



## An Analysis of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Vocabulary Teaching at Junior High Schools Gunuang Omeh

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### Abstract

This research aimed to analyze of teacher beliefs and practices in vocabulary teaching at Junior High Schools Gunuang Omeh. This research used Graves theory with which teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary are seen, including, providing rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words explicitly, teaching word-learning strategies, and fostering word consciousness. This research employed qualitative approach. The participants of this study were four English teachers. The instruments of this research were interviews and observations. The result of this research shows that teachers generally hold similar beliefs in four of indicators, except in one aspect. One teacher believes that teachers should teach definition of new words directly to students while others prefer to teach them implicitly. The research also found that in certain aspect, teachers' beliefs and practices are not aligned. Only two teachers taught vocabulary used various kinds of game. The researcher suggest that teacher should improve the quality of theirs by using games to teach vocabulary. This research can be addition reference for the same field.

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is often associated with constructing an excellent sentence to speak and excellent sentence to write. Many people think that achieving fluency and effective communication in the language they are acquiring is their primary goal. Nevertheless, the significance of prioritizing the expansion and enhancement of one's language vocabulary often escapes their thoughts. However, mastering an extensive lexicon is the fundamental means for crafting sentences and ultimately attaining fluent speech. Vocabulary is the basis for developing the ability to learn a foreign language, learning a foreign language will be difficult if do not learn the vocabulary of that language, vocabulary is an integral part of language, vocabulary is the center of communicative competence (Rohmatillah, 2017)

Vocabulary is all the words know or use in a specific language Hornby (2006). According to Richards & Renadya (2002), the ability to use vocabulary effectively is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency that serves as the foundation for learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. According to Hatch & Brown (1995), Vocabulary refers to a compilation of words used in a given language, which are utilized by speakers of that language. It can either be in the form of a list or a set of terms. Based on the provided definition, vocabulary encompasses all the words employed by individuals to communicate and those they are acquainted with within a language. It is the paramount resource for grasping sentence structure and other language proficiencies.

Having a strong vocabulary is essential for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it allows individuals to express themselves better in writing. A good vocabulary is a prerequisite for good writing. Secondly, a strong vocabulary is often associated with communication skill. Having a good vocabulary allows individuals to express themselves more effectively. They are able to use the right words in the right context, making their message clearer and more precise. Thirdly, a strong vocabulary can be beneficial is improves confidence. Having a good vocabulary can boost an individual's confidence in their ability to communicate effectively. Lastly, a solid vocabulary can also help build a strong personal brand. Communicating one's ideas, thoughts, and opinions effectively helps one stand out in a crowded field and helps build credibility and trust with others.

There are many methods for educators in schools to employ when teaching vocabulary to their students, such as using games, song, pictures, cognates, and so on. The research conducted by Saeed & Neyadi (2007), the evidence demonstrates that playing games offers learners with understandable input as they interact in a group, providing a chance for them to clarify the meanings of words in context. The use of song in teaching vocabulary can be found in the research conducted by Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, Singh, Azman, & Souriyavongsa (2011).The result of their research shows that the experimental group experienced the experimental group showed a notable advancement in their proficiency in vocabulary when compared to the control group. The next way to teach vocabulary is through pictures. The research carried out by Aldhonita (2015) indicates that utilizing pictures is a thrilling approach to assist pupils in comprehending the significance of words, as well as to improve their pronunciation and spelling skills. Furthermore, vocabulary can be taught using cognates. The research conducted by Tonzar, Lotto, & Job (2009), shares the study showed that using pictures to learn L2 words was more effective than using words alone, but the results depended on cognate status and age of learning. Cognates were found to aid in the acquisition of L2 words. However, this effect diminished with increased exposure to the language. Additionally, the effectiveness of the word-based method was enhanced for cognate words in older children.

Regardless of the availability of various methods that teachers might employ in teaching vocabulary, a wide range of studies found that numerous students still experience vocabulary shortage and or get problems in making use of the vocabulary they have already acquired. The research conducted by Nursyamsiah (2021) at SMP Negeri 3 Agrabinta Cianjur, found that vocabulary mastery was still low. This is based on the results of students' pre-cycle tests and post tests on family material, out of 22

students, only 2 students scored above the KKM (63) and 20 students scored below the KKM. Furthermore, numerous students still experience vocabulary shortage, the research conducted by Zainuddin (2021) show that students at Cokroaminoto Middle School still lacked an understanding of English vocabulary. This causes students to be unable to respond properly and correctly when the teacher gives stimulus questions at the beginning of learning. Besides that, the students' ignorance in using the dictionary to look up the meaning of words is also a causal factor so that every word they want to know is dominated by asking directly to the teacher. Research conducted by Anggraeni (2021) found that class VII students of SMP Negeri 8 Penajam Paser Utara had difficulties in mastering vocabulary and reading vocabulary. This occurs because English is a foreign language for students, characterized by structures and formats distinct from their native tongue and the language they use daily. Consequently, students might need help with effectively applying the vocabulary they have acquired. The next research conducted by Dewati (2020) at SMPN 1 Karangobar, tell that learners interest in participating in learning English is still lacking so that it affects the level of mastery of English vocabulary.

There might be some questions appear related to the above phenomena, like how is vocabulary actually taught in the class?; why do teachers prefer that way?; how much do the teachers know about the methods?; or, if the teachers have sufficient knowledge about the methods, are there any attempts done to apply them in the classroom?. The answers to these questions might have a link to what teachers believe to be true in their teaching.

Based on the research previous experiences in the classroom, teacher's beliefs and practices do not align in the classroom, it can lead to a number of challenges and issues. For example, a teacher may believe that students learn best through hands-on, experiential activities, but may not implement such activities in the classroom due to time constraints or a lack of resources. This can result in a mismatch between the teacher's beliefs and the actual classroom practices. Another example could be when a teacher believes in a student-centered approach to learning, where the focus is on individualized instruction and personalized learning, but may implement a more traditional, teacher-centered approach in the classroom. This can lead to frustration and disengagement among students who may feel that their needs and interests are not being met. It is important for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and practices and to work towards aligning the two in order to create a more effective and engaging learning environment for their students. This may involve professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and a willingness to experiment with new strategies and approaches. By doing so, teachers can better meet the diverse needs of their students and help them achieve their full potential.

Unlike the previous ones, viewing beliefs on teaching vocabulary and teaching experience in general, this research explored teachers' beliefs and practice in four aspects, including providing rich and varied language experiences, fostering word consciousness, teaching individual words explicitly, and teaching word-learning strategies. The four aspects are the essential components of vocabulary teaching proposed by Graves (2006). The researcher conducted this research at SMP N 01 Gunuang Omeh, and SMP N 02 Gunuang Omeh. The researcher chose to observe teacher beliefs and teaching practices at both SMP N 01 Gunuang Omeh and SMP 2

Gunuang Omeh. During teaching practice at SMA N 01 Gunuang Omeh, the researcher observed that a significant number of students struggled with vocabulary usage and had limited vocabulary skills. The researcher found that most SMA 01 Gunuang Omeh students came from SMP N 01 Gunuang Omeh and SMP N 02 Gunuang Omeh. The researcher wants to see teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching English, especially in teaching vocabulary at SMP N 01 Gunuang Omeh and SMP N 02 Gunuang Omeh.

**METHOD**

This is a qualitative research. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research pertains to investigations aimed at comprehending the phenomena encountered by research participants, encompassing aspects like behaviour, perception, motivation, and action from a holistic perspective. This approach relies on descriptive language and words within an exceptionally authentic setting, employing diverse natural methods. To gather case data, the researcher conducts interviews, observation class pertaining to the teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary. The data from this research includes teacher beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary. The data source from this research are English teachers in SMPN 1 Gunuang Omeh and English teachers in SMPN 2 Gunuang Omeh. The participants in this research were four English Teachers.

**Table 1** Place of the Research

No	School	Total of Teacher
1	SMPN 01 Gunuang Omeh	2
2	SMPN 02 Gunuang Omeh	2
Total		4

The instrument used in this research are interview guideline and observation sheet. According to Creswell (2007), say that interviews are a valuable method for gaining in-depth information from individuals about their experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. Interviews conducted with teachers at Junior High School Gunuang Omeh to gather information about their beliefs and practices in vocabulary teaching. The researcher used *Bahasa Indonesia* to do the structured interview because the teachers felt more comfortable to pose their thoughts. The interview structured of the study was adopted in Graves (2006), there are four essential components of vocabulary instruction listed below.

1. Providing rich and varied language experiences
2. Teaching individual words explicitly
3. Teaching word-learning strategies
4. Fostering word consciousness

Observations conducted in the classroom to gather information about how vocabulary is taught at Junior High School Gunuang Omeh. Data collected from both interviews and observations can provide valuable insights into the beliefs and practices of teachers in vocabulary teaching at Junior High School Gunuang Omeh.

This research instrument used a content validity approach. The interview guidelines and observations sheet of this research were validated by one of lecturers in English Department, Language and Art Faculty, Universitas Negeri Padang.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Finding

#### 1. What are the teachers' beliefs in teaching vocabulary?

Teachers' beliefs in this research are seen from their views on providing rich and varied language experiences, fostering word consciousness, teaching individual words explicitly, and teaching word-learning strategies

##### a. Providing rich and varied language experiences

*Table 2 Providing rich and Varied Language Experiences*

No	Teacher Beliefs	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
1.	English teachers should motivate students to develop vocabulary	√	√	√	√
2.	English teachers should facilitate students to practice new vocabulary they have learned through various activities	√	√	√	√
3.	Vocabulary learning should be done in integration with other skills, such as speaking, reading, writing or listening	√	√	√	√

The four respondents shared the same perspectives on providing rich and varied language in the classroom. The respondent teacher B believed that teachers should motivate their students to develop vocabulary. This respondent claimed that to increase students' vocabulary, teachers should encourage students to actively read and write in English. According to teacher B, the more students do these activities, the more students' vocabulary will increase, and their ability to write will also improve.

*“To motivate students to increase their vocabulary is to encourage students to be active in reading and writing. This routine reading activity will increase students' vocabulary, and students will be able to write the vocabulary” (Teacher B)*

The excerpt above was evidence of her belief that teachers act as motivators for students to increase their vocabulary. Respondent also added that to increase student's vocabulary, the teacher must also facilitate students in practicing the vocabulary they have learned in class. This respondent claimed that the activity of practicing this vocabulary in class would make it easier for students to use the vocabulary they were learning. Teacher B said that:

*“It is essential to facilitate students to practice the vocabulary learned. Students will quickly understand how to use the vocabulary appropriately and relevantly.”*

From the vignette above, Teacher B claimed the teachers had to facilitate students in practicing vocabulary. Students are expected to actively practice the vocabulary they have learned because this activity is integrated with other skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This respondent claimed that teaching vocabulary must be integrated with other abilities simplify it for students to use vocabulary in various situations.

*“It should be integrated with other skills because it will develop students' ability to use the correct vocabulary in different situations and accelerate learning English as a whole” (Teacher B)*

**b. Fostering word consciousness**

*Table 3 Fostering Word Consciousness*

No	Teacher Beliefs	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
1.	Teachers should use various kinds of games, such as word games, tongue twisters, or jokes, or marking important words in the text in teaching vocabulary.	√	√	√	√

The four respondents shared the same perspectives on fostering word consciousness. All of the respondents believed that using games to teach vocabulary can help students feel more at ease during classroom learning and prevent them from becoming quickly bored while acquiring new words.

*“Using learning media such as games makes students' comfort with classroom learning and prevents English lessons from becoming*

*monotonous, especially since they're encountering the language for the first time in junior high school.” (Teacher A)*

Teacher A statement is also supported by Teacher B opinion that using games will make the class condition more active and fun for students. Teacher B said that:

*“Because using games makes the class condition more active and fun for students, thereby making the learning process more effective; students will easily understand the material presented.”*

**c. Teaching individual words explicitly**

*Table 4 Teaching Individual Words Explicitly*

No	Teacher Beliefs	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
1.	Teacher should teach the definition of each new word	X	X	√	X
2.	Teacher should introduce students to how the vocabulary is used in different contexts	√	√	√	√

The four respondents shared different perspectives on teaching individual words explicitly. The respondent teacher C believed that the teacher should teach the definition of each new word because it makes it easier for students to know the definition of each new vocabulary learned in class.

*“Teaching each meaning of the vocabulary will simplify the process for students to understand the vocabulary meanings..” (Teacher C)*

Teacher C statement is not in line with other teachers' opinions because most other teachers do not teach the definition of each new word learned. Teacher D claimed that there was no need to teach students the definition of each new vocabulary, students could find the definition of each vocabulary in the dictionary, but if students had difficulty finding the definition, then Teacher D would give a clue. This statement is in line with teacher B opinion that teaching the definition of each new vocabulary to students directly will make students easily forget the vocabulary.

*Teacher D: .....” students the option to look up the meanings of the vocabulary in a dictionary.; if students experience difficulties, then I will tell them what the meaning of the vocabulary means.”*

Teacher B : ..... ” , *if the teacher always gives students the meaning of each new vocabulary. It will make the vocabulary easy for students to forget. If the students forget, they will ask the teacher again.*”

Unlike Teacher D and B, Teacher C argued that teaching vocabulary should be in various contexts, simplifying the vocabulary will aid students in comprehension and grasping its diverse applications in various contexts. She said that:

*“It is necessary (to teach vocabulary in different context) this can make it easier for students to understand the vocabulary from various contexts”*

**d. Teaching word-learning strategies**

*Table 5 Teaching Word-Learning Strategies*

No	Teacher Beliefs	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
1.	Teaches should teach students various strategies in learning vocabulary	√	√	√	√

The four respondents shared the same perspectives on teaching word-learning strategies. All of the teachers claimed that teaching English at the junior high school level is quite difficult; therefore, it requires a strategy for teaching vocabularies. Teacher A said that:

*” Teachers need to teach vocabulary with lots of strategies; we all know that English is a subject that is quite difficult for junior high school students, and because of that, teachers have to think of strategies to increase their students' vocabulary”*

Based on the data description above, it is found that the four teachers share similar beliefs that in teaching vocabulary, teacher need to inspire students to expand their vocabulary. English teachers should create opportunities for students to engage in practical exercises, allowing them to apply recently acquired vocabulary through diverse activities. Moreover, vocabulary acquisition must be seamlessly integrated with other essential language skills, including speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

In addition, the teacher believe that vocabulary should be taught using games to make students not bored in learning. Furthermore, vocabulary should be taught in different contexts so that students can easily understand the



vocabulary. On the other hand, the English teacher believe that teaches vocabulary should be taught using various strategies.

Even though the four teachers hold similar beliefs in most of the aspect, one of them shares different view in them of teaching new vocabulary. This teacher C believes that teachers should directly give the definition of new words to students. She thinks that teaches each definition of the vocabulary will make it easier for students to know the meaning of the vocabulary. Meanwhile, the other three teachers not see that providing words definition directly helps student to learn.

In general, it can be concluded that only one teacher has beliefs according to teacher beliefs in Graves (2006). The other three teachers have different views on one indicator teaching the definition of each new vocabulary

## 2. How Do the Teachers Practice Their Beliefs in Teaching Vocabulary?

Like the way the research sees teachers' beliefs, how they practice their beliefs is also seen from the aspect of providing rich and varied language experiences, fostering word consciousness, teaching individual words explicitly, and teaching word-learning strategies.

In addition, this research explored the beliefs that the respondents do not implement and their explanations about their decision not to implement these beliefs. The following table presents the discrepancy between the respondents' stated beliefs and their same classroom.

*Table 6 Teacher Beliefs and Teacher Practices*

No	Teacher Beliefs				Teacher Practices			
1.	Teachers should motivate students to develop vocabulary							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2.	English teachers should facilitate students to practice new vocabulary they have learned through various activities							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
3.	Vocabulary learning should be done integration with other skills, such as speaking, reading, writing or listening							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4.	Teachers should use various kinds of games, such as word games, tongue twisters, or jokes, or marking important words in the text in teaching vocabulary.							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	X	√	X	√

5.	Teacher should teach the definition of each new word							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	X	X	√	X	X	X	√	X
6.	Teacher should introduce students to how the vocabulary is used in different contexts							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
7.	Teaches should teach students various strategies in learning vocabulary							
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

The table presents the alignment between teacher beliefs and classroom practices, along with disparities identified by researchers between these beliefs and practices in the actual classroom observed. Some respondents act differently from their beliefs regarding teaching vocabulary at school. All respondents believed that teaching vocabulary should use various kinds of games, such as word games, tongue twisters, or jokes, or marking important words in the text in teaching vocabulary. In spite of that, only two teachers applied games in the class when teaching language.

However, the discovery learning mentioned earlier in the interview section wasn't observed by the researcher in the actual classrooms. The upcoming paragraphs will provide evidence and discuss the respondents' perspectives..

Teacher A : *Today, we will learn the descriptive text. Does anyone know what descriptive text is?*

Students : *No, sir*

Teacher A : *Have you ever told anyone about the cat?*

Students : *Yes, we have, sir*

Teacher A : *How do you tell it?*

Student : *Tell about what the characteristics, sir.*

Teacher A continues teaching descriptive text by explaining the definition of descriptive text. By giving examples, then asking students to read the text in turn, then continued by doing exercises given by the teacher. After doing the practice, the English lessons have run out.

The conversation above is one of the observation excerpts in teacher A's observation class. In the post-observation interview, the researcher asked the respondent about the discrepancy. Teacher A said that:

*“Not all material is suitable for using game media in teaching it. In addition, the time for teaching is also limited to only 90 minutes. Next, if you want to use games in class, playing games in one meeting is not*

*enough because this junior high school student still has limited vocabulary."*

Teacher B on the other hand, had used games to teach vocabulary in class. The game used is a knock-knock joke, even though it does not go well, teacher B once used a knock-knock joke when teaching vocabulary.

Teacher B : *Knock Knock*  
 Students : *Hah?*  
 Teacher B : *Knock Knock*  
 Students : *Why, mam?*  
 Teacher B : *Have you heard knock-knock jokes before?*  
 Students : *No, mam*  
 Teacher B : *Are you serious? Ok, I want to explain how to play a knock-knock joke.*  
 Students : *Okay mam*

Teacher B explained that playing games knock-knock jokes in class requires an extensive vocabulary. In addition, students must also have good speaking skills to continue knock-knock jokes.

Teacher D on the other hand, used a game to mark important words in the text when teaching vocabulary in class. Teacher D used LCD projector in teaching. The descriptive text displayed on the projector screen is recorded by students and marking important words in the text in their notebooks.

Teacher D : *Please write down the example of a descriptive text first, then try to mark important words in the text. For this week's important word is an adjective*  
 Students : *Okay mam*

From the quotation above, it can be seen that what the teacher believes and what they practice in the classroom. Teacher D during the interview, explained that for the junior high school level, there were few games that could be used because the students still needed more vocabulary.

Based on the data obtained from the observation, the researcher found that teachers practice their beliefs. The teachers motivate students to increase their vocabulary continually. Teacher C praises students when they successfully practice a vocabulary to motivate students in learning. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to practice vocabulary that has been studied. Teacher D gives students time to practice vocabulary they have studied with their peers. The teacher gives students the facility to practice the vocabulary that has been taught, but in the process of practising this, there is still no continuation, this practice activity is only limited to practising with peers, and this activity has no follow-up. Furthermore, in teaching vocabulary, all teachers do this integrated with other abilities, such as reading, speaking, writing, and listening.

In addition, teachers practice their beliefs in teaching vocabulary. The teacher teaches vocabulary in various contexts. Teacher A teaches vocabulary with lots of relevant examples to make students more aware of the use of this vocabulary in sentences. Furthermore, the teacher in teaching vocabulary uses various strategies for teaching. All teachers have their strategy for teaching vocabulary to students. Teacher C has a strategy of using applications available on the PlayStore and AppStore to teach vocabulary to students.

There is a difference between teacher beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary at Junior High Schools Gunuang Omeh. The difference is that all the teachers believe using games to teach vocabulary is fun, but the fact is that when observing in class, there are only two teachers who use games in class. Teaching vocabulary using games in class is not implemented because classroom management still needs to improve.

To sum up, it can be said that most of the teacher's beliefs and practices in vocabulary teaching at SMP N 01 Gunuang Omeh and SMP N 02 Gunuang Omeh are in line. The teacher teaches in the classroom according to his understanding. Only one belief is outside practice, namely teaching vocabulary using games. Teaching vocabulary using games was only done by two teachers.

## B. Discussion

Based on the findings above, the researchers found that not all beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary are in line. The research found that from interviews, there is difference in beliefs among teachers who teach at junior high school Gunuang Omeh. The difference is in the teaching definition of each new word. Only one teacher taught the definition of each new word, and three other teachers did not teach it.

In addition, the researcher found that there is an inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practice teaching vocabulary. All teacher believes that teaching vocabulary using games, all teachers believe teaching vocabulary using games can help students easily understand vocabulary, but in practice, only two teachers use games in teaching in the classroom.

One teacher said the difference between beliefs and practices in the classroom was due to the lack of classroom management. Classroom management involves the methods used to address students' inappropriate behavior within a classroom context. According to Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly (2011) classroom management is a compilation of teaching techniques educators apply in classroom environments involving all students. Its primary objectives are to foster appropriate behavior, prevent misconduct, and mitigate inappropriate behavior. The issue of classroom management that could lead to the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practice was also mentioned in a study conducted by Saputra & Rodliyah (2018) showing the gap between the teachers' beliefs and classroom practices are called incongruence, mismatch, inconsistency, and discrepancy. Almost every aspect of this investigation found mismatches indicating a gap between their beliefs and actual practices.

In addition to classroom management conditions and situations of students in class might also cause practices unaligned with the beliefs held. This similar to what was found by Hidayah (2019), affirming that the teacher cannot apply their belief or the curriculum in total because the situation and condition of the student, and school facilities are sometimes not supported.

The results of this study are the same as previous research conducted by Hidayah (2019) and Saputra, Suherdi, & Rodliyah (2020), stating teachers' beliefs and practices are influenced by the lack of classroom management. This research also found that teachers' beliefs and practice is influenced by the curriculum demands that all materials must be completed before the Final Examination.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, the researcher concluded that there is a difference in beliefs among teachers teaching vocabulary at Junior High School Gunuang Omeh. One of the teachers believes that it is essential to teach the meaning of each new word explicitly, while the rest think that it is worth it to let students figure out the meaning by themselves. In addition, the researcher also found that there is a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices in terms of applying games during teaching. In addition, the researcher also found that there is a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices in terms of applying games during teaching. All teachers believe that teaching vocabulary using games can help students easily understand vocabulary, but in practice, only two teachers use games in the classroom. The disparity is generated from two factors, namely classroom management and time constraint.

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