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Artikel

IMPROVING STUDENTS'™ SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH ENGLISH MOVIE IN SCOPE OF SPEAKING FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Aseptiana Parmawati, Ratih Inayah
43-53

 PDF

THE SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED IN INDONESIAN FILM

Noni Agustina, Joni Joni
54-59

 PDF

INVESTIGATING INDONESIAN TEACHERS'™ STRATEGIES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

Isry Laila Syathroh, Bachrudin - Musthafa, Pupung - Purnawarman
60-74

 PDF

USING WORD BANK TO ENRICH VOCABULARY OF GRADE X STUDENTS OF TAMAN KARYA MADYA VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Indira Lusianingtyas Siswanto, Catur Fitriana, Barli Bram
75-86

 PDF

PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS'™ COGNITION OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Angga Maulana, Siska Rizkiani

87-97



THE USE OF MIND MAP TO IMPROVE STUDENTSâ€™ VOCABULARY AT SMP WARINGIN BANDUNG

Rasi Yugafiati, Tania Priscila

98-105



Editorial Team

Peer-Reviewers

Peer Review Process

Focus and Scope

Publication Ethics

User Rights

Publishing System

Author Guidelines

Author Fees

Information

[For Readers](#)

[For Authors](#)

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Language

[English](#)

[Bahasa Indonesia](#)

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USING WORD BANK TO ENRICH VOCABULARY OF GRADE X STUDENTS OF TAMAN KARYA MADYA VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the teaching techniques to enhance the tenth grade students' vocabulary items in Taman Karya Madya Vocational High School Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The researchers conducted a pre-test before undertaking the classroom action research (CAR) and a post-test to measure the students' improvement afterwards. Data were analyzed by using the qualitative method by comparing the results of the pre-test and of the post-test. This study sought to answer the research questions related to how the word bank helped students in enriching vocabulary and whether there was any relationship between the teaching method applied in this CAR and the students' improvement in vocabulary mastery. Results indicated that word bank assisted the students in enhancing vocabulary and that it was essential to choose an appropriate technique in teaching vocabulary.

Keywords: word bank, vocabulary, Vocational High School, teaching technique

A. INTRODUCTION

Mastering vocabulary is crucial in learning a language. Cameron (2001) states that vocabulary plays a great role in language acquisition. In accordance with that, Harmon, Wood and Keser (2009) state that learners' vocabulary development is an important aspect of students' language development. In constructing a sentence, both in speaking and writing, a learner needs to arrange several words and make them meaningful. In order to produce a meaningful sentence, knowledge of vocabulary is essential. Meanwhile, in order to understand spoken and written expressions, knowledge related to the vocabulary will be helpful in comprehending the message conveyed. Therefore, students' mastery of vocabulary will affect their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

However, foreign language learners may find difficulty mastering the vocabulary because of several reasons. Laufer (1990) states that "the factors that interfere with learning a word were claimed to be the following: difficult pronunciation ability; similarity of form between the word and other words; similarity of morphology between the word and other words; deceptive morphological structure; different syntactic patterning in L1; differences in lexical gridding between L1 and L2 (one-to-many correspondence, partial overlap in meaning); multiplicity of meaning and metaphors/idioms nonsistent in L1; lexical voids; connotations nonsistent in L1; differences in the pragmatic meaning of near synonyms and of L1 translation equivalents; partial synonymy; and apparent rulelessness of collocation". For example is the word "can". In Indonesian, it can be translated as "bisa", if it has function as an auxiliary verb; "kaleng", if it is a noun; or "mengalengkan" if it is a verb. In addition,

they also rarely use the foreign language in their daily life. Therefore, it will be very difficult for them to memorize the vocabulary. In this study, the mother tongue of the students is Javanese, while their second language is Indonesian.

One of the problems faced by the tenth grade students of English as a foreign language in Indonesia is that there exists no explicit guidelines about what vocabulary to master (see Pramesti, Pramono, & Suhermawan, 2008). Horst et al. (2005) argue that using the word bank involved learners in identifying important words to study and make them able to review their own and their classmates' words. Having a word bank to be mastered by the students surely will make both of the teacher and also the students easier to focus on the targeted vocabulary to be mastered.

However, Graves and Prenn (1986) state that there is no one best method of teaching words. In practice, a certain method might be appropriate and effective in one circumstance, but it may not work well if it is applied in a different circumstance. Each method has its own costs and benefits. Therefore, researchers need to observe the classroom in order to find the most effective and appropriate method that can enhance students' vocabulary. In this study, one of the researchers is a teacher in the school that becomes the subject of this study. She has been teaching there for two years. It helps us to get a clearer picture about the situation at school.

This paper aims to investigate the use of word bank to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. The research was conducted in Taman Karya Madya Vocational High School, a private school in Ngemplak, Sleman, Indonesia. The subjects of the research were the tenth grade students, who are considered as adolescents. The researchers believed that they would be responsible and prepared to follow the procedures to achieve the goal. According to Brown (2004), adolescents are more ready to enter the world and potentially overcome any obstacle that comes between them and their goal. However, they are considered the novice level of English as foreign language learners. The results of this study are expected to be beneficial for both teachers and the students to enrich their vocabulary items.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in English acquisition or learning. Vocabulary is the essence for constructing sentences and utterances. With sufficient vocabulary items, the speaker is able to communicate and understand the written expression. According to Behbahani (2016), acquiring a deep and rich vocabulary knowledge can help students to convey their messages more efficiently. However, helping the students in mastering vocabulary is not an easy job. It requires certain strategies to ease the students to remember and also apply them contextually (see also Gu & Johnson, 1996; Hamzah, Kafipour, & Abdullah, 2009). Nation (1990) believes that knowing and using vocabulary learning strategies is the most important way for learning language. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) say that vocabulary learning strategy knowledge is very important. According to Oxford (1990) as cited from Diaz (2015), strategies are considered as "actions taken by students to make learning easier, more effective, and more self-directed and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990).

2. Strategies in Vocabulary Learning

In this research, the researchers attempted to apply three strategies in vocabulary learning. The strategies were using word bank, using flash-cards, and also applying repetition. Each of the strategies had their own strengths and weaknesses. However, having seen the background of the students and the researcher's experience in teaching them for two years had helped the researchers to decide that those strategies were the most suitable strategies to be applied.

a. Word bank

Word bank is a vocabulary list designed by the researchers as a guideline for the teacher and the students in the teaching and learning process. The vocabulary items were taken from Longman Basic Vocabulary Word List. The researchers selected the words that suited the novice level of English learners. Horst et al. (2005) state that using the word bank involved learners in identifying important words to study. They became more aware of the words to master. They could also set the target words to be mastered in one year, and therefore they could manage their time learning independently. Therefore, the researchers considered the word bank beneficial in enhancing students' vocabulary learning.

b. Flash-card

Using flash-cards in learning vocabulary attracts students' attention and motivation. According to Nation and Webb (2011), learning vocabulary from flash-cards needs highest level of involvement. Students will be actively involved in the teaching learning process. Based on Craik and Lockhart's (1972, as cited in Schmitt, 2008) level of processing, if an activity has the highest level of involvement and deeper processing is needed, the outcome of that activity is retained and learned better. Therefore, flash-cards are effective to teach vocabulary.

c. Repetition

The last important strategy that is mostly teacher-oriented is repetition. Repetition is considered the basic method in teaching. It is important in helping the students to memorize the learning material. By repeating the learning material, students will get used to it and will be able to store it in their mind. The scholars mostly believe that there must be at least seven times of exposure to take place for every word to be learned efficiently. Nation (2001) believes that Pimsleur's model of repetition is applicable for vocabulary learning.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used Classroom Action Research (CAR) method. CAR is a method that aims to find out what works best in the classroom, so that the teacher can improve the students' learning. The researchers believe that the technique of the teaching plays an essential role in the classroom in regard of students' improvement. According to Aronson (2011), "every teaching situation is unique in terms of content, level, student skills and learning styles, teacher's skills and teaching styles, and many other factors. Therefore, in order to maximize student learning, a teacher must find out what works best in a particular situation."

Hopkins (2008) states that classroom action research (CAR) is teachers' action in implementing and evaluating to improve their teaching or their colleagues' teaching. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), CAR is a study whose purpose is to help the teachers to reflect on their teaching qualities as for further improvements, to give

experiences, to help the teachers to set the plan more systematically, and to encourage teachers to do introspection after conducting teaching and learning activities.

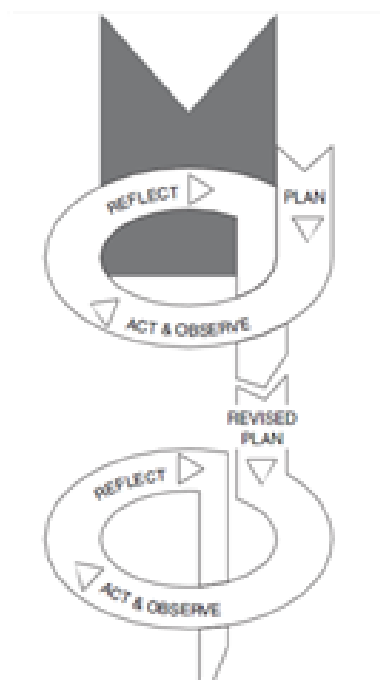


Figure 1. Action research spiral model (Kemmis & Taggart, 1988)

There are four steps in conducting Classroom Action Research (CAR). The researchers applied Kemmis and Taggart's (1998) Action Research cycles, which consisting of at least two cycles in the implementation. In the first cycle, teacher conducts the learning process as the prior plan. In the last step of the first cycle, the teachers needs to reflect on what they have done, and make an improvement for the next meetings.

The participants of this research were the grade X students of Taman Karya Madya Vocational High School. They were categorized as a novice level of English as a foreign language learners. Taman Karya Madya is a private vocational high school located in Ngemplak, Sleman, Yogyakarta. This school has two majors, namely computer and network engineering and motorcycle engineering. We chose this school as they represented the subjects we needed for this research. This school did not have any word bank. Therefore, students became overwhelmed since there were too many vocabulary items to be mastered at once. In addition, the vocabulary items used in the textbook were considered difficult and inappropriate for a novice level of English learners. For example, they used the word *distant* instead of *far*. Based on *Longman Dictionary*, *distant* is categorized as W3, which means that it is included in top 3000 written words. On the other hand, *far* is categorized as S1 (top 1000 spoken words) and also W1 (Top 1000 written words). It indicates that the textbook uses words which the students are unfamiliar. Therefore, it will be difficult for them to memorize the words since they are rarely used in daily contexts.

The data were gathered through pre-test, post test and observation. The pre test was conducted to get the prior knowledge of the students related to the vocabularies to be taught. The post test was used to gain the data related to the students' improvement after getting the treatment.

The result of this research was analyzed using a qualitative method. The researchers used this method since it employed a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Accordingly, the phenomenon of interest would not be manipulated by the researchers (Patton, 2001). In this study, the researchers would like to dig the students' obstacles in learning vocabulary, and would like to provide the solution related to the problem. Seeing this fact, we concluded that this method was appropriate to be employed to answer the research questions of this study.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers applied two cycles for four meetings. The cycles were elaborated below.

Cycle 1

a. Planning

The plan was made before the researchers conducted the research. First, we identified the problems faced by students in their English learning. And then, we formulated the problems into research questions and decided instruments. The next step we took was asking for permission from the principal to conduct the research. The last step was designing the materials. We planned to conduct a pre-test and post-test. The purpose of the pre-test was to obtain data related to students' prior vocabulary proficiency. Meanwhile, the post-test was used to see the results after the implementation of the teaching techniques.

The pre-test and post-test used the same questions. The questions were the vocabulary items that would be learned in four meetings. The tests consisted of three sections. In the first section, the students were required to translate 10 English words into Indonesian. In the next section, there were 10 Indonesian words that needed to be translated into English. In the last section, they were asked to match 10 English words with the correct meanings in Indonesian.

b. Action

In the first and the second meetings, the students would learn 15 vocabulary items. They were divided into three groups and were given flashcards. Each flashcard contained the vocabulary items in English or Indonesian. Then the students were asked to match the word with the appropriate meaning. In order to train the students in constructing sentences, we also taught the students how to construct simple sentences.

c. Observation

Observations were conducted during the execution of the action by using students' daily evaluation and also by creating a field note in order to record events that were not included in students' daily evaluation. During the observations, the researchers observed students' behavior and found out the students' problems in the learning process.

d. Reflection

At this stage, the researchers evaluated the activities in this first cycle. The results of the evaluation were used as feedback to conduct the second cycle. From the evaluation of the

first two meetings, we identified the strengths and weaknesses of the techniques. One of the strengths was that matching flashcards assisted the students in memorizing vocabulary items. Even though they did not know yet the meanings of the vocabulary items, they could guess the meaning since the translations were already there. However, this technique also had its own weaknesses. There were only few students actively participated in the learning process. The passive students were dependent on the active ones. Therefore, we decided to change the matching flashcard activity with arranging jumbled letters. By arranging the jumbled letters, we hoped that the students would be more actively participated in the teaching learning process.

Cycle 2

a. Planning

At this stage, we prepared the materials for teaching. We created the lesson plans and prepared the letters that were used to arrange the words. We chose the words to be taught in the third and fourth meetings.

b. Action

In the third and the fourth meetings, the students would learn 15 vocabulary items. They were divided into three groups and were given the jumbled letters. Each group was asked to arrange the letters to produce English words. They were asked to make the words as many as possible. In order to train the students in constructing sentences, we also taught the students how to construct sentences in a simple way.

c. Observation

Observations were conducted during the teaching learning process. Students' daily evaluation and a field note to record events that were not included in students' daily evaluation were used as the observation tools.

d. Reflection

The evaluation in this reflection phase showed the improvement of the students' participation in the teaching learning process. The students were more active in following the class activities. The factor that influenced the improvement was the technique. The students were asked to arrange seven to eight words using the jumbled letters in a limited time. They felt challenged and they were able to collaborate significantly in finishing the task.

We compared the results of the pre-test and the post-test. The comparison was explained descriptively. If the results indicated an expected improvement of students' vocabulary mastery, we strongly suggested that the teachers should use the word bank regularly at school. The results of pre-test and post-test are shown as follows.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test results

No	Student	Scores of the Test		Conclusion
		Pre- Test	Post Test	
1	Student 1	80	100	Improved
2	Student 2	50	83	Improved
3	Student 3	13	60	Improved
4	Student 4	20	83	Improved
5	Student 5	27	63	Improved
6	Student 6	50	90	Improved
7	Student 7	33	67	Improved
8	Student 8	33	100	Improved
9	Student 9	57	100	Improved
10	Student 10	53	100	Improved
11	Student 11	53	97	Improved
12	Student 12	23	60	Improved

From the data above, we can conclude that all the students had made improvement in vocabulary mastery. It can be said that the techniques used in the teaching learning process were effective in helping the students to master the vocabularies.

Finding of Each Vocabulary Item

Below the researchers elaborated the findings of each vocabulary item. We compared the results of the pre-test and the post-test in order to identify the difficulty level of each vocabulary item (see Brogan & Kutner, 1980).

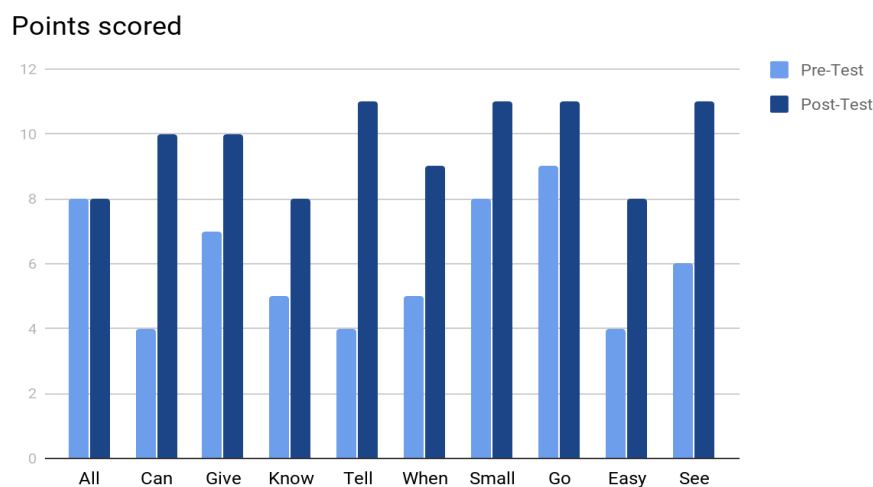


Figure 1. Translating English into Indonesian

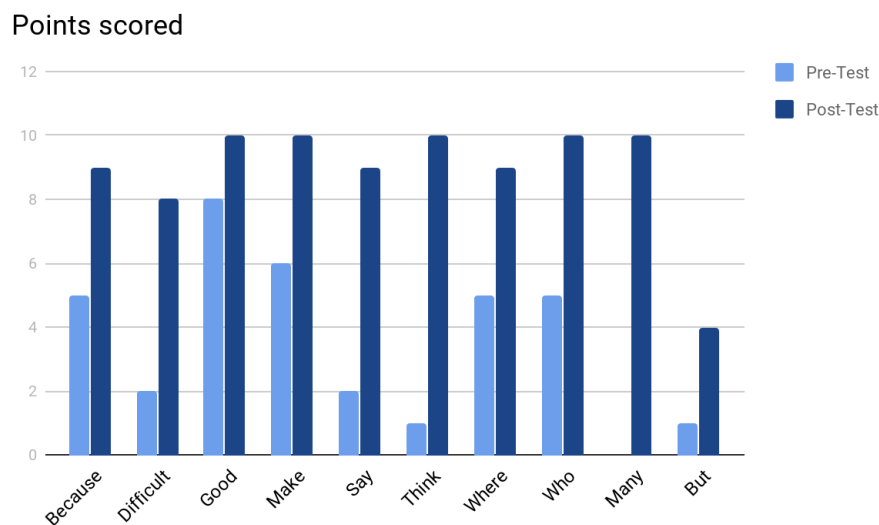


Figure 2. Translating Indonesian into English

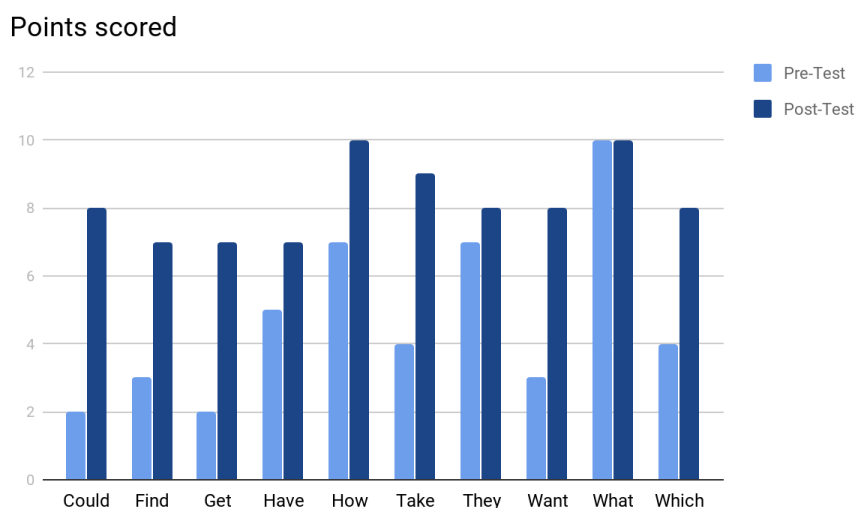


Figure 3. Matching the English words with the Indonesian between the pre-test and the post-test results, except for the item “all” and “what”.

Activity of Each Meeting

The researchers conducted the research in four meetings. There were 30 vocabulary items to be learned during the research. The result of each meeting was elaborated below.

The first and the second meetings: The students learned 15 vocabularies in this first two meetings. The method applied in teaching the vocabulary was by matching cards containing the English words and Indonesian meanings. They did the task in a group with heterogeneous members. The word ‘heterogeneous’ means that the members of the group had a different level of ability. It was done several times (repetition) until the students succeeded in mastering the items. The students were also taught to make simple sentences

From the data above, we found that most of the vocabulary items were mastered by the students. There was a significant difference

using those words. Therefore, at the end of the class they were asked to produce one simple sentence from the words given.

The third and the fourth meetings: For the last two meetings, the students learned the other 15 vocabulary items. In these sessions, the students were asked to arrange jumbled letters into meaningful words. Then, they discussed in a group to find the meanings in Indonesian. The target of the meeting was also to produce simple sentences using the words given. The table below shows target vocabularies in four meetings.

Table 2. List of vocabularies

No	List of Vocabularies			
	First Meeting	Second Meeting	Third meeting	Fourth meeting
1	all	easy	how	make
2	can	see	take	say
3	give	could	want	think
4	know	find	what	where
5	tell	get	which	who
6	when	have	because	many
7	small	they	difficult	but
8	go		good	

Students' Daily Evaluation Result

The students' evaluation was done in the end of class. This activity was completed in order to retain the vocabularies that they learned. The result of the evaluation shows in the table below.

First and Second Evaluation

Table 3. Students' daily evaluation

No	Student	First Meeting		Second Meeting	
		Vocabulary Mastery	Produced Simple Sentence	Vocabulary Mastery	Produced Simple Sentence
1	Student 1	Mention all the words	When is your birthday?	Mention all the words	I find you.
2	Student 2	Can't mention know	I tell you a story.	Can't mention could	I have a sister.
3	Student 3	Can't mention all, when, can, know	I go to school.	Absent	
4	Student 4	Mention all the words	They tell me a secret.	Can't mention get, find	How old are you?

5	Student 5	Can't mention know	She <u>give</u> me a book.	Can't mention have, get	I see you.
6	Student 6	Mention all the words	I know your house.	Mention all the words	I have cousin
7	Student 7	Cant mention Know, when, Give,	All <u>student</u> <u>is</u> smart.	Can't mention find, get, have	Can't make sentence
8	Student 8	Can't mention know and tell	I know your name.	Can't mention get	I get a good score
9	Student 9	Mention all the Words correctly	Dad <u>go</u> to office.	Mention all the words	Could you help me?
10	Student 10	Can't mention know and tell	She <u>give</u> a book.	Can't mention see	How are you?
11	Student 11	Can't mention know	I can sing.	Can't mention Have	He <u>get</u> a ball.
12	Student 12	Can't mention Tell, when, give can	I can play football.	Absent	

Third Evaluation

Table 4. Students' daily evaluation

No	Student	Third Meeting	
		Vocabulary Mastery	Produced Simple Sentence
1	Student 1	Mention all the words	He makes me crazy.
2	Student 2	Can't mention know	Where are you going?
3	Student 3	Absent	
4	Student 4	Mention all the words	How to make a cake?
5	Student 5	Can't mention know	This quiz is difficult.
6	Student 6	Mention all the words	Lucky makes traditional Toys.
7	Student 7	Cant mention know, when, give,	Can't make a sentence.

8	Student 8	Can't mention know and tell	I make a cake.
9	Student 9	Mention all the words	I think this is very difficult.
10	Student 10	Can't mention know and tell	Where do you live?
11	Student 11	Can't mention know	I don't say a word.
12	Student 12	Can't mention tell, when, give, can	Your acting is very good.

In the fourth meeting, the students and the researchers reviewed the vocabularies they learned by having a guessing game. Goodman (2014) argues that a guessing game tends to emphasize such higher level skills as the prediction of meaning by means of context clues or certain kinds of background knowledge. This method helps the students to connect their prior knowledge with the new vocabulary they will learn. In this research, most of the students had already memorized the words, only a few of students still struggled to memorize some words.

E. CONCLUSION

The researchers concluded that the word bank helps students in mastering the vocabulary items by giving them a guideline on which words to be mastered. The results of the pre-test and post-test showed that the students managed to enrich their vocabulary items. Moreover, the vocabulary teaching techniques also played an essential role in improving students' vocabulary. The evidence was reflected in their engagement and enthusiasm during the implementation. The students expressed positive feelings toward the vocabulary learning. They stated that it was a new and different experience in learning vocabulary. The limitation of this study was that we had only few students (twelve) to be the subjects of this research. We also found some demotivated students who reluctantly participated in the learning process. As a result, their scores for the post-test was less satisfactory. To continue exploring the effects of using the word bank, the researchers suggest that future researchers should improve the procedure of the research in gaining feedback from the students. It is also advisable for future researchers to distribute questionnaires to identify external factors related to data collection and analysis.

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