



IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH SEMANTIC MAPPING AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF SMPN 18 MATARAM IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to find out how semantic mapping can improve students' vocabulary mastery at the eighth grade of SMPN 18 Mataram in academic year 2022/2023. This study was conducted as a Classroom Action Research which was implemented in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four stages namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was regarded successful when at least 75% of the students achieved a minimum score at ≥ 75 by the end of cycle. The subjects of this study were the eighth grade students of SMPN 18 Mataram. There were 31 students that consisted of 15 females and 16 males. The data collection method of research were tests and observation sheets. The research findings showed that the use of semantic mapping strategy could improve students' vocabulary mastery. It can be proven from the improvement of students' score. The mean score of the post-test 2 (87.51) was significantly higher than the pre-test (56.54) and post-test 1 (73.55). Moreover, students' participation during the implementation of semantic mapping strategy were improved. The students became active and enthusiastic in learning vocabulary mastery. It means that the semantic mapping strategy was successful to help the students remember and understand the new word easily. In conclusion, the semantic mapping could be used as an alternative strategy to teach vocabulary.

Keywords: *Improving, Vocabulary Mastery, Semantic Mapping*

INTRODUCTION

Learning vocabulary is essential for language learners. The earlier learners learn vocabulary, the easier they will use the language. Juniartawan et.al (2020) states that vocabulary is the first thing to learn in a foreign language. Moreover, Rohmatillah (2017) believes that without learning the vocabulary, the skill of communication in the second language becomes harder. It means without learning vocabulary, learners cannot use the second language in life. In addition, Alqahtani (2015) explains that lack of vocabulary knowledge also gives a serious problem for learners that affects learners' learning process. For that reason, Richards & Renandya (2002) point out without vocabulary learners will be discouraged to use the language. If learners do not pay attention to learning vocabulary, they will get difficulties in the four main language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing. However, Afzal (2019) states that learning vocabulary is quite challenging, especially for the non-native speakers of English who just started to learn the language.

Learners may face many difficulties when starting to learn vocabulary. The internal and external factors influence learners' progress. The internal factors come from learners and vocabulary itself. Learners play an important role in their learning vocabulary progress.

Without their self-will and motivation, the progress will be stuck along. The other internal aspect come from vocabulary itself. Learners must adapt with pronunciation, spelling, guessing meaning through context, correct use of words, and so on. The external factors may come from the frequency of learning vocabulary, teaching and learning aid, the number of learners in the classroom, strategy, etc.

From result of teacher's interviews at SMPN 18 Mataram, it was found that many students have problems in their vocabulary learning. First, they had lack of vocabulary. It was the reason why students did not have any interest and motivation in learning English. Second, it was difficult for them to memorize the unknown words that teacher had taught. Third, they did not pay attention to the teacher while the material was explained. It made them easily forget what they had learned. Last, teacher still used a monotonous teaching technique. This method made students bored and lazy in learning English.

Furthermore, some efforts are required to resolve the problems due to the importance of vocabulary in learning English language. Teachers need to find solutions to teaching vocabulary by applying some alternative ways. The strategy may become a tool that provides a direction to help teachers in teaching activities. Hartatik et.al (2022) states that the application of media in the educational process is crucial because it helps students to facilitate understanding of the material being taught. Therefore, teachers should use appropriate strategy and media for students.

One of the good strategies is semantic mapping. Semantic mapping might be an alternative strategy to make vocabulary learning easier and effective. Johnson et.al (1986) states that semantic maps are graphics which encourage students in discussion and demonstrate to see how ideas and concepts are related to one another. Semantic mapping affords students with the opportunity to remember, arrange and graphically illustrate the important knowledge. According to Oxford (1990), semantic mapping is a valuable strategy that used to improve students' memory and understanding of new words. It designed to aid students understand and memorize new words that will be learned. From the statements above, it is hoped that semantic mapping strategy can stimulate students to learn more about vocabulary items and helps them to memorize new vocabulary.

From the explanation above, the aim of this research is to find out how semantic mapping strategy can improve students' vocabulary mastery at the Eighth Grade of SMPN 18 Mataram in the Academic Year of 2022/2023."

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a Class Action Research. Sujana (2010), Class Action Research is a scientific procedure followed by teachers and students with the aim to solve problems in teaching practice and students' learning accomplishment. In this study, classroom action research was accomplished by the researcher to improve students' vocabulary mastery through semantic mapping. This study was carried out in two cycles which consisted of four phases: (1) Planning, (2) Acting, (3) Observing, (4) Reflecting. Each cycle was held in two meetings. The subject of this study was the eighth grade of SMPN 18 Mataram with 31 students. The members of class consisted 16 females and 15 males.

The data of research were collected by using pre-test, post-test and observation sheet. Pre-test was designed to determine students' knowledge of previous skills of vocabulary

before using semantic mapping strategy. Meanwhile, post-tests were used after using semantic mapping. In this study, two kinds of test were used by the researcher. There were 15 multiple choice and 20 fill in the blank questions. The observation sheets were used to collect the real information and situations during teaching and learning process. The observation was set in the form of check list which also provided additional columns to record the detail information.

The quantitative and qualitative data were used in this research. The quantitative data were acquired through the utilization of the mean statistical formula. It was used to know students' mean score and to check students' enhancement in vocabulary mastery. While, the qualitative data used to know activity of the students and how the teaching and learning process in the class. The qualitative data collected from the observation sheets which was analyzed descriptively. The success of this study depended on achieving the predefined criteria. The research is deemed successful when students' vocabulary mastery scores show improvement at the implementation of semantic mapping and when a minimum of 75% of the students exceed the established minimum standard score of ≥ 75 .

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

In this study, it was found that students' quality learning process was improving day by day during teaching and learning activities. The findings of this research are divided into three phases: (1) Finding of the Pre-Cycle (2) Finding of the First Cycle (3) Finding of the Second Cycle.

1. Finding of the Pre-test

Before doing an action, the researcher did a pre-observation and gave a pre-test for students. From the result of pre-observation, the situation of class was uncontrolled and extremely noisy. Additionally, the students did not pay attention to teacher's explanation. They also looked bored, lazy and not interested during the lesson as they were taught with traditional method without the aid of multimedia. For that reason, when the teacher asked about some meaning of vocabulary, their expressions and response indicated a state of confusion. Due to limited number of students' English vocabulary, it is challenging for them to comprehend the teacher's explanation and what is written in their textbook. This attitude of students gave effect on their result of pre-test. The students' percentage of mark vocabulary pre-test show that the level vocabulary of students is still low.

Table 1. Percentage Students of Mark of Pre-test of Vocabulary Mastery

No	Mark	Category	Frequency	Percentages
1.	75-100	Passed	7	23%
2.	0-74	Failed	24	77%
Total			31	100%

Table 1 displays that there were 24 (77%) students who did not reach the minimum passing criteria score. Nevertheless, there were only 7 (23%) students who reached the

minimum passing criteria score. In conclusion, the majority of students had not achieved a substantial level of mastery in vocabulary.

2. Finding of The First Cycle

The first cycle was done in two meetings on the 24th and 27th February 2023. By applying semantic mapping, the students started to show their interest and encouragement in answering questions in front of the class or in the task that given by the researcher. Unfortunately, some students still did not understand how to use semantic mapping strategy well. It made them less active during the group or individual activity. This students' attitude influenced their result of post-test in cycle 1. The result of students' percentage of mark vocabulary post-test in cycle 1 showed that students' ability in vocabulary mastery were low.

Table 2. Percentage Students of Mark of Vocabulary Mastery in Cycle 1

No	Mark	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	75-100	Passed	17	55%
2.	0-74	Failed	14	45%
Total			31	100%

Table 2 reveals that there was an improvement of students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the students who reached the minimum passing criteria score. There was an improvement from 7 to 17. However, there were 14 (42%) students who did not achieved the targeted score. Unfortunately, the target of this research was 75% so that students need to accomplish the minimum score ≥ 75 . As a result, the post-test conducted in the first cycle was deemed unsuccessful. Subsequently, the implementation of the second cycle became necessary.

3. Finding of the Second Cycle

The second cycle was done in two meetings on the 3rd and 13rd March 2023. In this cycle, the students did good cooperation and became enjoyable than the previous cycle. Students were active and enthusiastic to answer the questions. They also started to know how to use semantic mapping strategy well and remembered the vocabularies that had been taught. At the end of meeting, the researcher gave a post-test to students after the implementation of semantic mapping. The implementation of semantic mapping helped students to improve their score in post-test. This can be seen on the table below:

Table 3. Percentage Students of Mark of Vocabulary Mastery in Cycle 2

No	Mark	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	75-100	Passed	31	100%
2.	0-74	Failed	-	-
Total			31	100%

Table 3 shows that students' percentage score who reached the criteria minimum score was more than 75%. It was because 31 students who reached the criteria minimum score. In cycle 2, the students' percentage score clearly showed improvements from the previous tests.

For that reason, the research is considered to be called successful and the cycle 2 is ended.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to know how semantic mapping strategy can enhance the vocabulary mastery of students at the eighth grade of SMPN 18 Mataram. The implementation of planning, acting, observing and reflecting made it necessary to present about the general findings. The finding of these implementations might be established by test and observation. Based on the outcome test and observation, it was found that semantic mapping strategy could be an alternative strategy in enhancing vocabulary mastery of students because there was significant enhancement of score during each cycle after the students had been taught and learned English using semantic mapping strategy.

This research had been conducted in pre-activities and two cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Based on the data, the mean score of students' pre-test was 56.54. It was showed almost all students' vocabulary mastery at the eight grade in SMPN 18 Mataram was still very low. After the students were being taught using semantic mapping strategy, the mean score of post-test 1 showed a slight enhancement which reached score at 73.55. Nevertheless, this score had not yet reached the research target, which required 75% of students to attain a minimum standard score of 75. Consequently, the researcher proceeded to conduct another cycle of study. In the second cycle, students had significant improvement score compared to the previous cycle from 73.55 to 87.51. Therefore, the researcher decided to stop the research in cycle 2 because the students' score had already reached the performance of indicator.

Beside the improvements of students' score in every cycle, students were also had an improvement in learning vocabulary activity by using semantic mapping strategy. It was in line with Sopian (2019) who stated that semantic mapping strategy can improve students' vocabulary mastery. This study also showed that teacher could use semantic mapping as an alternative strategy to teach vocabulary. It was supported by Anam and Hidayanti (2021) who said that semantic mapping strategy could teach vocabulary. Moreover, it aligned with Denton et.al (2017) who stated that utilizing semantic mapping enables students to conceptually explore their comprehension of unfamiliar words by connecting them with other relevant words.

In this research, students were active, enthusiastic and engaged in learning vocabulary through semantic mapping strategy. It showed that students also have been easily to remembering and understanding the new words in an interesting way. Additionally, semantic mapping helped students to more enjoy and not bore in learning vocabulary. This finding had been supported by Safitri et.al (2020) who found that the use of semantic mapping strategy had positive responses because the semantic mapping strategy did not only help students to improve their vocabulary, but also made them to make learning vocabulary became enjoyable and easy for memorizing the words. In conclusion, semantic mapping became a strategy that use to improve students' vocabulary mastery. This strategy could help the eighth grade students of SMPN 18 Mataram in acquiring and mastering their vocabulary easily.

CONCLUSION

From the findings above, it can be stated that employing semantic mapping for teaching vocabulary has the potential to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen through several data from pre-test to post-test. The improvement of students' accomplishment was proven by mean score of pre-test (56.54), post-test 1 (73.55) and post-test 2 (87.51). In the pre-test, there were only 7 (23%) students reached the minimum passing criteria score with a range score of 75-80. At first cycle, 17 (54.83%) students reached the minimum passing criteria score with a range score of 75-100. During the second cycle, a notable improvement was evident in the mean score, which marked a substantial increase to 87.51. This data strongly indicates that all students (100%) successfully had been met minimum passing criteria score within the range of 75-100.

Furthermore, semantic mapping could be applied as the alternative strategy in teaching vocabulary activity. In addition, the process of teaching and learning activities were increased. Students had chances to be more active, engaged and confident by applying semantic mapping strategy in learning vocabulary. The students were also more enjoyed and did not bore in learning vocabulary because semantic mapping strategy is an interesting strategy which help them to collect new words so they became easier to remember the meaning of new words.

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