher conducted the teaching learning process in the classroom. The treatment was administered in three meetings. In each meeting the researcher distributed different texts. There are three texts for each meeting with different topic that are got by students either in control class or in experimental class.

In the control class the researcher used explanation technique. It was done by explaining them the meaning in English. But before that, the teacher asked students'

opinion about the topic related to the text as brainstorming activity. In this research, the researcher taught reading and the focus was on the vocabulary. It was done by elaborating the meaning of the texts with the students. The researcher and the students discussed about the texts with some questions to be answered.

The teacher started by asking the students some questions "Who have ever gone to the zoo? Can you mention animals which are in the zoo? Do you have favorite animals?". It was done to build students' knowledge to lead them or make use of their prior knowledge about the content of the text. Then the teacher told them about the topic which was going to be learnt. Next the teacher distributed text entitled "Belief in Friendship" and asked them to read in silence. The teacher pronounced the words in text and asked the students to repeat. After that the teacher explained the text and gave meaning in English. The researcher gave reinforcement to the students by asking some comprehensive questions related to the text and giving the test. The answers were discussed together by a class. The researcher did not forget to ask students' feeling after reading the text and lead them to conclude the material. As mentioned above, the text was explained by the teacher in English. It was done to help students comprehend the text. In finding the meaning of the words, the students did not have to try hard to get the access of the meaning; they just waited for the teacher's explanation. In this term students tended to be passive. So the meaning they had got could not be retained longer in their memory. Thus, it affected the result of students' posttest. Having finished with the text titled "Belief in Friendship" the teacher continued to the second text titled "Recreation on the Weekend" in the next meeting. The way she gave the text was the same as she introduced the previous text. The teacher discussed the text with students by asking them some questions related to the text, for example. 1) What is the text about? 2). Where do they have recreation? 3) How is the lake? 4) What did they bring to stay a night?. It was done after the researcher

explained the text in English and checked students' comprehension about the text. The test which was given during the lesson and related to the text was making sentences using some target vocabularies, so the students not only knew the meaning but also the form of the words. In the third meeting, the procedure of teaching and learning in the classroom was still the same as the others. The teacher elaborated the text titled "Graduation Day". The teacher discussed the text with the students. The students were asked to read text by them selves after being taught how to pronounce the words in the text. In the experimental class, the researcher used thematic picture technique in teaching vocabulary. The treatment was done in three meetings and the students were distributed different texts in each meeting. Texts used in each meeting in this class were almost the same as in the control class, those were "Belief in Friendship", "Recreation on the Weekend", and "Graduation Day". The difference from the text in control class was there was thematic picture in each picture which represented the content of the text. Similar to the control class, the procedure of teaching and learning process in the classroom was still the same. The difference only in the way the teacher explained the text. If in the control class the teacher used words in English to explain the content of the text and some target vocabularies, in experimental class the teacher's explanation was also helped by the picture to make the students understand and interested in the text. Except that part, all the procedures of teaching and learning process in the classroom both in control class and experimental class were same.

Having conducted the research, the researcher assumed that teaching vocabulary through thematic picture could motivate students to read the text and help them to retain larger the new vocabularies given because they could see them in the picture. By having picture in text, the teacher could raise and retain students' interest and attention. However, conducting this technique needed teacher's attention in selecting the picture and text that was

appropriate and suitable for some levels. Thirdly, the researcher administered the posttest to both classes. From the result, the researcher found that in the control class the highest score is 60; the lowest score 30; and the average score is 53.42. In the experimental class, the highest score 90; and the lowest score is 65; while the average score is 78.03. Both classes show improvement in vocabulary achievement score. However, students who were taught through thematic picture technique shows better result than those who were taught through explanation technique. In this research, the researcher used vocabulary test in the form of objective test. The items tested were taken from the students' reading material as stated by Heaton (1991). The test had four options which were printed in English.

The researcher assumed that the result of posttest in control class was low because the students in control class did not have enough experience in capturing the new target vocabularies. They just got them from the teacher's explanation. Moreover, some students did not really find the meaning of the words by researcher's explanation. Since the explanation was taken in English, the students only kept silent when they did not understand what the teacher's explanation and did not want to take the chance given by the teacher to ask the part they feel confused with. In experimental class however, the students were provided by the picture to help them comprehend what the text was about. Picture told and could convey the meaning of words. That was why it was easier for the students to master the new target vocabularies because they not only heard teacher's explanation but also saw the picture. Even of students did not really find the meanings, they still could find them in picture. Then they were strengthened by test that required them to make sentences using new target vocabularies. It was in line with Nation (1990) that if the teacher's aim was to get learners remember the word and its meaning, then it was useful to find ways of holding learners' attention and encouraging them to make an effort. It might mean that the

teacher should use any kind of vocabulary teaching technique which was able to motivate the students' develop their own vocabulary.

Above all, this finding might not show the same result if this research is conducted in other places with different criteria of students. SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung is not one of the favorite schools in Bandar Lampung. It could be assumed that most students in this school are those who have standard academic achievement. It might become a problem for the students (where this research was conducted) whether or not the teaching learning process used L1/L2, since they belong to students with standard criteria of junior high school students. Language used in teaching learning process (whether L1/L2) would affect the students' understanding of materials.

In summary, teaching vocabulary through thematic picture technique gave a better result than teaching vocabulary through explanation technique. The students who were taught through thematic picture technique gained higher scores than those who were taught through explanation technique (in a certain condition).

5. Conclusions

Having finished conducting the research and analyzing the data, the researcher comes to a major conclusion as follows:

There was a significant difference of vocabulary achievement between those taught through explanation technique and thematic picture technique. It could be seen from the result of the hypothesis which showed that the value of two tail significance was smaller than alpha ($\text{Sign} < \alpha$, $0.000 < 0.05$). It was also supported by the data of the total increase of the students' score from both classes. In the control class the students' total increase was 4, while in the experimental class the total increase gained up to 44.03. This meant that thematic picture technique was more effective than the explanation technique.

In addition, the researcher also has some the minor conclusions as follows:

1. Learning vocabulary through thematic picture technique could motivate the students. It could capture the students' interest and attention.
2. Learning vocabulary through explanation technique made students did not have to try to get the access to the meaning. It could be done quickly and easily because they got it directly from the teacher. It might make the words were unable to be retained longer in students' mind.

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UCAPAN TERIMA KASIH

Ucapan terima kasih dan penghargaan diberikan kepada para pakar/rekan setara yang telah diundang sebagai penelaah oleh Jurnal Linguistika dalam volume 1 tahun 2010. Berikut ini adalah daftar nama pakar/rekan setara yang berpartisipasi:

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