

## Chapter 12:

# ***Promoting Vocabulary Learning with Big Books in Shared Reading Activities***

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### **A. Introduction**

Acquiring English vocabulary is essential for language learning; yet, the process requires effective, engaging strategies to enhance retention and application (DeVries, 2015; Hasbi, 2024; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012). Context-based and interactive learning helps learners grasp meanings, retain words better, and apply them in real-life situations (Pateşan et al., 2019; Dewi et al., 2024; Austria & Velasco, 2023). To do so, teachers should adopt innovative, learner-centered approaches to optimize vocabulary learning and ensure long-term retention. However, many learners struggle to retain vocabulary due to a lack of engaging, interactive experiences. Elmahdi and Hezam (2020) highlight that teachers' inability to empower learners affects motivation, confidence, and engagement. Kurniawati et al., (2024) stress the importance of active participation in boosting motivation and vocabulary. Thus, creating an interactive and supportive learning environment is essential for vocabulary acquisition.

In the context of teaching English vocabulary to children in Indonesia, the use of appropriate media is paramount to developing an engaging and effective learning

environment. English teaching media for elementary school children should be designed to help them learn vocabulary both orally and in writing (N. F. Novitasari, 2020), facilitate the acquisition of easier words, connect new vocabulary to real-life contexts, and foster a lasting interest in language learning through interactive and enjoyable activities. Big books are great media to provide an interactive, context-rich, and captivating learning experience for teaching English vocabulary to children in Indonesia. The Big Book concept refers to large-sized books designed to facilitate dynamic classroom interactions that make all learners see the text and illustrations (Usaid, 2014). Such a method is very effective for vocabulary building because it combines visual, auditory, and interactive elements that improve the quality of learning. The large size of the book, text, and images allows for shared reading activities. Hence, the size of the big book used should be adjusted so that all learners can read it. To implement big books in the classroom effectively, teachers can incorporate various engaging activities that maximize learners' participation and vocabulary retention. By integrating storytelling, interactive discussions, and hands-on exercises, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment where learners can actively engage with new words in meaningful contexts. The following section explores practical classroom activities that utilize big books to enhance vocabulary learning through shared reading activities.

## **B. Classroom Activities**

Shared reading using big books is an effective strategy for teaching vocabulary engagingly and interactively (Altamimi & Ogdol, 2023). This approach allows all learners to participate actively while developing their reading skills

and comprehension. By integrating visual, auditory, and verbal elements, shared reading facilitates learners to recognize words, understand meanings in context, and retain vocabulary more effectively. The following are key ways in which big books can be used in shared reading activities.

1. Teacher-Led Read-Aloud

The process of shared-reading activities starts with a teacher-led read-aloud session. In this session, the teacher reads the story while pointing to each word to help learners follow along. Expressive intonation, facial expressions, and gestures make the reading experience more attractive and help the learners grasp the story's tone and meaning. This modeling of proper pronunciation and fluency offers an excellent reference for learners to imitate and practice.

2. Visual Engagement

Big books' large texts and illustrations ensure all learners see clearly, so it will be easier for them to connect words with images. The illustrations provide context clues that help learners understand new vocabulary, especially for young or beginning English learners who rely on pictures to infer meaning.

3. Choral Reading

Choral reading is often integrated into shared reading to build fluency and confidence. In this activity, learners read along with the teacher in unison. This can reduce the pressure of individual reading and encourage participation. The activity also reinforces word recognition, pronunciation, and fluency. Besides, this collective reading approach builds learners' confidence as well, as they are supported by their peers and teachers rather than reading alone. In other words, this group

experience helps lower anxiety and fosters a positive attitude toward reading. It also promotes rhythm and pacing in reading.

4. Vocabulary Highlighting

To strengthen vocabulary learning, vocabulary highlighting is a key component. The teacher emphasizes keywords by pausing, repeating, or using gestures to highlight their meaning. During the read-aloud session, the teacher pauses to emphasize important words, repeats them, and explains their meanings in context. Gestures, synonyms, and connections to learners' prior knowledge help clarify these words to ensure deeper understanding and retention. This technique helps the learners retain vocabulary and understand how words function in sentences.

5. Interactive Discussion

Another important aspect of shared reading is the interactive discussion that takes place throughout the activity. During the reading, learners are encouraged to make predictions about the story, answer comprehension questions, and share personal connections. This type of dialogue keeps learners engaged and provides them with opportunities to practice using new vocabulary. Engaging learners in discussion makes the reading activity more meaningful and allows them to practice using new vocabulary in conversation.

6. Follow-Up Activities

Finally, follow-up activities solidify learning by allowing learners to apply the vocabulary in creative and practical ways. After reading, learners participate in activities that reinforce vocabulary and comprehension. These

activities may include role-playing scenes from the book, drawing story events, writing summaries, or creating sentences using the newly learned words. These follow-up tasks cater to different learning styles and ensure that learners have multiple opportunities to engage with and apply the new vocabulary. Such activities also help solidify learning by allowing the learners to apply vocabulary in different contexts.

### **C. Further Discussion**

To produce an effective learning experience, teachers must take into account the strengths and shortcomings of each shared reading activity using big books to create an effective vocabulary learning experience. Teacher-led read-aloud sessions model pronunciation, intonation, and fluency, providing contextual vocabulary exposure, but may become passive if not interactive. This is supported by Nambi (2019) who says that learners may lose focus or become mere spectators which may lead to lower opportunities for active learning. To prevent this, teachers should involve learners by asking questions, encouraging predictions, or prompting them to repeat and act out key vocabulary, ensuring an engaging and participatory experience (Hasbi, 2017). Visual engagement through large text and colorful illustrations helps learners understand stories and decode vocabulary, particularly for visual learners, though it may distract the learners or oversimplify content for advanced learners. This shows that the unique features of big books (the large size, the colorful pictures, and interesting-related content) enhance shared reading experiences that allow all learners to follow along easily (N. F. Novitasari, 2020). The visual particularly promotes group engagement and ensures

inclusivity, even for learners who are seated at the back of the classroom (Djajasudarma, 2017). Choral reading promotes fluency, confidence, and group participation, but weaker readers might rely on stronger peers without fully engaging.

Highlighting key vocabulary during the story enhances retention and comprehension but can disrupt the reading flow if overused. Interactive discussions and prediction activities foster critical thinking, personal connections, and speaking skills, although they require skilled facilitation to stay on track (Hasbi et al., 2024). Follow-up tasks such as role-playing, drawing, and writing provide hands-on learning opportunities that solidify vocabulary and facilitate different learning styles (Soori et al., 2023). However, role-playing can make some learners shy and not willing to participate (Keezhatta, 2020), while writing tasks may overwhelm beginners. By carefully balancing these activities, teachers can create an engaging and supportive learning environment that boosts vocabulary acquisition and retention. To conclude, despite certain obstacles, shared reading activities with big books continue to be an effective way to help young learners improve their language and vocabulary. Teachers may create an engaging and participatory learning environment that supports a variety of learning styles and cultivates a love of reading by carefully balancing a variety of activities. Big books may greatly enhance the language learning process and encourage long-term vocabulary retention and fluency with careful preparation and expert facilitation.

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