

EXPLORING TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING YOUNG LEARNERS' VOCABULARY

THESIS

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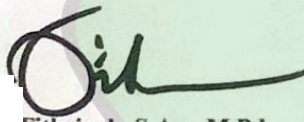
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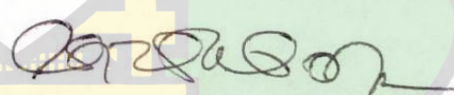
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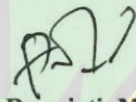
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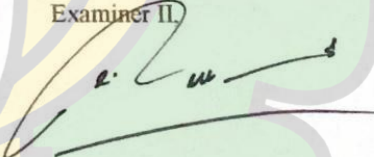
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Hereby declare that in writing this thesis, I:

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This statement is made truthfully and without coercion from any party.



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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Alhamdulillah Rabbi ‘Alamin, all praise and gratitude are due to Allah Subnallahu Wa Ta’ala, Lord of the universe, who has bestowed His blessings upon all mankind. Blessings and greetings are offered to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the bringer of the light of knowledge who illuminates humanity's path from darkness to the shining light of knowledge. Praise be to God, this thesis entitled "Exploring Teachers' Strategies in Developing Young Learners' Vocabulary" has been successfully completed. This thesis is intended to fulfill one of the requirements for a Bachelor of English Education (S.Pd) degree from the Faculty of English Education, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

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ABSTRACT

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Vocabulary plays a crucial role in early language learning as it builds the foundation for communication and further language development. Teaching vocabulary to young learners is challenging since they require strategies that are engaging, interactive, and suited to their developmental stage. Preliminary observations at Kiddos English School Banda Aceh showed that teachers employed multiple strategies, yet it remained unclear which were most effective and how they were applied. To address this, the study investigated two research questions: (1) What strategies do teachers commonly use to develop young learners' vocabulary? and (2) How did they implement these strategies to develop young learners' vocabulary?. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method, with four teachers from level B as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers used a variety of strategies to teach vocabulary, including flashcards, storytelling, games, media (realia and audiovisual), Total Physical Response (TPR), roleplay, repetition, and elicitation. Flashcards and storytelling were among the most frequently applied, as they provided visual support and contextualized language. Realia and audiovisual media helped students link vocabulary to real-life objects, while TPR and roleplay allowed them to embody and practice words actively. Repetition strengthened memory, whereas elicitation encouraged critical thinking and active recall. Teachers adapted these strategies based on learners' needs, learning styles, and prior exposure. In conclusion, the study confirms that varied and interactive strategies are essential for vocabulary development among young learners. Combining visual, physical, and inquiry-based methods not only supports comprehension but also promotes confidence and active use of vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

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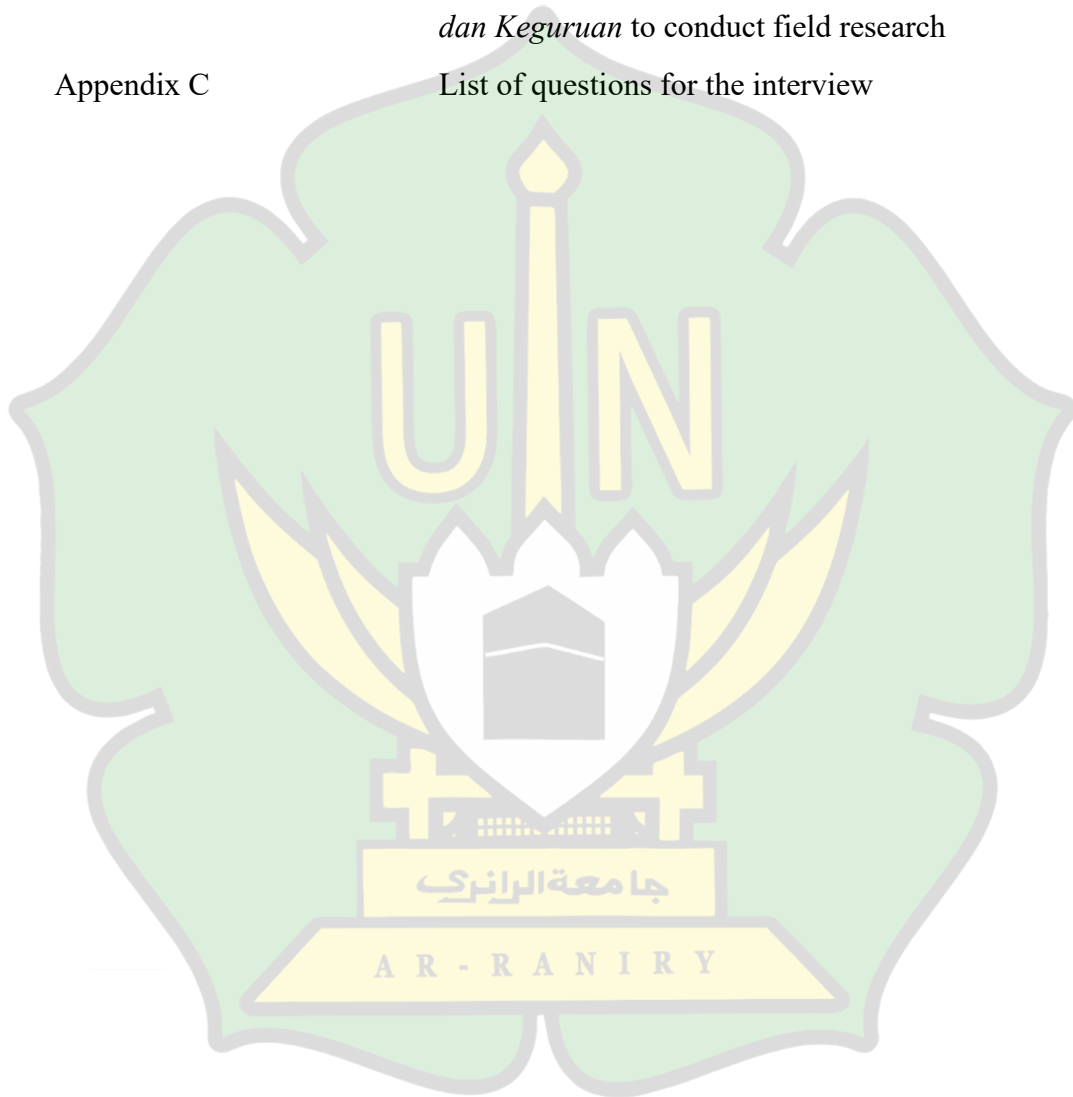
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter describes the reasons for conducting the research. It discusses the background of the study, research questions, the aim of the study, the significance of the study, and the terminologies. The information needed is elaborated on in the following section.

A. Background of Study

Mastering English as a second or foreign language begins with building a solid foundation in vocabulary. Vocabulary is the fundamental building block of language that enables learners to access and express meaning across all communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, even learners with strong grammatical understanding may find it difficult to comprehend texts or participate effectively in conversations. This highlights that vocabulary is not merely a supporting element but a central component in achieving language proficiency. Wilkins, as cited in Rashid (2022), emphasized that while spelling and grammar have their roles, it is the knowledge and use of vocabulary that truly enable communication.

Similarly, Schmitt and Schmitt (2020) noted that vocabulary is critical for successful language learning because it allows learners to construct meaningful messages and understand others. Thus, vocabulary acquisition must

be prioritized from the early stages of English learning to ensure learners are equipped to engage with the language confidently and effectively.

Given the central role of vocabulary in mastering English and engaging in global communication, it becomes especially important to introduce effective vocabulary learning from an early age. Early exposure to language helps children develop not only linguistic competence but also confidence in using the language in various contexts (Nation, 2001), because students who have a strong mastery of vocabulary are more likely to understand the accurate meaning of words. On the other hand, limited vocabulary knowledge can make it difficult for them to use the language effectively and engage in communication (Liando, 2018).

Young learners are naturally curious and eager to learn new words, but they require appropriate guidance and support to acquire vocabulary effectively. Teaching vocabulary to this age group is not only about introducing new words but also about ensuring that learners can understand, use, and retain them in meaningful contexts. Teaching vocabulary for young learners should be embedded in engaging and age-appropriate activities that support both understanding and use (Cameron, 2001).

However, teaching vocabulary to young learners presents several challenges for teachers, including both internal and external factors such as student motivation, classroom diversity, and class size (Anggraini, 2018). Because teachers of young learners need to spend time understanding how their

students think and behave. They should be attentive to learners' current interests in order to effectively use them as a source of motivation (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, selecting appropriate strategies for teaching vocabulary to young learners is essential to ensure they fully comprehend what they are learning.

Several studies have been conducted on developing vocabulary among young learners. One such study is Teachers' Strategies to Increase Vocabulary for Young Learners: Teachers' Use and Perception by Munawwarah (2022), which examined English teachers with a minimum of one year of experience in teaching vocabulary to young children. The findings revealed that commonly used strategies included games, visual aids (such as pictures), memorization, translation, realia, physical actions or gestures, and songs. These techniques were widely favored by teachers in their vocabulary instruction. Additionally, the study found that most teachers shared similar perspectives regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. Importantly, the teachers also adapted their instructional approaches based on the classroom environment and learners' conditions to ensure optimal vocabulary acquisition.

Another relevant study was conducted by Dasapratama (2020), titled Teacher's Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary for Young Learners: A Descriptive Study on Teaching Vocabulary at EYL Class of Ohio English Course. This study identified five key strategies utilized by teachers when teaching vocabulary to young learners: the listen and repeat strategy, listen and do, songs and games, question and answer, and outdoor learning strategies. These methods were

chosen by the teachers because they were considered appropriate and effective for the context of English for Young Learners (EYL) classes.

Therefore, I am interested in exploring teachers' strategies in developing young learners' vocabulary because, based on my initial observation, it was evident that teachers do not rely on a single strategy. Instead, they employ a variety of strategies simultaneously to introduce and strengthen vocabulary among young learners. This observation raised my curiosity to investigate further how these different strategies are selected, combined, and applied in the classroom context. By examining this, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of multiple strategies in addressing the diverse learning needs, styles, and abilities of young children in vocabulary development. Moreover, at Kiddos English School, English is taught not only during formal classroom sessions but also through daily interactions outside the classroom, as the school adopts English as part of its everyday communication practices. In response to this condition, the researcher is intrigued by the opportunity to explore teachers' strategies in developing young learners' vocabulary.

B. Research Questions

Based on the explanation above, the researcher formulates the research question as follows:

1. What strategies do teachers commonly use to develop young learners' vocabulary at Kiddos English School?

2. How did they implement these strategies to develop young learners' vocabulary at Kiddos English School?

C. Research Aims

The aims of this research are:

1. To find out the strategies teachers use to develop young learners' vocabulary at Kiddos English School
2. To find out the implementation of these strategies to develop young learners' vocabulary at Kiddos English School

D. Significance of Study

The results of this study are expected to contribute to several parties, namely learning institutions, lecturers, and researchers. In addition, this study is expected to make a meaningful contribution both theoretically and practically in the field of English language teaching, particularly in the area of vocabulary teaching for young learners.

E. Terminologies

In conducting this study, several key terms are frequently used and need to be clarified to avoid misinterpretation. Below are the terminologies relevant to this research:

1. Teachers' Strategies

Teachers' strategies in this thesis refer to the approaches and actions taken by teachers to help young learners develop their vocabulary. A strategy is understood as an overall plan that guides classroom practices to reach specific learning goals (Harmer, 2007). Brown (2004) explains that teaching strategies

function to simplify the use of methods and techniques in practice. In the context of this research, teachers' strategies involve activities adapted to children's developmental stages, learning preferences, and motivation. These include the use of flashcards, storytelling, games, media, Total Physical Response (TPR), roleplay, repetition, and elicitation. Each of these strategies is applied to make vocabulary learning more meaningful, interactive, and effective for young learners.

2. Young Learner

The term usually refers to children who are at the beginning of their formal education, usually ranging from 5 to 12 years of age (McKay, 2007). In the context of this research, the term specifically refers to learners at Kiddos English School, aged 5 to 6 years, who are learning English as a second or foreign language.

