

## **FUN ACTIVITIES TO TEACH VOCABULARY FOR YOUNG LEARNERS: A LIBRARY RESEARCH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is found that young learners in Indonesia still have low vocabulary mastery. It is resulted from the teacher factors in teaching vocabulary which cannot use appropriate media and technique. This study investigates kinds of fun activities under young learners' characteristics and learning styles to teach vocabulary. Based on library research, teachers can implement nine kinds of fun activities: singing/listening to a song, watching videos, playing games, listening to a story/storytelling, conversational activity, study tour/outdoors, coloring, and using pictures and flashcards. Those activities already meet the characteristics and the learning styles of young learners. However, the teacher must be creative, imaginative, and innovative to implement the activities to make the teaching and learning vocabulary process more enjoyable.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary, young learners, fun activities*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is a very crucial aspect to be mastered in learning a language. The reason that makes it essential is that vocabulary integrates and relates to the four language skills. In line with this statement, Sunarko et al. (2019) state that people will not be able to convey their feelings, opinions, and ideas without vocabulary. They would face many difficulties when they lack vocabulary knowledge, such as not communicating and understanding something in a different language. Anwar and Efransyah also prove this in their article. Anwar and Efransyah (2018) explain that vocabulary is an essential aspect of learning a language because it delivers the meaning used by humans to communicate. In addition, Nugroho and Suprpto (2018) point out that students should have lots of vocabulary in learning a new language. Vocabulary mastery is the initial step in communication (Katemba, 2021).

Moreover, vocabulary mastery should be built at an early age. Fachraini (2017) reveals that early childhood is the golden period to learn a language. It is the right time to learn another language besides the mother tongue because their brains are still flexible. It is easier to learn a language for children than for adults (Fachraini, 2017). It can be said that students must enrich their vocabulary mastery from an early age to learn and develop their language skills.

Nevertheless, expectations that students have rich vocabulary are not valid. Many students with poor vocabulary show low English scores due to incapability in using four language skills (Sunarko et al., 2019). Puspita and Sabaiqoh (2017) add that not all students can learn and master vocabulary easily. It is shown in a study conducted by Noviya and Anugerahwati (2021) in SDN Lowokwaru 2 Malang. They found that the student's vocabulary mastery was still low.

Based on the test given to 34 students, only five students could pass the test. Elementary students from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nahdlatul Ulama (MINU) Tropodo Sidoarjo also encounter the same problem. Most of test scores on English vocabulary were low which occurred because they did not understand the explanation from the teacher (Rahmah & Astutik, 2020). Students with a lack of vocabulary knowledge are difficult to deliver ideas and understand each other when communicating (Nugroho and Suprpto, 2017). Anwar and Efransyah (2018) also state that communication would not occur if students did not have enough vocabulary. Students with little vocabulary are still commonly found.

The cause of students having a little vocabulary is in the media and technique used by the teacher. Fachraini (2017) explains that English teachers in kindergarten RA Takrimah Tungkob still use old teaching methods, such as the audio-lingual method. Moreover, she reveals that no media is involved in teaching and learning, which can cause a dull atmosphere. The absence of media could make the students, especially young learners, quickly feel bored and not focus on the lesson. Young learners cannot understand the material if they only listen to explanations (Indrasari et al., 2018). As the holder of an essential role in teaching and learning, the teacher must apply suitable media. In addition, the teacher must understand the situation of students in order to apply the correct technique (Anwar and Efransyah, 2018).

Teaching language to young learners will be different from adult learners. Young learners are students between the range of age 0 until 15 years old, and they have some characteristics

that teachers should consider (Sukmawati, 2018). According to Scott & Ytreberg (1993:2-4), (Hartina et al., 2019) young learners have four characteristics, as cited in Hartina et al. (2019). First, young learners are very active; they learn through physical and actual activities. Second, they tend to learn by using their five senses and sensory. Third, easier to learn language through concrete things rather than something abstract. Forth, they could learn well if the atmosphere is enjoyable. In addition, Rhalmi (2019, in Pustika, 2021) points out that young learners quickly feel bored and imaginative. It can be said that young learners learn through visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. Visual means young learners learn by watching, auditory means learning through audio or listening, and kinaesthetic means learning through physical movement (Suaib, 2017). It is also supported by Putri and Listyani (2020) which states that it is easier for young learners to learn if they see, listen, touch, and interact. Based on those explanations it can be said that teaching vocabulary for young learners is a tough job that requires more efforts and strategies (Katemba & Sianipar, 2020).

Considering those characteristics, English teachers should perform fun teaching to create an enjoyable atmosphere by using appropriate media, techniques, or methods to teach vocabulary for young learners. Fun activities could make young learners feel enthusiastic about learning (Hartina et al., 2019). If they enjoy the learning process, they can learn and grasp it well. A study conducted by Bavi (2018) in Iran proves that fun activities are effective to be used in teaching vocabulary for elementary students. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate kinds of fun activities to teach vocabulary for young learners

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is considered a qualitative study. Moreover, the process of data collection is done through library research. The library research obtained data regarding fun activities to teach vocabulary for young learners from books and various online sources, such as through e-journal and e-article. After the information is collected, the researcher reads and analyses it to find comprehensive information. Then, it is elaborated with several theories of teaching vocabulary for young learners from experts.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

An enjoyable atmosphere is an essential aspect of teaching, especially for young learners. To build a good atmosphere, teachers or instructors can use several fun activities to teach vocabulary for young learners. According to Ratminingsih et al., 2021 (146-206), there are five fun activities that teachers or instructors can implement to teach vocabulary for young learners, as follows:

1. Teaching vocabulary through games  
The use of games can catch the student's attention. At the same time, they play and learn something new in which it becomes easier for them to remember the vocabulary. It also helps the students to develop their imagination. Examples of vocabulary games are flashcards, crossword puzzles, or other game variations involving vocabulary.
2. Teaching vocabulary by using a story  
Teaching vocabulary also can be done by listening to a story. Young learners

like to hear and read a story, especially when the story is full of pictures or illustrations. In teaching vocabulary through a story, the teacher can give the students audio and ask them to listen; for example, it is a story about places. After that, the teacher and students can discuss the topic and how is the story went. As a follow-up activity, the teacher can ask students to write the vocabulary that the students hear from the story. The teacher can replay the audio several times to ease the students in remembering or writing the vocabulary they have heard.

3. Teaching vocabulary by singing a song  
Besides the story, young learners also love to sing a song. By singing a song, they are not only gain new vocabulary but also train their listening skills, pronunciation skills, grammar skills, learn other cultures, and motivates them to learn (Dzanic & Pejic, 2016; Mejzini, 2016; Millington, 2011 in Ratminingsih et al., 2021 p.174). The teacher should consider the song and the activity very well in implementing this activity. The teacher can replay and ask the students to sing several times before performing some activity. That activity can be filling in the missing words from the song's lyrics, rearranging the shuffled song lyrics, or choosing the right word from two-word choices provided to fill in the gaps in the lyrics.
4. Teaching vocabulary through conversations  
Conversation activities can make the learning atmosphere more active. This activity can be done between students and teachers or fellow students. However, it is hoped that these conversations will occur between

students, such as dialogue in simple English, role-playing, or conducting simple interviews (Kayi, 2006 in Ratminingsih et al. 2021).

#### 5. Teaching vocabulary through study tour.

This activity is conducted outside the class. A study tour can give young learners new experiences in learning. They directly come to places and get new insight, memory, and knowledge, for instance, a study tour to a museum, zoo, or historical place. The teacher can ask them to observe what kinds of objects they have seen, discuss, or interview other visitors.

Furthermore, YouTube videos can also be used as media and activity in teaching vocabulary for young learners. Based on Hariyono's (2020) study, YouTube videos can increase young learners' motivation in learning English, especially vocabulary. By asking students to watch a video at the beginning of the teaching process, it can engage the students towards the material. Besides, they can remember several vocabularies they have heard from the video. Learning English vocabulary through video becomes more fun for young learners.

Besides video, technology in electronic or online games is also beneficial for vocabulary learning for young learners. Electronic Guessing Game (EGG) developed on Ana's (2018) study can significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery. EGG is an educational game that provides the students with several clues. Students can play the game with a group and discuss the answer based on the clue given. Through this activity, the students are more involved and enthusiastic in learning English. Moreover, it also encourages the

students to spell and pronounce the words they have seen on the game.

Moreover, Priskinia (2020) states that teaching vocabulary for young learners can be done using flashcards. She reveals that flashcards are appropriate for young learners since it provides visual. It assists them in memorizing, understanding words meanings, spelling, and pronunciation. To make the teaching process more fun, the teacher can use flashcards as a game where the students could play as a team. Besides, it also can be used as a drilling words activity to train speaking and pronunciation skills. In using flashcards, the teacher should be creative to maximize flashcards to engage the students.

Meanwhile, Yusuf et al. (2019) mention six strategies or activities to teach English vocabulary to young learners. Those are:

#### 1. Songs

Songs in the teaching process can encourage young learners to listen and move. By listening to a song, students get a motivation to learn, and at the same time, they also become familiar with the words they have heard. In addition, they learn the pronunciation in a fun way. An example of a song that can be used is parts of the body song. This song is very appropriate because the words are simple, and they also can touch the body parts while singing.

#### 2. Pictures

By using pictures, teaching vocabulary to young learners can be done easier. Pictures can attract young learners because of the pictures' colors or shapes. In using pictures, the teacher can use flashcards of colors as an example and ask students to sit in a circle shape. Next, the teacher shows the flashcards and asks the students to

follow the pronunciation. After that, the teacher can ask the students to find objects that have the same color as what they have seen and pronounced, such as "please find something in red".

### 3. Games

Games are an effective activity to introduce and teach vocabulary for young learners. They can learn, use, and amusingly practice the vocabulary through games. In implementing games, it is better to set the students in a group to make them more confident and strengthen their collaboration. An example of a vocabulary game is asking students to sit in O shape and mention the object inside the class. The teacher can start by saying "table" then each student should mention other objects. The student who mentions the same word would get a penalty, such as singing in front of the class.

### 4. Storytelling

The teacher can use storytelling as the activity in teaching vocabulary. The teacher should show appropriate gestures, mimic, and intonation as a storyteller. Because it is intended for young learners, the story should be simple and easy to understand. In reading the story, the teacher can stop to read in the middle of the story and ask the students about what happened to the character. For example, in the story of the rabbit and the turtle, the teacher asks, "What animal challenges the turtle to have a running race?".

### 5. Colouring

Through coloring activity, besides assisting young learners to enrich their vocabulary mastery, it also helps the students develop their creativity, head and eye coordination, and color

recognition. By doing this, students can learn the colors and shapes of the objects they have drawn or colored.

### 6. Outdoors Activity

Outdoors activities are an exciting way to teach vocabulary for young learners. They need something new; learning outside the class is also possible. Taking students to the playground, schoolyard, canteen, etc. can give them a new experience in learning. They can see and find the actual object and simultaneously learn the vocabulary. Before taking students out of the class, for example, to the school field, the teacher must provide some vocabulary that can be found in the schoolyard, such as flag, tree, flower, and bench. When the teacher and students are already in the schoolyards, the teacher can go to one of the objects, and ask "what is this in English (flower)?".

## Discussion

Based on five studies, some researchers mention the same activity. In Ratminingsih et al. (2021), they mention some activities that Yusuf et al. (2019) also suggest to teach vocabulary. Those activities teach vocabulary through games, stories, songs, and study tours or outdoor activities. Ana (2018) also has the same idea about the use of games in teaching vocabulary, but the game used by Ana is technology-oriented.

Besides, conversation, colouring, pictures, flashcards, and video can also be implemented in vocabulary teaching for young learners. In total, there are nine activities to make the teaching process more fun for young learners.

All of the nine activities mentioned follow young learners' characteristics and learning styles. As seen from the

characteristics and learning styles, Suaib (2017) reveals that young learners could learn by doing, watching, and listening. They are also easier to learn if the atmosphere is fun and relaxed. Listening to a song or story and singing can facilitate students with auditory learning styles. Then, learning activities by using videos, flashcards, and pictures helps the students with visual learning style to learn vocabulary. In addition, students with kinaesthetic learning styles can learn vocabulary by implementing games, conversation, coloring, and study tours or learning outdoors. Obviously, all of these activities involve five senses, using something concrete, and providing a fun atmosphere for young learners. Since it is fun learning, it will be easier to learn and understand the words. They also will not get bored quickly.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Teaching vocabulary is the most crucial lesson for young learners. To maximize vocabulary learning and improve vocabulary mastery, there are some fun activities that can be implemented by the teacher. According to five studies, there are nine fun activities to teach vocabulary for young learners. Those activities are singing/listening to a song, watching videos, playing games, listening to a story/storytelling, conversational activity, study tour/outdoors, coloring, using pictures and flashcards.

Even though those activities are already fun to be implemented, the teacher must be creative, imaginative, and innovative. The application of activities must also be varied to avoid boredom or a dull atmosphere among students because

of repetitive activities. Teachers must use their creativeness in integrating activities to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for young learners

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