

## **IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY BY USING SHORT STORY**

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### **Abstract**

The research was conducted due to students' low ability in mastering English vocabulary. This research aimed at improving the second grade students' vocabulary by using short story in SMP Satap Negeri Nian. This research used classroom action research. This research was carried out in one cycle with three actions given. This research was carried out by following CAR's procedures consisting of planning, action or implementation, observation and reflection. Data were obtained through test results. The results of the preliminary study showed that students' vocabulary mastery were still very low with an average score of 48. Then, the researchers carried out cycle one, and the results of cycle one showed that students' vocabulary mastery had increased significantly, namely with an average score of 76. These results show that the use of short stories in teaching English can significantly increase the vocabulary mastery of second grade students at SMP Satap Negeri Nian.

**Keywords:** Improving, short story, vocabulary

### **INTRODUCTION**

In teaching and learning English, vocabulary as an element of language is considered as the most important factor in improving mastery of four skill of the language. They are not able to be mastered, if the students are still lacking vocabulary. Without the vocabulary mastery, the students cannot express their communicative needs (ideas, emotions, desires, and though) to somebody else clearly because of their limited vocabulary.

Vocabulary is the most important material in foreign language learning for the students. According to Basal (2016), vocabulary teaching is at the heart of developing proficiency and achieving competence in the target language. Whereas, without a good mastery of vocabulary, the learners may be discouraged in making use of language learning change around them such as watching English program, listening to the radio, reading some kinds of English test, etc.

The teachers must have great sense of determining methods in teaching English especially vocabulary. They should know how to trigger students' interest to learn English. The teacher should be able to develop more creative materials that are related to vocabulary in order that students might not get bored and monotonous. The teachers can apply a short story as a medium in teaching English to improve students' vocabulary.

Short story is one of many kinds of a books are likely familiar to students. It is because, the students are interested to read it. Short story has various titles with different themes. Usually, the students' of junior high school are more interested in the story with the theme of fairy tales or fables. By reading short story, the students can also find out

many kinds of vocabulary. Hence, through this method, automatically the students can increase their vocabulary.

Students' problem in learning English is lack of vocabulary. The students feel that it is still difficult to learn English, and many of students are not aware, if the vocabulary is important in their English learning process. As one of the researchers found out that when she was doing teaching practice (PPL) in school, students' vocabulary was very limited and it was proved by the result of their test. It was proved by the researcher when is conducting the English teaching for them. She taught some English materials and also gave them some tasks to do. The result was not satisfactory. Having done those test and task, many students admitted that they still got obstacles, because they did not comprehend almost the whole text due to limited vocabulary mastery. They also said that their teachers just give them task to do in their textbook with monotonous explanation. This is considered a gap in English teaching and learning process.

Based on this problem, the researchers were willing to develop a good teaching with a proper method to teach English with the goal to enrich the students' vocabulary mastery. Having considered short story is an interesting way to be applied in teaching English vocabulary, researchers came to an agreement that this is the significant of the research. The short stories applied in the teaching was local short stories of Timor Island. This was aimed at attracting students' interest to learn English. Therefore, the use of local short stories is the novelty of this research.

### **Previous Studies**

There are some previous studies have been conducted that related to this study. First, Rohimajaya (2018), conducted a study entitled "the effect of using short story toward students' achievement in vocabulary mastery". This study aimed to investigate the impact of short stories on eighth-grade students' vocabulary mastery at SMPN 1 Labuan. A sample of 70 students was divided into an experimental and control group. A quantitative design was used, with a t-test to determine statistical significance. Results showed that using short stories for instruction and learning was more successful, and it was concluded that using short stories was more beneficial in helping students gain significant vocabulary mastery.

Second, Adreis et al., (2022) conducted a study entitled "the use of reading short stories method to improve students' vocabulary mastery". The study investigated the impact of reading short stories on second-grade students at SMP Negeri 6 Kalukku's English language skills. Results showed a significant increase in vocabulary, with a T-test showing a higher increase than the T-table. Teaching short tales could enhance students' vocabulary.

Third, Rahman (2021), conducted a study entitled "the use of short story to enrich students' vocabulary achievement". This study aimed to analyze the teaching process and identify differences between using short stories in first grade at SMA Negeri 9 Pinrang. The study used pre- and post-tests to collect data on vocabulary achievement and short stories. Results showed that using short stories to teach vocabulary significantly improved students' vocabulary skills, with a mean post-test score of 86.89. This supports the alternative hypothesis (H1) and rejects the null hypothesis (Ho).

The three researchers above have found that, the use of learning media such as short stories can improve students' vocabulary. The method they used in their studies

was the classroom action research. It is the same with this study. But what distinguishes between this study and theirs is in the way the data were analyzed and discussed.

## **METHOD**

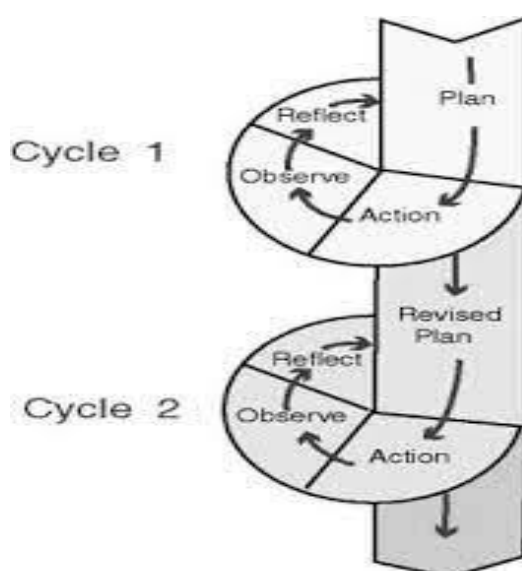
This research was a quantitative research that applied Classroom Action Research (CAR). Short story was utilized as a technique to improve vocabulary needed in the Classroom Action Research design.

Suhirman (2021) states that action research was a term which refer to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it was you would like it to be. Panhwa (2021) states that action research was only a form of self-reflective inquiry made by involving in a social situation with the purpose to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices were carried out.

The model of action research that civilized in this research was the model made by Kemmis and Mc Taggart Burns (2022). According to the model, the application of the classroom action research comprise in four ways at the following:

1. Identifying problems and planning the action
2. Applying the action
3. Observing the action
4. Reflecting the result of the observation

The measures in action research (planning, action, observation and reflection) were making in each cycle. Cycles were done depending on the issues need to solve. The following figure is the model of action research as suggested by Situmorang in his research think by Situmorang (2022).



**Figure 1. The Model of Action Research**

### **Participants**

#### Population and sample

The populations of this research were students of SMP Satap Negeri Nian especially the second grade student that consisted of 50 students. In taking the sample, the researcher applied random sampling technique. The sample in this research was class B of the second grade students of SMP Satap Negeri Nian that consisted of 20 students.

### **Instrument**

The instruments used to collect the data was a test. The researchers gave the students for the first meeting and at the end of the cycle. The test was same, the students read the story and after that the students have to answer the questions that the researchers give to them. Each test that the researchers applied 20 questions (10 questions were to fill in the blanks spaces of the story, 5 questions were in form of matching of the words and 5 questions describing or retelling the picture).

### **Procedures of Data Collections**

There were some phases of Classroom Action Research involved in this study. It covered planning, action, observation, and reflection (Situmorang, 2022).

#### a. Preliminary Observation

The researchers accompanied the English teacher going to class to observe the teaching and learning process. The researchers found that the teaching learning process in SMP Satap Negeri Nian especially for vocabulary was not effective because the technique in teaching process was monotonous. It was safe to say that students got bored in class. Moreover, the students had low motivation to get involved in English class. They lost their enthusiasm. Most students appeared less self-confidence.

In addition, the researchers tried to get information based on the interview with one of English teachers and also two of students at eight grades in SMP Satap Negeri Nian. They found it hard to get along with the class. In this section, the researchers tried to find a lot of real information through interview with English teachers and students. Based on the interview with the students, it proved that the students got obstacles to learn English. To convince the researchers, the researchers compiled any authentic documents, such as students' file of scores, students' work, and so forth. Having checked all those files, the researchers noticed the exact weakness of students' low grades in English especially vocabulary.

#### b. Planning

The following points were the specification of the planning of first cycle:

- 1) Conducting the cycle in three meetings.
- 2) Administrating the vocabulary learning process according to lesson plan
- 3) Conducting test in order to know the students' basic ability in master vocabulary
- 4) Preparing material for vocabulary mastery

- 5) Conducting a test of vocabulary mastery by using short story at the end of the cycle
- 6) Preparing the instrument for collecting data; 20 questions consisted of 10 questions of filling in the blank, 5 questions of matching the words and 5 questions of retelling the picture.

c. Action

In this step, the students were taught how to comprehend vocabulary mastery by using short story.

d. Observation

The observation conducted to all the process and atmosphere of vocabulary mastery and learning process. The researcher wanted to find out the overall condition occur during the instruction.

e. Reflection

Reflections had evaluative aspect to effect of spacious issues and suggest in handling it. The researchers took the feedback of this vocabulary mastery and learning process from the result of the observation, the problem that exist, and the cause of problem.

f. Test

The test in this research given before and after the treatment. It aimed to measure current situation of students' vocabulary mastery. In this research, the test was in the form of fill the blanks, matching the words, and describing or retelling the picture

**Techniques of Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, a formula suggest by Sabrani (in Seran, 2020) was applied. A statistical technique was employed to analyze the data. The first step of the analysis was tabulating the students' test. Then, the formula was used to calculate the number of students who attain lower scores to the higher score of the given test. The formula to count the percentage was as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total Score Achieved}}{\text{Total Question}} \times 100\%$$

By utilizing the formula above, the percentage for every type of test could be clearly determined. The average of the students' score in comprehending and mastering vocabulary was obtained by using the formula. After getting the percentage achieved by the students, their degrees of competence were determined by using the criteria suggested by Sabrani (in Seran, 2020) as given below:

**Table 1. The students' predicate score**

<b>Rank e of score</b>	<b>percentage (%)</b>
Excellent	76 - 100
Good	56 - 75
Fair	40 - 55

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **FINDINGS**

The Implementation of CAR of this study had been done in one cycle. In the process of teaching and learning vocabulary by using short story, it was done through three steps (Situmorang, 2022). These three steps included finding new words, determining the meaning of words, and comprehending the meaning of each sentence. The research findings divided in two types, as follows:

#### Situation of the Implementation

Based on the situation of the implementation of CAR in the 8th grade of SMP Satap Negeri Nian, the research was divided into two steps, based on the situation of preliminary study and cycle 1. The situation of the implementation, as follows:

#### 1. Situation of preliminary study

In the implementation of the Short story to improve students' vocabulary mastery at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of SMP Satap Negeri Nian, there were some weaknesses and problems in learning process. Firstly, it was found that some students had lack of vocabulary, but they did not have dictionary to support their learning. Secondly, the students had lack of motivation to learn English. Some of students did not participate effectively in learning English. They did not put much attention to the teacher (.Seran, 2020); (Humaida, 2012).

It was seen that the researcher gave text of short story to each students' and instruction to read and comprehend the story, and many of them found trouble to comprehend the story. It was because they had less vocabulary and they were not aware that vocabulary is important to their English learning. The researchers walked around the class and asked about the difficulties to ensure their problems.

In the end of the lesson, there were several students finished the assignment in group. In this cycle there was no positive effect in conducting short story as media, and the students' involvement in the lesson was poor.

#### 2. Situation of cycle 1

Based on the accomplishment of preliminary study, the researcher and the collaborator teacher considered that students' ability could increase. It proved that, in the implementation of cycle 1, there was some improvement.

Firstly, in terms of classroom condition and the students' awareness to learning English, it showed significant progress. It could be seen from the classroom condition in teaching and learning process was changed. So far it was different from the previous ones, the classroom was unconditional. In the preliminary session, several students made noisy also walked around the class, and had low responses to learning English.



But, in this cycle, the students' awareness to take part in learning English changed. The classroom was quiet and the students appeared to be ready to follow the class.

Secondly, in terms of students' progress in learning vocabulary using short story, it increased than it was in the preliminary study. It could be seen that in the preliminary study, students had lack of vocabulary and found difficulties to comprehend each sentence of the short story. Based on this cycle, the students' vocabulary mastery showed gradually increased. It was seen when the researcher gave instruction to some of students to determine the meaning of each sentence in front of class, the students could determine the meaning of each sentence correctly. The students' vocabulary mastery gradually increased than the previous one. It was also seen that the researcher gave them randomly questions to determine the meanings, and they were able to do it. In the end of lesson, the researcher chose two of the students to determine the meanings of whole text, and they were able to finish it.

As the conclusion, the vocabulary mastery of the 8th grade students' of SMP Satap Negeri Nian increased than the preliminary study. The data from the preliminary study and test cycle 1 are shown in the table bellow:

**Table 2. The students' score in preliminary study**

NO.	Score		Percentage (%)
	Right	Wrong	
1	8	12	40
2	7	13	35
3	10	10	50
4	11	11	55
5	10	10	50
6	7	13	35
7	8	12	40
8	9	11	45
9	10	10	50
10	11	9	55
11	10	10	50
12	13	7	65
13	11	9	55
14	10	10	50
15	11	9	55
16	10	10	50
17	9	11	45
18	8	12	40
19	9	11	45
20	10	10	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>960</b>



<b>Average</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>48</b>
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As illustrated in the table above, the average score of students' prior vocabulary mastery before applying the short story was fair. It was shown that the students' vocabulary mastery in preliminary test was low, because most of the students got fair score.

**Table 3. The students' score in cycle 1's test**

NO.	Score		Percentage (%)
	Right	Wrong	
1	16	4	80
2	15	5	75
3	15	5	75
4	14	6	70
5	17	3	85
6	17	3	85
7	16	4	80
8	14	6	70
9	15	5	75
10	13	7	65
11	15	5	75
12	16	4	80
13	16	4	80
14	15	5	75
15	13	7	65
16	15	5	75
17	15	5	75
18	16	4	80
19	16	4	80
20	15	5	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1520</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>76</b>

As the conclusions of this cycle, the researchers found that the students' vocabulary mastery got increased than the previous one. It was proved from their score of cycle 1's test result that the average increased significantly. The using of short story gave positive effect to improve the students' vocabulary mastery.



Based on the research findings, it showed that the comparison of the average score of the test got improved. Based on the minimum completion of criteria of the subject. The results average of the tests shows good improvements, namely from 48% in the Preliminary study to 76% in the test of cycle 1.

Based on the analysis of students' mean score of test and observation result in the all cycle. The researchers found some comparison based on the preliminary study and cycle 1's test. The comparison as follows:

1. Preliminary study

Based on the average score of pre-test, the students' got score 48%. It happened because, the first, a few students had lack of vocabulary but they didn't bring own dictionary to help their learning activities, so they had a trouble to pass the test. The second, the students' lack of motivation in learning English caused the class condition was noisy (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016).. So, based on problem above, the students' could not fully participate in learning process.

2. Cycle 1's test

Based on the implementation of Cycle 1, the students' progress significantly increased. It could be seen that the students' average score of the test cycle 1 obtained score better than the test in preliminary study. In the cycle 1's test, students' average score was 76%. It's too far than the previous one's, that just got 48%. It's also the effect of change of length of short story and students' learning motivation. Changing the length of short story is very influential to improving students' development in learning vocabulary. If the short story is too length, it cause students get bored to learn. It's because the students would spend more time to comprehend the whole story. The shorter of short story was the better vocabulary mastery achieved.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **How short story could improve the students' vocabulary**

The interpretation of the results is covered in this section. This study's main goal was to determine whether or not short stories could help the second-graders at SMP Satap Negeri Nian expand their vocabulary. Short stories could help students' vocabulary mastery, according to data gathered through vocabulary exams. There are plausible explanations for the research findings.

First, the researchers administered a test to gauge the students' prior vocabulary knowledge before the teaching and learning process. The test results revealed that the students lacked vocabulary. They had to reach a minimum grade of 56 based on the data analysis criteria. In fact, just one student was able to reach a good score, according to the preliminary test results. According to the results of the second test, students had a poor score, while 17 students obtained a decent score. There were no students who obtained a good, or very good grade. This suggested that the students had trouble in understanding word meanings, which made it

challenging for them to respond to the questions. Additionally, the children struggled to form proper sentences. They were unable to correctly spell and pronounce the word as well as use the proper tenses in accordance with the test's instructions. In order to accomplish the goals of this research, the researchers treated the issue that arose following the first test. The treatments increased the students' vocabulary by using short stories. According to Kareem (2021), English vocabulary is a significant topic that merits effort and research.

The students discovered that understanding the terms' meanings and their spelling was simple. It denoted that the students had a solid understanding of the language, making it easier for them to recall and comprehend new vocabulary during treatments. The researchers can draw the conclusion that some of the terms in the first test were challenging to comprehend and were spoken incorrectly. However, after receiving treatment, some of the terms were simple for them to spell and pronounce because they had been aware of their meanings.

Second, the students had trouble identifying made-sentences. The majority of students failed to correctly complete the test. They lacked sentence structure knowledge. In order to address the issue, researchers taught them how to construct sentences as part of the treatments process. Thus, the students were able to construct proper sentences during the last test.

**The problems were encountered in mastering vocabulary by using short story.** The followings are problems were encountered by students in mastering vocabulary.

First, students lacked vocabulary. Inadequate vocabulary could cause students difficulties in understanding learning material, as well as students have difficulties in test and evaluations because students were unable to express or describe the intent of the text they read (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

The second, students lacked motivation or interest in English. Students did not have interest in English because of lack of relevance. Students felt that English is a confusing language because it is not relevant to the language used in everyday life. This made it difficult for them to learn English. Besides that, students lacked confidence in using English and were afraid of making mistakes and they felt that their abilities are not good enough. The other problem was that students did not want to learn English because experiences had made them discouraged, such as poor grades and unconstructive criticism.

Lastly, misuse of spelling and pronunciation. Reasons for misuse of spelling and pronunciation include: lack of understanding of spelling rules. Students did not comprehend well the rules of spelling in English. English has many exceptions and complex patterns. This made it difficult for students to remember and apply the correct spelling rules (Almurashi & Sultan, 2023).. Then the influence of the mother tongue. Students who tended to apply the rules and sounds they use in their mother tongue when writing and speaking English result in spelling misuse and incorrect pronunciation. In addition, students also had less practices and consolidation in spelling and pronunciation as well as distrust and fear of making mistakes. This made them feel insecure about using English correctly. This fear portrayed them as a lack of practice and honing of their correct spelling and pronunciation skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researchers concluded that based on research on improving vocabulary by using short story of the second grade students' in SMP Satap Negeri Nian, short story can significantly improve vocabulary mastery in preliminary test with an average score of 48% and in cycle 1's test with an average score of 76%. It is clear from the data of preliminary test and cycle 1's test that using short story can help improve students' significant vocabulary mastery. In addition, the implementation of short story can increase students' interest and motivation.

The problems were encountered in mastering vocabulary using short story of the second grade students in SMP Satap Negeri Nian such as lack of vocabulary and the students' misuse of spelling and pronunciation. They didn't have idea to express the short story, difficulty in retention and lacks of active practices, and the lack of interest in English.

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