



## **INCREASING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY BY USING CONCEPT DEFINITION MAP STRATEGY THROUGH READING ACTIVITY TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses about one of strategies in teaching English vocabulary; that is through *Concept Definition Map*. Concept Definition Map is an instructional strategy which used to teach the students about the concept of a keyword that they knew before. This strategy helps the students to find a new concept of the word by filling out some instructions in accordance with the graphic provided by the teacher. The students are asked to re-call their knowledge about the word until they find a new concept in more detail about it. This strategy is very suitable for learning vocabulary through reading activity; besides learn about a text, the students can also increase their knowledge deeply about the concept of words. Therefore, by implementing this strategy it is expected that the vocabulary knowledge of the students can grow easily.

**Key words:** vocabulary, concept definition map strategy, reading activity, junior high school students

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary knowledge is an important key in language learning; either in first or second language. Someone who wants to be able to communicate in certain languages, they must learn about its language vocabulary first; it is impossible to master a language without knowing its vocabulary.

Furthermore, vocabulary is the basic tool must be learned by the students before coming to learn the other skills. Vocabulary itself is a core component of language proficiency and becomes the foundation for how well the students listen, speak, read, and write. Without having vocabulary mastery, it is difficult for the students to convey the information which they want to express.

In Indonesia, English becomes one of the compulsory subjects taught in every level of education system; from elementary school up to university level. The writer focus here is English subject taught in junior high school. The teaching

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of English at junior high school includes all of the language competencies: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills have to be mastered by students in order to achieve the aims of teaching English at junior high school level.

Teachers in junior high schools seem have done several methods to improve their students about the vocabulary knowledge, but in fact it still not success yet. Based on writer's experience during field practice as an English student-teacher at SMP Negeri 29 Padang, many students do not understand a number of vocabularies; which leads them become difficult in other skills of English. As a result, they difficult to follow the teacher in learning process; such as they difficult to catch the information given by the teacher, they difficult to write some projects with their own idea, they unable to use English in spoken form and they difficult to understand the text in reading section.

Vocabulary knowledge also determines how well the students comprehend the text that they read. According to Fitriani and Isyam (2012: 246) To prepare students who are having good ability in communicating, the teacher should pay attention much in teaching vocabulary. Nevertheless, in reality the writer found that many of the students were still difficult in reading; they hard to understand word by word of the text, and they also have trouble to find the idea from the text. Those all problems caused by lack of vocabulary knowledge which makes the students do not understand the meaning of the words on the text. Additionally, the lack of vocabulary makes them become lazy to read the text given by the teacher.

Moreover, students' word knowledge is crucial and it is linking to reading comprehension. In order to understand a text, students need to know the meanings of individual words. Vocabulary knowledge also determines how well the students comprehend the text that they read. Nevertheless, in reality the writer find that many of the students are still difficult in reading; especially in understanding word by word of the text. They also have problem to find the idea from the text. Those all problems caused by lack of vocabulary knowledge which makes the students do not understand the meaning of the words on the text. Additionally, the lack of vocabulary makes them become lazy to read the text given by the teacher.

For instance, in teaching reading, teaching and learning process often monotonous, less variety, and less attractive, so the students became bored, not interested to read and also to learn. Besides that, the teachers only give the text to the students and then ask them to read it without giving any further explanation. Then, the students were asked to answer the questions based on the text. Another reason that makes difficult in reading is the teachers often do not pay attention much to the stages in teaching reading process, like pre-reading, whilst reading and post reading, whereas these stages are very important to be followed.

There are some theories about vocabulary explained by many experts. Rivers in Nunan (1991) argues that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will not be able to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Likewise Hornby (1995) stated that mastery means great knowledge about understanding of a particular thing. In

addition, Fries (1945) said: “We never separated from mastery of vocabulary, because whenever we think of language learning, we usually think of mastering the vocabulary or learning the word.” From these two experts, mastering a language means mastering its vocabulary knowledge.

Vocabulary knowledge is the main element in language acquisition; either in learning first or second language. Bauman (1991) said; words are tools we use to access our background knowledge, express ideas and learn about new concepts. Specifically, students’ word knowledge is crucial and it’s linking to reading comprehension. By having good word knowledge, it determines how well they comprehend the text that they read. Meanwhile many English teachers found that students are still lack of vocabulary. This kind of case is a serious obstacle for many students to learn English as a foreign language, because English is not their native language. Students’ lack of vocabulary is also impacting to other skills in English; not only in reading but also in listening, speaking and writing.

Another expert; Ur (1996) stated that vocabulary is the words teach in the foreign language. A language has number vocabularies. It is hard knowing those words without learning it. In other words, each person will acquire some vocabularies from learning the language. Another idea comes from Masheffel (1989), he said that learning a language is a mastery of the vocabulary in the language. By mastering vocabulary, people will be able to learn languages easily.

Similarly, A. S. Hornby (in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1990) explained that vocabulary is the total number of words (with rules for combining them) which make up a language. So, language is arranged by thousands of words and phrases. He added; vocabulary is a collection of words or phrases in language. It means vocabulary is not only words but also phrases in a language component which gives information or explanation.

Moreover, another definition of vocabulary stated by David L. Stepherd; he said vocabulary is one of the most significant aspects of language development. From his thought, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the thing that have important role in consideration of language development.

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Lado (1979) gives some steps in vocabulary learning, namely: (1) listening the words, (2) pronouncing the words, (3) understanding the meaning, (4) making illustration in the form of sentence, (5) doing practice in expressing the meaning, (6) pronouncing the words in loud voice, and (7) spelling the words. Based on those steps, the students supposed to be able to master vocabulary in listening the words, pronouncing the words and spelling the words.

According to Hatch and Brown (1995) vocabulary is a list or set of words particular language or a list or set of words individual speakers of language might use. Vocabulary is all the words in a language which has meaning that produced by human beings to express their mind. People use words in communication to convey meaning so that others can understand them.

Beck &McKewown (1991) stated that teaching vocabulary is not only teach a definition and translation of a language; but also how to make the students become understand more about the words that have been taught, its include the relation to the other words. Vocabulary instruction must include elaboration of definitions, discussion, and writing.

Reading skill is much influenced students in understanding the words. According to Nunan (2003) reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build a meaning. This statement means that the relationship between a text and the readers' background knowledge will determine the readers' comprehension. In this case the readers demand to have ability in combining ideas between their own background knowledge with information in the text to make connection and find the ideas of the text. Therefore the readers' background knowledge should be integrated with the text to create the meaning.

Teaching reading is usually uses as the way of teachers to guide the students in gaining the idea and information from the text or book. According to Brown (2004) there are three activities in teaching reading comprehension such as pre-reading activity, whilst reading activity, and post reading activity.

a. Pre-reading activity

This activity is designed to prepare the students for actual reading of the selected materials. In other words, the teacher helps the students to anticipate the text they will read. In pre-teaching activity, the teacher introduces the topic by brainstorming through media, graphic organizer, pictures, etc.

b. Whilst reading activity

This activity is the main activity in teaching learning process. In whilst reading activity, the teacher distributes the text to the students. Ask the students to read the text. After that the teacher will give explanation about the text, and ask the student to do assignment based on the text.

c. Post reading activity

It is an activity in teaching reading to comprehend the text. In post reading activity, the teacher asks the students about the text. Whether they have already comprehend the text well or not, also make summary about the text.

Furthermore, based on the implementation 2013's curriculum, there are three phases of teaching process in junior high school. They are Pre-teaching activity, Whilst-teaching activity and Post-teaching activity. In addition Whilst-teaching activity is divided into five steps: observing, questioning, experimenting, associating and communicating.

Related to the problems faced by the students about lack of vocabulary knowledge, the teacher should implement a strategy that could solve students' problem in learning process. The strategy chosen should appropriate with

curriculum and students' need. Among of number strategies that can be applied by the teacher in teaching vocabulary, concept definition map is one of them.

Concept definition map developed by Schwartz and Raphael (1985), it focuses on students' attention on the main components of a definition; the class or category, properties or characteristics, and illustrations or example. As a strategy, concept definition map is not only enriches students' understandings of a word or concept but also encourages them to integrate their personal knowledge into the definition.

Additionally, Susan D Lenski et al, assumed that a concept definition map trains students to place information in logical categories, to identify defining properties and characteristics, and to offer examples (and non-examples) of ideas. So that, this strategy is very useful for analyzing brief, but content-rich reading selections or vocabulary learning.

Another expert, Mary Lee Barton and Deborah L thought that concept definition map is a strategy for teaching students the meaning of key concepts. Concept definition maps are graphic organizers that help students understand the essential attributes, qualities, or characteristics of a word's meaning. Students must describe what the concept is, make comparisons/ relationships or, tell what it is like, and cite examples of it. According to them, concept mapping provides a structure for students to organize their understanding after they have completed an activity and/or read about a concept.

Moreover, Schwartz (1988) suggests for some situations, it is helpful to include comparisons on the map to help students come up with and evaluate their categories, properties, and illustrations. Hence, concept definition map strategy can also be illustrated as a valuable tool for vocabulary development; it is because this strategy requires the student to not only provide what the word is, but it also requires the students to provide descriptive words and its examples.

Hence, the goal of this strategy is to find new concept of the word being studied and in direct relationship to the known ones. As a strategy, it is not only enriches students' understanding of a word or concept but also encourages them to integrate their personal knowledge into the definition. It also gives students an opportunity to explain their understanding and to elaborate the word being studied by citing t examples also ideas from their own experiences. So, it can be used to increase students' vocabulary mastery especially in reading skill.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

In junior high school curriculum there has no specific time for teaching vocabulary; in other word vocabulary teaching and learning is integrated with other English skills. Likewise, reading is one of English skill that has a big impact in vocabulary acquisition. So, in this chance the writer explains how to improve students' vocabulary mastery by using concept definition map strategy which is integrated with reading skill. Before implementing this strategy, the teacher has to consider about some teaching preparations. There are several things that should be prepared by; they are lesson plan, material and media. All of the medias should be based on curriculum used and students' need.

After that, the teacher comes to the procedures of increasing students' vocabulary mastery by using concept definition map strategy through reading activity. This strategy will be applied in whilst-teaching activity. Before coming to whilst teaching activity, the teachers firstly do pre-teaching activity. In this stage, the teacher greets the students and prays together with them and then checks students' attendance. The teacher also gives motivation by telling them the goals of the lesson and competencies that should be reached by the students at the end of the lesson. After that, the teacher leads the students to do brainstorming by asking the students some questions to recall their knowledge about previous lesson. It can also help the teacher to make sure that the students are ready to study.

Then, the teachers come to whilst-teaching activity. In 2013's Curriculum, there are five phases that should be followed by the teacher; it is called as scientific approach. The steps are: observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating.

The first phase in whilst-teaching is *observing*. In this phase, the teacher builds students' background knowledge by showing some pictures related to the topic being studied. The pictures are showed through projector. Then the teacher asks the students to pay attention to the pictures before they get the text with the same title. In this phase, the teacher shows some pictures through projector to the students. By showing them some pictures related to the text, it helps the students to stimulate and build their background knowledge about the text. The teacher says to the students: *Now, you are going to observe some pictures. Pay attention to each of them, and find what happens to the pictures?*

Then, the teacher allows the students to ask some questions related to the pictures. This phase is known as *questioning* phase. The questions can be about the information that is not understood from what is being observed in the pictures. The questions are very expected come from the students. Not only come from the students, questioning can be used by both teachers and students in the classroom. But, if the students are afraid to ask, the teacher can ask them first. It is done by the teacher to encourage them to give their opinion or to give questions about the related material. The teacher may ask, *"What do you want to know about the pictures?"* Or *"Do you know what happens in the pictures"*.

Next, the teacher comes to *experimenting* phase where the strategy will be implemented. In this stage, the teacher first gives the text entitled "Earthquake" to the students and asks them to read it. Here the teacher explains to the students what the text is about. The teacher also explains some difficult words that are found in the text. the teacher explains the definition of the report text. Then, the explanation is continued to the social function and the structure of the text. The teacher explains which part is general classification and description or specific information from the report text. Furthermore, the teacher shows the students the concept definition map through board display. The teacher also explains how to define a new concept of the words by using it. Firstly the teacher demonstrates them how to do that and asks them to pay attention to the teachers' explanation.

Then, in *associating* phase the students will work in group, each group consist of four students. In their group they have to find a new concept of another

word. After every student have their group, and then the teacher shows them another report text which is already signed with its generic structures, and the teacher also gives them a blank template of concept definition map. Each group will get one word to find for the new concept. The teacher gives the students time around ten minutes.

After doing so, the teacher and the students come to the last phase in whilst teaching activity, it is called as *communicating* phase. In this phase, the students present their map in their group and read it aloud about the new concept of the word in front of the classroom. After read the new concept of the word, the teacher asks another students' opinion about their friends' answer to improve their critical thinking and speak actively in the class.

Lastly, in post-teaching activity the teacher concludes the material by doing reflection of the activity that has been done. Teacher also gives some feedbacks about process and the output of learning. The teacher asks the students to do homework individually by asking them to find another topic of report text from books or on the internet. Besides that, the teacher also can inform material for the next meeting so that they can prepare themselves. After that, the teacher ends up the lesson by greeting them.

### C. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Concept definition map is effective strategy that can be used by the teacher in teaching vocabulary through reading activity to junior high school students. By using this strategy, students' vocabulary knowledge can be improved easily. Moreover, this strategy also can be used as a medium to re-call students prior knowledge about the words, so that they then can relate it with the new concept of that words.

This strategy also has some advantages to the students. Besides it activates the students' background knowledge, this strategy also encourages the students to use their imagination and expand their ideas. Furthermore, it also makes the students have a more understanding about the words. Lastly, by implementing this strategy, the students are expected to have better understanding about the concept of words.

Therefore, the writer also gives some suggestions for junior high school teachers in applying concept definition map strategy in teaching vocabulary through reading activity. It is suggested for the teacher to be more creative; which means in giving the text, the teacher should find interesting topic which is still in line with the curriculum and students' needs. Second, to make the lesson goals successfully achieved, the teachers have to make sure that the students really understand how to use the map. Next, concept definition map strategy is required students' participation, so that the teachers should be able to encourage them to share and generates their ideas; on the other words do not let the students to keep silent even one person. Lastly, during the activity or practice the students' really needs their teacher direction, because of that the teacher must play a role as a mentor to guide them.

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