# TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO NURSERY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TK IT MTA POLANHARJO ACCORDING TO MERDEKA CURRICULUM



Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Getting Master Degree English Education

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## APPROVAL

## TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO NURSERY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TR IT MTA POLANHARDO ACCORDING TO MERDICKA CURRICULUM

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## TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO NURSERY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TK IT MTA POLANHARIO ACCORDING TO MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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## TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO NURSERY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TK IT MTA POLANHARJO ACCORDING TO MERDEKA CURRICULUM

## **Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui teknik yang digunakan untuk mengajarkan vocabulary kepada murid taman kanak-anak dan perubahan dari kurikulum 2013 dan kurikulum Merdeka dalam mengajar kosa kata bahasa inggris pada murid taman kanak-anak. Jenis penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru menggunakan teknik presentasi berupa visual dan verbal (flashcard, lagu,gestures), praktek (games) dan latihan (bertanya pada orang lain). Terdapat beberapa perubahan dalam pengajaran vocabulary dari kurikulum 2013 ke kurikulum merdeka yakni alokasi waktu yang lebih fleksibel, pemilihan materi berdasar keinginan anak dan pendekatan pembelajaran yang mulai berpusat pada siswa.

Kata kunci: Teknik pengajaran kosa kata, taman kanak-kanak, kurikulum merdeka

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to find out the techniques used to teach vocabulary to nursery school students and the changes from the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum in teaching English vocabulary to nursery school students. This type of research was qualitative descriptive. Data collection was done through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings showed that teachers used presentation techniques such as visual and verbal (flashcards, songs, gestures), practice (games), and exercises (asking others). There were some changes in the teaching of vocabulary from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum, such as more flexible allocation of time, selection of materials based on children's desires, student-centered approach.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching technique, nursery schools, merdeka curriculum.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the Merdeka Curriculum, all schools have the freedom to develop their curriculum based on the needs and social context in their school's region. English is not a required subject in Elementary School, but the urgency of learning English is a strong motivation for educational units to teach English according to the development of the language according to age. The earlier children are introduced to English, the easier it will be to teach English at the next level. Pransiska (2016) claimed that teaching English at early age has so many benefits as it promotes bilingualism or multilingualism to children.

Aggraena et.al (2022) added that teaching English from an early age with carefully designed policies, planning, and implementation will promote the strengthening of English language foundations. This is in line with one of the goals of Merdeka Curriculum to create students with "Berkebhinekaan global" or global diversity characteristic. Students with this characteristic have a passion for preserving their noble culture, localities, and identity, and have open-mindedness towards other cultures. As a result, there will be a sense of mutual respect for the cultures of other nations (Singleton, D., 2003, Harmer, J., 2012, Moon, J, 2005).

Goorhuis-Brouwer and de Bot (2010) stated that teaching English at early age can help students to gain proficiency by the end of elementary level, but it depends on the exposure (Graham, Courtney, Marinis, & Tonkyn,2017). It is believed that early start in learning English can help to lead to better outcomes (Murphy, 2014; Hopp, H., Vogelbacher, M., Kieseier, T., & Thoma, D, 2019).

Not only about the courage to teach English at early age, Merdeka curriculum also emphasized the use of student-centered approach in teaching and learning process. Brough (2012) stated that student-centered curriculum in educational settings is relevant, captivating, and fair. Pritchett and Beatty (2015) added that students at the center of their learning means teaching concepts and/or skills according to their abilities at the time, rather than teaching a particular subject matter only because it follows a recommended sequence in a textbook without considering whether the majority of the students are actually ready to learn the material. Thus, kindergarten teachers should be able to to focus on what kindergarten students' fundamental need in learning EFL and how they teach with new paradigm promoted by Merdeka curriculum.

One of fundamental things to teach English as foreign language is teaching vocabulary. Wilkins (1972) stated that good grammar skill will be useless without vocabularies because when a person speaks things without incorrect grammar, then it can be conveyed a little. When a person does not know vocabularies, then there is nothing to be conveyed. This means that the position of vocabulary in language is very important. It implicitly means that vocabulary is the main source for a person to speak a language.

Zucker et al. (2021) proposed some vocabulary model that has been adapted for use with prekindergarten to grade 1 child who have limited reading skills and may not be able to use word learning strategies like looking up words in a dictionary. To help these children learn vocabulary, educators should use a variety of approaches such as promoting incidental vocabulary learning, providing direct vocabulary instruction, and fostering an awareness of words.

There are several categories of words that are worth to be taught to kindergarten students. Although many researches have suggested basic or common words, but there is consensus that young children are capable of learning advanced words that more accurately or subtly convey a familiar idea (Foorman et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, there are several techniques in teaching vocabulary. Several authors have explained vocabulary teaching techniques (Gairns and Redman, 1986; Nation, 1990; and Brewster, J., Ellis, G and Denis Girard, 2003). The techniques include presentation (visual and verbal), practice and training.

However, teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students can be very different. Teacher should use creative media and method to attract their students' attention. One of the best ways to teach vocabulary is through song and songs are perfect for students at any age. Davis and Fan (2016) stated that songs and choral repetition are both effective at teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students. Some experts also recommended songs to teach in foreign language classrooms in different skill of areas like listening (Sevik, 2012), literacy (Paquette &Rieg, 2008), grammar (Saricoban and Metin, 2000), conversation (Orlova, 2003).

Apsari (2012) inspected that teaching vocabulary to kindergarten using songs or audiovisual media can boost students' interest and mastery. Another studies that examined the use of songs to teach vocabulary also come from several researchers. Davis and Fan (2016) found that participants had better recall for information that was learned through songs and repetition in a group, but not for items in the control group. Limbong (2012) used pop songs to teach vocabulary learning in kindergarten and it was effective. Denise (2016) and Gushendra (2017) found that kindergarten students' vocabulary acquisition improved by using the selected songs to teach vocabulary. Walton (2014) investigated the use of songs and common literacy programs in teaching vocabulary. The study resulted that both groups made equal improvement in vocabulary learning.

Teacher also can use multisensory materials such as video to teach vocabulary using gestures and songs. The use of multisensory materials to enhance the learning of second language vocabulary is a common practice among foreign language teachers. A study conducted by Silverman and Hines (2009) found that showing short video clips in addition to regular instruction improved L2 vocabulary knowledge of kindergartners to second graders. This means that the combination of gestures and video is good to teach vocabulary

According to Tellier (2008), using gestures during learning can enhance memory due to multimodal storage. When gestures are used during learning and later reproduced, they can serve as both visual and motor cues, which leads to a stronger memory trace.

A recent study involving 111 preschool children (aged 5) in an educational setting found that incorporating physical exercise and hand gestures while listening to foreign language vocabulary improved recall compared to exercising without gestures in the context of sensorimotor enrichment (Mavilidi et al. 2015).

Beside songs and gestures, flash cards, pictures or realia are also effective to teach vocabulary to kindergarten students. Ulita (2015) found that when teachers used flashcards by introducing new

vocabulary and having students read them, the students' vocabulary skills improved at the kindergarten level. Teaching vocabulary using flash card apparently has significant and effective impact to kindergarten students (Rachmita, 2016; Magta and Tirtayani, 2017; Saputri and Ramli, 2017; Chen and Khan, 2019; Elisa and Tuti, 2020).

Flashcard or picture might not be enough. Teachers can use pictures and real object to get more attention from kindergarten students. Teaching vocabulary using real object is more effective than teaching without real object (Acharya, 2008; Sukrina, 2010; Mansourzadeh, 2014; Susanto, 2017; Irawan, 2017). It can enhance student interest, curiosity, and participation during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, incorporating real objects or realia into lessons can create a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Another way to get more attention and from students, games can also be a good idea to teach vocabulary. Bakhsh (2016) looked into how games can be applied in teaching vocabulary, including how to incorporate them into lesson plans and specific game examples that can be used with children. The games gave more ease to students to learn vocabularies. Equivalent study also conducted by Derakhsan and Khatir (2010) and Hashemi (2021) found that game-based learning activities can improve student's skill in memorizing new words, increasing their social skills, and improving student's motivation. Games are also amusing and good for students' mood in learning vocabulary (Aslanabadi and Rasouli, 2013).

Based on the explanative above, the aims of this research are to identify the techniques used in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students and to know the changes from the 2013 curriculum and Merdeka curriculum in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students.

## 2. METHOD

This research used qualitative method. According to Moleong (2001) explained that a qualitative research is type of research which does not include any calculation or numeration because the data are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences, not numbers. This method is more emphasizing on the analysis process rather than the result of the analysis. The data in this research was the words, phrases, and sentences representing the speech.

Data in this research were in the form of written text in the field notes, and interview transcript. Data is an important aspect in conducting qualitative descriptive research. From these data, researcher obtained information about the teacher's technique in teaching vocabulary TK IT MTA Polanharjo. The data source of this research was taken from interview and observations during the learning and teaching process in TK IT MTA Polanharjo.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

## 3.1. Technique of teaching vocabulary

The research showed that the teachers employed various techniques to teach vocabulary, including: a) presentation techniques, such as visual and verbal methods, which involved the way words and their meanings are presented; b) practice, like games, which provided opportunities for students to apply their vocabulary knowledge; c) training techniques, like seeking assistance/ask to others, that helped students to take ownership of their vocabulary learning.

In the technique of presentation, the teacher used two techniques; visual and verbal. According to Gairns and Redman (1986), memory for objects and pictures is generally more reliable. The use of flashcards and real fruits when teaching vocabulary made the process easier for students to understand. In a study, teachers used red apples while the apple picture in flashcard is green. Students understood that the fruit in the picture shown was an apple, and the apple itself is not only green, but also red.

However, Nelson (1979) and Mayer & Sims (1994) emphasized that visual materials like pictures are highly effective for memory. The use of pictures was also more effective and enjoyable. Students did not feel like they were learning but playing. When vocabulary was taught only by memorization without additional aids such as pictures or songs, the learning would sound monotonous and the students would feel pressured.

When teachers used real fruits like apples. Students could feel the shape and texture of the fruit. In addition, students could also taste the fruit. Students were also more enthusiastic when the teacher brought real fruits into the class. That kind of practice is in line with the statement by researchers. The use of real objects increases the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching (Acharya, 2008; Sukrina, 2010; Mansourzadeh, 2014; Susanto, 2017; Irawan, 2017). It added the curiosity and participation of students to learn things. This finding is also in line with Ulita (2015) which stated that the use flashcard can improve vocabulary of kindergarten students significantly. It was better than teaching vocabulary without pictures or flashcards.

Teachers used verbal techniques to help students become more engaged in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning by using songs. According to Murphey (1992), incorporating songs into language learning can create a fun and positive atmosphere for students. Teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students is different from teaching students at higher levels. Songs were more effective for students because they have short attention spans. Creating vocabulary songs by the teacher was very helpful for students to memorize new words. For example, when teaching gross motor skills, the teacher used the song "Baby Shark" as an accompaniment to exercise. The song was short and didn't show many new vocabulary words like modified songs do. However, when the song was sung and used as an accompaniment to the exercise, students learned some new vocabulary words such as "baby", "run", "hunt", "daddy", "mommy", and so on. Eken (1996) said that the use of songs is very useful for teaching vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition, they also learn other skills such as listening (Sevik, 2012), literacy (Paquette & Rieg, 2008), grammar (Saricoban and Metin, 2000), and conversation (Orlova, 2003).

Teacher used gestures for gross motor activities and ice breaking. Students were very active and ask to repeat the gesture game. When the teacher taught vocabulary using gestures like "Run", "Shake", "Clap". Students not only learned new vocabulary but also learned to be more active. Students moved more before the main activity. The use of gestures in teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students served both visual and motor cues. This will certainly strengthen memory trace in students. This is in line with Tellier (2008) who said that gestures during learning can enhance memory due to multimodal storage.

Not only that, students found easier to remember the words taught than memorizing without gestures, songs or others. It could be seen during reflection where students answered the question correctly. Mavilidi et al (2015) said that incorporating exercise and hand gestures while listening to new vocabulary can improve recall. The teacher taught simple vocabulary like "run", "shake", "clap" also unintentionally in line with one of the vocabulary learning theories. Zucker et al. (2021) about the selection of basic or common words to teach. When using the word "slow-slower", "hard-harder" or "fast-faster" indirectly the teacher had also taught a little advanced words especially comparative adjectives. Although the recommendation of vocabulary teaching is basic or common words, Foorman et al. (2015) said that kindergarten students can also start learning advanced words so that they are more familiar.

Teacher used several games to teach vocabulary to kindergarten students. The discussion of using games is in the next paragraph. Teacher created games based on vocabulary knowledge that has been taught, both from songs and previous lessons. Then the teacher used the games as one of the confirmations of how far the vocabulary teaching has been done. The enthusiasm of the students and their speed in answering the teacher's questions became the evidence of the strength of using games in vocabulary teaching. This is also in line with Adi Wijaya (2018) that flash card games are effective in teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students.

The use of games that have rules agreed upon by the students also increased enthusiasm and discipline among students while playing games. Liu (2015) said that games in English language learning can make learning more engaging. Far before Liu, Thiagarajan (1999) more than two decades ago proved the effectiveness of using games in English learning. Learning became more fun and enjoyable.

When students played games, they unconsciously learned a new language without feeling like they are learning. Vocabulary learning using games had been proven to provide real benefits for students. Students did not have a burden when learning (Richard-Amato,1988), class was more enjoyable (Betterbridge and Buckby, 2015), more flexible because it could be played inside and outside the classroom (Ellis,2005). The use of games to teach vocabulary would certainly help teachers to control the class. The game which rules made by the students themselves could improve the compliance of students in playing according to the rules.

The teacher only used "asking to others" in this technique. When the teacher asked the meaning of certain words, the students who knew the meaning raised their hands and answered the question. This technique could boost the confidence and motivate other students to know more about the vocabulary taught by the teachers.

## 3.2. The changes in teaching vocabulary during 2013 curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum

In 2013 curriculum, teachers had specific schedules for foreign language including English. They used to teach English in scheduled day. In Merdeka curriculum, they changed the time allocation. They no longer allocated specific day to teach but they blended the vocabulary or English teaching to the daily activities.

Anggraena et al. (2022) stated that Merdeka curriculum let teachers and students to create their own goals in learning without neglecting the main goal designed by the government. This flexibility let the teacher have more space to design their teaching activities including time allocation for.

In 2013 curriculum, teachers designed everything with their point of view including goals and approach in teaching. The Merdeka curriculum emphasized to use student-centered approach where teachers should consider student's background (culture, initial knowledge and emotional statement) and student's needs and wants in teaching-learning activities. This allowed teachers to explore more about what makes students curious and interested in learning. Students also had more chances to get involved in what they are going to learn.

Student-centered also allowed them to have more confidence and participation in class. This finding is in line with what Brough (2012) stated in his study. By letting students to design their own games and what they want to learn allowed them to develop and self-assurance. Here, the teacher let the students design their rule in game and choose what they want to learn. They were allowed to choose the topic also. This approach was very different from what teachers used in 2013 curriculum. Anggraena et al (2022) stated that 2013 curriculum are too broad so it is hard to implement flexibility in class and focus on what students need. Teachers might have unconsciously practiced students-centered in previous curriculum. However, the significant difference between previous and current curriculum was the whole understanding about student-centered approach. In the interview, teachers didn't know that student-approach was not only about what games they want to play, but also about goals and their background.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The use of several techniques in teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students such as presentation, practice and training each has weaknesses and strengths. That is why teachers used multiple techniques in one lesson to maximize results. Enthusiasm and student's aptitude in learning new English vocabulary was one of the proof that techniques such as presentation (visual, verbal, or a combination), practice and training are suitable for kindergarten students. By using appropriate media and methods or approaches, vocabulary learning became more enjoyable and not boring. Considering that kindergarten students have short attention spans, it was necessary to have fun teaching methods such as through songs and games. In addition, the student-centered approach promoted in Merdeka Curriculum also helped to increase the effectiveness and compliance of learning.

Enthusiasm and student's aptitude in learning vocabulary are indeed valuable, but it will be more valuable if teachers and students also actively use the vocabulary that has been studied. Unfortunately, in the practice technique, teacher was less active in using vocabulary that has been taught outside of games. It is understandable because the teacher has limited knowledge of English and English teaching to kindergarten students. Ideally, sustainable vocabulary learning requires unlimited practice and supportive environment. So, it would be more effective and useful for further learning if schools and teachers create supportive environment to practice.

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