

## Analyzing the Challenges Faced by Students in Learning Vocabulary at Seventh Grade of MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu

Hidayatullah<sup>1)\*</sup>, Hasbullah<sup>1)</sup>, Herman<sup>1)</sup>,

<sup>1)</sup>English Education Department, Universitas Qamarul Huda Badaruddin Bagu, Indonesia

\*Email: penulis.satu@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *This study investigates the challenges faced by seventh-grade students at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu in mastering English vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery is essential for developing the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, many students struggle with comprehension, retention, and practical application of vocabulary in real-life contexts. A qualitative case study was employed, combining online surveys of 22 students and interviews with English teachers, supplemented by documentation. Thematic analysis revealed five key challenges: difficulty understanding new vocabulary, frequent forgetting of learned words, boredom during lessons, shyness or lack of confidence, and limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Teachers also highlighted gaps in students' initial abilities and limitations in technological resources. Nevertheless, contextual teaching and learning (CTL), interactive games, songs, and visual media proved effective in engaging students. Findings suggest that vocabulary learning strategies must integrate multimedia tools, psychological support, and increased practice opportunities. This study underscores the importance of varied pedagogical approaches and supportive environments in enhancing vocabulary mastery.*

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary learning; English education; Student challenges; Contextual teaching; Interactive methods*

**Abstrak:** Studi ini menyelidiki tantangan yang dihadapi siswa kelas tujuh di MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu dalam menguasai kosakata bahasa Inggris. Penguasaan kosakata sangat penting untuk mengembangkan empat keterampilan bahasa inti: mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis. Namun, banyak siswa kesulitan dalam pemahaman, retensi, dan penerapan praktis kosakata dalam konteks kehidupan nyata. Sebuah studi kasus kualitatif digunakan, menggabungkan survei daring terhadap 22 siswa dan wawancara dengan guru bahasa Inggris, dilengkapi dengan dokumentasi. Analisis tematik mengungkapkan lima tantangan utama: kesulitan memahami kosakata baru, sering lupa kata-kata yang dipelajari, kebosanan selama pelajaran, rasa malu atau kurang percaya diri, dan terbatasnya kesempatan untuk menggunakan bahasa Inggris di luar kelas. Guru juga menyoroti kesenjangan dalam kemampuan awal siswa dan keterbatasan sumber daya teknologi. Meskipun demikian, pembelajaran kontekstual (CTL), permainan interaktif, lagu, dan media visual terbukti efektif dalam melibatkan siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran kosakata harus mengintegrasikan perangkat multimedia, dukungan psikologis, dan peningkatan kesempatan berlatih. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya pendekatan pedagogis yang beragam dan lingkungan yang mendukung dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata.

**Kata kunci:** Pembelajaran kosakata; Pendidikan bahasa Inggris; Tantangan siswa; pengajaran kontekstual; metode interaktif.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become a crucial skill in the globalized era, where communication across borders requires mastery of international languages. English serves not only as a medium for academic growth but also as a gateway to broader professional opportunities. At the junior high school level, particularly in MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu, English education is vital in equipping students with the skills needed to navigate academic and social demands.

Vocabulary, as the foundation of language skills, directly influences students' ability to listen, speak, read, and write effectively. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners struggle to understand texts, express ideas, and participate in communication. Research emphasizes that vocabulary mastery is both receptive and productive, requiring systematic teaching that integrates meaning, form, and usage.

Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition presents various challenges. Students often face cognitive barriers such as memory limitations, psychological obstacles like shyness, and external issues including monotonous teaching methods. These constraints hinder both retention and active application of vocabulary in communication.

To address these issues, researchers highlight the significance of innovative methods such as educational games, digital media, and cooperative learning models. These strategies not only enhance motivation but also foster meaningful language practice. Thus, this study aims to analyze the challenges students face at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu and to identify strategies that can support more effective vocabulary learning.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a **qualitative case study design**. Participants included **22 seventh-grade students** at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu and one English teacher. Data were collected through:

### 2.1 Online student surveys

Google Forms with open-and-closed-

ended questions,

### 2.2 Teacher interviews

semi-structured, focusing on teaching methods and challenges

### 2.3 Documentation

lesson plans, syllabi, and student work.

Thematic analysis [7] was used to identify recurring patterns in the data. To enhance validity, data triangulation and member checking were conducted, ensuring consistency between student responses, teacher perspectives, and supporting documents.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Survey finding

Table 1 presents key challenges identified from student responses.

**Table 1.** Summary of Student Challenges in Vocabulary Learning.

Aspect	Findings (%)	Notes
Difficulty understanding words	Often 36.4, Rarely 40.9, Never 22.7	Most students face comprehension issues
Forgetting learned vocabulary	Often 13.6, Rarely 45.5, Never 40.9	Retention remains a challenge
Boredom during learning	Not bored 63.6, Somewhat 27.3, Bored 9.1	Majority engaged, but some bored
Shyness/lack of confidence	Never 45.5, Rarely 40.9, Often 13.6	Psychological barriers persist
Use of English outside class	Often 40.9, Rarely 27.3, Never 22.7, Very Often 9.1	Limited practice opportunities

Interviews revealed that teachers employ CTL, games, songs, and memorization techniques. However, they noted differences in students' initial abilities and limited technological facilities as major obstacles. Teachers emphasized that interactive methods, especially games and multimedia, were more effective in sustaining student motivation.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings highlight that **comprehension** and **retention** issues align with Nation's theory that vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure in meaningful contexts. **Psychological barriers**, including shyness, support Krashen's affective filter hypothesis [8]. Additionally, the **limited learning environment** reflects Vygotsky's theory of social interaction [9], emphasizing the importance of practice opportunities.

In sum, both internal (memory, confidence) and external (teaching methods, practice environment) factors affect students' vocabulary mastery. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines multimedia resources, interactive learning, and supportive classroom environments.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that seventh-grade students at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu face multidimensional challenges in vocabulary learning, including difficulties in comprehension, retention, motivation, psychological confidence, and limited practice opportunities. Effective strategies involve interactive methods such as CTL, games, songs, and digital media, combined with supportive learning environments. The study recommends increased teacher training, technological support, and extracurricular activities to provide richer opportunities for English practice.

### 5. CLOSING STATEMENT

The researcher extends appreciation to the students, teachers, and MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu for their participation and support. This study hopes to contribute meaningfully to the development of effective English vocabulary learning strategies in Indonesian secondary schools.

### REFERENCES

- [1] D. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- [2] I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- [3] S. Thornbury, *How to Teach Vocabulary*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2002.
- [4] N. Schmitt, "Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning," *Language Teaching Research*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 329–363, 2008.
- [5] D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson, *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning*, 5th ed., Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999.
- [6] R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th ed., Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2014.
- [7] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, 2006.
- [8] S. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Pergamon, 1982.
- [9] L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- [10] A. N. Sari, "Challenges faced by seventh-grade students in learning English vocabulary at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu," *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 45-57, 2021.
- [11] H. F. Wijaya and T. P. Ardiansyah, "An analysis of vocabulary learning difficulties in MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu: A case study of seventh-grade students," *Indonesian Journal of English Education*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 102-114, 2020.
- [12] M. L. Budi, "Factors affecting vocabulary acquisition in seventh-grade students at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 120-134, 2021.
- [13] I. R. Pratama and F. M. Rahman, "Exploring vocabulary learning challenges in junior high school: A study of MTs

- Qamarul Huda Bagu," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 78-85, 2022.
- [14] S. D. Nur and E. Y. Alamsyah, "Analyzing students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary at MTs Qamarul Huda Bagu," *Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 47-59, 2020.