

EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON USING SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD IN TEACHING VOCABULARY

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Abstract

The research was accomplished to investigate the perceptions of elementary-school teachers on using Situational Language Teaching method in teaching vocabulary. The aims of this study were to examine the advantages of using situational language teaching method in teaching vocabularies and to investigate English teachers' challenges of using Situational Language Teaching method in teaching vocabulary. This research was completed by using a qualitative approach and the researchers employed a semi-structured interview to collect the data. The research participants were five English teachers who teach English subject at elementary schools in Aceh Barat. The results of this research indicate that the advantages of using this method were enhancing students' motivation and creating an effective teaching-learning process. Then, the challenges of using Situational Language Teaching methods in teaching vocabulary were preparing course material and dealing with students' boredom.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception; Situational Language Teaching; Teaching Vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, vocabulary is a central point to understand and express ideas. Richard and Renandya (2002, as cited in Fidyati, 2018:115) interpret vocabulary as "a core component of language acquisition and is a benchmark of how well a language learner speaks, hears, reads, and writes". In a more complicated way, vocabulary is characterized as the knowledge of words and their meanings. According to Fidyati (2018), vocabulary is divided into four language competencies: listening, writing, reading, and speaking. Vocabulary is the basis of a language because it is a more substantial base in learning English.

Moreover, simple vocabulary is the best choice for students ; it is stated that an English teacher for the junior high school level plays a significant role in the teaching-learning process (Yopi, 2003). On the other hand, some teachers find many difficulties in teaching vocabulary in junior high school. Usually, the student is challenged to memorize the new words; the time to teach vocabulary is limited because several skills need to be

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learned in English (listening, speaking, writing, and reading). Also, the teachers must be sure that the students can put the new vocabulary in a proper sentence and express the word in good pronunciation.

Teaching English as a foreign language to elementary-school learners is not easy. In line with this, Gruss (2016:71) stated that “teaching a foreign language to children might often generate controversies since they are not yet fully competent speakers of their first language”. Thus, English teachers must be able to select and adjust an appropriate approach, method, and strategy in order that those learners are able to develop their English skills successfully (Manalullaili, 2015). Otherwise, as argued by Toro et.al (2018), learners’ oral production of the language will be poor if the teachers apply approach, method, technique, and strategy which are not suitable for the learners.

However, some English teachers still use traditional methods by ordering students to memorize new vocabulary by translating it into learners’ first language. It can be said that teachers tend to translate the written text into mother tongue or give the students the list of words with equivalence (Septiana, 2011). Fauziati (2002, as cited in Septiana, 2011) argued that some teachers still implement the traditional method because they believe it is effective in teaching vocabulary for students. In learning English, it is believed that vocabulary cannot be taught independently, unless learners particularly young learners, will be confused even frustrated (Wulanjani, 2016). Learning English for the first time needs interesting methods and strategies to make learning English enjoyable. Many methods can be used in teaching English vocabulary; one of them is Situational Language Teaching method.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), Situational Language Teaching embraces an inductive approach to teaching grammar. Situational Language Teaching “emphasized on spoken language teaching in the beginning; the target language is the language of the classroom, and new language points are introduced and practiced situationally” (Intarpanich, 2013). Using this method, the sense of words or structure is not to be given in either the mother tongue or the target language by definition but is induced by the way the form is used in a situation.

Billows (1963, as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) argue that when we give the meaning of a new word, either by a translation into the home language or by an equivalent in the same language, we weaken the idea that the word gives to the mind as soon as we introduce it. The explanation is therefore discouraged, and the learner is expected to deduce the meaning of a particular structure or vocabulary item from the situation in which it is

presented. The learner is required to adapt the vocabulary learned in a classroom to non-classroom circumstances. In this context, as stated by Mareva and Nyota (2012:104), “language is viewed as a set of structures related to situations”. That is how children’s language learning is thought to take place, and the same mechanisms are thought to take place in second and foreign language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

There were previous researches conducted on the Situational Language Teaching issue. Husniati (2010), for example, figured out that students could improve their vocabulary achievement through the use of Situational Language Teaching in English nouns, English verbs, and English adjectives. Regarding the previous researches, many methods can be used in teaching vocabulary, but in this research Situational Language Teaching method in teaching vocabulary was focused only. Thus, this research was aimed to investigate the perceptions of English teachers in using Situational Language Teaching method, particularly in teaching vocabulary.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative approach was employed in this study. This research approach is used to provide a better understanding of the research problem. Mohajan (2018:2) defined that “qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals”. Furthermore, five English teachers from Elementary schools in Johan Pahlawan sub-district, Aceh Barat, were involved as the participants of this research.

Due to the purposive sampling, the researchers defined particular criteria in the collection of the sample for this study. First, participants must be the teachers who teach English subject at Elementary schools. Second, participants are the teachers who have used the situational language teaching method in teaching vocabulary. In gaining data, the researchers used a semi-structured interview to obtain deep information. Each participant was interviewed for about 30 minutes to answer ten questions prepared by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The data from the interview obtained by the researchers were transcribed and then interpreted by thematic analysis. In this research, a coding investigation was implemented to extract the information from the participants’ responses. This affirmed the

appropriateness of the things for each element of the theoretical structure of the instrument. All the responses were coded and categorized under the themes.

In this qualitative research, the result of data collection was analyzed into several steps referring to Creswell (2012). Those steps are: first, organizing and preparing the data; second, reading through all data to obtain general information; third, coding the data into several categories, and open coding was used to analyze the data; fourth, looking for patterns and themes; fifth, representing, and reporting findings; sixth, interpreting and discussing the meaning of the findings. The final step of qualitative data analysis was analyzing and addressing the results.

After going through some processes, the researchers gained several findings that were composed into two main points based on the research problems addressed. The first point is the advantages of using the situational language teaching method, which consists of enhancing students' motivation in learning vocabulary and creating an effective teaching-learning process. The second point is the challenges of using the situational language teaching method, which consists of the teachers' preparation in applying SLT, and how to deal with students' boredom.

1. The advantages of using Situational Language Teaching Method in Teaching Vocabulary

Based on the answers that were given by all participants in the interview, almost all of the participants had similar perceptions. Based on the interview responses, there were some advantages of using the situational language teaching method, as perceived by teachers. These benefits include enhancing students' motivation to learn vocabulary and creating an effective teaching-learning process.

a. Enhancing students' motivation to learn vocabulary

The results showed that all participants agreed that situational language teaching method makes teachers easier to enhance students' motivation in learning vocabulary. As Teacher-2 said :

"Yes, because we teach and talk directly, and it builds communication between students and me. So the vocabulary that I teach looks tangible, and the pronunciation is clear, and it makes students better understand and can increase their motivation in learning vocabulary."[ES]

Teacher-4 also had the same idea:

"Yes, in my opinion, this method is indeed easier to increase student motivation. Because with the practice of this method, we present new vocabulary and new grammar through oral practice so that students repeat themselves, so students are motivated to memorize this vocabulary especially when their friends have memorized everything. And I always try to repeat the vocabulary that I have taught."[RK]

Furthermore, Teacher-4 also mentioned the same thing:

"The strength that I found, many students are motivated to collect and memorize new vocabulary. Because when they can say one word as if they want to repeat it continuously. That way, they hope to be able to speak English well, so with that, they memorize new vocabulary. That's the advantage."[RK]

From the teachers' explanation above, the situational language teaching method can make it easier for teachers to increase students' motivation because it can build direct communication with students.

b. Creating an effective teaching-learning process

Regarding the use of situational language teaching methods in teaching vocabulary, all participants responded that they have used the method when they teach in the classroom, and they argued that this method is effective to apply.

As Teacher-2 reported:

"Yes, it is good, effective to apply because I have already used it to children if directly, the approach is easier to understand and easy to apply in the classroom. Because also face to face so can see directly when there is an object, which can not be seen that is difficult to understand."[ES]

Furthermore, Teacher-3 had the same argument :

"In my opinion, this method is very effective to apply in the classroom so that students more easily understand the lesson. So by using this method of situational language teaching, students more easily absorb and understand the learning we teach."[AK]

Similarly, Teacher-1 argued :

"Yes, because this method is suitable for teaching vocab to students to be able to speak appropriately and directly practised by making sentences, then this method is also easy for students to understand."[LN]

As Teachers 5 stated:

"Of course. Because the teacher creates a situation that suits the learning material so that it is easier for students to learn new vocabulary."[IH]

When teaching vocabulary using SLT method, it is easy for students to recognize the words with their pronunciation and makes students easy to memorize vocabulary. Hence, this method is very suitable for teaching vocabulary because it applies a repetition method that make students more comfortable to remember the lesson. Therefore, this method is very effective to be applied in the class to learn vocabulary.

2. The challenges of using Situational Language Teaching Method in Teaching Vocabulary

In this study, to analyze the challenges in using situational language teaching methods in teaching vocabulary, the participants were asked about the difficulties they found and faced in using SLT in their class. Based on what participants said, there were not many challenges faced by teachers in using situational language teaching methods; preparation in applying situational language teaching methods and dealing with students' boredom are two challenges noted.

a. Teachers' preparation in applying SLT

The results showed that one of the difficulties found by participants in using the situational language teaching method was when the teacher prepared materials to be applied in class, such as carrying objects to be taught directly, taking flash-cards or pictures that support vocabulary teaching.

In this case, Teacher 2 said :

"The way I prepare the class, yes, before I prepare what material I want to teach and bring the object directly or the relevant picture then shows it to the children."[ES]

In addition, Teacher 3 said :

.... "when I had a teaching schedule, I usually downloaded the flashcard on Google and printed the flashcard in preparation for teaching materials. Because if we use the situational language teaching method without flashcards or materials, it's a bit more challenging to teach. Because we have to show and show first to students, then we say the pronunciation so that students more easily understand the vocabulary."[AK]

From the statement above, it could be inferred that preparation in using the situational language teaching method is a challenge that would be faced by the teacher. Teachers must prepare course material before teaching in class. The purpose of this preparation is that the teacher is ready to teach, and students will easily understand the material.

b. Dealing with students' boredom

As stated earlier, by using this method continuously, students may get bored in learning, and the teacher must react by giving other interlude methods such as providing games. As Teacher-4 said:

"The way I solve that problem is by the way I use the distraction method like using the game method when students are getting bored."[RK]

In addition, Teacher 4 also added:

“The way I solve the problem is by mixing other methods or mix methods, such as making vocabulary games that will make it easy for children to remember the words that are taught, so by making games individually or in groups.RKJ

From the statements above, it can be concluded that through this method, the teacher might be able to overcome students' boredom by inserting other methods or by using games. That way, students will not feel bored, and learning process can run smoothly.

According to the above responses, it can be noted that teachers face two challenges when using situational language teaching methods in vocabulary teaching. The first challenge is regarding the difficulty for teachers in planning learning material. Second, if this method was used continuously, it would make students bored.

Discussion

The result of the research shows that all of the English teachers at elementary school agreed SLT is good for improving students' motivation in vocabulary learning. As reported by Du (2017), using situational language teaching method is effective to attract learners' attentions stimulating their enthusiasm and motivation due to lively activities facilitated by teachers in the classroom. When the teachers use the SLT method, they can teach and talk directly to build communication with the students. This is in line with Jain and Patel (2008), stating that this method can introduce vocabulary, including abstract vocabulary, by using the real and the planned situation. Another important point is that, as argued by Koran (2015:400) “it is crucial that teachers create a learning environment where learners not only learn the aspects of language and use this knowledge but also get adequate exposure to the target language to be able to use it naturally and fluently”.

The second advantage of using the situational language teaching method is that it creates an effective teaching-learning process. It involves repetition vocabulary by the right intonation and inductive approach to the teaching of grammar. Liskova (2014) argues that a significant feature of the SLT is also to teach vocabulary and grammar control. Hussain (2015) added that the implementation of situational language teaching method aims to ensure that a substantial general service vocabulary is included well in learning process. It was the list of the most frequently used vocabulary that is essential for understanding most of the texts. It is supported by Jain and Patel (2008), reporting the method was based on the language's conceptual view. Hence, situational language teaching method is appropriate to be used in teaching English vocabulary, particularly to young learners.

Furthermore, learners should know the situation where multiple mechanisms are used to communicate a message or to transmit ideas. With the help of the situation, the students can understand effectively. Moreover, Riani (2013) asserted that the learner must listen and repeat what the teacher says throughout the learning process and respond to questions or commands. All teachers agreed SLT method was easily implemented while teaching directly in the classroom by constantly repeating vocabulary. It will make it easier for the students to understand the vocabulary taught and make them more likely to remember the vocabulary given. As claimed by Huang et al (2010:312), it can be concluded that situational language teaching method is "effective instruction paradigm for English teaching in term of providing vocabularies and sentence patterns with their frequent situations through learning material".

Furthermore, all of the participants accepted that the use of situational language teaching methods often poses challenges which make teachers ready for classroom teaching. The results of the interview show that the teachers always need to plan teaching materials that are in harmony with this method itself before teaching starts. Richards and Rogers (2001) explained that the essential teaching of English in Situational Language Teaching is a structural syllabus and a word list. A structured syllabus is a list of basic structures and sentence patterns in English organized according to the presentation order.

Jin-e li (2019:3) states that "Situational Language Teaching takes a step further with the Direct Method concept of presentation and practice using objects, pictures, and examples, rendering presentation and practice in a single coherent 'scenario' whenever possible". From the interview result, the teachers need to plan teaching resources such as what content or vocabulary to offer, then items or media such as flashcards, photos, posters, or other teaching aids that help them in teaching learning process. Hussain and Sajid (2015) proved it; they argued that several teacher roles provide means of various teaching aids such as wall charts, flashcards, posters, photos, stick figures, etc.

According to Riani (2013), the learner has little influence over the learning material and is therefore considered likely to succumb to inappropriate habits unless the teacher manipulates them expertly. Also, the interview results show that the teachers had to manage the class properly, and had to master the class with this approach by skilfully manipulating the situation to improve the learner's sentence. Furthermore, suppose this approach is continuously used, in that case, it will make students feel bored in the learning process so that the teacher must find a way to solve these problems by interspersing this method with other strategies such as playing games. Jain and Patel (2008) stated that this method is

useful to lower class only. Higher class students are not benefited by this method. Only a few selected items can be taught through this method, not all language items. After all, in English teaching-learning process, it is a usual condition when teachers face some challenges in and out of the classroom (Anyiendah, 2017).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion the researchers concluded some points. First, one of the advantages of using the situational language teaching method in teaching vocabularies is to increase the motivation of students in vocabulary learning. Also, this method is easily applied by the teachers because it requires students to repeat vocabulary continuously, and it will make it easier for students to understand the vocabulary taught and make students more likely to remember the given words.

Furthermore, teachers faced some challenges in using the situational language teaching method in teaching vocabulary; teachers need a very good preparation in implementing SLT; in using this method, teachers always need to plan teaching materials that are consistent with this method. Another challenge is that the teachers play a role as the class manager and must master the class to manipulate the situation skillfully to improve learners sentences. Furthermore, if this approach is used continuously, it will make students feel bored in the learning process, so teachers must find particular ways to solve the problem.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, this study provided several suggestions for teachers and students. It is expected that Situational Language Teaching Method can be one of methods that will be used by the teachers in terms of teaching English vocabulary. This method may also solve the problem of the students' difficulties in memorizing the meaning of vocabulary; then it will make the learning process in the classroom will be more exciting and active.

The situational language teaching method is one of methods that is very easy to apply in class. Due to Covid-19, this research was completed by using the interview as a research instrument. Therefore, future researchers can add other data collection methods, such as experiment, observation, and questionnaires, to gain more data needed.

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