

Students Difficulties in Vocabulary Acquisition and Teacher Strategies in Vocabulary Instruction for Young Learner Students at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang

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Abstract – This study, entitled “Students Difficulties in Vocabulary Acquisition and Teacher Strategies in Vocabulary Instruction For Young Learner Students at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang, aimed to identify the difficulties faced students in learning English vocabulary and to describe the strategies used by teacher to overcome those difficulties. The research employed a qualitative method with interviews as the primary data collection instrument. The participants of the study were fourth and fifth grade students along with the English teacher at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang. The findings revealed that students experienced several difficulties in vocabulary acquisition, including limited mastery of vocabulary, problems with pronunciation, spelling error, memory difficulties, and confusion in contextual usage. Emotional responses such as frustration, low motivation, and lack of confidence also emerged as factors that hindered learning. These obstacles indicated that young learners often struggle due to both internal factors such as low retention and limited strategies and external factors, including teaching methods and lack of exposure to English in daily life. In responses, the teacher applied various strategies to support students learning. These included

contextual approaches, the use of songs pictures, and games, as well as formative evaluation to assess progress. Such strategies were found to make learning more engaging, help students participate actively, and gradually improve their vocabulary mastery. The result of this research highlight the importance of creative, students centered approaches in vocabulary instruction for young learners.

Keywords – Vocabulary Learning Difficulties, Teacher Strategies

I. Introduction

English is universally acknowledge as a significant global language, and its role in international communication continues to increase along with globalization. Murti (2024) states that “English language proficiency is recognized as an important need in various contexts, including international careers”. English is therefore essential for economic growth, educational, advancement, and global collaboration. As Andika (2023) explains “In the era of globalization as we are experiencing now, technology continues of English is something to be mastered in facing various challenges in this era”.

In Indonesia, the government has responded do these demands by enacting policies that require English education at all levels. As Makarim (2024) highlights in New Direction, “The government will implement a policy that will require English language proficiency at all levels at all levels of education so that future generation will have the necessary skills to deal with global challenges”. Early English instruction is believed

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to strengthen language acquisition, as Lestari (2023) noted “It is anticipated that early English language instruction will accelerate learning and lay a solid foundation for future academic and professional success”.

Despite these efforts, difficulties remain in vocabulary acquisition, particularly among young learners. During the researcher PLP experiences at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang, it was found that many students had difficulty retaining simple vocabulary, showed low motivation, and lacked exposure to English outside schools. As Widagdo (2021) suggests, “Ideally, when learning a new language, students should be exposed to and interact with real life materials that their language proficiency”. However, limited resources, reliance on memorization, and lack of supportive environments hinder vocabulary learning. Vistari (2020) emphasizes that “A positive learning environment and support from the family greatly influence students English language skills”, while Yulianti (2024) adds that “Memorization as a teaching method often does not provide enough context for students to understand the use of vocabulary in real situation”.

To address these issues, teachers have applied more engaging strategies such as songs, flashcard, and games. Sari (2023) underlines that “Childrens cognitive development is an importance aspect of the learning process, where children need to be engaged in activities that stimulate their thinking and memory skills”, and Nabila (2024) notes that “Interactive and engaging activities are needed to support students learning process, so they not only learn vocabulary but also develop a positive attitude towards language”.

In light of this, vocabulary development becomes a central concern in young learners English learning. This study therefore investigates the difficulties faces by students acquiring English vocabulary and the strategies employed by teacher at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang to overcome these difficulties.

II. Methodology Section

The study employed a qualitative approach to gain a through understanding of the difficulties faced by young learners in acquiring English vocabulary, with the main

aim of exploring experiences, perspective, and meanings within a natural context. As Creswell (2012) explains, “Qualitative research method are used to describe, explore, and understand the meanings that individuals of group ascribe to social or human problems”. A case study design was applied to obtain in depth insight into students vocabulary learning difficulties and teacher instructional strategies in a real classroom setting.

The participants consisted of two students from grade IV, two students from grade V, and one English teacher, all selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria, namely students with English scores below 65 and those who had previously received remedial of special instruction. Although purposive sampling carries a risk of subjectivity, this study minimized such limitations by applying clear criteria and documentations.

The research site was SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang, located in Bungo Dani sub-district, Jambi province, chosen because English is taught under the Merdeka curriculum and both teacher and students face notable difficulties in English learning.

Data collection was carried out in August 2025 during the active school term, using an interview protocol as the primary instrument to guide the process systematically. As Creswell (2018) states, “Interview protocols ensure interviews run in directed and consistent manner”, while Sugiyono (2017) highlights “Interviews are as a two way process to exchange information that produces descriptive, reflective, and contextual data”. Therefore, semi structured interviews were conducted with students and the teacher to explore in detail the difficulties in vocabulary acquisition, teaching strategies, and students responses.

The research procedures involved preparation and planning, designing and validating the interview protocol, collecting data, transcribing and organizing responses, analyzing data, interpreting the findings in relation to theories, and drawing conclusion. Data were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman (1994) framework, which consist of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification, enabling the research to identify recurring patterns and ensure the validity of the findings.

III. Results

This research aimed to investigate the difficulties faced by students in learning English vocabulary and the strategies used by teacher at SDN 104/II Sungai Pinang. Data were collected through direct interviews with one teacher and four students from grades IV and V on 8 august 2025. The finding revealed that students experienced various difficulties, such as limited memorization ability, lack of interest, confusion in understanding vocabulary, and overall difficulties in learning English.

3.1 The Students Difficulties in Learning English Vocabulary

No	Theme	Sub Theme
1	Memory Difficulties	1. Storing 2. Recalling 3. Recognizing vocabulary
2	Learning Difficulties	1. Hard to remember 2. Too many words 3. Forgetting after learning 4. Teacher speaking too past 5. Different speaking and writing forms
3	Emotional Responses and Attitude	1. Low motivation 2. Confusion in spelling/pronunciation 3. Feelings of annoance/irritation 4. Fear of asking quastions 5. Positive feelings when learning through songs/games 6. Hopelessness or dislike toward English leassons

Table 1 Students Difficulties

3.2.4 Memory Difficulties

Studies have found that students experience several difficulties in learning

English vocabulary. Memory difficulties arise because students often forget words they have learned due to a lack of repetition, the large number of vocabulary items, and the speed of teaching.

3.1.2 Learning Difficulties

In terms of learning difficulties, students have trouble retaining vocabulary due to the complexity of word forms, inadequate practice, and limited memory capacity.

3.1.3 Emotional Responses and Attitudes

Emotional responses and attitudes play an important role in shaping students' motivation and learning outcomes. Negative feelings such as confusion, frustration, and lack of interest often arise, while some students show enthusiasm when learning through songs or games.

3.2 The Teacher Strategies in Learning English Vocabulary

No	Theme	Sub Theme
1	Visual and auditory media	1. Visual aids (picures, images) 2. Auditory aids (songs, recordings) 3. Help with meaning association 4. Support correct pronunciation 5. Strengthen memory 6. Create engaging learning atmosphere
2	Student activities	1. Vocabulary games 2. Creating sentences/ short stories 3. Group discussion 4. Increase motivation & engagement 5. Encourage active use of new vpcabulary
3	Contextual Strategies	1. Teaching vocabulary through sentences/texts 2. Understanding meaning in context 3. Beyond memorization 4. Makes learning

		meaningful & practice
4	Evaluation and feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formative assessment 2. Writing/speaking assignment 3. Constructive feedback from teacher 4. Opportunities to improve understanding 5. Identify strength & weaknesses

3.2.1 *Visual and Auditory Media*

Teachers use pictures, recordings, and songs to help students connect vocabulary with real objects, reinforce correct pronunciation, and create an engaging atmosphere.

3.2.2 *Students Activities*

Teachers implement interactive activities such as vocabulary games, flashcards, bingo, short story assignments, and group discussions to increase student motivation and participation.

3.2.3 *Contextual Strategies*

Vocabulary is introduced through sentences or texts to help students understand meaning in real-life contexts rather than relying solely on memorization.

3.2.4 *Assessment and Feedback*

Teachers conduct regular quizzes, writing and speaking assignments, and then provide constructive feedback to reinforce vocabulary master.

IV. Discussion

4.1 *Students Difficulties in Learning English Vocabulary*

4.1.1 *Memory Difficulties*

Findings show that vocabulary storage and recall capacity are major obstacles for students. The phenomenon of forgetting experienced by students is caused by three main factors: lack of repetition, the volume of vocabulary that must be mastered, and the pace of delivery of the material. This is in line with Sucandra (2022), who notes that “Limited memory capacity and infrequent use

of words significantly hinder vocabulary retention.”

4.1.2 *Learning Difficulties*

The complexity of word forms, both in terms of structure and differences between spoken and written forms, adds to the cognitive load on students in the learning process. The limited practice provided further exacerbates this condition. Kurniawati (2025) also emphasizes that “Poor vocabulary mastery affects students' communication skills due to ineffective strategies and poor memory.”

4.1.3 *Emotional Responses and Attitudes*

The affective dimension has been proven to have a significant effect on student learning outcomes. The spectrum of emotions that arise ranges from negative to positive, depending on the teaching methods applied. Brown (2016) states that “Emotions greatly influence learners' achievements in foreign language learning.”

4.2 *Teacher Strategies in English Vocabulary Learning*

4.2.1 *Visual and Auditory Media*

The implementation of multisensory media has been proven effective in strengthening meaning associations and improving student memory. The use of visual and auditory aids not only supports pronunciation accuracy but also creates a more dynamic learning atmosphere. As Chamdani (2023) states, “Audio-visual media that engage both the senses of hearing and sight simultaneously can improve English language comprehension in a more effective way.”

4.2.2 *Student Activities*

An interactive activity-based learning approach has a positive impact on student participation and enthusiasm. The variety of methods applied, ranging from games to group discussions, successfully transformed the classroom dynamics into a more active one. This is in line with Banjarnahor (2024), who explains that “The use of interactive learning media such as vocabulary games is very effective in improving learners' vocabulary mastery because they will become more enthusiastic and not easily bored.”

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that students face major difficulties in vocabulary acquisition, including limited memory, complex word forms, low retention, and emotional barriers. To overcome these difficulties, teacher play a crucial role as facilitators by applying contextual and multi-sensory strategies, encouraging active students participation through games and discussion, addressing motivational factors, and providing consistent practice with constructive feedback. By integrating these approaches, vocabulary learning becomes more meaningful, engaging, and effective, enabling students to build a stronger foundation for their English proficiency.

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