



# Teacher's Strategies in English Vocabulary Instruction for Learners with Hearing Impairment at Special Education School

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**Abstract**

*This study aims to explore teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. It employed a descriptive qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices in a natural setting. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with an English teacher experienced in teaching learners with hearing impairment. The findings reveal five main strategies: (1) sign language, (2) visual media, (3) fingerspelling, (4) lip reading, and (5) drilling strategy. Sign language is the most dominant, serving as the primary medium to bridge students' understanding of English vocabulary. Visual media, such as pictures and flashcards, support comprehension, while fingerspelling helps students recognize word structures. Lip reading facilitates pronunciation and articulation, and drilling strengthens memory through repetition. Therefore, more interactive, multimodal, and technology supported strategies are recommended to improve vocabulary acquisition and student engagement.*

## **1. Introduction**

English has become an international language that plays an important role in various aspects of life, especially in the era of globalization and the development of information technology today. English language proficiency is no longer seen as an additional ability, but rather as a primary need to communicate, access information, and participate in the increasingly competitive world of education and the world of work. In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary to higher education as an effort to prepare a generation that is able to adapt to the demands of the times and global developments (Sahnan, 2024). At present, English is also being taught to children with disabilities, including those with hearing impairments.

Regulation of the Minister of National Education (Permendiknas) Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with disabilities and has the potential for intelligence and/or special talents Article 3 paragraph (2) states that every student who has physical, emotional, mental, and social disorders or has the potential for intelligence and/or special talents has the right to participate in inclusive education in certain educational units according to their needs and abilities. The Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 56/M/2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery states that educational units need to develop a curriculum with the principle of diversification in accordance with the conditions of educational units, regional potential, and students (Panduan-Pelaksanaan-Pendidikan-Inklusif Kurikulum).

Based on the observation conducted by the researcher during the Teaching English with Disabilities course in the fifth semester, the learning process for learners with hearing impairment still tended to focus on repeating the material on Greetings and Introduction over several weeks without adequate attention to the achievement of the expected learning objectives. Ideally, learners with hearing impairment should be provided with learning experiences covering a variety of topics, such as greetings and introductions, animals, and other relevant themes, so that their language skills can develop comprehensively and in accordance with the predetermined learning outcomes.

These observation results provide evidence of a significant shortcoming in the implementation of adaptive teaching strategies. The fact that the learning process remained stagnant on a single topic for several weeks indicates that the current teaching methods have not effectively utilized the visual strengths and unique communication needs of deaf learners.

In relation to this, one of the students in the third semester of the Sendratasik Department was deaf, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to use sign language in teaching English. The researcher also had the opportunity to teach English in an inclusive classroom setting. During the teaching process, the researcher found that deaf students experienced difficulties in understanding English vocabulary and classroom instructions. Therefore, the

researcher used sign language to help the students comprehend the meaning of words and instructions more effectively. This condition indicates that the process of acquiring English for deaf students requires adaptive, visual, and multimodal teaching strategies to ensure that they have equal access to learning opportunities as hearing students. These findings are supported by Zhang et al. (2024), who state that the use of signed–written translation-based bilingual strategies is effective in strengthening lexical comprehension and increasing the cognitive engagement of deaf students with English texts.

In addition, Sari and Marlina (2021), which state that when students have trouble understanding commands or instructions, they are less likely to respond, and this may hinder both their learning process and social interaction. This condition indicates that limitations in communication access and the lack of adaptive learning strategies remain significant obstacles in the English learning process for deaf students. Furthermore, several previous studies have attempted to identify strategies used in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment. However, a conceptual gap can still be found in previous research. Research conducted by Husnaini and Kalora (2022) on Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary to Deaf Students at SLB-B Karya Ibu Palembang shows that there is a conceptual gap in the classification of learning strategies.

The study categorized flash cards, drawings, crossword puzzles, and subtitling films as learning strategies, even though theoretically these elements are more accurately classified as learning media or visual aids used to support the process of delivering material. Learning strategies should refer to the approaches, procedures, or systematic steps that teachers apply to achieve learning goals, while learning media function as a means of supporting material delivery. These conceptual inaccuracies show that previous research focused more on the use of media than on the analysis of pedagogical strategies that teachers actually use in learning vocabulary for deaf students.

The various challenges in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment demonstrate that the use of appropriate teaching strategies greatly influences the development of their English language skills. Although the existing literature provides an overview of the importance of visual, multimodal, and adaptive strategies in supporting vocabulary acquisition, classroom practices in the field do not yet fully reflect these needs. This condition indicates a gap between the theoretical concepts of effective teaching strategies and the actual strategies implemented by teachers in the learning process.

Based on the gap between theory and classroom practice, research on teachers' strategies in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo is highly important. This research is expected to make a meaningful contribution by identifying and analyzing the strategies used by teachers in teaching English vocabulary to learners with hearing impairment.

## 2. Method

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on the exploration and interpretation of the meanings constructed by individuals or groups of a social and educational phenomenon Creswell (2023). Descriptive qualitative research aims to explore the teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo as a phenomenon in its natural context without manipulating variables or providing specific treatments. This approach is very suitable for research that aims to understand teaching practices, behaviors, and strategies applied by teachers in real contexts.

The data of this research is sourced from English teacher who teach learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. These teacher's select because they have direct experience in implementing various instructional strategies in classrooms for learners with hearing impairments. The inclusion criteria are as follows: Teacher who have taught English to learners with hearing impairment for at least one academic year; Teachers who are actively involved in classroom teaching and use different instructional strategies to support learners with hearing impairment; Teachers willing to participate in interviews and classroom observations.

Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, to reveal how teacher's implementation specific learning strategies in supporting learners with hearing impairment in English learning processes. The first stage of this research is classroom observation, conduct to identify the actual teaching practices use by English teacher. The second stage is an in-depth interview conduct with English teachers who teach deaf students. Using a semi-structured format, the interviews explore teacher's perceptions, rationales, and experiences in applying the strategies to teach learners with hearing impairment.

Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews. Class observation was conducted one times following date and time, the observation took place on Thursday, February 12, 2026, from 08:30 AM to 09:15 AM, with the English teacher and 5 students present. During each observation, the researcher wrote down the field notes, and video recordings were made to gather comprehensive data on the learning process and teacher's performance. The interviews involved 15 questions directed on one teacher, including questions about the teacher's experience in teaching English to deaf students and the teacher's training or preparation background in teaching learners with hearing impairment.

The data were then analyzed using analytical approach, which data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification related to teacher's strategies for learners with hearing impairment. This analytical approach allows the researcher to interpret patterns and relationships among the strategies used by teachers in teaching deaf students (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing

information obtained from different sources. Triangulation provides a more holistic and credible picture of a study phenomenon, reducing bias and increasing the depth of understanding (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

### 3. Result

Based on the data obtained through classroom observation and semi-structured interview, teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for Learners with hearing impairment were categorized into five major themes including (1) Visual Media, (2) Sign Language, (3) Finger Spelling, (4) Lip Reading, (5) Drilling strategy.

Table 1: Theme and codes of teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for Learners with hearing impairment

| Themes            | Codes  |
|-------------------|--|
| Visual Media      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using picture and flashcard in learning activities to teach vocabulary of "My Family"</li> <li>2. Explanation of vocabulary using visual aids (white board)</li> <li>3. Combining sign language with visual presentation (pictures)</li> </ol>                 |
| Sign Language     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consistent use of sign language in teaching</li> <li>2. Modeling correct sign forms for vocabulary</li> <li>3. Providing feedback on students' use of signs</li> </ol>   |
| Finger Spelling   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introducing new English words using fingerspelling</li> <li>2. Connecting fingerspelling with written English (chaining)</li> <li>3. Encouraging students to use fingerspelling for recall</li> </ol>  |
| Lip Reading       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving attention cues before saying important words</li> <li>2. Using controlled articulation and rhythm of speech with Tactile-assisted lip reading</li> <li>3. Provide students with the opportunity to practice lip reading as a recall exercise</li> </ol> |
| Drilling strategy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repetition of vocabulary through sign or writing</li> <li>2. Individual drilling practice</li> <li>3. Feedback and correction during drilling</li> </ol>   |

The results reveal a teacher's strategies used by the teacher in English vocabulary instruction to learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. The researcher findings are based on the research questions. The purpose of this study is to explore the teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairments at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo.

### *Visual Media*

Based on data obtained through classroom observations, it was found that teachers implemented English vocabulary learning strategies that emphasized the use of visual media for learners with hearing impairments. The primary strategy involved the use of pictures to introduce and clarify the meaning of vocabulary. The Teacher said: "In terms of preparation, I am more interested in media, so they learn through pictures, because learning English vocabulary uses more pictures and deaf students also learn to use visual media such as pictures." The visual media functions as a concrete representation of the concept or word being taught to help students understand the relationship between the form of the word and its meaning.

The observation results also revealed that the whiteboard functioned as an important additional visual aid in organizing students' understanding of the lesson content. The teacher wrote the topic "My Family" on the board to provide a thematic framework for the learning activity. This practice demonstrates that visual reinforcement of the topic helps students organize vocabulary within a structured context of meaning rather than learning isolated words separately. Through this strategy, students are encouraged to connect new vocabulary with their prior knowledge and experiences.

Interview results revealed the use of whiteboards in the learning process was influenced not only by instructional preferences but also by limitations in school facilities. Participants explained that the use of audiovisual media such as learning videos is considered more effective in helping students understand the material, especially through conversation displays and animations that can clarify the meaning of vocabulary.

However, the availability of LCD devices in schools is still very limited so they cannot be used permanently in every classroom. Participants revealed that the use of these devices is often constrained by the preparation process and the mobility of the device that must be moved from one room to another. The teacher said: "In terms of the use of visual aids, it would be better if there was an LCD or audiovisual like that, but because of the shortage, there is only how much is available here..." These findings suggest that the effectiveness of adaptive learning strategies is closely connected to the availability of educational facilities.

In addition, teachers integrated sign language with visual media throughout the learning process. Vocabulary was explained through sign language and reinforced using relevant pictures. This integration reflects a multimodal strategy that combines symbolic visual communication and concrete visual representation. Sign language functioned as a bridge between students' first language and English as the target language, helping students connect written words, visual representations, and conceptual meaning more effectively.

This strategy reflects a bilingual-bicultural approach that strengthens meaning association, improves instructional clarity, and minimizes misconceptions in vocabulary learning.

### *Sign Language*

Based on the data obtained of classroom observation, it was found that teachers used sign language consistently from the beginning to the end of the learning process. At the opening stage, the teacher conveyed greetings using sign language as an initial form of communication as well as building a communicative learning atmosphere. The consistency of the use of sign language shows that teachers use it as a strategy to interact in learning English vocabulary for learners with hearing impairments.

In the core learning activity, teachers introduce English vocabulary using the Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia (SIBI). The teacher said: "... it is better to teach using sign language and spelling letters using the Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia (SIBI) and it is easier." The systematic use of SIBI demonstrates an adaptive teaching strategy aligned with the visual communication needs of learners with hearing impairments.

The use of sign language throughout all stages of instruction reflects an effort to ensure equal access to classroom interaction, instructional explanations, and learning activities. In the opening stage, sign language was used to communicate learning objectives and introduce lesson topics, while during the instructional process it functioned to explain vocabulary, provide examples, and guide student participation. Even at the closing stage, sign language continued to be used to reinforce learning outcomes and provide feedback. This consistency suggests that sign language plays a central role not only in transmitting information but also in maintaining instructional continuity and classroom engagement for learners with hearing impairments.

Observation and documentation results also showed that teacher's use appropriate and appropriate sign language in teaching learners with hearing impairments. The correct use of sign language can be seen from the way the teacher demonstrates each vocabulary consistently so that it can be clearly understood by students. The accuracy of the use of these gestures is also reflected in the students' responses who are able to imitate the gestures that have been demonstrated by the teacher. In one piece of the documentation was taken during the learning activity, a student can be seen demonstrating sign language for the vocabulary "mother". The gestures shown by students are in accordance with the correct form of sign language, namely by placing the thumb on the chin. This shows that students are able to understand and reproduce the cues that have been taught by the teacher.

In addition, the use of sign language by teacher functions not only serves as a tool for delivering material, but also as a means to evaluating on students' understanding. During the learning process, the teacher actively pays attention to the way the students re-demonstrate the cues that have been taught. When students try to imitate cues for certain vocabulary, teachers respond directly in the form of correction, reinforcement, or appreciation through sign language and

nonverbal expressions. Conversely, when errors occurred, teachers directly corrected them by re-demonstrating the appropriate sign while guiding students' attention to the correct hand movements.

### *Finger Spelling*

Based on data obtained through classroom observation, it was found that teachers use fingerspelling as one of the strategies in introducing and strengthening students' understanding of new vocabulary in English. This strategy is applied when teachers introduce new words to learners with hearing impairments, specifically to help them understand the spelling form of each word more clearly. The teacher said: "Spelling fingers are important in my opinion, because they can know the words, what the letters are like..." This result indicates that fingerspelling is not only used as a communication technique, but also as a pedagogical strategy that supports students' visual literacy development through manual representations of alphabetic structures.

Teacher's also use flashcards containing written text flashcards as one of the media in teaching English vocabulary to learners with hearing impairments. The flashcards display the words in English clearly so that they help students recognize the written form of the vocabulary being studied. In practice, the teacher shows the flashcard to all students while pointing to the text on the card to emphasize the shape of the word in question. Next, the teacher combines the use of the media with fingerspelling to spell letter by letter from the vocabulary displayed on the flashcard.

The teacher demonstrates each letter slowly so that students can visually observe the spelling form of the word. After that, students were asked to re-imitate the finger spelling that had been demonstrated by the teacher as a form of practice to strengthen their understanding of the letter arrangement in the word. This combination of fingerspelling usage and written text flashcards helps students not only visually recognize vocabulary, but also understand the spelling structure of words in English.

Furthermore, the observation results showed that teachers actively encouraged students to use fingerspelling as a strategy in helping them remember the English vocabulary they were learning. In learning practice, teachers not only demonstrate finger spelling as examples, but also provide opportunities for students to practice them repeatedly. In the early stages, the teacher models the spelling of words by demonstrating letter by letter using finger movements slowly so that students can observe each letter shape clearly.

After that, the teacher asks the students to imitate the spelling, either individually or together. In this process, the teacher usually gives a special code or gesture by moving the finger as a sign for students to repeat the vocabulary that has been taught using fingerspelling. The cue serves as a visual reminder for students to immediately respell the word they are learning without having to use lengthy verbal instructions.

For example, when teaching the vocabulary of “father”, the teacher first demonstrates the finger-spelling F–A–T–H–E–R, and asked students to repeat it several times using their fingers. During this process, the teacher also provides reinforcement by observing every movement of the students and ensuring that the order of the letters demonstrated is correct. This repetition process aims to strengthen students' memory of the spelling structure of words and help them associate between letter shapes, finger movements, and vocabulary meanings. Thus, the use of finger spelling not only serves as a communication tool, but also becomes an effective learning strategy in supporting the vocabulary recall process for learners with hearing impairments.

### *Lip Reading*

Based on the data from classroom observations, it was found that teacher's use lip reading strategies as a way to help learners with hearing impairments understand the pronunciation of English vocabulary. Before saying important words, the teacher first gives a gesture of attention to the student by pointing the index finger towards the lips. With these cues, students become more prepared to observe the process of articulating the words to be spoken. After the students show focus on the teacher's lips, then the teacher pronounces the vocabulary slowly and clearly so that it can be observed through lip movements. Thus, the use of attention cues can be interpreted as an important communicative strategy that facilitates students' understanding of English pronunciation through visual observation.

Observation results showed that the teacher controlled and guided students directly when practicing vocabulary pronunciation. The teacher holds the student's hand, then places it near the teacher's lips and places it under the teacher's chin so that the student can feel the flow of air or vibration when the vocabulary is spoken. This action is a form of tactile strategy that supports the process of lip reading, so that students not only rely on sight for lip movements, but also gain additional sensory experience to understand the process of articulating English sounds.

Teachers use tactile-assisted lipreading strategies to help learners with hearing impairments understand the pronunciation of English vocabulary. This strategy is carried out by combining visual observation of the teacher's lip movements with the sensation of touch felt by students. In practice, the teacher pronounces vocabulary slowly while directing the students' attention to pay attention to the movement of the lips. At the same time, the teacher occasionally asks students to bring their hands closer or place their hands near the teacher's mouth so that they can feel the exhale that comes out when the word is spoken.

This approach helps students gain a clearer understanding of the process of articulating sounds, as students not only rely on sight for lip movements, but also feel the airflow generated during pronunciation. Through the combination of

visual observation and tactile experience, students can more easily understand how vocabulary is pronounced and re-imitate the pronunciation more precisely. Therefore, the use of tactile assistance in lipreading can be interpreted as an adaptive instructional strategy that strengthens students' ability to connect visual speech patterns with physical sensations involved in pronunciation.

Furthermore, the observation results showed that teacher's consistently provided students with the opportunity to practice lip reading as part of the practice of remembering the vocabulary that had been learned. In each new vocabulary learning session, after the teacher demonstrates how to pronounce words through clear lip movements, students are given the opportunity to observe and then re-imitate the pronunciation through the lipreading process. Teachers usually ask students to repeat the practice three to four times so that they can better understand the lip movement patterns and the articulation of each vocabulary taught. During the process, teachers continuously monitored students' attention to lip movements and guided them to imitate the pronunciation accurately. Such repetition reflects an instructional effort to help students gradually recognize the relationship between lip movement patterns and English pronunciation forms.

Through repeated lipreading practice, students gradually demonstrated improvement in their ability to imitate the teacher's lip movements and reproduce pronunciation according to the given model. These findings indicate that consistent opportunities for guided practice play an important role in supporting pronunciation development for learners with hearing impairments. Therefore, lipreading strategies supported by repetition and teacher guidance can be understood as an effective adaptive approach for facilitating English vocabulary pronunciation and strengthening students' visual recognition of spoken language patterns.

### *Drilling Strategy*

Based on the data obtained through classroom observation, it was found that teachers applied a repetition strategy (drilling) in learning English vocabulary for learners with hearing impairments. In practice, teachers not only repeat oral vocabulary pronunciation, but also repeat the use of visual media such as pictures and flashcards containing written text, so that students can see the form of words and their meanings clearly. In addition, teachers also consistently repeat sign language, fingerspelling, and lip movements through lip reading when introducing or reaffirming the vocabulary being learned. The teacher explained that the drilling technique relatively does not cause obstacles in the learning process. The teacher stated: "If it is drilling, there is no obstacle."

The repetition process was generally carried out three to four times until students demonstrated responses indicating vocabulary comprehension. However, the frequency of repetition is also adjusted to the ability of each student.

The teacher stated: "It depends on the student. If they are caught quickly, then they can only be caught 2--3 times. But if it takes a little longer, it can be 4--5 times." This result suggests that the implementation of drilling was flexible and individualized rather than rigidly standardized. Teacher adapted the intensity of repetition to students' learning pace, indicating an awareness that vocabulary acquisition among learners with hearing impairments requires differentiated instructional support.

Teacher modeled the vocabulary through various strategies such as sign language, lip reading, and finger spelling, the teacher then called the students in turn to re-practice the vocabulary individually. Through this process, each student is asked to repeat the vocabulary learned by demonstrating sign language, spelling using fingerspelling, and trying to imitate pronunciation through observation of the teacher's lip movements. Teacher then directly monitored students' responses and provided guidance when errors occurred in sign production, spelling sequences, or pronunciation attempts. This individual practice reflects that drilling was not only intended to reinforce repetition collectively, but also functioned as a form of formative assessment that enabled teachers to evaluate each student's level of understanding and provide personalized instructional support.

The teacher explained that the use of one strategy alone is not enough to help students understand vocabulary thoroughly. The teacher state: "Some or all of the strategies are good combined into multiple strategies..." This statement suggests that individual exercises through drilling techniques are not stand-alone, but are carried out as part of a multimodal approach that integrates different forms of visual and kinesthetic representation.

Furthermore, the observation results showed that during the application of the drilling technique, the teacher actively provided feedback and corrections to the students to ensure that each vocabulary was understood and practiced correctly. In the repetition process, teachers not only ask students to repeat the vocabulary that has been taught, but also directly monitor how students demonstrate sign language, spell fingers, and imitate lip movements. When students show the right response, the teacher provides reinforcement through gestures of approval or positive expressions as a form of appreciation for the correct answer.

The impact of this practice can be seen from the students' responses which show an increase in vocabulary mastery. Students are able to convey English vocabulary using proper sign language as well as spell words through finger spelling correctly. These findings are also reinforced by the researchers' field notes showing that most students with hearing impairment are able to rephrase the entire vocabulary taught without errors after going through a process of practice and correction during drilling activities. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of repetition techniques accompanied by active practice through

sign language, lip reading, and finger spelling is an effective strategy in improving the accuracy and comprehension of English vocabulary in learners with hearing impairments. This technique not only strengthens memory retention, but also increases students' confidence and accuracy in representing the vocabulary they have learned.

The results reveal that vocabulary instruction for deaf students is structured through five interrelated instructional strategies, with visual media and sign language serving as the foundational modalities, while fingerspelling and lip reading function as supporting cognitive mechanisms, and drilling acts as a reinforcement strategy that consolidates learning across modalities.

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings are divided into one main section based on the research objective. Exploring the teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo as follows:

At first, visual media such as flashcards and images have an important role in effectively conveying information to students who rely on visual perception as the main path in learning. In this context, findings in the field show that teachers use pictures and flashcards as the main medium in introducing new vocabulary, especially in the "My Family" material. Rather than functioning merely as supporting tools, these visual media became a bridge that connected abstract English vocabulary with concrete representations that students could easily recognize and interpret.

This condition suggests that visual-based instruction not only attracts students' attention, but also helps reduce barriers in language comprehension commonly experienced by learners with hearing impairment. In this situation, students appeared more focused and responsive because the visual stimuli provided direct and meaningful references during the learning process. These findings reinforce the view of Gülengül Birinci and Sariçoban (2021) who stated that visual media is able to increase vocabulary retention through students' active involvement in the learning process. In practice, students appear to be more focused and responsive when the teacher shows them pictures or flashcards, as the visual stimulus directly grabs their attention and helps facilitate cognitive processing of information.

The vocabulary explanation using visual aids, teachers are seen using a whiteboard to write down the topics and vocabulary being studied, such as "My Family". By writing topics and vocabulary items such as "My Family," teachers provided students with clear visual references that supported the learning sequence and helped students connect vocabulary forms with their meanings.

This practice demonstrates that visual instruction in classrooms for learners with hearing impairment requires structured presentation, not merely visual exposure. According by Mayer (2024) this integration between text and visuals assists students in building a stronger mental representation of vocabulary,

especially for learners with hearing impairment who tend to have difficulty understanding abstract concepts without visual aid. Nevertheless, the findings in this study suggest that such integration is particularly important for learners with hearing impairment because it compensates for limited auditory input by maximizing visual organization and contextual understanding during vocabulary instruction.

The combining sign language with visual presentation, the results showed that teachers consistently integrated sign language when using visual media. Each vocabulary introduced through pictures or flashcards is always accompanied by appropriate sign language, so that students gain reinforcement of meaning through two different forms of visual representation, namely images and gestures. This indicates that sign language was not used merely as a translation tool, but as an integral part of meaning-making during the instructional process.

Through this combination, students received repeated exposure to vocabulary in different visual forms, namely images, written words, and gestures, which potentially strengthened both comprehension and memory retention. Although Mayer (2024) highlighted the importance of integrating visuals to support meaning transfer, the importance of transferring meaning between images and sign language, students not only understand vocabulary more deeply, but also have a greater chance of remembering and reproducing that vocabulary in different contexts.

Second, classroom practices demonstrated that teacher seen consistently using sign language from the beginning to the end of learning, both in explaining material, providing instructions, and interacting with students. This consistency indicates that sign language functioned not merely as a supplementary communication tool, but as the primary medium through which classroom interaction and vocabulary learning were constructed. The continuous use of sign language also created a more accessible learning environment for students with hearing impairment, as information could be delivered in a form that matched their dominant mode of communication.

In this context, the classroom interaction became more inclusive because students were able to follow explanations and participate in learning activities without depending heavily on spoken language. This finding reflects the perspective of Yin and Alikhani (2022), who argued that sign language possesses a complete linguistic structure comparable to spoken language, including visual-spatial phonology, morphology, and syntax.

However, the findings of this study further suggest that the effectiveness of sign language in vocabulary instruction lies not only in its linguistic completeness, but also in its ability to establish continuous and meaningful interaction between teacher and students during the learning process.

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In practice, teachers also demonstrated gestures carefully by paying attention to the clarity of sign movements, facial expressions, and body language so that students could observe and imitate them accurately. This process shows that vocabulary learning for learners with hearing impairment relies heavily on visual modeling, where meaning is conveyed not only through the hand signs themselves but also through expressive and physical cues that support interpretation.

The teacher's modeling became an important reference for students in understanding how vocabulary should be formed and used appropriately. As students repeatedly observed these demonstrations, they gradually developed a clearer understanding of both the forms and meanings of the vocabulary being introduced. This process aligns with the view of Wolbers, et al., (2023) who emphasizes that learning occurs through observation and imitation of the model given by the teacher. With clear and structured modeling, students can build a better understanding of the forms and meanings of vocabulary, while reducing the possibility of errors in the use of sign language.

The teacher was also actively provided direct feedback when students made mistakes in demonstrating signs. This feedback is given in the form of movement correction, correct repetition of gestures, and positive reinforcement when students succeed in using gestures appropriately. This practice suggests that feedback played a central role not only in correcting errors, but also in guiding students toward more accurate and confident communication. Through immediate correction and reinforcement, students were given opportunities to refine their understanding continuously during classroom interaction. This finding supports

the argument of Wolbers, et al., (2023) which emphasizes the importance of feedback in developing students' communication competencies. With consistent feedback, students not only correct their mistakes, but also become more confident in using sign language as a means of communication and learning.

Third, classroom learning practices revealed that teacher's use fingerspelling as part of the process of introducing new vocabulary, especially when students are introduced to words in English that are not yet familiar. In this context, fingerspelling functioned as a transitional strategy that helped students recognize and process vocabulary step by step before fully understanding its meaning. Teachers were observed actively spelling words through finger movements while simultaneously introducing written forms of vocabulary, allowing students to visually follow the structure of each word more carefully.

This practice indicates that fingerspelling does not merely support memorization, but also assists students in developing awareness of letter patterns and lexical structures in English. For learners with hearing impairment, this process becomes important because vocabulary learning requires stronger visual connections between written forms and meaning. This finding reflects the perspective of Lee and Secora (2022) which states that fingerspelling is an important component of bimodal communication (signed and written) that effectively help deaf students recognize written words as well as facilitate language use activities in the context of interaction.

However, the present findings further suggest that fingerspelling also serves as a scaffold that gradually guides students toward independent recognition of English vocabulary within classroom interaction.

The results of the study showed that the teacher's connecting finger spelling with written language (chaining), the results showed that teachers combined the use of finger spelling with visual media such as flashcards containing text. During this process, teachers not only spelled words using their fingers, but also pointed to the written text on the flashcards and linked it with the corresponding sign language.

This combination created a more integrated learning experience in which students could simultaneously observe letters, written words, gestures, and meanings in one instructional sequence. Such practices demonstrate that vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment becomes more effective when different visual representations are interconnected rather than presented separately.

Through chaining, students appeared to develop a clearer understanding of how letters form words and how those words relate to meaning in communication. This finding is in line with research by Walsh-Aziz et al. (2023), who argued that chaining techniques can strengthen the relationship between letters and words and improve the literacy skills of deaf students. Nevertheless, the findings of this study further indicate that chaining also functions as a strategy for reducing

students' confusion when encountering unfamiliar English vocabulary by providing multiple visual references simultaneously.

The teacher's also encouraged students to use fingerspelling for recall, the results showed that teachers gave students the opportunity to repeat or respell vocabulary that had been learned using fingerspelling. This activity shows that fingerspelling was positioned not only as a teacher-centered instructional tool, but also as a participatory activity that actively involved students in reconstructing vocabulary knowledge. By repeatedly reproducing vocabulary through finger movements, students engaged in a process of active recall that strengthened both memory retention and understanding of word forms.

In addition, the practice created opportunities for students to participate more confidently in classroom interaction because they were directly involved in demonstrating what they had learned. This activity is line with Walsh-Aziz et al. (2023), where students actively build their knowledge through direct involvement in the learning process. By using fingerspelling as a tool for recall, students not only passively recall vocabulary, but also reconstruct their knowledge through meaningful activities.

Then, based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it was found that the use of lip reading (speechreading) is one of the supporting strategies used by teachers in helping deaf students understand English vocabulary, especially in the aspect of recognition of speech forms and word meanings through visual information. This strategy is important because deaf students do not have access to auditory input, so they rely heavily on visual information such as lip movements, facial expressions, and articulation in understanding spoken language.

This condition reflects the perspective of Bernstein et al., (2022), who argued that individuals with hearing loss rely on visual information as the primary source of capturing the meaning of speech. In the context of this study, lip reading in vocabulary instruction also serves as a bridge between visual language systems and spoken language forms, helping students become more familiar with English pronunciation patterns even without direct auditory perception.

In lip reading strategies, the results show that most of the activities in the learning process is giving attention cues before delivering important words, the teacher is seen giving attention cues to students before saying certain vocabulary. These cues were given through eye contact, body gestures, or by ensuring that students focused on the teacher's lips before the articulation process began. This practice demonstrates that successful lip reading depends not only on students' visual ability, but also on the teacher's management of students' attention during classroom interaction.

By directing students' focus before articulating vocabulary, teachers created conditions that allowed students to observe lip movements more carefully and interpret visual speech information more effectively. Such interaction suggests that visual attention becomes a crucial prerequisite in speechreading activities, especially for learners with hearing impairment who process information

primarily through visual channels. This finding is consistent with the argument of Kyle et al., (2016), who emphasized language comprehension is more optimal when presented through various modalities, such as visual and gestural simultaneously.

This practice is very important because in lip reading, students' visual attention is the main prerequisite for them to accurately capture the shape of lip movements. Nevertheless, the present findings further indicate that attention cues also play an important role in preparing students cognitively before receiving vocabulary input, thereby increasing students' readiness and opportunities to understand the vocabulary conveyed during the learning process.

Last, based on the results of the research, it was found that the drilling strategies is one of the strategies played an important role in strengthening the mastery of English vocabulary in deaf students. In the context of classroom learning, drilling is more focused on visual forms such as the use of pictures, sign language, lip reading, and fingerspelling. This shows that there is an adaptation of drilling strategies in accordance with the characteristics of deaf students who rely more on visual modalities in processing information.

This strategy is applied through a structured and consistent process of repetition of previously introduced vocabulary, thus helping students build long-term memory and increasing automation in recognizing and using words. The findings also suggest that repetition in this context functioned not merely as mechanical practice, but as a process of strengthening visual associations between vocabulary forms, meanings, and communicative use. These findings are in line with Nation (2017) which states that drilling helps strengthen long-term memory through the sequential and consistent repetition of vocabulary forms and meanings. However, the present findings further reveal that the effectiveness of drilling for learners with hearing impairment depends on how repetition is visually contextualized within meaningful classroom interaction.

Teachers were also observed consistently repeating vocabulary through multiple forms of visual representation, including re-demonstrating sign language, pointing to pictures, and rewriting words on the board. This repetition process occurred across several stages of the lesson rather than in a single moment, giving students repeated opportunities to observe, process, and reconstruct vocabulary knowledge gradually.

Such classroom practices indicate that repetition for learners with hearing impairment requires variation in visual presentation to maintain students' attention and strengthen comprehension. Through repeated exposure to the same vocabulary in different visual forms, students appeared to develop more stable understanding and recall of word meanings.

In addition, the findings suggest that visual repetition helps reduce students' difficulties in connecting English vocabulary with its conceptual meaning because information is reinforced continuously through observable representations. In addition, this practice resonates with the argument of Marschark and Spencer

(2010), which emphasizes that deaf students process language optimally through visual representations that can be observed directly. Nevertheless, the present study further indicates that the success of drilling strategies lies not only in the frequency of repetition, but also in the teacher's ability to combine various visual supports that make vocabulary learning more accessible and meaningful for students.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study resulted in conclusions about the use of Teacher's strategies in English vocabulary instruction to learners with hearing impairment at SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. First, in terms of the type of strategy used, the results of the study show that sign language became the primary strategy in classroom instruction, while visual media, fingerspelling, lip reading, and drilling functioned as complementary strategies that supported students' vocabulary learning process. Rather than being implemented independently, these strategies worked together to facilitate students' understanding of vocabulary through multiple forms of visual representation and interaction. Among these strategies, sign language serves as the primary and most dominant strategy because it provides direct access to meaning and functions as the main medium of communication in the classroom.

Second, in terms of strategy implementation, the results of the study show that the learning process is characterized by consistent integration between various strategies in a series of learning activities. The implementation is reflected through several key practices, such as the use of images and flashcards as visual stimulus, the consistent use of sign language as the main medium of material delivery, vocabulary recognition through fingerspelling, the use of clear lip articulation to support lip reading, and the application of drilling in the form of visual repetition. In addition, teachers also actively model and provide direct feedback to students, so that students can observe, imitate, and improve their understanding of the vocabulary learned. This shows that the success of learning is not only determined by the type of strategy used, but also by how the strategy is applied systematically, interactively, and continuously in a supportive learning environment.

Third, the study highlights that effective English vocabulary instruction for learners with hearing impairment is closely related to the creation of a visual, interactive, and inclusive classroom environment. Such learning conditions enable students to develop deeper understanding of vocabulary, strengthen memory retention, and participate more confidently in classroom interaction. In addition, this conclusion also provides a solid basis for the development of a curriculum and learning design that is more responsive to the characteristics of deaf students, as well as a direction for future research focusing on the effectiveness of visual and multimodal learning approaches in the context of special education.

Overall, the study provides pedagogical insight that English instruction for deaf learners should be adapted to students' dominant visual learning characteristics through the integration of various communicative and visual supports rather than relying on a single teaching strategy. Therefore, the findings may serve as a practical reference for teachers and curriculum developers in designing more inclusive and responsive instructional practices within the context of deaf education.

#### *Suggestion*

English teachers are advised to continue to develop visual-based and multimodal learning strategies that are appropriate to the characteristics of deaf students. Teachers need to integrate various strategies such as the use of visual media, sign language, fingerspelling, lip reading, and drilling more systematically in each learning process. Schools are also advised to provide more optimal support in the implementation of English learning for deaf students, especially in the provision of learning facilities and resources that support visual-based learning and the improvement of teacher competencies.

The use of LCD projectors in classroom instruction can assist teachers in displaying pictures, videos, vocabulary materials, and interactive visual presentations more clearly, thereby helping students focus on learning through visual perception. In addition, the integration of speech-to-text technology can support students in understanding spoken information by converting speech into written text directly during classroom interaction. Teachers are further encouraged to continuously improve their communication skills in sign language by participating in online sign language classes and training programs organized by Gerakan Kaum Tuli Indonesia (GERKATIN), so that they can develop more effective communication strategies and create a more inclusive, accessible, and responsive learning environment for learners with hearing impairment.

Further research may also develop more innovative visual-based and multimodal learning models, such as the use of interactive media, digital technologies, or project-based approaches tailored to the characteristics of learners with hearing impairment.

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