

## **THE APPLICATION OF MEANINGFUL WORDS STRATEGY TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS IN MASTERING ENGLISH VOCABULARY AND IMPROVING ENGLISH WRITING SKILL**

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### **Abstract**

This research is describing the application of meaningful words strategy motivates students in learning English vocabulary and improving English writing skill particularly in writing descriptive text. The writing skill in this case is categorized in productive skill means that student can produce their ideas, opinions and express their feeling in written text. The reason of choosing this meaningful words strategy was that this strategy can build the comfortable situation during the teaching and learning process. This strategy also can build the student's sense of collaboration and that makes them actively participated in the classroom activities. This research used case study and it was conducted at secondary high school - SMA Negeri Model Terpadu Madani Palu, Indonesia. The data in this research were obtained from the interview, questionnaire, observation check list, fieldnotes, and documentation. The researcher employed qualitative approach in analysing the data. The research findings show that using the Meaningful Words Strategy have three results; (1). the teaching process is more effective; the teaching material given to the students are more varied and interesting, (2) the students become more motivated and confident in learning; they participate enthusiastically to the class activities and completed their task, (3) the students achievement in vocabulary mastery and English writing skill have improved.

Keywords : Meaningful words strategy, motivation, writing skills, descriptive text

### **BACKGROUND**

Starting from the Curriculum Based Competence in 2004, then *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*, through the curriculum 2013; the English teaching and learning should be oriented on the text type or genre. In this case, teachers are required to be able to implement the teaching and learning process which based on the text; understand the content of the text and also able to construct the simple text according to the background of the students' level.

English Teaching and learning through text motivate the students in writing, and it is also should be oriented in developing other English skills; listening, reading and speaking. Moreover, the

teaching and learning process is also should consider the improvement on the language function (language expression), and the language components; grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary.

The teaching of vocabulary to students should be followed by teaching the students writing skill, therefore, the students can use their vocabularies directly in communication, particularly in form of written text. Sufficient in vocabulary stock enable the students to express their idea in writing easily. The writing would be easy to be comprehended and interpreted by the reader if it is explained with varied and appropriate vocabularies.

### **The Importance of Mastering Vocabulary in Learning English and in Writing**

Vocabulary is indicated as one of language elements that important in English. Vyogotsky in Thornbury (2002) states that a word is a microcosm of human consciousness. The vocabulary is assumed like the cells that make up the organs in the human body, so it is a component of language that we must learn first before the four skills in English. While Hornby (1995) explains that vocabulary is the total number of word in a language, vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings. Further explanation that vocabulary is items of word which has different meanings and vocabulary is a listing of all words that are thought and learned in the foreign language. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read and write. It means that vocabulary is a center of all languages, it is used by every skills in English. Vocabulary has important role in developing another skills.

The previous explanation clearly explores the importance of vocabulary in learning language skills. The learners can easily complete simple writing task if they have sufficient vocabulary stock. They will be able to speak fluently if they have many vocabularies in mind. They will easily understand the native speaker's expression they listen from recorder or television if they are provided with enough vocabulary, and they even can understand the content of reading if they have significant vocabulary to understand the text.

Teaching vocabulary means providing the learners a set of words they use to speak, to write, to understand the content of recording, and understand the content of English text. The teaching of English vocabulary should not be separated from teaching language skills since one of

the measurements can be used to measure student's vocabulary improvement through assigning them to write a simple text.

It is meaningless for the teacher teaching students' English vocabulary but he/she does not know how far the students have mastered targeted vocabulary. It is one of the reasons why teaching vocabulary cannot be separated from teaching language skills. Hudson (2007: 25) proposes some variables which affect success in reading. One of them is mastering vocabulary.

English writing skill is one of the language skills should be paid attention more. The students can communicate with others or they can express their ideas and personal expression through writing other than speaking. According to Ehte Olshtain in Celce (2001:207), writing as a communicative activity needs to be encouraged, nurtured during the language learner's course of study. This opinion is strengthened by Raimes (1983) who gave the reasons for teaching writing: "We frequently have to communicate with each other in writing" and "Writing reinforces grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary. Raimes (1983) also states that teaching writing is a unique way to reinforce learning.

The focused on this research is to provide a description of how this meaningful words strategy can motivate the students in learning English vocabulary and having competence in writing skill particularly in writing descriptive text. Descriptive text is assumed as a simple text in which student can describe things, animal, person or place differently according to their own idea. They can express their thought and personal feeling about the object.

Writing skill is one of the language skills that need to be taught to students. This skill is categorized as a productive skill on which students can produce and express their ideas, opinions and feelings

through writing. Brown (2001:335) explains that writing is the representation of spoken language, written language is almost same as spoken language, the difference is the performance of written language is conveyed in graphical. Besides, Brown (2001) also mentions that written products are the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures, specialized skills is required in written language, and that not every speaker develops naturally. The previous statement means that the writing is the representation of spoken language.

Written language is almost the same meaning as spoken language. The difference is on the form, where the written language is in the form of graphics, while the oral language is not in that form. Brown (2001) mentions that the product in the written or spoken language is through the process of thinking, drafting, editing and producing.

However, in reality mostly students still have difficulties in writing. Based on the preliminary observation in secondary high school; SMAN Model Terpadu Madani Palu grade tenth, the researcher found that most students had problems when the teacher instruct them to write the topic about Kota Palu., they were confused what to write and how to describe. It was because unclear instructions delivered by the teacher in the teaching and learning process and unappropriate strategy the teacher implemented during the lesson.

Moreover, another problem faced by the students in English class especially in writing class is that they shared the same low motivation level in learning English vocabulary and in English writing skill. As a result they have low classroom participation; asking the question, sharing opinions and even completing the classroom task. Another fact found in writing class is the students lack stock of vocabulary and they have less experience

in writing because the teacher did not provide more chance for the student to practice how to write. The other problem in writing class is the teacher usually assigned the students to write but never corrected and scored the students' works. It has caused the student discouraged and had less motivation in writing, particularly in English.

In the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher, teacher had implemented varied learning strategy in the teaching of vocabularies and English writing skill in SMA Negeri Model Terpadu, however, the teacher should have other more interested and smart strategies hence will increase the student motivation in learning English particularly in English writing skill.

Therefore, the researcher observed the phenomena in the classroom: how the application "*meaningful words*" strategy in the teaching of vocabularies and in improving students' writing competence particularly in writing descriptive text; and how the students' response toward the application of "*meaningful words*" strategy in improving students vocabulary and writing skill particularly in writing descriptive text.

## **METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

This research employed qualitative method, and obtained the data from the respondents through interview, questionnaire, observation, and fieldnotes. The data gained from the teacher interview was crosschecked with the data gained from the questionnaires and the result of observation during the teaching and learning process in the classroom and confirmed to the data gained from the fieldnotes. Then to check the validity of the data, the researcher employed the triangulation.

Questionnaire and interview items were constructed in accordance with the objective of the research: to investigate the

application of meaningful words strategy in motivating the students to learn English vocabularies and to write particularly in writing descriptive text; and to describe the students' response toward the application of *meaningful words* strategy in motivating students to learn English vocabulary and to improve students writing skill particularly in writing descriptive text.

### **Instruments Research**

The interview guide was directed to gain the data about the teacher's perspective toward the application of *meaningful words* strategy in improving students vocabulary and motivating students in writing competence particularly in writing descriptive text. The data gained from this interview was about the teacher's perspective about the effectiveness of this teaching and learning strategy, and student's respond toward the teaching of English vocabulary and writing descriptive text using meaningful words strategy.

The questionnaire was focused on exploring data about the advantages of using the strategy by the teacher in the teaching and learning process; it covers about the effectiveness of this strategy, the enjoyable learning environment, the activeness of students class participation, increasing student's meaningful learning, increasing student's motivation, confidence in learning English vocabulay and in writing skill, and improvement on student's achievement and competence.

The data gained from the observation which have conducted by the researcher directly on the site. The data which have been collected to be focused on the teacher's teaching performance on the application of the meaningful words strategy in the teaching and learning process, and the process of evaluation. The data about the student's participation and responses toward the teaching and learning process using the meaningful

strategy which is conducted by the teacher also to be collected during the observation process.

The data gained from the fieldnotes about all the activities teaching and learning process done by the teacher from the beginning through the end of the teaching process in the classroom. Those data to be recorded in order to support other data gained from the interview and observation.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Application of the Meaningful Words Strategy**

In the observation phase, the researcher observed not only the students' response toward the use of the meaningful words strategy which is focused on the student's classroom participation and students learning motivation, but the researcher also observed toward how the teacher's teaching performance using the meanigful words strategy.

Based on the information gained from the informant (teacher), the use of meaningful words strategy in teaching English vocabulary and writing skill is effective. The students could understood clearly the meaning of the words and use it on the communication particularly in written text. The fact is in line with Richards and Rodgers (2001:12) state that a better reading comprehension, someone should have adequate vocabulary. This can be intepreted from this point of view that other than reading comprehension, mastery in vocabulary would make someone more easily and precisely in expressing their ideas and thoughts and feelings through writing with their own vocabulary.

Moreover, applying this meaningful words strategy in the teaching and learning process makes the learning becomes more oriented on the students centre, means that the students are actively asking questions to the teacher and friends and they also put

effort in finding the meaning of the unfamiliar words through other media such as dictionary or from google translate.

Before assigning the students to do the task, the teacher firstly presented some examples of questions to direct them in completing the task. The teacher presented the question about the alphabet, the students should give information as many as possible about the words in order to lead the partner in guessing the words which has a particular meaning.

In the implementation this meaningful words strategy, the students are firstly divided into groups or pairs, then they present the questions and every student gives different questions to his/her partner. The questions are described in form of written text. The students firstly should write as many as possible information which are related to the words in order to give a clue to his/her partner, then she/he informs to her partner orally. The partner then gives the answer or try to guess the words described by his/her friends. If the information is not sufficient or enough to support the answer, the partner have a chance to ask his/her friend to give more information about the words. From those words the teachers assigned the students to construct a simple written descriptive text. It is understandable that the more students guess the unfamiliar words through single alphabet, the easier for them to construct a simple descriptive text by using those words. Those words are called productive vocabulary in which the students can use them in writing and speaking. Kamil and Hiebert (2005:3) states that the productive vocabulary is the words that are familiar or easy to recognize. These are often used by an individual, particularly in writing and speaking. In relation to the present study, the researcher found that, the more teacher provided the students with words to guess, the more motivated they are and the more vocabulary they gained that makes them

easily to construct a written descriptive text by using those vocabularies.

During the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, it was found that the teacher taught the vocabulary then followed by directing the students to write a simple descriptive text. The importance in teaching students English vocabulary and teaching students writing skill are strengthened by Harmer (1991:153) said : *if language structures make up skeleton of the language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vitas organs and flesh.* The statement means that vocabulary is one of the language components which play a predominant role in learning English skill; writing, reading, speaking and even in learning the language grammatical. Therefore, teaching English vocabulary to students should be followed by teaching the English skills.

The following table is an example of the questions given by the teacher and the steps of the teaching and learning of the vocabulary; asking questions, explaining the words then concluding or answering the words:

Table 1. Questions in Meaningful words Strategy

No	Q	Exp/C	A/C (Meaningful Words)
1	What's "V?"	It's noun. It is part of dress. It's commonly worn by Muslim women.	"V" must be "Veil"
2	What's "S?"	It's an adjective. It's used to describe particular condition of one's body. It causes someone to lose the weight. It's usually used to express a women physically appearance.	"S" must be "Slim"
3	What's "W"	It's a verb. It has similar meaning to use; it relates to clothes. Someone looks bad in appearance without	"W" must be "Wear"

		“w”.....clothes.	
4	What’s “B”	It’s adverb. It’s used to describe something done by someone. It’s derived from an adjective to describe something done well.	“B” must be “Beautifully”
5	What’s “L?”	It’s noun. It is always situated around the mountains. It is the place where big water gathers in it. Poso has a wide “L”, called “L...Poso” It contributes water to the rivers”	“L” must be “Lake”
6	What’s “F”	It’s noun. It can cool down uncomfortable or warm condition. You can set it up on the floor or hang it on the wall	“F” must be “Fan”

### **The Effect of Meaningful Words Strategy**

The result from the questionnaires gained from the students (informant) toward the teaching of English vocabulary and writing the descriptive text using the meaningful words strategy conducted by the teacher during the teaching and learning process. The researcher analysed and concluded that the teaching and learning using the monotonous strategy makes the students uninterested to participate the class activities. On the contrary when the teacher apply this meaningful words strategy in the teaching and learning process the students become more challenged to participate actively in class activities. In addition, according to the students, they feel more relaxed in learning English vocabulay and writing descriptive text. They can ask questions to their classmates or teacher about the unfamiliar words and also they can express their idea freely and write easily without worrying much in making mistakes on their grammatical.

Based on the observation of the teaching and learning process using the meaningful words strategy in improving student’s English vocabulary and writing descriptive text in the classroom, it can be revealed that students learn English tend to be more relaxed and motivated to participate with the class activities. They were seriously concentrated and pay the attention to the teacher’s explanation, they were curious to search the meaning of the words. When they found unfamiliar words, they were more actively and confident in asking questions to their teacher, classmates and sometime they looked up in the dictionary or searching from the google translate. This teaching and learning process facilitate the students to be more actively in the learning process – Student Centre Learning. This findings is supported with the studies conducted by Campilo (2005:46-47) stated that Students-Centred Learning can also take place in different ways such as by allowing them to ask other students in the classroom, by using a dictionary, or through contextual guess works.

In addition, the students also enjoy do classroom task colaboratively and complete the writing task more frequently. That was indicated students become more interested and enthusiastic in learning English vocabulary and writing particulaly in writing descriptive text, and they learn English in more meaningful activities. Moreover, the meaningful words strategy not only can motivate student to learn English vocabulary and writing skill but it can also enhance students speaking skill.

### **Students’ Vocabulary and Writing Achievement**

To make clear description of the findings on student’s vocabulary and writing achievement, the researcher administered classroom writing task to analyse. Writing task is in the form of writing simple descriptive text. Each students is assigned to write single

descriptive text concerning with describing persons and things. They were suggested to employ new vocabulary input they gained from guessing meaningful words during the teaching and learning process.

The classroom writing tasks is intended to measure students' improvement on vocabulary and writing skill. This is considered effective to evaluate the vocabulary stock they gained by assigning them to write. Students' writing product can be evaluated simultaneously with vocabulary they use to write.

Table 2. Students' Vocabulary and Writing Achievement

Number of students	Classroom Writing Task (topic)	Vocabulary Achievement	Writing Achievement
2	Person	Difficult to employ suitable diction	Constructing writing task with limited vocabulary makes the content of writing confusing
6	Natural Appearance	Employed limited vocabulary	Describing things in unappropriate expression with recurring vocabulary
22	An object	Employed various vocabulary	Presenting a coherent idea

The findings show that the students have a better result or improvement on the vocabulary and writing skill. The table 2 shows that there is a significant improvement the students gained from vocabulary stock and writing skill compared to the previous achievement before they were treated with meaningful words strategy. It was about 22 students have achieved better result in constructing the simple descriptive text and employed various vocabulary for the topic of an object.

## CONCLUSION

The result of this research can be concluded as follows:

This research is focused on investigating the application of meaningful words strategy in motivating the students to learn the English vocabulary and improving the students writing skill particularly in writing descriptive. The observation is directed to the three main areas in which they relate to each other ; the teacher's teaching performance, the students' classroom participation and learning motivation, and improvement on students' writing skill.

The researcher found that the teaching process is more effective, the teaching and learning activities are more oriented on the students and more meaningful learning activities, and the teaching materials given to students are also more varied and interesting; the students become more active in participating the classroom activities, they feel more relaxed and confident in asking questions and expressing their opinion and delivering their answer. Moreover, the students are motivated to complete their task given by the teacher, and the students achievement in vocabulary mastery and English writing skill have improved as well.

The result of this research is expected can motivate other teachers particularly teachers from other High schools in Kota Palu to apply this meaningful words strategy effectively, therefore students will have an interest in learning English particularly in learning English vocabulary and writing English skill.

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