

## **TEACHING VOCABULAY FOR INDONESIAN EFL CHILDREN WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER**

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**Abstract:** A preschool teacher of English must provide equal chances and access to all children in learning its vocabulary including those with special needs. The aim of the present study is investigating (1) the current teaching techniques of teaching English vocabulary for preschool-aged students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and (2) the difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching English vocabulary for the students with the disorder. This case study employed oral interviews, questionnaire, and observation schemes as instruments administered to 50 teachers from 13 preschools in Surabaya for data collection. The result of this study indicates that the teachers applied electronic media, flashcards, pictures, alphabet recognition, realia, body language, songs, and story-telling. The use of electronic media was the most preferably common techniques in teaching young students vocabulary. The teachers sometimes had to adapt and combine the techniques to adjust to the students' needs. The difficulties encountered by the teachers were the students' extensive native language, being uncooperative, inability to stay focused. This study provides some suggestions for they need to be equipped with the methodology of teaching vocabulary for student with such a learning disability. This disability can lead to difficulties in understanding and using language for communication and interaction. Having adequate knowledge of such methodology brings about the equal chances for such students to earn learning success. The article ends up with implications for practice and future research directions.

**Keywords:** *teaching; vocabulary; children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is an essential part of language learning. Learning vocabulary is a basic constituent of learning a language. Vocabulary should be taught since the pre-school level (Lougy, DeRuvo, & Rosenthal, 2007). It is important because the mastery of vocabulary affects the mastery of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (Richards and Renandya, 2002). By enriching vocabularies, students are able to comprehensively use English (Ramadhani, 2015), including those who are experiencing difficulties such as students with deficit order and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

ADHD is the most common mental health disorder in childhood (Sung, Hiscock, Sciberras, & Efron 2008). Up to now ADHD has been regarded as learning disability due to brain dysfunction which causes very limited concentration, impulsive behaviour, restlessness and processing information differently (Turketti, 2010). ADHD prevalence in Indonesia is between 0.4% and 26.2%. Male and female ratio was 2:1. Increased ADHD cases affect almost all aspects of children's lives. One of them is their learning activities (Suyami, Khayati, Setianingsih, & Pranandari, 2018). What they need is specific adjustments and accommodations for their learning structures in order to make their learning successful (Turketti, 2010).

There have been numerous studies conducted to investigate effective vocabulary learning strategies for students with ADHD (Turketti, 2010; Król-Gierat, 2014; Sabet, Farhoumand, Zafargandhi., & Nasekh, 2015; Copland & Garton, 2019). However, not much research into the effective vocabulary learning strategies has been carried out for a specific need context, in particular children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Few studies have examined the methods vocabulary instruction, especially in the pre-school years. Therefore, this present was initiated in order to investigate effective strategies for vocabulary learning perceived by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students teaching and learning English at a private school in Indonesia, respectively in order to identify what the most effective strategies are, how they are used, and what can be drawn for the implications for vocabulary learning and teaching.

This study is aimed to reviewing the techniques often used by the teachers in teaching vocabulary. It is about to give a view to enhance the quality of doing so in teaching students at regular schools. Theoretically, it will provide teachers at school an overview of young students' characteristics and their manner in a language classroom. Accordingly, it equips teachers with a picture of teaching vocabulary to the targeted students at school. It also reveals the effective used techniques in accordance with the students' characteristics. It also focuses on identifying the teachers' difficulties in teaching English vocabulary to young students with ADHD. It was concerned with the activities, material, and class management that can develop the students' ability in learning the English vocabulary in the hope that it will inspire English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL teachers in terms of the ways of teaching English to such students that best cater to their needs.

## **METHOD**

In answering the research questions, this research employed qualitative research design with a case study. A case study was conducted to understand the information gathered from a picture of the English vocabulary learning and the teachers' personal reflection on the strategies of teaching it and the hardships they faced, and then to discuss the contexts of those phenomena (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The case study is undertaken in order to have in in-depth study of the phenomena.

## **Respondents**

This study focused on 50 teachers of English language who were working with young students of 3-5 years of age. They were from 14 preschools in

Surabaya, East Java. These preschool-aged children have no formal learning experience, no literacy skills, and various levels of readiness for schools. The teachers were taken as the subjects of the study. Their ages ranged from 23 to 53 years-old. They were all non-native teachers of English and had previous teaching experience ranging from 1-3 years to over 24 years at pre-school levels.

### **Instruments**

The study applied the method triangulation by using observation, interview, and questionnaire to gain the comprehensive understanding of the observed phenomena. It was also to investigate the repeated patterns found in the data required to reveal the more reliable research findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In collecting the data, the researchers conducted the classroom observations and distributed questionnaires to the teachers. The observation checklist as proposed by Bouraine (2017) was used. The questionnaire was prepared to further investigate the teaching and learning activities. It followed the format proposed by Lai (2005). The questionnaire was aimed at investigating the perceptions of teachers in teaching vocabulary. The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice type of questions in relation to what techniques the teachers preferred using most to teach vocabulary to the young children and the difficulties in applying them. Interviews were employed as well to gain deep information about the teachers; use of techniques in the teaching of vocabulary to the young students, and their difficulties in applying them. Table 1 presents some sample question items used in the interview.

Table 1: *Question Items in the Interview*

| <i>Question Items</i>  | <i>Responses</i> |
|--|------------------|
| Do your students like learning English vocabulary?   |                  |
| Is it fun for your students learning English vocabulary                                      |                  |
| Is it difficult for your students to memorize English vocabulary?                            |                  |
| What techniques are you using in teaching English vocabulary to your students?               |                  |
| After using those techniques, is it difficult for your students to study English vocabulary? |                  |

### **Procedures**

To collect the data, the study utilized the classroom observation checklist, questionnaire, and interview. During the observation, the researchers also observed the pre, during, and post instructional activities done by the teacher and students in the classroom. The observers sat in one some classroom sessions, recorded the teacher's teaching activities, and student learning actions, and then met and had some interviews with the teaching to discuss the observations.

### **Data analysis**

After the data was collected from the observation field notes, interview transcript, and questionnaire analysis, the data were analyzed, interpreted, and validated for their accuracy. The extracted data from the observation field notes,

interview transcript, and questionnaire were extracted and then coded into the text data, and the findings were subsequently extracted as modelled by (Ryan, 2006).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary

The findings of this study show that the techniques applied to the teaching of English to the young children afflicted with ADHD included: electronic media, flashcards, pictures, alphabet recognition, realia, body language, songs, and story-telling. They are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: *Techniques Preferred by Teachers to Teach Vocabulary*

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Techniques of Vocabulary Teaching</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|------------|--|------------------|-------------------|
| 1          | electronic media                         | 10               | 27                |
| 2          | flashcards and pictures                  | 8                | 21                |
| 3          | realia                                   | 7                | 19                |
| 4          | body language                            | 5                | 13                |
| 5          | songs                                    | 4                | 12                |
| 6          | story-telling                            | 3                | 8                 |
| Total      |  | 37               | 100               |

From Table 2, the techniques were used to create situations or contexts of the vocabulary being presented. Electronic media and flashcards/pictures were the most common techniques. Twenty seven percent reported applying the electronic media; whereas twenty one percent reported using the flashcards/pictures. The flashcards constituted alphabet cards for alphabet recognition, word cards, and pictorial cards. The pictorial cards were presented first, then the word cards. The teachers used both to present new words, practice, and recycle them, and later on to check the students' memory and comprehension of the words. The teachers also used both pictorial cards and word cards as a warm up activity. The teachers managed to make the students actively participate in the learning.

Another technique was realia (19%). The teachers utilized several real items or objects related to the new words being presented. It was intended to make the new words memorable by creating a link between the objects and the word or phrase they represented. It made the learning enjoyable, useful, and meaningful.

Using body language was the next technique used by the teachers (13%). The body language used consisted of "sight language, body touch language, posture, gesture, manner, facial expression, and clothes language" (Yang, 2016, p. 711). The technique enabled the students to find the word meaning directly by seeing how the teachers' bodies "talk" as the clues. This was motivating and easy

to remember for the students. It also helped build the relationship between the teachers and their students.

Another technique used was songs (12%). The use of songs supported the learning of vocabulary and memory retention of the young students. It also brought about fun activities for the young students. Another technique was storytelling (6 %). The storytelling used the Indonesian fairy tales and fables. This was intended to introduce the Indonesian cultural literacy to the young students. It also created an enjoyable, fun, and engaging learning atmosphere. The students' vivid mental images were also developed while they were listening to the stories. Next, was rereading stories. Using this technique, the teachers read the stories aloud and introduced word meanings during the read-aloud. Then, the teachers asked each of the students to reread the stories in question.

From the observation results, it shows that the vocabulary activities were most likely to happen prior to reading or any other activities, such as listening, speaking, and writing. The teachers simply asked the students to read words in sentences aloud. The teachers' explanation of word meaning was very brief (51%). They had little systematic efforts to reinforce the students' word comprehension. Most of the vocabulary instructions reviewed the meaning or pronunciation of the given word list from the workbook exercises with the students (32%). Some of the teachers (17%), managed to link the word meaning to things the students were familiar with. All of the teachers never asked the students to define a word, explain its contexts, ask questions, having discussion, and give students an opportunity to ask questions.

In relation to the use of songs, based on the observations, the teachers mostly, at first, introduced the songs by singing songs along chorally. Then they introduced the new vocabulary through pictures, dictated the songs and practiced pronunciation, stress, and intonation. This was intended for both vocabulary development and memory retention. In using the body language, the teachers demonstrated the body language in front of the class and then they asked the students to guess what they see (the word and its meaning). The teachers, afterwards, provided exercises to check the students' comprehension. Regarding the use of storytelling, the teachers used their different voices for acting and body language while telling the stories. The teachers used pictures, gestures, facial expressions, puppets, masks, real objects and cut figures as well to introduce the main characters to attract and engage learner's attention.

### **Difficulties in Teaching Vocabulary**

From the results of the questionnaire and interviews, it reveals that attracting attention and interests of the young students with ADHD was the most difficult stage to take as perceived by most of the teachers in the questionnaire and interview. Other difficulties are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Difficulties Faced by Teachers to Teach Vocabulary*

| No. | Difficulties Vocabulary Teaching | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|

*Teaching Vocabulary for Indonesian EFL Children with Attention Deficit  
Hyperactivity Disorder*

|       |                                     |    |     |
|-------|-------------------------------------|----|-----|
| 1     | Attracting attention                | 16 | 43  |
| 2     | Being overactive                    | 8  | 21  |
| 3     | Not following teacher's instruction | 5  | 13  |
| 4     | Being easily forgetful              | 4  | 11  |
| 5     | Having difficulty completing a task | 3  | 8   |
| 6     | Being hard to make friends          | 2  | 6   |
| Total |                                     | 37 | 100 |

From Table 3, the most common difficulty was attracting and keeping the unfocused students' attention and interest to the lesson (43%). The students most of the times were considerably active. They also made much noise. Sometimes they too much moved and spoke. That caused the teachers difficulty in controlling them. In addition, the students had a very limited span of attention. Once the teachers managed to catch the students' attention, another difficulty emerged, that is, keeping them focused.

Another difficulty stated by 21% of the teachers was the students' being overactive. They moved around the classroom a lot and had difficulty engaging in quiet activities. They tuned out easily when they were not interested in the topic or whatever being presented to them. They were then uncontrollable.

Next, five of the teachers (13%) reported that the young students had hardships in following the teachers' instructions. The students at this range of age were at the very beginning stage of learning English as their new and foreign language. They did not they know how to pronounce, read, and write a word. The students were speaking too much in their first language in class. That was problematic in teaching young learner in EFL context.

Four teachers (11%) revealed that the young students often forgot things easily. The students were not easily aware of information concerning the vocabulary they need to retain. They tend to be slow to make sense of what they heard. They required extra time to organize their thoughts and put together a sentence. This situation was getting worse as the teachers were confronted with various uncooperative behaviors of the students. They included messing up, being stubborn and rebellious. They also lacked of empathy. The teachers also reported that the use of flashcards was easy to use. New words can be easily practiced. However, they reported that the difficulties in using them was when they presented abstract words using them.

Furthermore, eight percent of the teachers suggested that the young students had difficulty in completing any task assigned to them. The students did not focus when teacher was presenting the task on board. The students most of the times took many breaks and forgot the task. The students were often too energetic to

stay still. They were also too busy doing other things with their friends to pay attention. They often misunderstood the teachers' instruction. The last problem emerged was the students' making no friends (2%). This may be caused by the students' being uncooperative. Their friends would certainly keep themselves away from such disruptive behaviors. It made the teachers difficult to have group setting.

The findings of this study revealed that the teachers often used electronic media, flashcards, pictures, alphabet recognition, realia, body language, songs, story-telling. This multi-sensory approach works best when teaching students with ADHD (Kałdonek- Crnjaković. 2018). They kept enjoyment in the vocabulary learning and created a relaxing and fun learning atmosphere (Bakhs, 2016).

They are consistent with the results of the previous studies (Silverman & Hines, 2009); Sari, 2013). The results of the studies show that using English TV news facilitates vocabulary learning. Moreover, it shows that using English subtitles raises the learning motivation of the students. According to the data gathered from the experiment and questionnaire, it is confirmed that using English TV news could really help EFL students acquire vocabulary and arouse their motivation in learning vocabulary.

Moreover, Sari (2013) has dealt to improve vocabulary through picture based memory words game to the fourth grade students of SDN 17 Dauh Puri. This classroom action study was initiated by the fact that the majority of the students experienced difficulties in their vocabulary learning. The teaching and learning process for this study required two cycles in which each cycle consisted of two sessions. Some data gathering instruments, such as pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire, were administered to collect the responses from the subjects of the study. The mean score of the pre-test and post-test were subsequently compared. The findings of the study indicated that pictures based memory words game could enhance vocabulary mastery of the fourth grade students. The results of the questionnaire revealed that the subjects' attitude and motivation in learning vocabulary changed positively.

The teachers being observed used the old conventional methods and techniques. The teachers implemented the direct or explicit instruction in the teaching of vocabulary. From the interview results, the teachers reported that they applied the use of those methods and techniques because the young students enjoyed routines, imitations, and repetitions. The teachers combined and simplified them with motivating and stimulating activities. Even though this combination had its own advantages and disadvantages, using it will enable the young students to have fun and amusing learning activities and to memorize vocabulary with much ease (Bakhs, 2016). The teachers successfully brought the vocabulary learning became meaningful teaching and learning activities (Ilmi & Fitriati, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the most common to the least common techniques in teaching vocabulary to young students with ADHD were electronic media, flashcards, pictures, alphabet recognition, realia, body language, songs, and story-telling. They were mostly used to attract the young students' attention and interest. Moreover, the techniques were intended to entertain and engage the students.

Next, the difficulties in teaching vocabulary to the young students were attracting attention, being overactive, not following teacher's instruction, being easily forgetful, having difficulty completing a task, and being hard to make friends. Additionally, the students' small attention span, their using too much their first language and being uncooperative were also major problems that many times caused tension for teachers in the vocabulary class.

Therefore, it is necessary to suggest some possible solutions to any of the problems encountered by the teachers. First, to keep the young students' attention at the longest time, the teachers should provide a wide variety of learning activities and tasks and a combination of them. One of them is vocabulary games (Bakhs, 2016). Second, the teachers should also vary their learning resources to keep up with the students' short span of concentration and attention.

Finally, further studies can be carried out to further examine the most appropriate technique in teaching vocabulary to young students with ADHD in the EFL setting and how much and what kind of vocabulary instruction may be most beneficial to students as they are learning to read and comprehend text. They can also be directed to similar studies with a larger scale and a longer time to bring about more reliable results and to draw generalization of the teachers' techniques and difficulties. Other similar studies can be conducted to address other skills such as on teaching speaking, writing, and reading.

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