Teachers Challenges and Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary at Rural Elementary Schools in Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency

Lailatun Nisa[1]([✉]), Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati[2], Chyntia Heru Woro Prastiwi[3]
[1,2,3]English Education Departement, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Indonesia
lailatun.nisa2805@gmail.com[1], meiga_ratih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id[2],
chyntia_heru@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id[3]

abstrak — Pengajaran kosakata di sekolah dasar di daerah pedesaan memiliki tantangan yang unik karena sumber daya yang terbatas, kebutuhan belajar siswa yang beragam, dan pelatihan guru yang tidak memadai. Penelitian ini menyelidiki tantangan yang dihadapi oleh para guru dan strategi yang mereka terapkan dalam mengajar kosakata di sekolah dasar pedesaan di Kecamatan Ngasem, Kabupaten Bojonegoro. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman nyata di kelas untuk lebih memahami bagaimana guru mengatasi hambatan ini dan meningkatkan pengajaran kosakata. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan, yang melibatkan wawancara dan observasi kelas dengan dua guru bahasa Inggris dari dua sekolah yang berbeda di kecamatan ngasem. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama yang dihadapi guru adalah kurangnya bahan ajar, rendahnya motivasi siswa. Sebagai tanggapan, para guru menerapkan berbagai strategi seperti fokus pada pembelajaran kontekstual, penggabungan strategi metakognitif, pendekatan berbasis tugas, penggunaan instruksi dan umpan balik yang eksplisit, pengulangan dan daur ulang untuk membuat pembelajaran kosakata menjadi lebih menarik dan efektif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun guru-guru di daerah pedesaan menghadapi rintangan yang signifikan, kreativitas mereka memainkan peran penting dalam mengatasi tantangan dan meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan yang berguna bagi pihak-pihak terkait untuk lebih mendukung pengajaran bahasa Inggris di daerah pedesaan.

Kata kunci — Pengajaran kosakata, Tantangan guru, Strategi pengajaran, Sekolah-sekolah di pedesaan

Abstract — Teaching vocabulary in rural elementary schools poses unique challenges due to limited resources, diverse student learning needs and inadequate teacher training. This study investigates the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies they employ in teaching vocabulary in rural primary schools in Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency. The purpose of this study was to explore real classroom experiences to better understand how teachers overcome these barriers and improve vocabulary teaching. A qualitative descriptive method was used, which involved interviews and classroom observations with two English teachers from two different schools in Ngasem District. The findings show that the main challenges teachers face are lack of teaching materials, low student motivation. In response, teachers implemented various strategies such as a focus on contextualized learning, incorporation of metacognitive strategies, task-based approaches, use of explicit instructions and feedback, repetition and recycling to make vocabulary

learning more interesting and effective. The study concludes that although teachers in rural areas face significant hurdles, their creativity plays an important role in overcoming challenges and improving students' vocabulary acquisition. This research provides useful insights for relevant parties to further support English language teaching in rural areas.
Keywords— Teaching vocabulary, Teacher challenges, Teaching strategies, Rural schools

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a very important element in English learning, especially for elementary school students in rural areas. Good vocabulary mastery helps students understand instructions, express ideas, and actively participate in learning activities. Ayana et al., (2024) states that vocabulary learning requires an integrated approach, including the use of varied techniques to introduce, repeat, and practice new words. Thus, vocabulary acquisition remains a fundamental aspect that cannot be ignored in language learning.

Teaching vocabulary is a process that aims to provide students with an understanding of the meaning, form and usage of words in a particular language. It aims to expand students' ability to understand and use language effectively, both in academic contexts and in everyday life. Walters (2018) states that vocabulary teaching methods should include visualization techniques, associations, and repetitive exercises so that students can understand new words easily.

However, the challenges faced in vocabulary learning often refer to various difficulties experienced by teachers and students in the process of mastering or teaching vocabulary. These challenges can come from internal factors, such as student motivation, or external factors, such as limited resources. Richards and Rodgers (2020) explained other challenges, such as the lack of appropriate teaching materials and the lack of teacher training in teaching vocabulary effectively. Therefore, teachers need to find innovative strategies to overcome these challenges.

Vocabulary learning strategies involve a variety of methods and techniques that aim to improve students' comprehension, recall and ability to use new words in a variety of contexts. In teaching vocabulary, the strategy, teaching method, materials, and technique are the key points. But among them, the teacher's strategies are the most important (Sari et al., 2024). With approaches tailored to students' needs, such as the use of visual media, structured repetition teachers can create a supportive learning atmosphere. In addition, it is very important for teachers to use contextual and relevant teaching materials so that students can more easily relate new vocabulary to everyday life, especially in rural schools.

Rural schools are educational institutions located in remote areas that often face limitations in terms of infrastructure, teaching staff and access to technology. Mulkeen (2018) explains that teachers in such schools often rely on creativity and locally available resources to ensure effective learning. This condition is clearly reflected in the case of SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem, a school located in a remote area in Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency. The school struggles with inadequate facilities, such as incomplete classrooms and minimal access to educational technology. With a limited number of teachers, the teaching and learning process cannot always be optimized. On the other hand, SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem presents a stark contrast.

As the most well-known school in the area, it has a fairly complete infrastructure. These favorable conditions allow for a more effective teaching and learning process, positioning the school as a model institution that can serve as an inspiration for other schools in the area.

Although many researchers have studied the challenges and strategies in vocabulary teaching, most of these studies were conducted in urban areas or educational institutions with better access. Research on vocabulary teaching in rural schools, especially in remote areas such as Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency, is still very minimal. Therefore, this study is expected to meet this need by analyzing the real challenges faced by educators and innovative strategies implemented in elementary schools in rural areas of Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach used in this study is descriptive qualitative, which aims to analyze in depth the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies they apply in teaching vocabulary in rural elementary schools in Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena that occur in a natural context, by exploring teachers' experiences, views and practices holistically. Creswell (2018) explained qualitative research is suitable for analyzing complex issues that require in depth understanding of individual perspectives and specific social situations. This research was conducted in 2 elementary schools located in Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency. These are SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem and SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem. This area was chosen because of its characteristics that reflect a rural environment with various limitations in educational facilities, both in terms of infrastructure and learning support resources. In this study, data was collected through interviews, observations, and documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of research on the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies used in teaching English vocabulary in rural elementary schools, particularly in SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem and SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem. Data were obtained through observations and interviews with teachers in both schools. The findings of this study are divided into two main aspects that will be discussed in depth to show the dynamics of English language learning in a rural elementary school environment that has certain limitations.

1. The challenges faced by teachers in teaching vocabulary at rural elementary schools

Teachers at SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem and SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem face various challenges in teaching English vocabulary to their students. The main challenge they face is the students' low basic proficiency in English. Most students do not have an adequate vocabulary foundation, so the learning process is slower and requires constant repetition of material. In addition, limited learning facilities are also a considerable obstacle in creating interesting

and interactive learning. Both schools also face limited time allocation for English lessons, which is generally only given once a week, so time for material exploration is very limited. Another challenge is the background of the teachers who do not have special expertise in English language teaching. The teachers are classroom teachers who are assigned to teach English subjects without adequate training or background in English education. This condition certainly affects the quality and approach to learning that can be applied in the classroom, because teachers have to adjust independently to teaching materials and methods that they may not have fully mastered.

2. Strategies do teachers employ to overcome these challenges in teaching vocabulary

In facing these challenges, teachers in both schools show different adaptation efforts in developing vocabulary teaching strategies. At SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem, the approach used is more contextual and structured. Teachers teach vocabulary that is directly related to students' daily lives, such as objects in the classroom, their home environment and their activities, with the aim that students can more easily understand and remember the words. Teachers also provide clear and directed instructions and give verbal feedback whenever students make mistakes, especially in pronunciation or word usage. In addition, teachers consistently repeat the same vocabulary in various classroom activities, such as simple games and questions and answers as a form of reinforcement so that students can better internalize the vocabulary.

Meanwhile, at SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem, teachers prioritize a student-centered approach and encourage their active involvement in vocabulary use. Students are encouraged to use the vocabulary they have learned in simple sentences, dialogs between friends, or activity-based tasks, such as matching words with pictures or real objects, and composing short stories based on pictures. This approach not only provides opportunities for students to actively practice the language but also increases their confidence in using English. Teachers at this school have also started to introduce metacognitive learning strategies, such as recording new vocabulary in a personal notebook or categorizing it based on a particular theme. These strategies aim to train students' awareness of their own learning process and get them used to learning independently.

Based on these findings, the following discussion will elaborate on the meaning of the results obtained by linking them to theory and previous research. At SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem, teachers use a contextualized and structured teaching approach, focusing on vocabulary that is closely related to students' daily lives. This method facilitates the understanding and recall of new words, especially for students with limited exposure to English. This approach is in line with Mistar and Zuhairi (2020) findings, which state that contextualized vocabulary learning helps bridge the gap between abstract language and students' life experiences, thus improving young students' recall and engagement.

In addition, teachers incorporate repeated reinforcement through games and question and answer activities. This is in accordance with Nation (2018), who

emphasizes the importance of recycling vocabulary in various meaningful contexts to improve memory and long-term recall. Repetition strategies are particularly effective in helping students who need continuous exposure to the same vocabulary before they can use it confidently.

Meanwhile, at SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem, teachers apply a student-centered and communicative approach. According to Tirtanawati (2021), vocabulary learning is not enough just by delivering material and students listening, but it must involve students actively in the process of learning English vocabulary. The emphasis is on student engagement. Students are encouraged to use the vocabulary they have learned in simple sentences, dialogs between friends, or activity-based tasks, such as matching words with pictures, and composing short stories based on pictures. These activities reflect the principles of task-based language teaching which encourages language acquisition through practical use and communication. Wulandari and Lestari (2021) support this approach by highlighting that communicative task-based teaching helps young learners actively use vocabulary in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, teachers at SDN Setren I Ngasem introduce metacognitive strategies, such as recording new vocabulary in a personal notebook or categorizing it based on a particular theme. This is in line with research by Purwaningtyas et al., (2022) which shows that metacognitive approaches in vocabulary teaching can increase learner autonomy and self-awareness in learning progress. These strategies are particularly valuable in rural environments, where learning resources are limited and self-learning skills are crucial.

The different approaches between these two schools show that teaching strategies are not always uniform but are strongly influenced by the context of the students, the readiness of the teachers and the learning environment. On the one hand, SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem strategy is effective in building an initial foundation for students who are completely new to English. On the other hand, the strategy at SDN Setren I Ngasem provides more space for students to develop actively and independently in language use. Both approaches have their own advantages and reflect teachers' efforts to provide effective vocabulary learning amidst limitations. This finding supports Zein (2019) argument that empowering teachers to adapt pedagogy based on local needs is crucial to improving English language education in under-resourced areas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results at SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem and SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem, it can be concluded that teachers face various challenges in teaching English vocabulary in rural primary schools. The main challenges include students' low basic proficiency in English, limited learning facilities, minimal time allocation, and teachers' backgrounds that do not have special expertise in English language teaching. These factors affect the effectiveness of the learning process and require teachers to adjust methods independently.

To overcome these challenges, teachers in both schools developed strategies that were appropriate to their respective contexts. At SD Negeri Mediyunan II Ngasem, the approach used was contextual and structured, focusing on vocabulary relevant to students' daily lives and reinforcement through repetition and feedback. Meanwhile,

at SD Negeri Setren I Ngasem, the strategy applied is more student-centered by encouraging active participation through the use of vocabulary in dialogue, activity-based tasks, and the application of metacognitive strategies to encourage independent learning.

These different strategies show that the success of vocabulary teaching is not only determined by a particular method, but also by the suitability of the approach to the conditions of the students, the readiness of the teacher, and the learning environment. Based on the results of observations and interviews, it appears that although teachers in these two schools face various limitations, they still show creativity and adaptability in designing effective vocabulary learning. The strategies used are adapted to the characteristics of the students as well as the available resources, so that it still allows students to develop in mastering English vocabulary, even in simple learning conditions.

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