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English Vocabulary Teaching at Elementary Schools in Rural Area

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Abstract – English is a very crucial skill for every individual in education, career and daily activities. A key component of learning English is vocabulary, which is taught at all levels of education, starting from elementary school. Vocabulary learning is not limited to urban students; rural children also study vocabulary. However, students in rural areas often face challenges in the vocabulary learning process. This qualitative research explores English vocabulary learning in rural schools, specifically focusing on fifth-grade students at SDN Sranak and MI Al Ghonim. This study aims to identify the strategies teachers employ in teaching vocabulary to primary school students in rural areas, as well as to examine the factors that influence vocabulary development. These factors include the availability of learning resources, students' socio-economic backgrounds, teacher involvement, and environmental support. By analyzing these elements, the study seeks to understand how vocabulary is taught and learned in rural settings. The aim is to provide insights that can help improve English language teaching in areas with limited educational access and resources, ultimately contributing to more optimal learning achievement for students in these communities.

Keywords – English Vocabulary, Elementary School, Rural Education, Teaching Methods, Language Learning

abstrak – Bahasa Inggris merupakan kemampuan yang sangat krusial bagi setiap individu dalam bidang pendidikan, karier, dan aktivitas sehari-hari. Komponen utama dalam belajar bahasa Inggris adalah kosakata, yang diajarkan di semua tingkat pendidikan, mulai dari sekolah dasar. Pembelajaran kosakata tidak hanya terbatas pada siswa di perkotaan, anak-anak di pedesaan pun mempelajari kosakata. Namun, siswa di daerah pedesaan sering menghadapi tantangan dalam proses pembelajaran kosakata. Penelitian kualitatif ini mengeksplorasi pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris di sekolah-sekolah pedesaan, khususnya berfokus pada siswa kelas lima di SDN Sranak dan MI Al Ghonim. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang diterapkan guru dalam pengajaran kosakata kepada siswa sekolah dasar di kawasan pedesaan, serta untuk memeriksa faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi perkembangan kosakata. Faktor-faktor tersebut meliputi ketersediaan sumber belajar, latar belakang sosial ekonomi siswa, keterlibatan guru, dan dukungan lingkungan. Dengan menganalisis elemen-elemen ini, penelitian ini berusaha untuk memahami bagaimana kosakata diajarkan dan dipelajari di daerah pedesaan. Tujuannya adalah untuk memberikan wawasan yang dapat membantu meningkatkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris di daerah-daerah dengan akses dan sumber daya pendidikan yang terbatas, yang pada akhirnya berkontribusi pada mengenai pencapaian belajar yang lebih optimal untuk para siswa di masyarakat-masyarakat ini.

Kata kunci— Kosakata Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Dasar, Pendidikan Pedesaan, Metode Pengajaran, Pembelajaran Bahasa

INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization, English has transformed from a foreign language to a universal language that is used in many facets of contemporary life, such as international communication, education, science, technology, and the workplace (Kirkpatrick, 2020). The dominant role of English as the main language in scientific publications, international trade, digital media, and global diplomacy makes it a skill that is no longer optional but an urgent need to be mastered by every individual who wants to compete globally (Crystal, 2019). One of the crucial components in mastering English is vocabulary. The development of other language skills, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading, is mostly based on vocabulary acquisition. (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2020). Without adequate vocabulary, students will find it difficult to understand the content of texts, convey ideas, and participate in meaningful communication. Therefore, early vocabulary acquisition, especially at the primary school level, is crucial to support long-term success in learning English. Vocabulary acquisition involves not only memorizing words but also the ability to use those words in appropriate contexts orally and in writing (Cameron, 2011; Susanto, 2017).

However, the reality of education in rural areas still faces significant challenges in this vocabulary acquisition process. Students in rural areas tend to experience limited access to adequate educational resources, such as English reading books, digital media, and environments that support active language practice. In addition, the quality of teaching is often hampered by the lack of teachers with good English language competencies and effective teaching strategies (Fitriani et al., 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2022). The concept of “rural” itself generally refers to areas with low population density, high levels of remoteness, limited access to infrastructure, and reliance on often limited local resources (Putri et al., 2022; Peters, 2020). These characteristics influence students' overall language skill development, including English vocabulary acquisition.

This research focuses on two primary education institutions located in Trucuk sub-district, Bojonegoro district, East Java, namely SD Negeri Sranak and MI Al Ghonim. Despite being geographically located in the same area, these two schools show very contrasting educational conditions. SDN Sranak faces various limitations, such as a lack of educators, inadequate learning facilities, and a lack of parental support for the students' learning process. In contrast, MI Al Ghonim shows a more systematic approach to teaching, supported by a community environment that cares about education. By comparing vocabulary comprehension among fifth-grade students in the two institutions, this study seeks to uncover effective strategies and identify influential factors in vocabulary development in a rural context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how English vocabulary is taught in primary schools in rural areas. This study's primary goal is to gain a thorough understanding of the teaching methods used, the difficulties encountered, and the contextual elements that affect vocabulary acquisition in a rural educational environment. A case study design was chosen so that the analysis could focus on two specific schools in a rural district.

This research was conducted in two primary level educational institutions located in Trucuk sub-district, namely SDN Sranak and MI Al Ulum. The selection of these two schools was purposive, given the differences in learning environments and geographical locations. SDN Sranak represents a school that has limited educational resources, while MI Al Ghonim is considered to have better infrastructure and community involvement.

Participants of the study included English teachers from each school, grade 5 students who were actively involved in English learning activities, and school principals to obtain contextual background information.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the research entitled English Vocabulary Teaching at Elementary Schools in Rural Area. The research was conducted in two elementary schools located in Trucuk sub-district: SDN Sranak and MI Al Ulum. Participants in the study included English teachers from each school and grade 5 students who were actively involved in English learning activities. The study used observation and interview techniques to collect data, with interviews conducted with students and teachers to understand their experiences and perspectives on teaching English vocabulary in remote area schools.

The observation in class V of MI Al Ulum shows that English vocabulary teaching has been implemented with an approach that is relevant to the students' context in rural areas. The teachers consistently use contextualized methods, such as through pictures, stories and daily life examples, which have proven effective in attracting attention and increasing student engagement. Although teacher-student interaction is positive, with the teacher actively providing feedback and encouraging discussion, the use of technology in learning is still limited. Teachers only occasionally use videos through personal cellphones due to limited school facilities. In addition, the variety of learning activities involving speaking, writing and listening has not been maximized. Classroom activities are still dominated by passive verbal methods, while cooperative learning such as group work has not been widely implemented.

At SD Negeri Sranak, teachers also apply similar contextual methods in teaching English vocabulary. The use of pictures, stories and examples from daily life help students relate new vocabulary to their experiences. Although the use of technology is limited due to limited facilities, teachers still utilize technology such as video and audio whenever possible, which enriches students' learning experience. Teacher-student interaction is fairly good, but students are not very active in asking questions or discussing the meaning or use of new words. This may be due to a lack of

confidence. Learning activities in the classroom are also limited, with a lack of variety in activities that combine speaking, writing and listening skills.

Similar constraints also emerged in both schools related to limited resources and support from parents. At MI Al Ulum, although some parents began to support their children's learning, their limited knowledge of English was an obstacle. Likewise, at SD Negeri Sranak, parental support is limited as most parents in rural areas do not have an adequate understanding of English. This limitation hinders vocabulary learning that can be continued at home. Even though both schools have adopted creative and adaptable vocabulary teaching strategies, more techniques, technology, and parental support are still required to raise the standard of English language instruction in rural locations.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions demonstrate that teaching English vocabulary in rural elementary schools—more especially SDN Sranak and MI Al Ulum—has been implemented through creative and contextual approaches that align with students' daily experiences. Teachers at both schools utilize visual aids, stories, and relatable examples to enhance student engagement and understanding. While teacher-student interaction tends to be positive, the integration of technology in classroom instruction remains limited due to infrastructural constraints. Furthermore, both schools have not fully optimized the variety of classroom activities, particularly those that combine speaking, writing, and listening skills.

A common challenge across both schools is the lack of parental support, often stemming from parents' limited English proficiency and low involvement in their children's learning process. This further impedes vocabulary reinforcement outside the classroom. Despite these limitations, the efforts made by teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to adapting teaching methods to the rural context. To improve the quality of English learning in rural areas, it is essential to expand the range of instructional methods, increase access to technological resources, and foster stronger collaboration with parents and the broader school community.

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