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## **Teacher's Strategies in Using Storytelling for Improving Student's Vocabularies Skills at MTS Ath-Thahiriyah Kamilatunnaimah**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Initial observations at MTS Attahahiriyah highlight that teachers employ a variety of individualized approaches when using the storytelling strategy to teach English, each adapting the method to suit their teaching style. Despite these differences, all teachers share the common objective of improving students' vocabulary. The research specifically focuses on an English teacher at the school and investigates how different storytelling strategies are utilized to enhance students' vocabulary skills. The study found that using new stories introduces students to fresh vocabulary, which facilitates vocabulary acquisition in an engaging context. Storytelling, in this sense, serves as a practical tool not just for language learning but also for expanding students' vocabulary in a more natural and memorable way. By incorporating narrative elements, students are exposed to words in meaningful and relatable contexts, which can help them better understand and retain the new vocabulary. However, the research also revealed certain challenges that teachers face during the implementation of storytelling in the classroom. Some students become disengaged, losing interest in speaking activities and showing little enthusiasm for participation. This lack of motivation can hinder the learning process, making it difficult for students to fully benefit from the strategy. To address these challenges, teachers adopt creative methods to re-engage students and sustain their interest throughout the lesson. They may vary the storytelling techniques, introduce interactive elements, or use other supportive strategies to keep students motivated. The ultimate goal of these adjustments is to ensure that the storytelling approach remains effective in improving students' vocabulary skills, even in the face of obstacles such as student boredom or low participation. Through these tailored strategies, teachers aim to create a more dynamic learning environment where students are both motivated and equipped to enhance their vocabulary through storytelling.*

**Keywords:** Teacher's Strategies, Storytelling, Vocabulary Skills

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The importance of learning English vocabulary is paramount in acquiring proficiency in the language, especially in the context of international communication. English is widely spoken across many countries, and a rich vocabulary can greatly enhance students' overall language skills. Soejito (2013) argues that vocabulary is foundational to language learning because it facilitates smoother communication and improves fluency, particularly in English, which serves as a common medium for global interactions. A student's ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language is closely tied to their vocabulary knowledge.

Pavita (2022) further emphasizes that vocabulary is one of the most critical components of language learning. Without an adequate vocabulary, students face significant barriers in mastering the language. This is supported by Ali and Anwar (2021), who highlight the centrality of vocabulary in learning English, stressing that a limited vocabulary makes language acquisition extremely challenging.

In general, students often find it difficult to communicate in English due to a lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary mastery not only facilitates communication but also improves essential language skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Learning is an interactive process between students and teachers, where instruction plays a vital role in achieving learning objectives. Teaching vocabulary is crucial for laying the foundation for language learning, helping students to use English more effectively in both academic and social environments (Asep Jihad & Abdul Aziz, 2013).

However, many students face challenges when reading English texts or answering comprehension questions because their vocabulary is limited. As English is a second language for many learners, mastering it requires patience and structured teaching approaches. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on building foundational vocabulary to ease the process of learning the language.

One effective method for enhancing vocabulary is through storytelling. Storytelling offers an engaging way for students to acquire new vocabulary by immersing them in narratives (Subyantoro, 2016). It captivates students' attention through its dynamic presentation, style, and intonation, making it easier for them to grasp new words (Atin, 2018). This approach not only enriches the learning experience but also makes vocabulary acquisition more enjoyable.

Given the potential benefits of this method, the researcher decided to explore storytelling as a strategy for improving students' vocabulary skills. The research was conducted at Mts Atthahiriyah, a school with a boarding program that provides students with daily opportunities to practice English.



## II. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, qualitative data were used, which refers to non-numeric data that capture subjective experiences, observations, and interpretations. Qualitative data differ from quantitative data, which are measured numerically, in that they aim to provide a deeper understanding of human experiences rather than focusing on statistical analysis.

The descriptive nature of this research focuses on presenting the findings in a way that reflects the participants' real-life experiences. This approach is ideal for investigating educational strategies like storytelling, where understanding the practical application and impact on student learning is more meaningful than quantifying outcomes. For data collection, the researcher opted for semi-structured interviews as the primary technique. A semi-structured interview involves a combination of open-ended questions and predetermined themes or topics to guide the conversation. The research was conducted at Junior High School At-Thahiriyah, with a specific focus on English teachers who are directly involved in teaching vocabulary to students through storytelling. This school was selected because of its emphasis on language development and its teachers' use of innovative teaching methods, such as storytelling, to enhance students' learning outcomes. The school environment provided a relevant context for examining how storytelling can be used as a pedagogical tool in an Indonesian educational setting.

In this study, the data analysis process followed the approach outlined by Bogdan (in Hardani et al., 2020), which emphasizes organizing the data in a way that highlights key findings and insights that can be shared with others. This involved categorizing the data based on the research objectives, identifying common themes related to the use of storytelling in vocabulary instruction, and synthesizing the information to draw conclusions about its effectiveness.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Teacher Strategies in Using Storytelling to Improve Students' Vocabulary at MTs At-Thahiriyah

Through interviews and classroom observations, it was found that the English teachers at MTs At-Thahiriyah use storytelling as a central strategy to enhance their students' vocabulary. Each teacher adapted the storytelling technique to suit their individual teaching style and classroom dynamics, but all agreed that it was an effective approach for engaging students and promoting language retention. The teachers used a variety of storytelling methods, emphasizing different aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, and student engagement.

#### a. Interviews

#### 1. Teacher A's Strategy

Teacher A stressed the importance of storytelling in reducing students' reliance on dictionaries for vocabulary learning. According to this teacher, vocabulary retention is often short-lived unless students have opportunities to apply new words in meaningful contexts. Storytelling provides such opportunities by immersing students in language use that is practical and relevant to real-life situations. Teacher A noted that storytelling, especially in group settings, is highly effective because it allows students to collaborate,

share ideas, and build confidence collectively.

Teacher A typically uses stories that draw from personal experiences, such as vacations or everyday events, to make the content relatable to students. This method helps students connect with the material, increasing their motivation to participate and internalize new vocabulary. Rather than assigning impromptu storytelling tasks, Teacher A prefers to give students time to prepare their stories at home, ensuring that they have thoughtfully crafted their narratives. This preparation leads to higher-quality storytelling, where students pay closer attention to sentence structure and vocabulary choice.

Teacher A also encourages peer interaction by allowing students to add to or modify each other's stories during class discussions. Even if students contribute only a few sentences, this promotes collaborative learning and ensures that everyone is involved in the storytelling process. Teacher A evaluates students not only on their storytelling skills but also on their pronunciation, fluency, and ability to communicate the narrative effectively. For students who are hesitant or shy, Teacher A adopts a non-forceful approach, recognizing that too much pressure can lead to disengagement. Instead, the teacher creates an inviting atmosphere, where participation is voluntary but encouraged.

Teacher A begins storytelling sessions by inviting the most confident students to share first, creating a positive momentum for the rest of the class. This strategy helps reduce anxiety among less confident students, who often feel more comfortable participating after seeing their peers succeed. Teacher A's approach helps students relate the stories to their own lives, which not only boosts vocabulary learning but also develops their speaking and writing skills.

## 2. Teacher B's Strategy

Teacher B also utilizes storytelling to improve students' vocabulary but places a greater emphasis on pronunciation and fluency. Teacher B starts by telling a story in English and then asks students to repeat sections of the story, which reinforces their pronunciation and understanding of new words. This method helps students to become familiar with the language's rhythm and intonation, which are critical for fluency.

To make storytelling sessions more engaging, Teacher B uses expressive techniques such as varied intonation, facial expressions, and gestures to bring the story to life. This dramatization helps capture students' attention and keeps them actively involved in the storytelling process. Additionally, Teacher B incorporates visual aids, such as illustrations from the stories, to further reinforce vocabulary acquisition. By asking students to describe these illustrations, the teacher provides opportunities for students to practice using new words in descriptive contexts.

Teacher B also focuses on classroom management by ensuring that students are attentive before starting a storytelling session. For those who may be distracted or disengaged, Teacher B gently redirects their focus, ensuring that the entire class is mentally prepared to engage with the story. New vocabulary introduced in the story is emphasized and repeated for memorization and future use.



In terms of evaluation, Teacher B asks students to recall and discuss the story after the storytelling session, focusing on the key vocabulary and its meaning. Although time constraints may prevent every student from telling their own stories during class, they are encouraged to participate in storytelling either in class or as part of their homework assignments. This ongoing practice helps students to continuously improve their language skills, particularly in vocabulary, speaking, and writing. Teacher B believes that regular engagement in storytelling enhances students' proficiency in English, making them more confident speakers and writers.

The Interviews with both teachers revealed that the storytelling strategy is considered a highly effective tool for improving students' vocabulary skills. Although the teachers applied the strategy in slightly different ways, the core principles remained consistent—storytelling creates an interactive and dynamic learning environment that promotes vocabulary acquisition while also enhancing overall language proficiency.

#### b. Observation

Classroom observations confirmed that both teachers actively used storytelling as a central strategy for teaching vocabulary. During these storytelling sessions, students were visibly more engaged and enthusiastic about participating in class. The researcher observed that storytelling sparked a high level of interest among the students, particularly when teachers involved them in discussions about the stories.

Both teachers employed questioning techniques during storytelling to prompt students to think critically and apply new vocabulary in context. However, not all students were equally engaged throughout the lesson. Some students appeared less active, possibly due to fatigue, lack of interest, or varying confidence levels. Nevertheless, the teachers addressed these challenges by offering extra support and encouragement to less engaged students, helping to draw them into the learning process.

The teachers were careful not to rely solely on storytelling for every lesson, recognizing that overuse of the strategy could lead to student boredom. Instead, they integrated storytelling with other teaching methods to keep the lessons varied and interesting. Despite differences in the way each teacher managed their class, both used storytelling effectively to achieve their objective of enhancing students' vocabulary skills



#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research conducted on the strategies used by teachers at MTs At-Thahiriyah to enhance students' vocabulary skills through storytelling, several key conclusions can be drawn:

##### 1. Effectiveness of Storytelling in Vocabulary Development

The use of storytelling as a teaching strategy has proven to be both effective and efficient in improving students' vocabulary skills. Teachers at MTs At-Thahiriyah have found that introducing new stories allows students to encounter and internalize unfamiliar vocabulary in context, which not only expands their vocabulary but also improves their speaking and writing abilities. The interactive nature of storytelling helps create a dynamic learning environment where students are more engaged and motivated to use the language. Teachers are confident that the continuous introduction of fresh stories will further enhance students' vocabulary retention and overall language proficiency.

##### 2. Challenges Faced in Implementing Storytelling

While storytelling is an effective strategy, teachers also face certain challenges in its application. One significant obstacle is the lack of enthusiasm from some students. These students may show signs of disengagement or lack of interest during storytelling activities, which can hinder their language development. To address this, teachers employ various strategies to reignite their interest and actively involve them in the learning process. Whether through personalization of stories,

Adjusting teaching techniques, or focusing on student participation, teachers are proactive in ensuring that every student remains engaged and benefits from the storytelling approach.



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