



The Effectiveness of the ODOW Strategy in Developing Young Learners' English Vocabulary

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effectiveness of the One Day One Word (ODOW) strategy to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary mastery among elementary school students. This classroom action research (CAR) involved sixty-three fourth-grade students as research subjects. The preliminary test revealed that 57 out of 63 subjects struggled with basic vocabulary translation from Indonesian to English, scoring below 75 out of 100 on items taken directly from their textbook. The research proceeded with a cyclical approach consisting of four key stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The initial results from Cycle 1 demonstrated some improvement, with 41 out of 63 students achieving an average score of 70 out of 100. Then, this research implemented cycle 2. The results of cycle 2 were significantly more promising, with 60 out of 63 students achieving an average score of 91 out of 100. The findings showed that the ODOW strategy was beneficial for improving young learners' vocabulary mastery in an EFL context. In addition, the findings indicated that consistent, focused exposure to new vocabulary, coupled with active engagement and practice, could lead to significant gains in vocabulary acquisition.*

Keyword: *Young learner, English vocabulary, ODOW strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

In addition, young learners are less nervous and have stronger motivation (Sanjaya et al., 2022). These points drive them to learn foreign languages faster than adolescents and adult learners because they are in the golden age. However, besides those benefits, young learners have a short focus and are less interested in monotonous teaching methods. This becomes homework for the teachers to innovate the teaching strategies and learning media in the class. Therefore, the current era is quite crowded with some teaching strategies and methods to advance teaching and learning EFL pertinent to vocabulary. Several researchers have conducted research on improving vocabulary mastery (see Putra, 2023; Liando et al., 2022, Firdausah & Sari, 2022; Nuderiheshi, 2022, Moku, 2022).

Putra (2023) found a Paper Mode Quizizz to attract the students' attention in class, create joyful learning, and improve the students' vocabulary mastery. Quizizz is an online learning platform that helps platform users to improve their learning goals. The users can learn, repeat, and evaluate themselves. However, Putra (2023) implemented a paper mode feature to adjust to the school policy that did not allow students to use some gadgets at school. The result showed that this method succeeded in bringing joyful learning so that the students were highly motivated and improved their vocabulary mastery. The result indicated an increase in average scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Liando et al. (2022) used pictures as learning media to teach vocabulary. Rather than using textbooks only, the researchers took some pictures to attract the students' attention. The results showed that the pictures greatly affected the students' learning outcomes. The students were more enthusiastic and interested in expanding their English learning.

Firdausah & Sari (2022) took flashcards to improve young learners' vocabulary mastery. The findings indicated that the young learners responded positively to this media. The researchers observed the students' activities from beginning to end with rubric scores. In the end, the findings showed that the students' scores increased when they learned vocabulary with flashcards in the class. Naderiheshi (2022) wrote a paper that substantiates using some games in teaching vocabulary mastery to young learners in Iran. The researcher stated that games bring fun and energy to the class. The findings not only highlighted the benefits of using games but also found some weaknesses in using games as learning media. Class conditions were uncontrollable because the students focus on the games were common when the teacher implemented games as the learning media. The students might shout out and move from their seats. This might drive the class atmosphere to be chaotic. Second was controlling time. During the game, time probably flew. The learning outcomes and objectives might not be achieved optimally within those two conditions. Mokalulu (2022) found that improving young learners' vocabulary can be done by implementing realia. The benefits of implementing realia were that the learning progress was more memorable because the students highlighted their visual learning. The students were directly involved so that they had some roles and had a chance to be active during the learning process.

The researchers observed that many students in English classes did not master the vocabulary in their textbooks. The students who could answer the equivalent meaning from Indonesian to English were those who had other classes, especially English classes out of school. The number of course takers was fewer than the number of students who did not take additional courses; they were 21 of 63 students. Therefore, the researcher tries to apply One Day One Word Strategy (ODOW) to overcome this matter. The name of the strategy itself directly reflects this core principle of focused, daily vocabulary acquisition. This strategy offers a structural approach to vocabulary acquisition, designed to immerse students in the English language daily, both within the formal learning environment of the school and in their everyday lives outside of it. This exposure to new vocabulary is expected to be particularly beneficial for young learners because they need to repeat, practice, and engage in the given vocabulary, they can involve all five senses to memorize the given vocabulary.

Numerous strategies for vocabulary mastery are readily available, and this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by specifically investigating the effectiveness of the ODOW strategy in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among young learners. The present study is grounded in the foundational research conducted by Dewi (2016), which explored the effectiveness of the ODOW strategy. However, the present study is different from Dewi's work (2016) in several key aspects, primarily due to the different age groups of the participants. Dewi's research (2016) took high school students as subjects. Conversely, the current research focuses specifically on young learners. The modifications are designed for the present study to ensure that the strategy is developmentally appropriate and optimally effective for the younger target audiences.

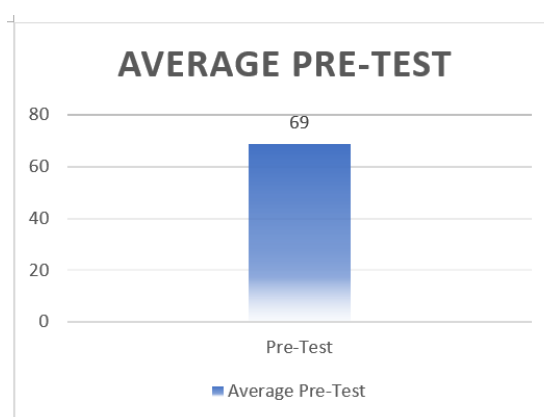
METHOD

The current study implemented Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the study method. CAR is a research design in which the teacher acts as the researcher, collecting and interpreting data to identify and solve classroom problems (Cohen et al., 2018). Classroom Action Research has a cycle that consists of four stages, namely (1) planning, (2) acting, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting or evaluating (Sumarni et al., 2022). Planning is activities to plan and prepare the previous action, including developing lesson plans, learning materials, learning strategies, and assessments to measure the student's abilities. Acting means to act, apply the planned planning previously stated on the lesson plan, then teach the learning materials, and implement the chosen learning strategy. Observing is monitoring the classroom circumstance during the strategy being implemented in the class and filling the observation sheet. Reflecting or evaluating refers to evaluating or analyzing the acting results and observation sheet to determine whether the acting meets the success criteria.

The current research involved all fourth-grade students in MI Tarbiyatussibyan, Boyolangu, and Tulungagung Regency, as the research subjects. The total number of students was 63, 31 from A class and 32 from B class. A class has 18 females and 13 males. Meanwhile, the B class has 15 females and 17 males. Their average age is 9 to 10 years. In class A, 21 students are 10 years old, and the rest, 10 students, are 9 years old. In class B, 22 students are 10 years old, and 10 students are 9 years old. Most students live in the rural areas surrounding the school; however, five students live in downtown Tulungagung Regency. Given their age, the subjects are categorized as young learners suitable for the purpose of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pre-test was administered to measure the students' cognitive competency in vocabulary mastery. Figure 1 presents the pre-test results. According to the data, the students' average score was 69 out of 100, while the minimum standard score required was 75. This indicates that the students' vocabulary competence was still below the expected standard. Therefore, the researcher proceeded to conduct the first cycle of classroom action research to improve the students' performance. Additionally, the pre-test findings served as a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of the ODOW strategy in subsequent cycles.



Source: Research results

Figure 1. Students' Average Pre-Test Score

The Implementation of Cycle 1

Planning

The researcher created a lesson plan to manage the class optimally. The total minutes of each meeting in a week was about fifty minutes for each class. The researcher divided each fifty minutes as below:

- a. Five minutes for opening activities, including greeting and prayer.
- b. Five Minutes for brainstorming the theme of vocabulary the students are going to learn.
- c. Fifteen minutes for introducing new vocabulary. Asking the students to repeat the vocabulary as the teacher stated.
- d. Fifteen minutes for coloring the pictures, repeating, and writing the names of the pictures.
- e. Five minutes for a quiz.
- f. Five minutes for closing the class.

However, the learning progress was not limited to classroom activities. The students were also asked to memorize vocabulary and collect stars as a measure of progress from the teacher every day. In addition, learning materials suitable for young learners using the ODOW Strategy were prepared. Each student received an A4 sheet containing an empty table with 30 black-and-white pictures. The words were not written on the sheet. There was also a column where students could earn stars from the teacher if they submitted the vocabulary.

Acting

Every day, the teacher visited the students and asked them to fill in and submit their vocabulary memorization (spoken, written, and spelled) that had been taught to them. The students actively participated while the teacher checked their performance individually. They queued neatly in front of the class, waiting for their turn to be evaluated. The researcher also noted which students were still struggling with memorizing certain English vocabulary and its equivalent meanings in Indonesian. This finding is consistent with the study by Lutfiyah et al. (2024) and Lutfiana (2021), which reported that many EFL students in Indonesia continued to struggle with English vocabulary acquisition.

Observing

During the acting stage the students' engagement, mood, motivation, and the overall classroom atmosphere were observed. Most of the students were enthusiastic about earning stars (a stamp) from the teacher after submitting their vocabulary review. Many students expressed satisfaction after receiving three stars from the teacher. On the other hand, students who received fewer than three stars felt that they needed to improve and relearn the material. Additionally, three male students in Class A showed less interest in joining their classmates in the queue in front of the class. This aligns with findings by Pangesti et al. (2022), who reported that Indonesian EFL students perceived rewards as increasing their happiness, excitement, and learning enthusiasm. The observation also revealed that extrinsic rewards such as stamps could effectively foster short-term motivation and participation. However, the variation in students' responses indicated that individual differences in learning attitudes still played an important role in classroom engagement.

Reflecting

After implementing the ODOW Strategy for approximately 26 days (about a month), the researchers obtained the students' post-test scores for Cycle 1. The results indicated that the students' performance had improved compared to the pre-test. However, there were still 3 out of 31 students who scored below 60. Consequently, the average final test score for the first cycle was 74, which did not meet the minimum required score of 75. This suggested that although progress was evident, the improvement was not yet sufficient to reach the expected

learning standard. To address this gap and provide further reinforcement, the researchers proceeded to conduct Cycle 2. This aligns with findings by Feranty et al. (2024), who reported a similar trend: even though students' average scores improved significantly from the pretest to Cycle 1, the results still fell short of the success threshold, prompting continuation into a second cycle.

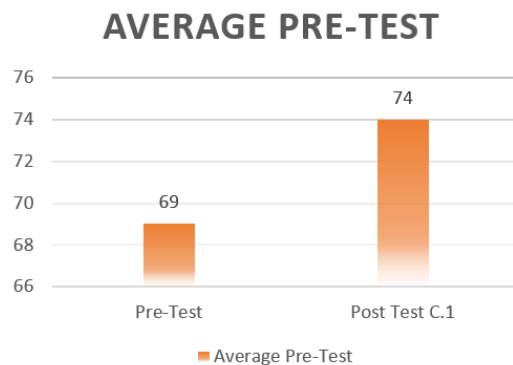


Figure 2. Students' Average Post-Test Score of Cycle 1

The Implementation of Cycle 2

Planning

The planning of Cycle 2 was not much different from the planning in Cycle 1. The researcher prepared the lesson plan, learning materials, media, and assessments to measure the students' cognitive competencies. The students were given an A4 sheet containing a table and pictures for the next theme. The lesson plan was like the one used in Cycle 1.

- a. 5 Minutes for opening including greeting and praying).
- b. 5 Minutes for brainstorming the theme of vocabulary the students are going to learn.
- c. 15 minutes for introducing new vocabulary. Asking the students to repeat the vocabulary as the teacher stated.
- d. 15 minutes for coloring the pictures, repeating and writing the names of the picture.
- e. 5 minutes for a quiz.
- f. 5 minutes for closing the class.

Acting

In this stage, the students had already understood the activities they needed to do based on the actions carried out on Cycle 1. However, the teacher asked the students to directly engage with and practice the vocabulary in the context of their daily lives. They were encouraged not only to remember and memorize the given vocabulary but also to apply it. The teacher also asked the students to identify and interact with objects related to the vocabulary, such as rooms in a house. The students were asked to observe the rooms in the house. When the teacher reviewed the vocabulary with them, the students were asked what activities could be done in each room, such as sleeping in the bedroom, cooking in the kitchen, and parking a car or motorbike in the garage, among others.

In addition, the teacher also requested online reports, which allowed the teacher to monitor the students' progress every day. The online-based learning used WhatsApp Groups (WAG), considering that young learners were under parental supervision. As shown by Umroh, Rismiyanto, and Ismaya (2024), employing platforms like WhatsApp Group facilitates increased student interest and more effective learning outcomes. WhatsApp Group was an easy-to-use application for sharing videos, pictures, audios, files, and other materials for communication, and it was expected to help parents become more involved in their children's daily learning. Since most Indonesians use WhatsApp as a communication tool,

this method was expected to facilitate learning outcomes and help achieve the learning objectives more effectively. Moreover, Rohmatillah et al. (2023) found that parental involvement in online learning—via supervision, motivation, and progress monitoring—positively influenced academic success.

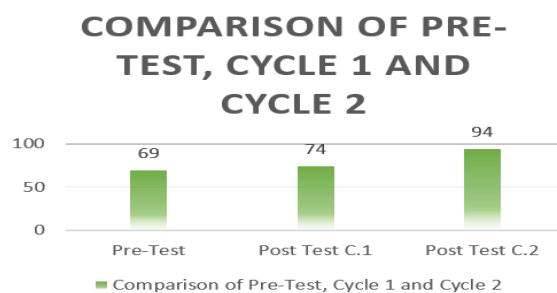
Observing

The progress during the acting stage was observed for 26 days, or about a month. Using online learning made it easier for the teacher to monitor the students' progress. An observation sheet was also used to track the students' behavior during the acting stage. Surprisingly, involving the young learners' parents in the learning process and conducting online monitoring had a positive impact. As Rohmatillah et al. (2023) emphasized that the involvement of parents in online learning environments has been shown to enhance students' academic outcomes, as it supports higher motivation and allows their learning progress to be more closely monitored. In line with this, the three students who had previously not actively participated, with their parents' supervision, began to submit the materials as required.

In addition, Fitria and Pangesti (2023) emphasizes that parental involvement during online learning plays a critical role in shaping students' success. Parents not only provide supervision but also offer essential emotional and cognitive support, which is particularly important for young learners who depend more on home guidance. This indicates that online learning outcomes are not solely determined by instructional strategies but also by the extent of family engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, the widespread adoption of WhatsApp in Indonesia offers a practical medium for fostering such involvement, as the platform facilitates daily communication, the sharing of videos, images, audio files, and instructional materials between teachers and parents. This accessibility helps bridge the gap between school and home, ensuring that parents remain actively engaged in their children's learning progress. Broader studies on school-home online communication also suggest that digital platforms such as WhatsApp can strengthen collaboration, enhance monitoring, and create a more supportive learning environment, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes (Umroh et al., 2024; Rohmatillah et al., 2023).

Reflecting

After implementing the ODOW Strategy for approximately 26 days (about a month), researchers administered the final post-test. The results revealed a marked improvement: students' scores exceeded 85 out of 100, with both classes averaging 94. A key difference in Cycle 2 was the review's mode—it was conducted online under parental supervision, unlike Cycle 1, which took place in person at school. This shift coincided with a significant rise in vocabulary competence, from a pre-test average of 69, to 74 in post-test Cycle 1, and ultimately reaching 94 in the final post-test. These outcomes mirror findings by Umroh et al., (2024), who demonstrated that using WhatsApp-based reporting significantly boosted students' interest and learning outcomes in Indonesian primary classrooms. Similarly, Sitorus (2021) found substantial increases in post-test vocabulary scores following online-guided interventions in an EFL context. Together, these studies reinforce the effectiveness of online, parent-involved review strategies in facilitating rapid and meaningful vocabulary mastery.



Source: Research results

Figure 3. Students' Average Score of Pre-Test, Test of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

There is no doubt that learning a foreign language requires regular engagement and practice. Research consistently shows that active and continuous practice is essential for sustaining fluency and ensuring that classroom learning transfers into real-world communication (Phan, 2023). Language functions as a tool for communication, and if these skills are not practiced over an extended period, learners may lose their ability to speak, listen, read, and write in that language. Without consistent reinforcement, the process of language attrition can occur, leading to a gradual decline in proficiency. Regular exposure to authentic materials, such as conversations, media, and reading texts, is therefore necessary to maintain and strengthen language competence.

Incorporating contextual learning further helps young learners solidify the meanings of vocabulary by connecting the source language to the target language. Studies indicate that when learners encounter vocabulary in meaningful contexts, such as real-life scenarios or interactive environments, their retention and recall of new words improve significantly (Weerasinghe et al., 2022). Research on varying levels of contextual richness ranging from zero to high shows that vocabulary presented in rich, high-context environments significantly boosts understanding and long-term retention among EFL learners (Zarfsaz & Yeganehpour, 2021). Moreover, constructivist approaches emphasize that when learners actively build new vocabulary through meaningful interactions grounded in their prior knowledge, the resulting semantic connections are deeper and more resistant to forgetting (Yoong et al., 2019).

The present study focused on improving young learners' vocabulary mastery. Prior research has emphasized that parental involvement plays a vital role in supporting children's language learning; learners whose parents actively participate in the learning process demonstrate higher levels of engagement and improved mastery of vocabulary (Rowiyah et al., 2024). As a result, involving parents in the learning process had a significant positive impact on enhancing learners' vocabulary mastery. Parental support not only provides children with guidance but also fosters a positive learning environment at home, where vocabulary practice can be reinforced through daily interactions and routines. Studies have shown that when parents integrate simple activities such as shared reading, storytelling, or using digital learning tools the frequency and quality of vocabulary exposure increase, leading to stronger retention and application of new words (Wasik & Hindman, 2020). In addition, parental involvement has been linked to higher learner motivation and confidence, as children perceive language learning as a valued and shared activity within the family (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). This collaborative approach between home and school thus maximizes opportunities for language input and ensures more sustainable vocabulary growth over time.

In addition to the significance of contextual learning and parental involvement, recent studies on learners' writing accuracy provide further insight into the challenges young EFL students face. Dewi et al. (2025) investigated grammatical omission errors in descriptive texts written by second-semester EFL learners and found that articles, pluralization, and

punctuation were the most frequently omitted elements. Their findings highlight that grammatical omissions, particularly in article use, significantly affect clarity and coherence in students' writing. These results emphasize that vocabulary mastery must go hand in hand with grammatical competence, as both are essential for developing overall communicative ability. Therefore, strategies like ODOW should not only strengthen vocabulary retention but also be integrated with explicit grammar support to minimize persistent errors and enhance learners' writing proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the importance of continuous practice and reinforcement in vocabulary learning for young EFL learners. The pre-test results indicated that students' vocabulary competence was initially below the required minimum standard, which confirmed the need for targeted intervention. Through the implementation of the ODOW Strategy, students were consistently engaged in structured classroom activities that emphasized repetition, memorization, and active participation. Although Cycle 1 showed an increase in the average score, the results still fell short of the standard, demonstrating that more intensive reinforcement was necessary to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Cycle 2 provided further evidence that combining classroom strategies with parental involvement and online monitoring significantly enhanced students' performance. The integration of WhatsApp-based reporting enabled parents to supervise and support their children's learning at home, creating continuity between school and family environments. This collaborative approach not only motivated students to participate more actively but also facilitated better retention and application of vocabulary in real-life contexts. The Cycle 2 post-test average of 94 demonstrated substantial improvement and confirmed the effectiveness of parental engagement and digital tools in enhancing vocabulary mastery.

Overall, this study concludes that vocabulary mastery among young learners can be meaningfully improved when instructional strategies are contextualized, reinforced through consistent practice, and supported by active parental involvement. The ODOW Strategy, when combined with home-based support and digital platforms, proved to be an effective approach in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. These findings suggest that future vocabulary instruction for young learners should not rely solely on classroom activities but should also extend into home environments, where parents and teachers work together to provide meaningful, sustained exposure to the target language.

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