



A Retrospective Study on English Teachers' Strategies to Increase Students' Vocabulary Mastery

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Abstract

Various teaching methods and techniques have been the focus of numerous studies on teaching strategies used to increase students' vocabulary understanding. Few studies, however, have looked at the methods teachers employ to increase their students' vocabulary mastery through retrospective study. The various teaching strategies that are beneficial to teachers were gathered in this study's retrospective review. For this study, researchers used a questionnaire design, a qualitative research strategy, and a descriptive methodology. A survey in the form of a google form is one of the research's instruments. Numerous closed-ended questions in the form of statements were used in previous research surveys. In contrast, the questions in this study tended to be open-ended, which led to responses that included a variety of ideas. Fifteen English teachers who teach English in Medan are the subjects of this study. The result of this research is the strategies used by teachers in teaching student vocabulary mastery are very diverse depending on students' and teachers' abilities. The more diverse the teacher's teaching strategies, the more successfully students will learn new words. The teaching strategy is then divided into three, namely preparation, practice, and evaluation strategies. In the end, it is anticipated that the findings of this study will help teachers succeed in developing their students' vocabulary mastery.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, speaking English is necessary for daily activities like communicating, imparting and receiving information, studying, and as one of the requirements for applying for jobs. Since English is now a global language of communication, many people have used it to help them achieve their goals in life (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021). Someone who masters English has more competitiveness and will be superior to those who do not master English. In learning English, we need to master four important English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will be able to communicate in both spoken and written English if they have a broad vocabulary. Students need English vocabulary to support them in these English skills (Chairiah Hariyono, 2020).

Vocabulary is an important part in English as well as a basic factor in language mastery (Fakhrudin, 2013). One of the language components that must be mastered in order to learn English skills is vocabulary. Richards (2001) states that one of the most obvious components of language which linguists turned their attention to is vocabulary. In order to learn vocabulary, English teachers and students must build strong relationships. Harmony in foreign language learning can be achieved by having a positive relationship between teachers and students. The teaching strategy used for the teaching and learning process can be described as the manner in which the teacher explains the subject matter to the students. Students are always instructed to memorize basic vocabulary first when learning English. Sari & Aminatun (2021) believe that Lack of vocabulary will make it difficult for students to express their comprehension and even production. It means in order for students to master other English skills, vocabulary learning is a crucial, fundamental component of education.

The majority of students still struggle with vocabulary when learning English, and their comprehension of the subject matter is low. They are also uninterested in learning English and find it boring (Marni, 2020). To help students master vocabulary, the teacher needs to use the proper

learning strategy. The right approach can make vocabulary learning fun for students since it will be tailored to their interests. These teaching strategies comprise the techniques, methods, and processes employed by teachers during lessons. Wenden & Rubin (1987) defined learning strategies as any plans, procedures, or sets of operations that a learner uses to efficiently process information beginning with acquisition, storing, retrieval, and application.

Previous researchers have done much research on how to improve students' vocabulary with various strategies, as Fatah did in 2019, who researched improvement in students' vocabulary knowledge as a result of using the Duolingo app. In this study, (Fatah, 2019) found that teaching vocabulary by using Duolingo application is appropriate to be implemented in the class. It is supported by the result of the average post-test score in the experimental class, which is higher than the controlled class. In this study, the average post-test score in the experimental class was 80.00, while the average score in the controlled class was 74.25. The researcher then came to the conclusion that using the Duolingo app successfully increased students' vocabulary knowledge.

Marni 2020 who researched vocabulary teaching using songs, also found that the songs were useful in raising students' vocabulary proficiency. It can be seen from the results of the pre-test and post-test scores carried out. In the study, it was found that after using songs, the pre-test result which was previously 40.66, then rose to 87.83 in the post-test. In addition, it was also found that using songs in teaching vocabulary increased students' interest. This is shown in the questionnaire filled out by students. They admitted that using songs to learn vocabulary could increase their interest in the learning process and make it easier for them to remember vocabulary.

Hariyono 2020 who researched vocabulary teaching using videos on YouTube, found that using YouTube videos in learning vocabulary made students enthusiastic and motivated, and the atmosphere of learning in the classroom became more fun. The findings of this study's

observations show that using a YouTube video to teach vocabulary can motivate students to become more active, which will enhance their learning outcomes.

The previous studies mentioned above only looked at the efficiency of one teaching strategy or technique only in practice. In fact, there are many efficient methods or strategies for teaching vocabulary that involve teacher preparation and evaluation. There were not many strategies in the preparation and evaluation of effective vocabulary teaching for students in the previous research because only one type of strategy or method was tested in the practice of teaching vocabulary. Therefore, there is a need for research that discusses strategies for improving students' vocabulary mastery not only in terms of practice but also through preparation and evaluation strategies.

There are so many studies conducted in Indonesia related to strategies to improve students' vocabulary mastery, but few have examined them from the teacher's point of view. Previous researchers studied strategies to improve students' vocabulary mastery by using students as research subjects. Meanwhile, in this study, the researcher used the teacher as the research subject. The teacher served as the research subject in this study because the teacher plays a crucial role in the learning process as a key player (Fatkhurrohman, 2018). Therefore, the strategies the teacher employs will largely determine the students' success in increasing their vocabulary mastery.

The problem formulations discussed in this research are: 1.) How is the teacher's preparation in teaching vocabulary mastery? 2.) How is the teacher's practice in teaching vocabulary mastery? and 3.) How is the teacher's evaluation in teaching vocabulary mastery? While the objectives of this research are 1.) Describe the preparation of teachers in teaching vocabulary mastery, 2.) Describe the teacher's practice in teaching vocabulary mastery, and 3.) Describe teacher evaluations in teaching vocabulary mastery.

The objective of this research was to identify the teacher's teaching strategies for

improving students' vocabulary mastery, including preparation (such as creating lesson plans) and evaluation strategies (such as giving assessments to students). The study's findings can be used to identify the methods teachers employ to teach vocabulary as well as a resource to identify the most effective strategies. Students' vocabulary mastery can be increased by employing the right techniques and increasing teachers' creativity in their vocabulary instruction. This study is anticipated to pique the interest of teachers and aspiring researchers to study the vocabulary mastery techniques used by educators. It is anticipated that this research will advance science and research in the future.

METHOD

Determine The Research Method

Researchers combined a descriptive method with a qualitative research approach for this study. Researchers used a questionnaire design to conduct qualitative descriptive research. The researchers also performed a retrospective study for this study. The primary goal of Retrospective Descriptive is to create an objective picture or description of a situation by reflecting on the past (Notoatmodjo, 2005). This study aims to take a retrospective approach (backward-looking). The researcher will compare the data with results from earlier studies after discovering the results.

The 15 English teachers who instruct English, particularly vocabulary, in Medan's schools and English courses are the focus of this study. With an average teaching tenure of four years, the fifteen participating teachers were split equally between five men and ten women.

Instruments in this research is a survey in the form of google form. To make it simpler for researchers to gather data, we chose a google-form questionnaire as the tool. Additionally, anyone can access google-form more easily.

Compile Survey Questions

In this study, researchers collect data through a questionnaire containing 10 questions and send it to participants (15 English teachers) using a research instrument in the form of a

google form. The question topics of the questionnaire were categorized into three: preparation, practice, and evaluation. The questions in the preparation category contain three questions. In the practice category, there are four questions. And in the evaluation category, there are three questions. The questions in this questionnaire were designed by members of the research group based on discussion and approval from the supervisor.

Disseminate Data to Respondents

The researcher found respondents by visiting schools and English courses in Medan, including the school where the researcher conducted teaching practice. The researcher then provided a survey link via google form to potential participants. The researchers selected the subjects to investigate the strategies the teacher employed to teach vocabulary, how these strategies were implemented during instruction, and the outcomes and efficacy of these methods.

Collecting Data from Respondents

The data collection process for this study was carried out by distributing questionnaires on Google-form media to qualified teachers between March 2022 and October 2022. The results of this study are presented as teacher strategies for enhancing students' vocabulary proficiency.

Activities	Time
Preparation of research	March - May
Research implementation	July - September
Report the results	October

Researchers in this study used descriptive qualitative analysis to analyze the data we used, presenting their findings as tables and percentages. The researcher prepare 10 questions for the participants to respond to using a google form. The researcher then evaluate the participants' responses. The following components create up the data analysis for this study:

1. Data transcript: To make the data presented more structured and to enable better data processing, researchers will copy the data from the google-form questionnaire into a document.

2. Data familiarization: To make it simpler for researchers to locate the necessary information in the data, we reread and reexamine the results of the data that have been collected.
3. Create the theme: Certain categories or labels will be applied to the data. As an illustration, the labels for the Vocabulary Teaching Strategy include using textbooks, playing games, watching movies, etc. An inductive method will be used to index the data, and the theme will be chosen based on the information that comes out of the participants' responses. The information will then be moved to a new document with topics and keywords that have been compiled and are pertinent to the research concept.
4. Discussing and Concluding: In accordance with the idea of a retrospective study, researchers will analyze the data before comparing and relating the findings with those of earlier investigations. The results of the data collection are then presented in a table, followed by an explanation. In the end, researchers will reach reliable conclusions using carefully chosen and organized data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The Preparation of Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary

Q1: Where are your learning indicators of teaching vocabulary mastery from?

Table 1. Learning indicators

No.	Result of the learning indicators	Percentage
1.	Experience	37
2.	Books	32
3.	Internet	21
4.	English skills	10
Total		100

The survey's findings indicated that the four categories of learning indicators that teachers use are experience, books, the internet, and English proficiency/skills. Table 1 defines

experience (37%) as the knowledge and skills a teacher has acquired through their experiences as students, teachers, and trainees. In addition, the experiences mentioned also include student learning experiences. Books (32%) such as modules, textbooks, and books about English are then read after that. The internet (21%), which includes YouTube and English-related websites, is then used to source the teacher's learning indicators. The last source of learning indicators is English proficiency/skills (10%), which includes comprehension and aptitude in speaking, pronouncing, spelling, and using grammar.

Therefore, it can be seen that the sources of learning indicators for teachers mostly come from experience (37%) and books (32%). What is meant by learning indicators that come from experience also includes student learning experiences because students are the center of attention, and this is demonstrated by including them in the learning process.

Q2: How often do you prepare your learning indicators?

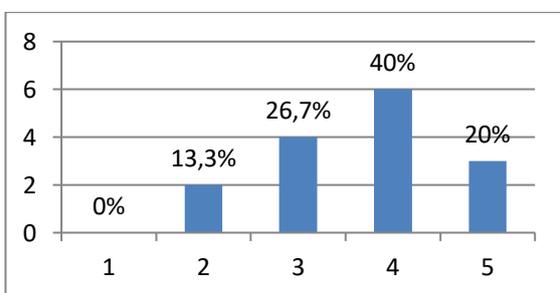


Figure 1. Scala of frequency

The description of each scale number is as follows:

- 1 = never
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = often
- 4 = usually
- 5 = always

The data shows that as many as 20% of teachers always prepare their learning indicators, 40% of teachers usually prepare their learning indicators, 26.7% of teachers often prepare their learning indicators, and 13.3% of teachers sometimes prepare their learning indicators.

Q3: Mention sources of your learning materials to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Table 2. Sources of learning materials

No.	Result of the learning material sources	Percentage
1.	English-related books	34
2.	Dictionary	19
3.	Internet	17
4.	Movie	7
5.	English text	5
6.	Pictures/Poster	5
7.	Magazine	2
8.	Song	2
9.	TV Shows	2
10.	Others	7
Total		100

Table 2 above allows for the conclusion that students' vocabulary mastery is improved by teachers using a variety of learning resources. English-related books were the primary source of learning materials used by teachers (34%). Textbooks, English, vocabulary, and the teacher's personal notebook all fall under this category. The dictionary ranks second in importance as a source of teaching materials, contributing 19% of results. Online dictionaries as well as bilingual and monolingual dictionaries are used. Additionally, the internet (at 17%) is the third-most popular source of educational content. Websites and YouTube fall under this category. Using YouTube to learn can be enjoyable because it provides subject matter that is as creatively rich as possible (Chairiah Hariyono, 2020). Then came other categories, including those for movies, English texts, TV shows, magazines, songs, posters, and others.

The Practice of Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary

Q4: Mention useful activities that students should do to improve

Table 3. Useful activities for students

No.	Result of the useful activities (for students)	Percentage
1.	Do practice	17
2.	Read a lot (books)	16
3.	Note-taking	12
4.	Memorize new words	10
5.	Watch movies	7
6.	Listen to songs	7
7.	Do conversation	7
8.	Play vocabulary games/app	5
9.	Listen to podcast	2
11.	Sing western song	2
12.	Use a dictionary	2
13.	Use drilling techniques	2
14.	Translate movie dialogue	2
15.	Others	7
Total		100

The data in table 3 above leads us to the finding that students should complete the following beneficial exercises to improve their vocabulary mastery: do practice (17%), while some of these activities include complete the sentence with suitable words, complete the story with suitable words, elaborating a word's meaning with another word, build the sentence using the challenging words or a new word you found in the text.

Reading a lot of English-language books (14%) is another beneficial activity that students should do to increase their vocabulary, also there are note-taking (12%) and memorizing (10%). Students' vocabulary mastery can also be increased by engaging in conversations, watching English movies, listening to English music, and engaging in several other activities listed in the above table.

Q5: Mention useful activities that teachers should do to improve students' vocabulary mastery

Table 4. Useful activities for teacher

No.	Result of the useful activities (for teachers)	Percentage
1.	Do practice	19
2.	Read a lot	16
3.	Memorize new words	12
4.	Play vocabulary games	9
5.	Do conversation	9
6.	Watch YouTube	5
7.	Make vocabulary list	5
8.	Do speech	2
9.	Use internet	2
10.	Control student's 4 basic skills	2
11.	Watch movies	2
12.	Ask question	2
13.	Use drilling techniques	2
14.	Learn with fun	2
15.	Others	9
Total		100

Based on the information in table 4 above, it can be concluded that practicing vocabulary (19%) is one of the beneficial activities teachers should carry out to increase students' vocabulary mastery. This activity includes tests, exercises, and evaluations because doing evaluations can increase students' understanding. They are then followed by reading a lot (16%), including reading books, English books, and scientific articles. The useful activity with the third largest result is memorizing new words (12%).

Then followed with other activities such as playing vocabulary games, do conversation, watch YouTube, make vocabulary lists, do speech, use the internet, control student's four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), watch movies, ask questions, use drilling techniques, learn with fun, and other activities as presented in table 4.

Q6: What do you do to help the students having difficulties in comprehending vocabulary?

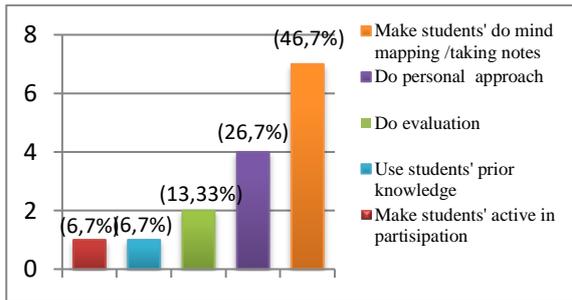


Figure 2. How to help students' difficulties

Data shows that the most commonly done by teachers to help students with difficulties in comprehending vocabulary is to make students mind mapping/taking notes (46.7%). Furthermore, the teachers also make a personal approach (26.7%), do an evaluation (13,33%), use students' prior knowledge (6,7%), and make students' active in participation (6,7%).

Q7: Do you always do the strategies suggested by the expert to improve vocabulary mastery to your students? Why?

Table 5. Doing the strategies suggested by the expert.

Do you always do the strategies suggested by the expert to improve vocabulary mastery to your students? Why?	
(53%) Yes, because...	(47%) No, because...
Most students are not eager to learn English	Some of the strategies are difficult to apply to the students
With do strategies, I can monitor the progress of my students	Before becoming a teacher, I was a student. I know what the student's weaknesses are so that makes me develop my own strategy
With do strategies, I can know the lack of my students	I try to make my way because trying to copy others' way shouldn't make it pleasant and you can not always do that well. Be yourself in teaching, that is the best way
With do strategies, I can arrange what I will do in the next step for my students	I have my own way and sometimes some suggestions didn't match my students' ability and conditions.
To achieve the goals	
To evaluate the students' abilities	
To make easy the learning process	
To guide students in learning vocabulary	
The strategy helps us to teach the students	
Teachers have to evaluate their own self.	

The teacher both implemented and did not implement the expert's recommended strategy to

increase students' vocabulary mastery because teachers who consistently implement expert-recommended strategies consider expert input and evaluation to be necessary in order to use effective teaching strategies. Expert-recommended teaching strategies also encourage greater engagement and innovation on the part of both teachers and students. On the other hand, because some of the strategies suggested by the expert do not match the circumstances and abilities of the students, teachers who do not always implement the strategies suggested by the expert think they have their own strategies and methods that follow those of their students' characters and abilities.

The Evaluation of Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary

Q8: Which type of tests do you usually provide to assess your students' vocabulary mastery?

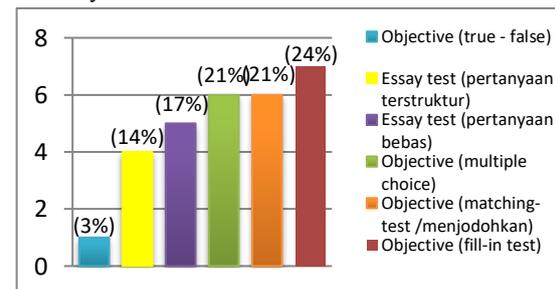


Figure 3. Type of test

Based on the results of the data gathered through a survey, it was discovered that the type of objective fill-in test is the one that teachers most frequently use to evaluate their students' vocabulary mastery (24%). The next type of test that the teacher most widely uses is the type of objective matching test (21%) and the type of multiple choice objective test (21%). In addition, the teacher also uses essay test types of open-ended questions (17%), structured questions (14%), and the type of True-False objective test (3%).

Q9: Are you satisfied with your teaching strategies that you have practice previously?

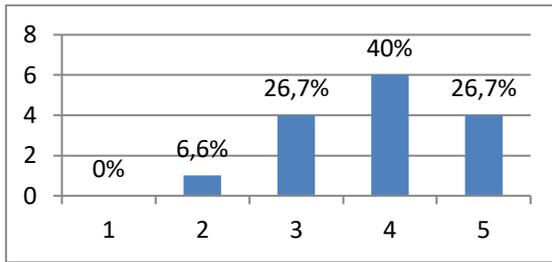


Figure 4. Scala of satisfaction

The description of each scale number is as follows:

- 1 = very dissatisfied 3 = neutral 5 = very satisfied
- 2 = dissatisfied 4 = satisfied

The data on the chart shows that 26.7% of the teacher is very satisfied with the teaching strategies they have practiced, 40% of teachers feel satisfied, 26.7% of teachers feel neutral, and 6.6% of teachers feel dissatisfied with the teaching strategies they practiced previously.

Q10: What are your suggestion for teachers and students to improve vocabulary skills?

Finally, those surveyed offered guidance to educators and students on how to improve students' vocabulary. The recommendations are compiled in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Sugestion for teachers and students

What are your suggestion for teachers and students to improve vocabulary skills?	
For teacher	For students
Speaking English when teaching	Practice speaking English a lot every day
Try many strategies	Study and remember a word a day
Play some vocabulary games with students	Playing games in the language app.
Make an active class	Reading anything related to English
Find the latest information which is fun to discuss	Develop a reading habit
Never stop improving skill even though we have been a teacher	Learn all vocabulary around you
Do a personal approach if your student seems difficult to understand.	Remember the synonym of a word
	Watching movies and writing the vocabulary that you don't know yet.

Discussion

According to the findings of this research, teachers employ a wide range of strategies to help students learn to master their vocabulary, depending on both their own students and their teachers' skill levels. In order to determine students' success in mastering vocabulary, teachers prepare by compiling learning indicators using their own experiences as well as information from other sources like books and the internet. The teachers do not always prepare their learning indicators but teachers usually often prepare their learning indicators before doing teaching practice in the classroom. Furthermore, for learning materials used by teachers, many are sourced from books relating to English, including the teacher's guidebook and student textbook. Some teachers also use other sources as their learning materials, such as dictionaries, the internet, and other media such as films, songs, posters, and magazines.

Based on the teachers' findings, activities are useful for increasing mastery of vocabulary through practice, reading many books, note-taking, and memorizing. Furthermore, for students who have difficulties comprehending vocabulary, teachers believe that making students do mind mapping/taking-note and make a personal approach can help students comprehend vocabulary. Note-taking is potentially effective and important for student achievement (Kiewra, 2018) because taking notes can help students remember and write correctly the spelling of the vocabulary they are learning. A personal approach is very useful for improving students' vocabulary mastery because a personal approach emphasizes the differences of each individual so that this activity is able to help teachers find the focus of a student's problem which is then able to find the best teaching strategy for that student.

When evaluating their students, many teachers employ objective question formats like fill-in tests, matching tests, multiple choice questions, and essay questions with open-ended and structured answers. After all was said and done, the respondents—in this case, the teacher—were very pleased with the instructional

techniques they had previously used and recommended to other teachers.

A previous study on what effective and ineffective strategies English language learners perceive conducted by S. Sa'D & F. Rajabi in 2018 found that the point being made here is not that teachers' VTSs (vocabulary teaching strategies) are ineffective, but rather that there may be a greater need for more strategies when it comes to teaching vocabulary. This finding is the same as the findings made by the researcher because the survey results show that the use of broad and varied teaching strategies according to the character of students can make their learning vocabulary mastery more effective than just using the same strategy. The difference between this study and the research conducted by S. Sa'D & F. Rajabi in 2018 is the data collection method. Previous research used students as participants, while this study used teachers as the participants. Furthermore, many closed-ended questions in the form of statements were used in earlier research surveys. The study's questioning style, in contrast, relied heavily on open-ended inquiries that led to responses that contained a variety of viewpoints and ideas.

In addition, the researchers also found that the teacher's teaching strategy must be accompanied by student learning strategies to create success in students' vocabulary mastery. Research conducted by P. Gounder in 2019, which examined vocabulary learning techniques employed by English language students who are studying it as a foreign language, found that to increase their vocabulary, EFL students frequently use repetition, memorization, dictionary techniques, use of translation, background knowledge, and experience (Goundar, 2019). The activities found by the researchers such as reading, watching, and listening to something in English were also able to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Instead of being conducted separately from other lessons, vocabulary instruction should be incorporated into lessons on reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Asyiah, 2017). In the vocabulary teaching and vocabulary learning research conducted by Asyiah, it was discovered

that vocabulary learning and teaching are thought to be the most successful methods for enhancing students' cognitive abilities. Students' ability to remember, comprehend, and use vocabulary in everyday communication is related to their cognitive skills. The researcher agrees that a good vocabulary teaching strategy must be accompanied by other English language skills teaching strategies so that students' cognitive skills and vocabulary mastery increase.

The novelty of this research from previous studies are that it uses a retrospective study to compare and help teachers find the best vocabulary teaching strategies according to the abilities, characteristics, and interests of their students. This retrospective review of the study collected various types of teaching strategies that benefit teachers and learning strategies that benefit students.

This research also contributes to English learning, especially vocabulary teaching strategies, as a reference and a means of discovery and scientific development. Future researchers are expected to benefit from this research and gain new understanding of English teacher strategies for enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. The findings of this study should ultimately help students succeed in developing their vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

This study discusses identification of teacher teaching strategies that can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The teaching strategy is then divided into three, namely preparation, practice, and evaluation strategies. Good planning and execution of teaching strategies will result from teachers' positive perceptions (Ilmi & Wuli Fitriati, 2020). The results and findings of this study can be concluded as follows. In preparation, the teacher prepares learning indicators whose sources come from experience, books, the internet, and the teacher's observations on the students' English skills. Various sources of learning materials then support the teacher's teaching strategy in preparation. The sources of learning materials

can be taken from books related to English, dictionaries, the internet, and other easily accessible media.

The second teaching strategy is a practical strategy. In practice, participants suggested several useful activities that could improve students' vocabulary mastery for both teachers and students. Activities that students can do are such as doing practices such as doing exercises, doing tests, and using vocabulary in daily conversation. In addition, other activities that students can apply are such as getting used to reading English books, taking notes, and enjoying entertainment such as movies, songs, and games in English. Activities suggested by participants to improve students' vocabulary mastery are not much different from those suggested for students. Teachers are also suggested to use broad teaching strategies to increase students' activeness and understanding.

Based on this research, the researcher believes that not all teachers use the teaching strategies suggested by experts. Some teachers admitted that they usually create and use teaching strategies that are suitable for their students because teachers know more about the character of students and the best strategies for them. Then to create teaching strategies that match the student's character, the teacher helps students who have difficulty understanding vocabulary by making them take notes, take personal approaches, and evaluate students and the suitability of teaching strategies.

As part of the evaluation strategy, fill-in tests, which require students to remember both the correct spelling and the meaning of a word, can help students improve their vocabulary mastery. Based on the data that has been collected in this study, the researcher stated that a good English teaching strategy is to try to use many strategies and be active in practice such as speaking in English when teaching. Not only improving students' vocabulary mastery, but this strategy is also able to improve other students' English skills such as listening and speaking.

There are still many limitations in this study, so researchers hope that future researchers who will research on related topics should

increase the number of participants with wider locations and teaching experiences. We know that many teachers out there still have their own effective teaching strategies that they apply to their students. Thus, research on teaching strategies to improve students' vocabulary mastery can then be continued by future researchers.

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