

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY  
THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: AN ACTION  
RESEARCH AT THE SIXTH YEAR OF SD NEGERI TRIYAGAN  
2 SUKOHARJO IN 2007/2008 ACADEMIC YEAR**



**RESEARCH PAPER**

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**by**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

English as the first foreign language in Indonesia is formally studied from junior high school to university, but it is introduced in elementary school as a local content. Kasihani (2005: 125) maintains that recently, learning English is not something new for elementary school students in Indonesia. More than ten years, there is a policy on the possibility to include English in the curriculum as a local content subject.

According to Singleton (1989: 242-245), there are some reasons for teaching English at primary level, namely: 1) the need to expose children from an early age to an understanding of foreign cultures so that they grow up tolerant and sympathetic to others; 2) the need to link communication to understanding of new concept; 3) the need for maximum learning time for important languages the earlier you start the more time you get; 4) the advantages of starting with early second language instruction so that the language can be used as a medium of teaching.

Teaching English at Elementary School will be the basis for the higher level. In Indonesia, English is introduced in a number of elementary schools into their curriculum as a local content. It is clearly stated in the curriculum of elementary education “ .....*memilih dan menerapkan bahasa Inggris sebagai mata pelajaran muatan local pilihan kabupaten untuk sekolah dasar. Untuk*

*sementara diberikan di kelas IV, V, VI “ . ( GBPP Muatan Lokal Bhs. Inggris, 2004 )*

From the curriculum development point of view, English as local content is considered as important subject as a means of absorbing and improving knowledge, technology, and art. Based on the Decree of the Head of Culture and Education Department No. 308/103.a/ 1995, English is taught at elementary school to give students simple skills in understanding written and oral statement in English.

Basically, skills in English consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing and the elements of language include vocabulary and structures. The learners are expected to have the language competences. As quoted in GBPP Muatan Lokal SD Bahasa Inggris as follows:

*Ruang lingkup pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di SD wilayah Kabupaten Sukoharjo adalah sebagai berikut:*

- 1. Keterampilan berbahasa Inggris, yang meliputi ketrampilan menyimak, membaca, berbicara dan menulis sederhana.*
- 2. Unsur-unsur kebahasaan, yang meliputi tata bahasa, kosa kata, pelafalan dan ejaan.*
- 3. Topik dan fungsi bahasa (language function), yang meliputi topik-topik dan fungsi bahasa yang berkaitan dengan kehidupan keseharian para siswa baik di rumah maupun di sekolah.*

Especially for beginners, vocabulary mastery is the very basic knowledge to learn more about English. Zimmerman (1997) states that for young learners, vocabulary is central to language and words are of the critical importance to language learning. It cannot be separated from the other

language elements in the teaching and learning process because it influences the students' ability and learning English.

Vocabulary is list of words in alphabetical order in dictionaries as symbols of ideas which are needed by people to express and to communicate their ideas both from the first language and second language. Ur (1998: 60) maintains that vocabulary can be defined as the words that teachers teach in the foreign language. A new item of the vocabulary may be more than a single word which is made up of two or three words but express a single idea.

In general, teaching vocabulary is not easy. There are many difficulties in teaching vocabulary, especially in elementary school students as the beginners. Based on the writer's observation in teaching English at the sixth year students of SD Negeri Triyagan 2 Sukoharjo, the writer finds out that the mastery of English vocabulary of students is still low, although they have learnt English since in the fourth year. Many problems often appear during the teaching and learning process. The students' score of the vocabulary test is also low. It shows that the students' vocabulary mastery is poor. The causes of the problem are that: 1) the material is not interesting; 2) the limited time and the equipment; 3) the technique of delivering materials is neither suitable nor interesting.

Because of the problems, students got difficulties learning vocabulary.

Firstly, the students get difficulties in pronouncing words correctly. Pronouncing the word correctly is an important part in teaching vocabulary because incorrect pronunciation will influence the meaning of the words.

Moreover, by pronouncing the words correctly, it can help the students remember the word longer and identify it more readily when they hear or see it. In introducing new words, the teacher should pronounce every new words, correctly and carefully, and then repeat it in chorus by the class or by individual pupils. In fact, the students still get difficulties in pronouncing the words correctly. There are many real cases related to the students' mispronunciation, namely:

- a. The students tend to pronounce the letters of the words. It can be seen when the students are pronouncing words such as *tongue, stomach, armpit* etc. The problem is caused not only by the differences in pronunciation system between the target language and mother tongue (Indonesian language) but also the teaching technique errors. In introducing the words, the teacher tends to use written form first than oral.
- b. The students add the vocal sound when they find consonant cluster which does not appear in Indonesia language. For examples are when they pronounce the words such as *arm, school, student, study, etc.*
- c. The students replace the consonant sound which is difficult to pronounce with the nearest sound. It happens when the students have to pronounce the word which ends in consonant sound. For example the word *orange*, the last sound / dʒ / is pronounced by the sound / ç /, so it becomes / oriç /.

Secondly, the students get difficulties in remembering and grasping the meaning of the words often appear when they do the exercises. They cannot do the exercise perfectly. Most of them fill the wrong answers. That mistake is

caused by translation method in teaching vocabulary. The teacher taught vocabulary mostly by translation at the beginning of the lesson or translation of the material containing new words or glossaries at the end. Therefore, it can be determined that the error in this case was to confuse translation with language use, and to assume that putting across the meaning was the whole of teaching vocabulary. Moreover, the teacher never uses self-defining context, definition in the target language, opposites, pictures, and dramatization as a number ways to put across the meaning of a new words to a class.

Thirdly, the students' attention and motivation in learning vocabulary are decreasing. The students do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation. They are also easy to get bored in having the lesson. It can be seen from the responses in doing some exercises and practices. They easily give up when they get difficult exercise and the teacher never uses games, dialogues, song, and dramatization as interesting ways in delivering material.

Based on the facts above, it can be concluded that the problems in the teaching and learning vocabulary at the sixth year of SD Negeri Triyagan 2 Sukoharjo mostly come from the teacher. The factors are: (1) the teacher is not creative to use media as aids of teaching. Dealing with teaching foreign language to children, Scot and Ytreberg ( 1990: 5) define that :

“words are not enough. Most activities for the young learner should include movement and involve the sense. The teacher will need to have plenty of objects and pictures”

(2) the teacher only gives a little time to practice in pronouncing the words correctly, whereas a little time to practice cannot create accurate

pronunciation, especially for the beginners; (3) the technique of the teaching vocabulary that the teacher uses seems ineffective for the students. It does not give the students great motivation to learn. In other words, students are passive in learning vocabulary.

To overcome those problems, the writer decides to conduct a research to solve the problems through this study. One of the causes that will be solved through this study is about the technique of delivering material that is not suitable and interesting to the learners. Thus, the research will be concentrated on the improvement of technique of teaching vocabulary during the teaching and learning process through an action research.

Wiersma (2000: 11) defines action research as follows.

“Action research as a research usually conducted by teacher to solve a problem or to provide information for decision making of local school. This research focuses in the solution of day-to-day problem at local level”.

The research designed to uncover effective ways dealing with real problems which is not confined to a particular methodology or paradigm.

Based on the features, there are natures of the action research proposed by Tinker Sachs (2000: 71) namely: (1) the duration is usually conducted over a short period of time; (2) the size of the project is usually small-scale; (3) the context is classroom based or school based and may involve one or more school context usually within the same region; (4) the key investigator involves one or more teachers from a school or several school; (5) the ethical consideration is usually informal that is given as the students participants that are known to the teachers and purpose is beneficial to the parties involved; (6)

the focus is investigating one or more practical teaching and learning factors; (7) practical and manageable in design to allow for teachers workload and teaching purposes; (8) utilizing one or more tools to collect and analyze the data, and the data collecting procedures is usually simple and straightforward; (9) the result is usually localized to a specific teaching and learning in class community or context with practical implications; and (10) the sharing of the results may be formal or informal and reported in local on international refereed journals for the benefit of those who teach.

The action research is carried out in the classroom by implementing the experiential learning in teaching vocabulary. The research title is **Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery Through Experiential Learning.**

## **B. Problem Statement**

This study is focused on a certain problem related to the effort to overcome the difficulties of teaching vocabulary. Based on the background explained, it is stated a problem statement:

1. How is the implementation of Experiential Learning ?
2. Does teaching vocabulary using pictures improve students vocabulary mastery ?

## **C. Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. describe the implementation of Experiential learning.
2. improve the students' vocabulary mastery so that:
  - a. They can pronounce words correctly.
  - b. They can memorize and grasp the meaning of words easily.
  - c. The teaching vocabulary improves effectively.

#### **D. Limitation of the Study**

In this research, the writer limits the problems on the implementation of Experiential Learning focusing on the procedure of teaching, especially using pictures as a media of the experiential learning.

#### **E. Benefits of the Study**

Here are some benefits of the study by the researching case:

1. Theoretical Benefit
  - a. This result of the research paper can be useful input in English teaching process especially for teaching vocabulary.
  - b. This result of the study will enrich the references of the next research.
  - c. The finding of this research will enrich the theory of students' vocabulary mastery.
2. Practical Benefit
  - a. The study will solve the problems faced by teacher in teaching vocabulary during the teaching and learning process.

- b. The study will improve the teachers' technique of teaching vocabulary, especially for elementary school students.

## **F. Research Paper Organization**

The organization of research paper is given in order to make readers understand the content of the paper as follows.

Chapter I is the introduction. It consists of background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, limitation of the study, benefit of the study, and research paper organization.

Chapter II is review of related literature. It consists of previous study and underlying theory. The underlying theory consists of the notion of young learners, general concept of vocabulary and general concept of experiential learning, theoretical framework, working hypothesis.

Chapter III is the research method. It consists of type of research, place and time of the research, model of action research, procedures of action research, subject of the study, object of study, data and data sources, method of collecting data, credibility of data and technique for analyzing data.

Chapter IV is the result and discussion . It consists of result and discussion.

Chapter V is the conclusions and suggestions.