

ABSTRACT

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in English language learning, particularly for young learners who require meaningful and engaging learning experiences to acquire and retain new words. Short stories provide contextualized language input that enables learners to understand and retain new vocabulary more effectively, as new words are encountered within a meaningful narrative rather than as isolated items to be memorized. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate how teachers implement short stories in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. The participants consisted of one English teacher and fifth-grade students at an elementary school in Pangandaran. The data were collected through classroom observations conducted during English lessons and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and five students. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying, coding, categorizing, and interpreting emerging themes from the observation notes and interview transcripts. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented short stories through a structured sequence of strategies, including pre-teaching vocabulary before introducing the story, using visual media such as pictures and videos, presenting the story in a meaningful context, translation activities, guided reading aloud, memorization and repetition, question-and-answer sessions, and oral assessment. These strategies were organized around the short story rather than treating it as a stand-alone activity, and together they created a meaningful learning experience that encouraged students' active participation in vocabulary learning. In the course of examining this implementation, the study also found that students generally held positive perceptions of learning vocabulary through short stories: they considered storytelling enjoyable and interesting, and found it helpful for understanding and remembering new vocabulary because words were presented in meaningful contexts. Nevertheless, some students still experienced difficulty understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and memorizing new words, indicating that the teacher's continuous guidance and repeated practice remained a necessary complement to story-based instruction. Overall, this study concludes that short stories can serve as an effective medium for teaching vocabulary to young learners when supported by a deliberate and systematic instructional sequence, and it offers a detailed, classroom-based account of how one teacher operationalized this approach in practice.