TEACHER’S TECHNIQUES OF INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS AT TK AR RAHMAN JOMBANG

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ABSTRACT: This study aims at revealing the techniques used by the teacher in introducing new vocabulary to young learners. The methods used for collecting the data were namely observations and interviews. The result of this study figured out that six techniques were demonstrated during the English language teaching. Based on the conclusion, English teacher in general is suggested to use these techniques during the class.

Keywords: techniques, teaching vocabulary, young learners

Critical period hypothesis has highlighted the significance of foreign language acquisition for children. It explains the idea that the acquisition will be more likely completed if it is begun before the puberty (Brown, 2007:101). It is due to the fact of brain plasticity possessed by children. Brain plasticity enables children to easily absorb any input from the environment that changes the brain structurally and functionally, which make children far more superior in their success in learning foreign language than adults.

In foreign language learning, vocabulary is the first component the learners need to learn. Vocabulary is a sole component of a language. A lack of vocabulary mastery will strive into communication breakdown. Besides for communication purpose, vocabulary mastery is also needed for the sake of accessing knowledge. According to Cahyono & Widiati (2011), the vocabulary mastery supports each of the language skills. Knowledge of vocabulary affects learners’ comprehension on reading and listening, meanwhile it also affects the way learners convey their ideas into writing and speaking. Indonesian government through KTSP (School-Based Curriculum) has focused the English language teaching into strategic and linguistic competence in which vocabulary is included. However, the mastery of vocabulary will be optimally absorbed by the learners if it is begun in childhood.

Although English language teaching seems to be universal phenomenon, teaching English to young learners appears to be not easy. English teacher who are concerned with young learners should understand the nature of children in teaching them. Based on some experts (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990 & Cameron, 2007), the use of various techniques that stimulate all the sense of children will strive into effective teaching and learning activities.

Based on the above-explained information, this study tries to find out the answer of this research problem: what techniques successfully employed by the teacher at TK Ar Rahman Jombang in introducing new vocabulary to the learners?
METHOD

This study employed descriptive qualitative design. The English teacher, the headmistress and B1 class- of 11 of 5-year-old learners- of TK Ar Rahman Jombang participated in this study as the subjects. According to the headmistress, B1 class was high achiever class.

The data of this study were taken using observations and interviews. Observations were conducted to reveal the activities done in English language teaching during the class. In the process of observing, a set of checklist were employed. The checklists were prepared to ease the researcher in recording the data. The checklist contains three sections; pre, whilst and closing activity. In whilst part, the checklists were prepared to identify techniques that might appear. A total of 5 meetings were observed to collect the data. Interviews were conducted in order to obtain data that might not be covered during observations. The interviews were done in two sections which involved the English teacher of B1 class and the headmistress of TK Ar Rahman.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research finding shows six techniques employed by the teacher during English language teaching in the B1 class. They were namely listen-repeat, singing songs, giving demonstrations, playing games, using picture, and ostensive procedure.

**Listen- Repeat Activities**

Listen-repeat activity was used in the English teaching and learning process in Ar Rahman kindergarten. This technique was used in almost all parts of the teaching process. It was suggested by Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 22) that listen-repeat activities would give the children a chance to get the feel the language through sounds, stress, rhythm, and the intonation. The listen-repeat activity was done by asking the children to repeat what the teacher said. In order to make the children get familiarized with the words, it demands the teacher to present the words continually. This idea is in accordance with Cameron (2001: 81) that in the development of children’s vocabulary for teaching, the children need to meet words again and again in new contexts that help increase what they know about words.

The listen-repeat activity was also used by combining it with demonstrations. Listening is the first skill mastered by young learners. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 21), when the pupils start to learn a foreign language, it is going in mainly through their ears. Since the listener cannot hear the same way they can read, they cannot go back and check what they have heard, it is important to say things clearly and repeat them. Due to the fact that children have short attention spans, they often easily forget about what they have learnt if it only comes from listening to the teacher. Therefore, some listen-repeat activities involved movement.

An example was found during the observations, when the teacher asked the children to pray. It was found that for teaching the word “bend”, “take”, and “close”, the teacher demonstrated the combination of listen-repeat technique and demonstration. It would be hard for the children to memorize what “bend”, “take”, and “close” mean if the teacher only explained it using their mother tongue. The children might remember it the time they hear the explanation but they surely would
forget once they went home. As Craik and Lockhart (1972 cited in Wahyudiati, 2011) state in their Deep Processing hypothesis, painless understanding will make the long term remembering less likely. Therefore, involving movement was needed by the children.

Based on the field notes made during the observation, the listen-repeat technique not only functioned as a medium to make the children familiarized with the new vocabulary but also it was useful to teach the children how to pronounce certain words correctly. By repeating after the teacher, the children indirectly learnt how to pronounce the words. Moreover, the teacher would also correct the learners’ mistakes at a time. Since young learners tend to imitate all the things surrounding them, the teacher must ensure that the children got the correct examples to be imitated. As in Ar Rahman kindergarten, the teacher had given good examples for the children.

**Singing Songs**

Songs were another medium used for teaching new vocabulary for young learners at Ar Rahman kindergarten Jombang. This technique was also used for memorizing new vocabulary suggested by Fachrurrazy (2010). The so called memorizing vocabulary strategy was done by using audio aids such as the teachers’ voice, children’ voice, cassette tapes and using visual aids such as pictures, written form, and demonstrations. There are many reasons for using songs in teaching and learning activities. Besides aiding relaxation and group dynamics (Davanellos, 1999 in Wahyudiati, 2011), the lyrics of the songs also convey various values. According to Lynch 2009 (cited in Wahyudiati, 2011) songs which contain authentic languages, are easily obtainable, provide vocabulary, grammar and cultural aspects and are fun for the children. They can provide valuable speaking and listening practices for the children.

The activity conducted by using songs was singing along. The teacher was not very strict on when this activity could be conducted. Singing songs could be done in the pre-teaching, whilst activities or even at the end of the class. The purpose of conducting this activity over and over again was to vary the technique to teach. According to Cameron (2007: 15), young learners are easily distracted; they cannot focus on one thing. The children would directly ask the teacher to do other activities once they got bored with what they were doing. Thus, the variation of the technique is a must.

When singing the songs, the children along with the teacher would do some gestures related to the lyrics they were singing. One example was when they were singing the shape song. The lyrics of the shape song are about the name of shapes like triangles, squares, ovals, and stars. The teacher made gestures with her hands showing how the shapes look like, while the children followed her. By doing this, the teacher gave concrete visualization for the meaning of the shapes’ names they were singing. It was in line with what Brown (2007: 103) says that children need to have all five sense stimulated. The activities should strive to go well beyond auditory and the visual mode.

**Giving Demonstrations**

Demonstrations were often used by combining them with other techniques. It happened during almost every other technique. According to Piagiet (in Cameron,
2007), a young learner is an active learner. They cannot sit still and learn the lesson. Young learners love to move their body. They learn the lesson by interacting with what surrounds them. Thus, giving demonstration or making gestures becomes one enjoyable technique for them.

This technique was once used when the teacher was explaining about adjectives and prepositions. The use of this technique, again, was to ease the children into grabbing the meaning of the vocabulary taught. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 23) state, words are not enough for young learners. The teacher should include movement and involve the senses. Demonstrations also become one variation in teaching English to accommodate the characteristics of the children, who have short attention spans.

During the teaching of preposition, the teacher asked four children as volunteers to come in front of the class. Asking for volunteer was the way the teacher engaged the children in the process of teaching and learning. By involving the children become involved, the teacher encouraged the children to be brave. This kind of activity would motivate the children to be active during the lesson. Moreover, the more the children got engaged during the lesson, the more they paid attention to the lesson that was being explained. Another activity involving giving demonstrations was when the teacher presented several action words. The teacher purposely chose action words so that the children would be able to move; “singing”, “jumping”, “running”, “swimming”, and “walking”. By acting out the action words, the children would understand better the meaning of every word.

As for the effectiveness of this technique, the researcher found that this technique was effective to be used. It was found that the children got the meaning of the vocabulary that was being taught once it was demonstrated. The teacher also did the reinforcement activity in the end of the class by asking what action verb she would say by demonstrating it. Most of the children were able to guess the words from what they looked like. Yet, if the children answered it wrongly, the teacher would not give the right answer right away but demonstrated it once more till the children got it right.

Playing Games

In order to create a supportive atmosphere for the children to learn in, the teacher utilized several techniques in teaching. One of them was playing games. Assuming from the characteristics of young learners, it can be known that they love to play. Therefore, the teacher used games to present the material to be learnt. The use of games motivated the children to pay more attention to the teacher. It was because the teacher would draw a star for each student who could answer the teacher’s question. Besides, learning through fun activities would help the children bond with the class and the teacher more naturally. For the shy student, he/she would make an effort to get involved in the games.

The game that was played was called Guess it. The instruction was to make the children guess certain things based on its characteristics mentioned by the teacher. The example was animal names. The teacher mentioned some characteristics of an animal for example “it has four legs”, “it eats grass”, “the voice is baa” and etc. After listening to the teacher’s explanation, the children would need to raise their hand and
guess the name of the animal. So, the children would not only learn about the name of
the animal but also the characteristics of it. Based on Cameron (2007:81), vocabulary
development is not just learning more words but is also importantly about expanding
and deepening word knowledge.

In this activity, repetition was also involved. Repetition is one important
factor during children language acquisition. As Cameron (2001: 81) says, in the
development of children’s vocabulary for teaching, the children need to meet words
again and again in new context that helps increase what they know about words. The
teacher was purposely describing animal with similar characteristics which made the
children understand the meaning without directly translating the words. One example
was the word “legs”. The student had understood the meaning of feet or foot, yet
“legs” has similar but different meaning from it. In order to make the children aware
of its differences, the teacher made strong intonation while she was mentioning “four
legs”. After that, the teacher would check if the children had really understood what
“legs” means.

**Using Pictures**

Many objects, qualities, and action verbs can be illustrated by pictures. Based
on that statement, the teacher in *Ar Rahman* kindergarten also used pictures to present
the lesson. Besides that, it is supported by Harmer’s statement in 2007 that the
children understand better by hearing, seeing and touching the object that is being
explained by the teacher. It is also one of the four procedures suggested by Mackey
(1965). Thus, pictures can be one resource for teaching English for young learners.

Pictures were chosen to be used as the medium to teach English since it gave
clear visualizations for the children. The children who consist of 5 year-old children
need more than direct translations to give them an understanding of a certain meaning
of a word. They need to draw an image of a certain word clearly to understand. Based
on some experts, picture serves as a fruitful medium in learning English, especially
vocabulary learning. Harmer (2007) suggests trilogy of teaching sequence elements,
the so called ESA, as an effective way of teaching small numbers of individual words
at the beginner level. ESA stands for Engage, Study and Action. In this procedure, the
first sequence is that the teacher starts teaching new vocabulary by showing or
drawing the pictures, or miming the actions of the new vocabulary that is going to be
taught. As what the teacher has done in teaching English in *Ar Rahman* kindergarten,
drawing pictures was more interesting for the children.

The instruction of this technique, given by the teacher, asked the children to
draw an image of the vocabulary that was being mentioned by the teacher. The
teacher firstly mentioned a certain vocabulary such as a butterfly. Then, she asked
one of the children to come in front to draw the picture of butterfly. Besides, the
teacher sometimes also used flashcards.

From the observations, the researcher could claim that the teaching and
learning process using picture was successful. The children were motivated and
involved themselves in the teaching and learning process. It can be seen from the
enthusiasm of the children to answer the teacher’s question. Most of the children
were fond of attention. They want to be the first. They want to get the teacher’s
attention. Therefore, the teacher made use of that characteristic of her children to
teach them. She often praised the student who was able to answer her question. Thus, it made other children enthusiastically try to answer every teacher’s question.

**Pointing out Things**

Another technique utilized to teach new vocabulary by the teacher was by pointing out the things. This technique is also known as ostensive procedure. Based on Mackey 1965, ostensive procedure is a procedure accompanied by the gesture of pointing out the object. Further, he explains that this procedure relies on analogical or cased based by the subject they are intended to.

As what has been stated in the previous explanation on another sub chapter, words are not enough for the children. Therefore, the teacher needed more than direct translations and explanations to make the children understand the vocabulary that was being taught. Understanding here is defined as the capability of the children to remember and use the vocabulary that had been taught in other opportunities.

The principle of this technique was almost the same as other techniques such as using pictures, and making demonstrations. This technique intended to make the children get concrete images or visualizations of the vocabulary being taught. It supported what Harmer (2007: 82) states that young learners will get better understanding by hearing, touching, and seeing the object that is being explained.

**Other Techniques Used for Teaching New Vocabulary**

In *Ar Rahman* kindergarten, English teaching and learning process was integrated. It means that they did not separate English from other subject. For example, the instructions used to open the lesson and praying are always done using English. This idea supported Brewster, Ellis, and Girrad (1992) who argue that early learning of a non mother-tongue language must be integrated into other teaching in the primary school. Based on the headmistress, the purpose of conducting the English teaching and learning process integrated with other subject is to make the children familiar and get accustomed to using English in daily life.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Teachers who are interested in English for Young Learners should enrich themselves with the development of the issues. It is expected by the awareness they put into this issue, a betterment of English teaching and learning process will be accomplished. The teachers should become more creative and innovative in the process of English teaching for young learners. In order to achieve successful teaching and learning process, teacher should exploit more techniques in class. Moreover, in order to select the appropriate techniques to be used, teachers should have careful consideration related to the children’ characteristics and interest.

Future researchers are suggested to conduct a research on the English for young learners issue on the other scope such as the process of teaching writing for young learners.

**REFERENCES**


