



## Teacher Difficulties in Teaching Vocabulary

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### Abstract

This research aims at finding out the teacher difficulties in teaching vocabulary at MTS Batusitanduk. The scope of the research was limited to focus on describing or exploring the difficulties faced by the teacher in teaching English vocabulary. This research applied descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research was 2 English teachers of MTS Batusitanduk. The research used interview to collect the data. Based on the result of data analysis the research concludes that teacher's difficulties in teaching vocabulary are difficult in selecting vocabulary to be taught because there are many words in English and the students do not have same ability, difficult in implementing teaching technique or presenting new vocabularies because when presenting the new vocabulary. The students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, noisy, and the students are passive in vocabulary learning. And the teachers are difficult to review or evaluating the students' understanding about the words that have been taught because the students do not still understand about meaning of the vocabulary.

**Keywords:** teacher, difficulties, teaching, vocabulary.

### Introduction

Vocabulary plays important role in language learning. Vocabulary is also an essential skill for learning to read, speak, write and listen. Without sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate and express their feeling both in form of spoken and written effectively. In addition, it is supported by Zimmerman(2006:60), vocabulary is one of important things to be taught in learning foreign language because it will be impossible to speak up without variety of words. Those statements imply the importance of teaching vocabulary as a foreign language.

In teaching English, vocabulary as an element of language was regarded

as the important aspects in mastering those skills. Nation (2006:5), states that vocabularies is an important aspect in all language teaching. The students must continuously learn words as they learn structure and as they practice the sound systems. He also stated that if language structure makes up the skeleton of language, than vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. Vocabulary is also an important element in language teaching and learning.

Teaching vocabulary is very important thing to help the students in mastering English, however there have been many teachers faced many difficulties in teaching learning vocabulary in the classroom. Wilkins (2010:10) says that the very first difficulty recognized in teaching words is the matter of whether to teach form first then meaning or meaning first then form later. This matter once drew attention of another author, on the other hand, he also said that raised two important facts that teachers might sometimes neglect: one form may have many meanings and vice versa. The researcher also assumed that in the way in presenting and practicing the vocabulary are also difficulties in teaching vocabulary. There are some teachers are hard to present the words that are taught to the students and they are sometimes confused to create the activity to help the students to practice the words.

From the explanation, it can be said that the difficulties in teaching vocabulary can occur from the difficult of language, the level of the students' intellectuality, and the teachers' role in teaching vocabulary itself. Therefore, those are the motivation that the researcher has to conduct the research about what are the teachers' problem of teaching vocabulary because the researcher assumed that many of the English teacher faced the difficulties in the classroom when they are teaching the vocabulary to the students. In relation to the background, the research formulates the problem statement what are the teachers' difficulties in teaching English vocabulary at MTS Batusitanduk.

## **Literature Review**

Learning a new language cannot be separated from vocabulary. Meaning that in learning a new language people have to know its vocabulary. Vocabulary can be defined in various ways. According to Richards & Renandya (2006:255), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read and write. Without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them such as listening to the radio, listening to the native speaker, and using language in different context, reading or watching television.

Hebert & Kamil (2005:3) define vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The term vocabulary has a range of meanings. For example, some teachers use the term to mean sight-word vocabularies, referring to students' immediate recognition of words in print; other teachers refer to words students understand as their meaning vocabularies. Still other teachers use the term to

mean listening vocabularies, or students' understanding of words that they hear in the spoken language. Content teachers use the term academic vocabulary to refer to content - specific words. Within this section, we use the term vocabulary to refer to students' understanding of oral and print words. Vocabularies include conceptual knowledge of words that goes well beyond a simple dictionary definition. Students' vocabulary knowledge is a building process that occurs over time as they make connections to other words, learn examples and non - examples of the word and related words, and use the word accurately within the context of the sentence.

According to Hatch & Brown (2005:90), the term of vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for particular language or a list of words that individual speakers of language use. Since vocabulary is a list, the only system involved is that alphabetical order. The choice in vocabulary selection and methods used in teaching vocabulary are important factors. Hatch & Brown (2005:95) also state that vocabulary is the only system involved of alphabetical order.

Lubliner & Scott (2008:7) describe that vocabulary is the total number of the words (with their meaning and with rules for combining them) making up the language and Burn & Broman (2007:4) define that vocabulary is the stock of words used by a person, class or professional, all having much in common, yet each distinctly different. The primary thing in learning a language is the acquisition of a vocabulary. Therefore, success in learning English requires vocabulary acquisition. A large vocabulary cannot guarantee the learner's competence in learning English but in adequacy of vocabulary will obstruct their chances to make success in learning English.

It needs the process of learning in context to get the meaning of words as stated by Nisbett & Ross (2009:2) explain that vocabulary is a fundamental component of second language proficiency, one of the primary goals of language learning is to know the meanings of the words. It is needed to communicate successfully in the second language.

Zhang (2009:33) defines that vocabulary as the words we teach in the foreign language. In addition, Nation (2006:8) views vocabulary items as a boring list of words that must be defined and memorized by the students, lexical forms are seen in their central role in contextualized, meaningful language. Scarcella (2009) also views that knowing a word meaning knowing how often it occurs, the company it keeps, its appropriateness in different situations, its syntactic behavior, its underlying form and derivations, its word associations, and its semantic features. From the definitions above, it can be concluded that vocabulary mastery is the the understanding of all the words of a language or complete skill to understand the stock of words and their meanings of a particular language.

Based on the definitions above, the researcher concludes that vocabulary is the set of words owned by someone or is a part of particular language that are always produced in verbal or non verbal communication.

Vocabulary is very important for second language learners, only with sufficient vocabulary learners can effectively express their ideas both in oral and written form. Thus they should have a good idea of how to expand their vocabulary so that they can improve their interest in learning the language. Language teachers, therefore, should possess considerable knowledge on how to manage an interesting classroom so that the learners can gain a great success in their vocabulary learning.

Finochiaro (2011:9), teaching vocabulary plays an important role in language acquisition because the mastery of vocabulary will help students to master all the language skills; speaking; listening; writing; and reading. The vocabulary will make the students practice life and will strengthen belief that English can be used to express the same ideas or feeling they express in their native language.

Furthermore, in teaching vocabulary the teacher can introduce the list of vocabulary that is taken from the book. The teacher uses and adds other vocabulary which is relevant to the students. Teacher needs a good knowledge on their teaching materials. When they have to teach the students about vocabulary, teachers should know the general knowledge of vocabulary, words and also the meaning. The words or vocabulary can be spoken and written.

Wallace (2007:207) explains that teaching vocabulary should consider these following factors:

a. Aims

The aim of teaching vocabulary is to make the teacher easy to formulate the materials, which will be taught to the students.

b. Quantity

The teacher has to decide the number of vocabulary items to be learned. The learners will get confuse or discouraged if they get many new words. Therefore, the teacher should select new words, which can easy to understand by the learners.

c. Need

In teaching vocabulary, the teacher has to choose the words really needed by the students in communication.

d. Frequent exposure and repetition

Frequent exposure and repetition here means that the teacher should give much practice on repetition so that the students master the target words well. They also give opportunity to the students to use words in writing or speaking.

e. Meaningful presentation

In teaching vocabulary the teacher should present target words in such a way that the meaning of the target words are perfectly clear and unambiguous.

f. Situation and presentation

The teachers tell the students that they have to use the words appropriately. The use of words depends on the situation in which they are used and depends on the person to whom they are speaking.

In this part, the researcher will describe some stages in teaching vocabulary. Basically as proposed by Gower (2005:8), there are three main stages in teaching vocabulary namely presenting, practicing and revising. In this research, the researcher is going to list each stage with its typical features to have a better review for further techniques followed that.

#### 1) Presenting

The title of this very first stage has indicated clearly its function in introducing new lexical items to learners. As suggested by Gower (2005:9), at the very least learners need to learn both the meaning and the form of a new word. Therefore, as he claimed, it is worth pointing out that both the aspects of a word should be presented in “close conjunction in order to ensure a tight meaning – and - form fit”, If the co-writers of teaching practice immediately referred to the effectiveness of using visual aids in presenting new words. It is also specifically emphasized the importance of cutting down “the gap between the presentation of a word’s form and its meaning” so that learners could possibly be at ease to make mental connection between the two.

Thorn (2009:10) stresses some major factors, subject to which the number of words should be presented. They could be as following:

a) The learners’ level (beginner, intermediate, or advanced). Learners’ likely familiarity with the words (learners may have met the words before even though they are not part of their active vocabulary)

b) The difficulty of the items (whether, for example, they express abstract rather than concrete meaning, or whether they are difficult to pronounce)

c) Their “teaching ability”, which means whether they can be easily explained or demonstrated within the context of the classroom.

d) Whether items are being learned for production (in speaking and writing) or for recognition only (as in listening and reading). Since more time will be needed for the former, the number of items is likely to be fewer than if the aim is only recognition

After raising two most common questions in presenting new words in teaching vocabulary, Thorn (2009:10) says that further to notify a principle in introducing new vocabulary items, which was learners’ capacity. When the learners’ capacity to remember new words, the number of new words presented should be carefully considered and should not be overstretched.

Sokmen (2007:8) assumes that in presenting the vocabulary, the teacher has to provide a description, explanation or example of a new term. Students are asked to restate the description, explanation or example of the new term. Students then construct a picture, symbol or graphic design of the term. The teacher engages students in activities that will help in mastering the new concepts. Students are asked to discuss the new terms often in class.

#### 2) Practicing

Gower (2005:10) says that the students often need a little time for the new lexical items (or new words for short) to “sink in”. They pointed out that learners

may recognize new item but often delay putting it into active use. In this case, the use of planned activities for recycling and reactivate the new vocabulary is of necessity. This kind of practice, as implied by Thorn (2009:20), underlines the popular belief that practice makes perfect. Additionally, he emphasized the action of moving words from short-term memory into permanent memory. He indicated that new knowledge – i.e. new words – needs to be integrated into existing knowledge – i.e. learner's existing network of word associations, or what is called the mental lexicon. This means in order to ensure the long-term retention and recall, words or lexical items need to be put to work, or into practice as it is often understood in many other contexts. He proposed that vocabulary need to be placed in "working memory" and subjected to different operations which would be mentioned intricately in the later part of techniques in practicing vocabulary.

Sokmen (2007:19) explains that after present the vocabulary, the teacher must provide a few times for practicing. The teacher can use songs and games when teaching vocabulary and employ semantic field and semantic mapping strategies. Teacher uses the key word method to reinforce important concepts and provide sufficient practice. Regular review of important concepts and vocabulary is done in class.

### 3) Consolidating and Revising

Gower (2005:22) explains that in accordance with presenting and putting words into practice, checking students' comprehension and revising those words are a final important stage in teaching this specific field. This stage sound familiar and may be equated to the second one, however; as its name suggests, in this stage, students are advised to complete high-level tasks namely production asks. The author of many famous books for English language teachers grouped decision-making tasks into the second stage when learners needed to decide and make their choice in facing up with already learnt items. For the third and final stage as this, production tasks were of high attention of the author. A closer look and review to techniques of this stage will be presented afterwards.

Concerning to the explanation assumed by Gower , the researcher can conclude that there are there main steps that can be followed by the teachers in teaching or presenting vocabulary to the students. Those are presenting, practicing, consolidating and reviewing.

In this series, the researcher will describes some techniques that can be used by the English teachers in teaching or presenting vocabulary to the students. Reed (2010:21) explains the technique in presenting vocabulary. It can seen the explanation below:

#### 1) Techniques in Presenting Word Meaning

The researcher will provide the explanation of some techniques that can be used in presenting word meaning. According to Reed (2010;22), there are

some techniques in presenting word meaning. They are translation, real object or phenomena, meaning definition, presentation through context and learners' active involvement.

**a) Translation**

Even though translation does not create a need or motivation of the learners to think about word meaning. In some situations translation could be effective for teachers, such as when dealing with incidental vocabulary, checking students' comprehension, and pointing out similarities or differences between first and second language, when these are likely to cause errors.

**b) Real objects or phenomena**

This technique includes the use of realia, visual aids, and demonstration. They can function to help learners in remembering vocabulary better, because our memory for objects and pictures is very reliable and visual technique can act as cues for remembering words and the use of real objects technique is appropriately employed for beginners or young learners and when presenting concrete vocabulary

**c) Meaning definition**

Meaning definition includes: full definition, analytical definition, giving examples, and synonyms or antonyms. Presented by meaning definition, students may be more cognitively engaged because they do mental work a little harder to understand a word meaning. In employing definition, Reed (2010:24) suggests that teachers need to show the meaning in simple English, using words that are within the students' current range.

**d) Presentation through context**

This technique is appropriate to employ when the vocabularies become more abstract. There are two types of this technique: giving an example situation and giving example sentences. Presented by this technique, learners work a mental process of guessing from examples, can memorize the word better and have the information about word's form and grammar.

**e) Learners' active involvement**

Employing this technique, the teacher encourages the students to find out word's meaning by elicitation. Elicitation maximizes learners' speaking opportunities, and acts as a way of checking learners' understanding. This technique also includes personalization, which is using the word by learners in a context or sentence that is related to their life.

**2) Techniques in presenting word form**

In presenting word forms, there are some techniques that can be applied. Reed (2010:27) describes some techniques in presenting word forms. Here below the explanation:

**a) Presentation of the graphic form**

This technique is employed when presenting the written form of vocabulary item, such as by writing the words on the board, underlining or highlighting the words on the text, and creating flashcards which consist of the words (word

flashcards).

**b) Phonetic transcription**

The second technique is by highlighting word form by writing its phonetic transcription. This technique is less necessary for young learners since they are still consolidating their writing skills and generally good at imitating foreign sounds.

**c) Drilling**

Drilling is employed to make learners get accustomed to the word form especially to how it sounds. To make learners more familiar with the word, drilling should be clear and natural. Drilling is very necessary since learners need to say the word to themselves as they learn it, to recall the words from memory

**d) Spelling the word**

Another technique that can be used in presenting word form is spelling the word. Reed (2010:34) explain that the primary means of spelling is actually memorizing words. Word spelling needs to be considered since spelling form of English words is not always be inferred by the pronunciation.

In conducting the research, the researcher refers to the Wallace and Gower's theory. In this case, in describing or finding the difficulties faced by the English teacher in teaching vocabulary, the researcher will design the instrument by referring of the principle and stages in teaching English vocabulary that have been proposed by Wallace and Gower. The researcher also refers to the technique in presenting vocabulary stated by Reed.

## **Research Method**

This research used descriptive qualitative methods. It means that the researcher applied a set of procedure use for problem solving based on the factual data. Descriptive qualitative method was a procedure or process undertaken by researcher to collect data orally. The purpose of this method was to describe data obtained systematically and in accordance reality. The researcher carried out this research on August 2018 at MTS Batusitanduk particularly the English teachers at MTS Batusitanduk. The subject of the research was the English teachers of MTS Batusitanduk. The researcher interviewed 2 English teachers of MTS Batusitanduk to get the data related to difficulties faced by the English teachers in teaching vocabulary. The researchers used interview as the instrument to know the difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching vocabulary at MTS Batusitanduk. In interviewing activity, the researcher recorded the teachers' answer.

Based on Miles & Huberman (2014) there are three stages of analysis data namely:

The researcher collected the data that used in the research, after doing the reduction, the researcher chose the data is very need to make the report of the



research, after that the researcher classification the data.

After reducing the data, the researcher displayed the data of the research. In displaying the data, the researcher created the explanation or description about difficulties faced by the English teachers in teaching vocabulary at MTS Batusitanduk.

In this part, the researcher made the conclusion by referring to the data that the researcher have reduced and displayed before.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Findings***

For collecting the data, Researcher interviewed the two teachers. This was aimed for knowing the teachers' problems in teaching vocabulary. Result of the research indicates, the teacher difficulties in teaching vocabulary include: the selecting material, implementing teaching technique (presenting new vocabularies) and review or evaluation.

### ***Difficult in selecting vocabulary to be taught***

The researcher gets the data about the teachers' difficulties in teaching vocabulary. The difficulty is about selecting material or choose the kinds of vocabulary will be taught.

First teacher said that teaching vocabulary is very difficult considering there are hundreds of thousands of words in English, but keep in mind that native speakers only use around 5000 words in daily conversation, so we have to choose which words are not mastered by students or for example simple and needed by students. This indicates that first teacher is difficult to select the words for teaching vocabulary and the Each student has unstable motivation in mastering vocabulary. It means that the total number and kinds of vocabulary to be taught make teachers difficult to select the vocabulary material.

Second teacher said that of course, in teaching vocabulary, there must be difficulties that might occur in selecting the vocabulary needed by students because their abilities are not the same. Some students have understood the vocabulary but some of them have not. It means that vocabulary material has a very important role in the teaching - learning process. The material should be appropriate with the students' need. It must be able to develop the students' competence and material should help the students understand the lesson easily. However, the second teacher is difficult select the words because the students do have the same ability.

### ***Difficult to present or introduce new words***

The researcher continue the process of interviewing the teachers about the

difficulties in teaching vocabulary and researcher get more data about that. Now, the researcher write in table below:

First teacher said that whatever technique we use in teaching may not be entirely helpful because of several factors such as the student's capture power, sometimes students do not like English lessons and many students are noisy when learning and when explain the vocabulary the students do not pay attention well what is explained.

Second teacher said that for example student factors, when we explain vocabulary many students do not pay attention to explanation, they are noisy, and are not active during the learning process. This indicates that first teacher is difficulties in managing the students in the class in receiving material or presenting new vocabulary.

It means the teachers are difficult in presenting or introducing new vocabulary. It is because when presenting the new vocabulary, the students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, noisy and the students are passive in vocabulary learning.

### ***Difficult to review students' vocabulary***

In interviewing the teachers, the researcher finds the teachers difficulties about reviewing or evaluating the students' mastering of vocabulary that have been taught.

First teacher said that In teaching learning process, the teachers get some difficulties to evaluate the words that have learnt. The problem when reviewing the vocabulary of students who usually appear in class is when students do their problems cheating and noisy each other, maybe they do not understand the vocabulary taught so it is difficult to answer questions. In addition, when asked they were silent and difficult to answer questions about the meaning of vocabulary in Indonesian.

Second teacher said that when we evaluate many students who are less focused and there are also some who apparently do not understand the material so passive in learning. It means the second teacher is difficult to review the vocabulary that have taught because the students less focused, understanding and passive in learning.

It can be concluded that the teachers are difficult to review students' vocabulary because the students do not understand about vocabulary that have been taught and the students are not interested to look for the meaning of words by asking to the teachers.

## **Discussion**

This discussion tells about the findings. The researcher found that the teachers' difficulties in teaching English vocabulary at MTS Batusitanduk related

to selecting vocabulary to be taught, difficult in implementing teaching technique or presenting new vocabularies, and difficult to review or evaluating the students' understanding about the words that have been taught.

The teachers are difficult to select the words to be taught to their learners. It is happened because the students do not have the same ability in receiving the material. So, the teachers should be aware of the vocabulary regarded to their learners' need. In this way, students can use words effectively and teaching vocabulary is clearly more than just presenting new words. A teacher has to be careful in selecting the vocabulary that he or she will teach. Both student and teacher need to know how it talks about language at various points during learning and teaching. In other words, teacher should know what he or she wants to teach in order to make student understands easily.

It is supported by Wallace (2007:207) explains that teaching vocabulary, the teacher has to decide the number of vocabulary items to be learned. The learners will get confuse or discouraged if they get many new words. Therefore, the teacher should select new words, which can easy to understand by the learners. So, the question of number 1, 2, 3 and 4 proved that the teacher hard in choose the word to taught the students.

The teachers are difficult in implementing teaching technique or presenting new vocabularies when presenting the new vocabulary. It is happened because the students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, noisy, and the students are passive in vocabulary learning. It describes that the teachers implement different technique in each meeting to overcome the problems and stimulate the students to be active and interested in process of presenting new vocabulary.

According to Gower (2005:9) that the very least learners need to learn both the meaning and the form of a new word. Therefore, as he claimed, it is worth pointing out that both these aspects of a word should be presented in "close conjunction in order to ensure a tight meaning – and - form fit", If the co-writers of teaching practice immediately referred to the effectiveness of using visual aids in presenting new words.

Teachers are difficult to review evaluating the students' understanding about the words that have been taught because the students do not still understand about meaning of the vocabulary. In process of evaluation, the teachers are hard to control the students being focus and concentrate because most the students are still hard to clarify the meaning of the new new words that have been taught.

The last, the researcher conclude that teacher difficulties in teaching vocabulary are difficult in selecting vocabulary to be taught because there are many words in English and the students do not have same ability, difficult in implementing teaching technique or presenting new vocabularies because when presenting the new vocabulary, the students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, noisy and the students are passive in vocabulary learning

and difficult to review evaluating the students' understanding about the words that have been taught because the students do not still understand about meaning of the vocabulary. It means, the teachers must be able to know what kinds of techniques use their goal and remember to motivate students in learning vocabulary, so it can help the teachers to solve difficulties in teaching vocabulary.

## Conclusion

Based on the explanation of the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that The teacher's difficulties in teaching vocabulary at MTS Batusitandukare difficult in selecting vocabulary to be taught because there are many words in English and the students do not have same ability. The teachers are difficult in implementing teaching technique or presenting new vocabularies because when presenting the new vocabulary, the students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, noisy and the students are passive in vocabulary learning. And The teachers difficult to review evaluating the students' understanding about the words that have been taught because the students do not still understand about meaning of the vocabulary.

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