Developing students' English vocabulary through translation activities using narrative text

Authors	:	Syamsia & Erisa La Jie
Affiliations	:	English Education Study Program, ISDIK Kie Raha Maluku Utara, Ternate, North Maluku, Indonesia
Correspondence	:	syamsia@stkipkieraha.ac.id

Abstract : The objective of this research was to determine whether translating narrative texts could enhance students' English vocabulary. The study identified that students struggled with English largely due to limited vocabulary, which hindered their ability to form responses and led to frustration and hesitation. Despite ongoing efforts, teachers had not effectively addressed this issue or engaged students in meaningful, interactive activities. To address this, the researchers implemented translation activities involving narrative texts to improve vocabulary acquisition. This qualitative descriptive study involved 20 eighth-grade students from SMP Negeri 47 Halmahera Selatan, out of a population of 98. Data were collected through tests, observations, and interviews, and analyzed using data reduction, display, and conclusion-drawing techniques. Results showed that 13 of the 20 students scored above average. Specifically, 2 students achieved perfect scores, 5 received good scores, 6 obtained satisfactory scores, and 7 scored below average. The study found that using narrative text translation activities to develop students' vocabulary was effective, achieving a 65% improvement rate.

Keywords : *Vocabulary development, translation activities, narrative texts, qualitative study, student engagement*

Introduction

In Indonesia, English is a popular subject, and many students are motivated to learn it as a foreign language due to its global importance in education, business, and technology. Students recognize that proficiency in English can open doors to better job opportunities, international communication, and access to vast resources of knowledge. This drives interest and enthusiasm among many learners.

However, for some students, learning English can feel challenging and even boring. This might stem from a variety of factors, including difficulties in understanding grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, as well as the methods used to teach the language. If the learning process is overly focused on memorization or lacks engaging, real-life applications, students may lose motivation. The key to overcoming this is often more interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, which can make learning English more enjoyable and accessible.

Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental aspect of learning any language, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. According to Alqahtani (2015), a strong vocabulary base is essential for effective communication, influencing both grammatical accuracy and functional conversation skills. Wallace (2007) emphasizes that vocabulary is crucial in learning English; without sufficient vocabulary, students face significant challenges in using language skills effectively. Mastering vocabulary is a foundational step in acquiring proficiency in a target language.

For second grade junior high school students, learning English can be easier for those who have already been introduced to the language in earlier grades. Having prior exposure to Basic English concepts, such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, allows these students to build upon their existing knowledge, making the learning process smoother. English proficiency at this stage is important because it serves as a foundation for more advanced learning in high school. As students' progress in their intellectual development, their ability to understand and use English will improve, and their unique language skills will begin to emerge. At the junior high level, students are in a formative period where their minds are highly receptive to new information. This makes it easier for teachers to transfer knowledge effectively. Since students are still shaping their academic and personal identities, the way English is taught can significantly impact their language acquisition and interest. Engaging and interactive teaching methods are crucial in helping students absorb English language skills that will benefit them in higher levels of education.

Based on the explanation above, researchers found the students' problems in vocabulary when the researchers done PPL II at SMP Negeri 47 South of Halmahere. the researchers have found that The students' difficulty in learning English is primarily rooted in their limited vocabulary. When the teacher asks them to respond in English, their lack of vocabulary prevents them from forming answers, leading to frustration and hesitation in using the language. Despite this issue persisting over time, the teacher has not effectively addressed it, failing to engage students and stimulate their interest in practicing English through simple interactions.

One key factor contributing to this challenge is the teaching strategy. The methods used by the teacher may not be engaging or aligned with students' needs, making it harder for them to memorize and use new vocabulary. A teaching strategy is essentially the teacher's plan to organize and deliver lessons in a way that helps students achieve learning goals. If the strategy is ineffective or uninteresting, students are less likely to be motivated or engaged.

To overcome this, students need fun and interactive learning activities that make vocabulary acquisition exciting and memorable. Games, interactive exercises, visual aids, or real-life communication scenarios can stimulate students' interest and encourage them to practice and expand their vocabulary in a way that feels natural and enjoyable. By making

learning more dynamic, teachers can better influence student enthusiasm and success in learning English.

Relating to the problems, the researchers would like to conducted activity translation of narrative text as a solution and ways to teaching methods that can make students motivated to learn English. Translation activities involve transferring the meaning of a text from one language to another while ensuring that the original meaning remains intact. The translator must carefully read and fully understand the source text, considering its context, meaning, and subtle nuances. In addition to grasping the core message, they need to be mindful of the grammatical structures and the appropriate language style in both the source and target languages. The goal is to ensure that the translated version accurately conveys the same message and intent as the original text, without losing any of its purpose or essence.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a critical linguistic aspect necessary for effective communication in both oral and written English (Dahidi, 2004). According to Tarigan (1994), vocabulary encompasses the meaning and usage of words in a language. It reflects the range of words known and used by a speaker or writer, similar to a dictionary but with practical explanations. Dowdowski (1982) defines vocabulary as the complete set of words within a language. Fries (1945) adds that vocabulary is crucial in learning a foreign language, requiring students to master individual words to expand their vocabulary.

Based on these expert definitions, the researcher concludes that vocabulary consists of the collection of words used in communication. Mastery of vocabulary is essential for effective language learning, as a rich vocabulary enables more precise expression and enhances comprehension. A broad vocabulary allows individuals to understand and engage with complex texts more easily, as familiarity with a wide range of words facilitates grasping meaning and context in sophisticated or specialized materials.

Translation and narrative text

To effectively learn how to translate English sentences into Indonesian, it is essential to understand the principles of translation before engaging in translation activities. Various experts offer insights into translation theory.

Catford (1965) defines translation as the replacement of textual material in one language with equivalent textual material in another language. According to Newmark (1988, as cited in Sakriani, 2017), translation involves rendering the meaning of a text into another language while maintaining the author's intended message. Nida (1974) describes translation as reproducing the natural equivalent of the source language message in the receiving language, both in terms of meaning and style. Translators are advised to use natural phrases that closely align with the original meaning and language style, ensuring the translation mirrors the original text without altering its meaning.

Translation activities involve transferring text from one language to another while preserving the original meaning. This requires careful reading and understanding of the original text, including its context, meaning, and nuances. Translators must attend to grammatical structure, appropriate language style, and ensure that the message and purpose of the original text are maintained.

Based on these definitions, researchers conclude that translation is the process of converting text from one language to another, accurately conveying meaning while preserving the original message. This process is vital for facilitating communication between speakers of different languages and bridging linguistic gaps, allowing ideas and information to be shared effectively across cultures. Successful translation demands a deep understanding of both the

source and target languages, including their grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances, to faithfully transmit the intended message.

A narrative text is a type of writing that presents a sequence of interconnected events. It typically includes elements such as characters, settings, and plots, following a pattern that includes a beginning, middle, and end. The primary purpose of narrative texts is to entertain or convey a message to the reader.

A narrative is essentially a story or the act of telling a story. Nislean (2008) describes narrative as a series of events with three basic components: the chronological sequence of events (the story), their verbal or visual representation (the text), and the act of telling or writing (the narrative). Although stories and plots are key elements of narratives, narratives encompass events that lead to various situations, not limited to a single occurrence but involving multiple sequential or chronological events. Narrative texts come in various genres, including fiction, non-fiction, fairy tales, legends, and myths.

Previous studies

Several researchers have explored translation activities, yielding notable findings. Daning (2004) examined the use of translation methods in teaching English. She found that translation methods simplify the teaching process for educators due to their clarity and straightforwardness. The engaging nature of these activities helps maintain student interest, facilitating quicker vocabulary acquisition and better understanding of the material.

Andi (2021) investigated efforts to enhance students' English vocabulary using the Grammar Translation Method. The study found that this method allowed students to learn in a relaxed and enjoyable manner. By encouraging students to independently discover knowledge, the method supported long-term retention of the material. The study concluded that the Grammar Translation Method improved both the learning process and vocabulary development.

These findings reinforce the researcher's confidence that their study will yield valuable results. However, they recognize that students' varying personalities may result in different advantages and challenges for each individual.

Method

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive. According to Tabrani (2015), qualitative research aims to understand human or social phenomena through a comprehensive, detailed, and nuanced approach.

The study's population included all students at SMP Negeri 47 Halmahera Selatan, totaling 98 students. The sample comprised 20 eighth-grade students from this school.

Data collection techniques involved tests, observations, and interviews to gather in-depth qualitative data. The researchers employed several data analysis steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Results and Discussion

Results of test

This research was conducted by organizing a class session with students to assess their ability to acquire English vocabulary. The main activity involved having the students translate narrative texts, which allowed the researcher to collect data on their vocabulary skills. The test results were used to evaluate the students' proficiency and to identify areas where vocabulary improvement was needed.

The test administered to the students was a narrative text translation, designed to measure how well they could understand and convey meaning in English. Once the tests were completed

and scores were collected, the researcher analyzed the results to assess the students' vocabulary development through translation activities. The analysis aimed to determine the students' vocabulary acquisition and growth based on their performance in translating narrative texts.

Table 1. Test results

Ss	ASPECTS					TOTAL	Category
	IG	RG	R	WG	UG		
S1	20	20	20	20	10	90	Very Good
S2	20	20	10	10	10	70	Enough
S3	20	10	10	10	10	60	Fair
S4	20	20	20	20	10	90	Very Good
S5	20	20	20	10	10	80	Good
S6	20	10	10	20	10	70	Enough
S7	20	10	10	10	10	60	Fair
S8	20	20	10	20	10	80	Good
S9	20	20	10	20	10	80	Good
S10	20	20	20	20	20	100	Excellent
S11	20	10	10	10	10	60	Fair
S12	20	10	10	20	10	70	Enough
S13	20	20	10	20	10	80	Good
S14	20	20	20	20	20	100	Excellent
S15	20	20	10	10	20	80	Good
S16	20	20	20	20	10	90	Very Good
S17	20	10	10	10	10	80	Good
S18	20	20	20	20	10	90	Very Good
S19	20	20	20	20	10	90	Very Good
N20	TOTAL					1590	
	MEAN SCORE					79,5	

As can be seen in the table above, almost all students get very good scores in developing their vocabulary. From the table above, there are 2 students, namely students with the initials S10 and S14 who got a perfect score of 100 with an excellent classification and there are 5 students with the initials S1, S4, S16, S18 and S19 who got a score of 90 with a very good classification. As well as 6 students with the initials S5, S8, S9, S13, S15 and S17 who got a score of 80 with a classification good. Moreover, there are several students who scored below average in the test results, namely 4 students with the initials S2, S6, S12 and S20 got a score of 70 with the classification of enough and 3 students with the initials S3, S7 and S11

The following are the percentage results that the researcher has described to easily see the success rate of the researcher who has done it.

Table 2. Students' scores percentage

No.	Score	Frequency	Mean	Percentage
1.	100	2	10	10%
2.	90	5	22,5	25%
3.	80	6	24	30%

4.	70	4	14	20%
5.	60	3	9	15%
Total		20	79,5	100%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there are around 20 students who have carried out translation test activities, Students have been able to achieve the maximum score, as can be seen from the amount of average score obtained by students of 79,5. This means that students' ability to develop vocabulary in translation test activities is very good. Around 20 students, there were 2 students who got a perfect score, namely 100 with a percentage of 10%, 5 students who got a score of 90 with a percentage of 25%, and 6 students who got a score of 80 with a percentage of 30%, and 4 students who got a score below average with a score of 70 who got a percentage of 15% and 3 students who got a score of 60 with a percentage of 15%. If judged by the researcher's success, the researcher found 65% of students who were able to develop their vocabulary through text translation activities and 35% of students who were not able to develop their vocabulary.

Results of observation

Observation is used to directly observe student activities during the research process. In the observations that have been made, the researcher will describe the results that have been obtained during the study as follows:

Table 3. Results from Observation

No	Students' activity	Evaluation Yes	No
	Preparation		
1.	Students begin the lesson by praying	✓	
2.	Students are present on time	✓	
3.	Students prepare tools and media in learning (books, pens, dictionaries and others)	✓	
4.	Students are ready to take part in teaching and learning activities	✓	
	Presentation		
5.	Students pay attention to the explanation of the learning material	✓	
6.	Students take note of the learning materials given	✓	
7.	Students can re-explain the learning material		✓
8.	Students are active in asking questions about the material being taught	✓	
9.	Students are able to answer questions given by the teacher		✓
10.	Students start translation English texts	✓	
11.	Students are able to translate English texts	✓	
12	Student interaction with other students	✓	

13.	Students have difficulty translating narrative texts		✓
14.	Students are able to solve problems in the translation process		✓
15.	Students discover new vocabulary	✓	
16.	Students are able to interpret, read, pronounce, write and use the vocabulary they have mastered	✓	
17.	Students draw conclusions in learning		✓
	Closing		
18.	Students write assignments	✓	
19.	Students pay attention to the teacher in conveying the conclusion and the next material		✓
20.	Students close learning by praying	✓	

From the results of student observations, there are several aspects of students that have been done very well, namely, students do well in learning. Students always start the lesson by praying and being present at the right time for learning. Students also prepare learning tools and media very well. Some students are quite responsive and enthusiastic in participating in learning activities. Some students pay close attention to explanations. Students listen to the teacher's explanation of the learning objectives well and take notes of the lessons that have been taught. Some are also active when asking questions in class about the material being taught. Interaction between students' needs to be appreciated well, they are very compact in solving problems in learning. Students also focus on translation the narrative text given. In addition, they are also able to interpret it. Some students were even able to recite and read the English text. There are some students who are also able to conclude the results of the translation of the text. Students do an evaluation in the form of a test of translating well. This is done to see and observe how far the ability is towards the material provided. Students can observe, and communicate the lessons given look good. Students close the learning by saying greetings and are very orderly so that they also listen to the messages conveyed by the teacher seriously.

However, there are several aspects that need to be improved by students; namely, some students who sit in the back tell a lot of stories so that other students are disturbed so that learning is less conducive. In addition, only a few students are active but some students are still lacking, almost all students just sit quietly observing without giving questions to the teacher. Only two students actively asked questions. Some students also have difficulty in getting new vocabulary when doing translation test activities. Only about 3 students were able to conclude the learning results, the other students just sat silently.

Results of Interview

Based on the results of interviews with students, the researcher concluded that most students face many problems when students learn English and the activity of translating texts. One of the difficulties faced by students when the researcher asked students what difficulties students faced in translation texts the dominant answer was the lack of vocabulary. The following are the results of interviews conducted by the researcher to students. The results of the interview that the researcher will describe are the most dominant answers answered by the students.

Table 4. Results from interview

Question of Interview	Answer of Interview
What are the most common difficulties that people face when learning English?	S6: The biggest difficulty I have is how to use English words and I don't really understand English words. S20: I have difficulty in arranging English vocabulary into a sentence and constructing English sentences is very difficult
Do you have trouble remembering English vocabulary? give the reasons!	S19: It's hard for me to memorize a lot of vocabulary. However, if the vocabulary is small, I can still remember it. S11: Yes, it's hard. Because English words are hard to understand and hard to memorize. S1: It's not difficult. Because if we memorize 5 English words every day we can get a lot of vocabulary.
What is the easy way do you do to remember English vocabulary?	S14: I like listening to English songs so I get more vocabulary from songs. S10: My easy way is just to memorize English vocabulary. S4: I prefer to interpret picture conversations and write down new vocabulary that I see.
How do you feel when you are asked to translate a text from English into Indonesian?	S15: yes i am happy. because i can get understanding from two languages S3: no. I have trouble finding the meaning of each vocabulary one by one S8: Yes. Because with the vocabulary that I get more not only English but also Indonesian
Do you like translation activities? Give reasons why!	S18: yes. Especially translating texts about conversations or short stories S2: no. English has words that are difficult to translate and difficult to put into sentences. S17: yes. I get more vocabulary from translating activities.
What difficulties do you got when translating text?	S7: The biggest difficulty I have is how to use English words and I don't really understand English words. S12: My difficulty is that English words have many meanings when translated. So I have difficulty determining which one fits in a sentence.
Can translating narrative texts increase your vocabulary? Give your reasons!	S5: Yes. I have gained much more vocabulary than before. S9: Yes, translating is one of the activities that increases my vocabulary.

> S13: Yes, I get more vocabulary when doing translation activities
>
> S16: Not bad. Because my vocabulary has increased a little

From the results of the interview above, the researcher concluded that there are some students who are able and some who are not able to carry out activities to translate narrative texts in developing English vocabulary. There are some students whose vocabulary has increased. One of them is a student with the initials S9, he said that with the activity of translating texts, the vocabulary he got was more. Not only that, students with the initials S13 also gave a similar statement, namely that they get more vocabulary when doing text translation activities.

However, there are some students who have not been able to develop their vocabulary, one of which is a student with the initials S7, he said that the most difficult he got was how to use English words and he also did not understand words in English. In addition to S7, there are also students with the initials S12; he said the difficulty is that the word English has many meanings so he has difficulty in determining a sentence with standards. As for students with the initials S2, he said that English has words that are difficult to interpret and difficult to compose into sentences. And students with the initials S1 said that English words are difficult to understand and difficult to memorize.

From the difficulties faced by students, most students have difficulty in interpreting vocabulary. So, the researcher concluded that this difficulty occurred due to the lack of vocabulary obtained by students. Students must learn more to increase their vocabulary. Therefore, translating is the most effective thing in developing English vocabulary.

Discussion

Based on the description of the data that the author has described above based on the existing things, in this section the author will present an analysis of the data obtained from the results of research in the field that the activity of translation texts in English to develop the vocabulary of SMP Negeri 47 Halmahera Selatan has been well realized. The results obtained by the students were very good because the grades they got were almost all perfect. Before implementing the translation activity, as an English teacher at SMP Negeri 47 Halmahera Halmahera, the teacher said that there were only 6 students who achieved KKM scores at school in their subjects. Due to the lack of vocabulary, they get, they do not understand learning in class. However, after carrying out the activity of translation a narrative text in the form of a folktale, there was 65% success of students in developing their English vocabulary where there were 6 people who only achieved the KKM out of 20 students, now there are 13 students out of 20 students who are able to pass the score of the KKM.

Meanwhile, based on the results of observations and interviews with students, it can be analysed that students have participated in learning activities well, followed school rules and regulations very well. The students are also polite to the teacher and the interaction with fellow students is also well established. The communication carried out by students to teachers and other students is fairly polite; cooperation between students is also very compact. However, based on the interviews that have been conducted, there are several students who experience difficulties during English learning activities. According to them, English is difficult, they have difficulty understanding the explanation and meaning in learning English. The lack of English vocabulary is also a trigger that makes it difficult for students to understand the lesson.

So, efforts to develop English vocabulary for students of State Junior High School 47 South Halmahera have gone well in its application, which can be seen in the process of

translating in class and the results that have been obtained. Each student must have different characters and different abilities. There are several difficulties for students in translating English texts, namely students do not understand the meaning of words and difficulties in structuring words to form solid sentences. However, by translating a text, students can add many new words that have never been seen before and, with translation activities are also one of the ways to develop English vocabulary in students.

In an effort to research the activity of translating narrative texts for students in developing their English vocabulary, the researcher can explain well that developing students' English vocabulary through the activity of translation narrative texts is successful in this study. By translation text from English to Indonesian, students can expand their English vocabulary. The process of finding the right and equivalent translations for specific words or phrases can help students understand the meaning and use of new vocabulary in different contexts. This can enrich students' understanding of sentence structure and overall English vocabulary.

Thus, the effort to develop the English vocabulary of students of SMP Negeri 47 Halmahera Selatan, both from the results of tests, observations and interviews conducted by the author during this research process.

Conclusions

Based on the result and discussion above, the researchers can conclude that the method of translation activity narrative texts can develop students' English vocabulary. The activity of translation narrative texts can be an effective method in developing students' English vocabulary. The process of translation helps students expand their vocabulary and improve students' understanding and use of English. There are 13 out of 20 students who scored above average. Which is about 2 students who got perfect scores, 5 students get good scores, 6 students who get good scores, and 7 students who get below average scores. The percentage obtained by the researcher in conducting research using the method of translation narrative texts in developing students' vocabulary was 65%. With these results, we can conclude that research on text translation activities in developing students' vocabulary can be an effective method. Those are some of the conclusions that researchers can draw from the results of this study.

References

Abbot, G. (2010). The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: Principles and Practices. Routledge.

Alqahtani, M. (2015). The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught. International Journal of Teaching and Education, 21-34.

Andi, A. (2021). Contemporary Approaches to Language Learning and Teaching.

Catford, J. C. (1965). A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics. Oxford University Press.

Dahidi, S. A. (2004). Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia. Yudhistira.

Daning, M. (2004). Effective Language Teaching Strategies.

Dowdowski, T. (1982). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. McGraw: Hill.

Fries, C. D. (1945). Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language. University of Michigan Press.

Nida, E. A. (1974). The Theory and Practice of Translation. Brill.

Nislean, H. (2008). Understanding Language Acquisition: Theoretical and Practical Approaches.

Sakriani, M. (2017). The Role of Vocabulary in Learning English: Strategies and Practices.

Syamsia, S., & Rusdy, N. (2021). The Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Method Type Talking Stick in Improving Vocabulary Memorization of the VIII class Students of MTs Al-Kautsar Kao. Langua: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Education, 4(2), 18-27.

Tabrani, W. &. (2015). Innovative Methods in Language Teaching.

Tarigan, H. G. (1994). Prinsip-prinsip Dasar Sastra. Angkasa.

Wallace, J. (2007). Action Research for Language Teachers. Cambridge University Press.