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*Original Research*

## A Survey of Indonesian Islamic Senior High School Teachers' Vocabulary Teaching Strategies/Activities

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**Abstract**

Teaching English in madrasahs still become problematic. Although the students have been learning English for years, they still cannot use it effectively. One of the reasons is that they do not have sufficient vocabulary. To solve this problem, teachers should use different strategies/activities in their teaching process. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the vocabulary teaching strategies/activities applied by teachers in Islamic senior high schools in West Sumatera. These strategies/activities are by referring to the principle of the Four Strands proposed by Nation (2007). The Four Strands consist of meaning-focused input (listening and reading), meaning-focused output (speaking and writing), language-focused learning, and fluency development. A survey research design was used in line with the study's goal. English teachers who teach in Islamic senior high schools or *Madrasah Aliyah*, both public and private schools in West Sumatera, were the study's target demographic. A survey design was conducted using a questionnaire and interviews to gather necessary information. The findings indicate that vocabulary teaching is integrated across the four equal strands, which are applied in various teaching strategies/activities. The findings of the study suggest that this study might give an insight that more strategies/activities need to be done by teachers to enhance vocabulary learning. The findings of the study provide some implications for future practice in teaching-learning process of teaching vocabulary. In reference to the findings, the recommendations are addressed to EFL teachers and future researchers. Future studies on vocabulary teaching strategies must be done in different regions in Indonesia by considering other strategies/activities at various levels or schools. Some implications of the study are also discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, Islamic schools or *Madrasahs* are educational institutions besides general schools. Technically, teaching and learning processes of madrasahs and general schools are the same. According to the joint decree of three ministers, the difference between the two types of school is that in madrasah, Islamic religious subjects are taught as a basic subject of at least 30% in addition to general subjects. This is what characterizes the specificity of the madrasah. Given this advantage, people should be interested in studying in madrasahs. In fact, madrasahs still possess distinctive features. They are regarded as a 'second-class' schools or the second choice of students to study after not being accepted in general schools (Qomar, 2007; Suwito, 2008). However, there are still many people who believe that studying at a Madrasah would be beneficial in enhancing their knowledge of Islam, science, and general subjects.

Although madrasahs have continued to grow, they still face a range of negative assessments. It is a commonly acknowledged fact that the voices of teachers and students in madrasahs are not well represented, even though they face the same responsibilities and challenges as teachers in general schools (Misdi, 2007).

Not only do they encounter challenges in teaching English that are more complex than those faced by teachers in regular schools, but these challenges also emerge in both academic and non-academic factors. According to [Fajaryani et al. \(2018\)](#), one of the academic factors that contributes to the challenges of teaching English is the lack of motivation and aptitude among learners. It is because most of the students are from middle-low proficiency. In contrast, the non-academic factors comprise conditions such as limited resources, a crowded classroom, the socioeconomic status of the learners, the quality of the school management, and the curriculum.

To enhance the validity of these statements, the researcher conducted an initial study with 14 English teachers from Islamic senior high schools. The study aimed to gather their perceptions on the working environment and local policy issues in their schools, in comparison to general senior high schools. The researcher conducted unstructured interviews to validate the results. The results of the preliminary study revealed that teachers at Madrasah share similar conditions, such as their students having low proficiency, school facilities being insufficient and their low engagement in workshops or teacher training programs organized by the local policymaker.

As a compulsory subject in general schools, English is also taught in madrasahs. Learning English is expected to equip students with the ability to compete globally. Despite years of learning English in madrasahs, the learning process has yet to yield satisfactory results. In fact, many students are still unable to use English effectively, both in spoken and written forms ([Chuzaimah, 2012](#); [Zulhidah et.al, 2023](#)). This problem can arise from various factors such as from teachers, materials, methods, facilities and infrastructure, and students' motivation ([Mulkan in Chuzaimah, 2012](#)). The lack of resources, overloaded curriculum, time constraints, and multiple complex demands on teachers also become factors inhibiting the success of language teaching ([Lestari, 2019](#); [Rahman & Akbar, 2021](#)).

A study conducted by Ahmad Chotib in [Chuzaimah \(2012\)](#) revealed that teaching practices in madrasahs typically employ the grammatical-translation method, where teachers teach grammatical rules and students are expected to memorise them. Additionally, students are expected to memorize vocabulary, construct sentences, and translate word by word to understand the content of the texts they read. Furthermore, students are provided with minimal opportunities for direct oral practice, and there are limited audio-visual aids available to aid their learning. To use English effectively, students should have an adequate vocabulary. Despite the importance of vocabulary mastery, the facts show that limited vocabulary still becomes major problem in language learning ([Cushing, 2022](#); [Liu, 2016](#); [Shen & Chiu, 2019](#)). To overcome this problem, teachers can apply many approaches to develop students' vocabulary mastery. One of them is by applying vocabulary teaching strategies/activities. Vocabulary teaching strategy/activity refers to what teachers do to assist their students in learning vocabulary in the target language ([Al-Bidawi, 2018](#)). Thus, teachers must realize the importance of these strategies/activities.

To the best of our knowledge, the previous studies concern with vocabulary teaching strategies by using Powtoon media ([Wardani, 2023](#)), teachers' various strategies to teach vocabulary ([Dilla, 2023](#); [Malik et.al, 2020](#)), vocabulary approach ([Gerami & Noordin, 2013](#)), and students' perception on vocabulary teaching ([Asyiah, 2017](#)). Although the latest studies on vocabulary acquisition have offered a variety of strategies/activities that teachers could apply to ensure that students develop the vocabulary they learn in class, many teachers have been unable to implement these findings into their teaching practices ([Hogain, 2012](#)). Besides being unable to integrate these strategies/activities into their instruction, teachers also overemphasized particular strategies/activities; for example, they focused more on form or explicit teaching than on communication or fluency ([Herman, 2020](#)). In addition, many teachers still teach vocabulary deliberately more often and make students uninterested in learning new words. For example, they are only guided learning using word cards, guessing from context, using word parts, using keywords, and using dictionaries.

To address this challenge, Paul Nation developed the Four Strands which focus on meaning-focused input, output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. Nation emphasizes that what is needed in teaching language, including vocabulary, is a balance of applying strategies/activities across the four strands ([Nation, 2007](#)). These strands can be employed in any language teaching area including vocabulary teaching and applied autonomously by students without teacher guidance. By responding to the important issue of teaching vocabulary in madrasahs, the current study is designed to address the investigation on vocabulary teaching strategies/activities employed by teachers in *madrasah aliyah* in West Sumatera by applying principle of the Four Strands proposed by Nation.

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## 2. Literature Review

It is widely accepted that the goal of teaching language is to facilitate students' use of the language for effective communication (Rabiah, 2012). A very important factor to achieve the goal is vocabulary mastery. Undoubtedly, teachers need to introduce and teach vocabulary to students for conducting a successful teaching and learning process. Teachers commonly teach vocabulary by giving a list of words of target language and the translation. Then, the students will have exercises about these words and find them in their examination (Dikilitas & Bush, 2014). However, teaching vocabulary is not as simple as illustration above and it becomes problematic for teachers. Teachers must give practice and practical skills development in order the students use the language fluently and properly (Herman, 2020).

To provide students with vocabulary mastery, teachers need to teach their students vocabulary they need by applying strategies/activities that the students can do later autonomously. Webb and Nation (2017) suggest that teachers adopt the strategies/activities into their teaching plans and instructions for two reasons. First, vocabulary is considered as a component of all language courses, it is often neglected in favour of other aspects of language learning such as writing, reading, speaking and grammar. Second, it is time-consuming to acquire enough words to understand both spoken and written communication. The students cannot rely on the teaching and learning process in the classroom to learn. Therefore, it is significant for teachers to employ some different strategies/activities to improve students' proficiency.

In line with this, Paul Nation suggests that teachers can apply a well-balanced language curriculum, or the Four Strands of language learning. The four strands consist of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused meaning, and fluency development. The meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and fluency development all involve incidental learning, whereas the language-focused learning strand involves deliberate learning. The same amount of time should be given to each strand of the teaching and learning process and to learning that occurs inside and outside the classroom. These four strands are a good starting point for vocabulary instruction since each strand highlights a distinct aspect of knowing and using a word and contributes to vocabulary growth in its own way (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016).

Some research has been done on the four strands. Hogain (2012) tested the four strands in the teaching and learning of vocabulary. The result showed that the four strands help students to increase their receptive and productive vocabulary as well as to retain vocabulary. The principle of the four strands can be applied by an autonomous learner when learning a language. In Nation and Yamamoto's (2012) study, the second author applied the principles of the four strands in learning Spanish without the help of a teacher but by using some resources, namely books, cards and notebooks, technology, films and TV series, songs and the internet. Given the rapid growth of the internet in teaching and learning, Robb (2022) applied strategies/activities in the four strands to teaching online. The finding revealed that by using online resources provides teachers and students with more opportunities to practice using the language they have learned in the classroom. Many of these online activities encourage students to practice meaningful conversation rather than rote learning, and the more chances they have to practice, the more enthusiastic they will be. From the findings above, it can be concluded that the principles of the four strands offer benefits to teachers and students in language teaching, including vocabulary teaching where the strategies/activities used are up to the teachers and students.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the principles of the four strands offer benefits to teachers and students in language teaching, including vocabulary teaching where the strategies/activities used are up to the teachers and students. So, teachers should be aware of the importance of implementing those proven strategies/activities in teaching vocabulary.

### 2.1 Meaning-focused input

The meaning-focused input strand covers learning receptively through listening and reading. Since students' goal is on understanding and comprehending the input, it is frequently incidental (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012). Students should receive comprehensive input at level  $i+1$ , aiming for a level higher than their current linguistic competence, to achieve the goal (Krashen, 1985).

Major activities in this strand involve extensive reading, extensive listening, and extensive viewing. An extensive reading program is a necessary part of vocabulary acquisition through meaning-focused input (Nation & Waring, 2020). Extensive reading enhances vocabulary, general knowledge, fluency, writing, comprehension, grammar skills, and students' motivation in language learning (Ghanbari & Marzban, 2014;

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Howarth & Bollen, 2019). Recently, Linh and Van (2022) found that e-books also enhance students' vocabulary size, comprehension, and attitude.

Besides extensive reading, students should also engage in extensive listening and viewing to improve their vocabulary acquisition. Applying extensive listening and viewing, where the students repeatedly listen and view to words, can improve students' vocabulary acquisition (Alharthi, 2018; Liando et al., 2020; Nasab & Motlagh, 2017; Rodgers, 2013). When implementing extensive listening, teachers should select types of listening that fit for the students' level. Listening only or listening while watching are recommended for more advanced students (Mayora, 2017), while reading while listening is suited to intermediate or lower-level students (Saputra & Fatimah, 2018). In addition to selecting types of listening, speech rate is another important factor to consider. Listening to authentic materials is considered suitable for upper-intermediate level students (Liando et al., 2020) whereas lower proficiency students may benefit from graded materials and simpler YouTube videos (Ivone & Renandya, 2019).

## 2.2 Meaning-focused output

Compared to meaning-focused input, this strand focuses on learning productively through speaking and writing. These two strands are interrelated in the sense that one person's input becomes another's output. A study by Noroozi & Siyari (2019) explored the effect of meaning-focused output and meaning-focused input on students' vocabulary acquisition. The study found that strategies/activities that belong to these two strands had positive impact to enhance students' vocabulary. Other strategies that can improve vocabulary in this strand include writing with feedback (Dilans, 2010; Ko, 2019), task-focused spoken interaction (Afghari & Khayatan, 2017; Arifin, 2021; Dobao, 2014), and writing productively (Dikilitas & Bush, 2014).

## 2.3 Language-focused learning

The language-focused learning strand involves the deliberate or intentional learning of language features. Although intentional and incidental vocabulary learning strategies are still controversial and widely studied by researchers for their effectiveness in teaching vocabulary, Nation (2007) argues that there is a limitation to this notion. Nation states that intentional or deliberate activities can positively impact language use, but they should not be the focus of the entire teaching and learning process. The strand should not exceed one-quarter of the total time spent on the process. In this strand, the students focus on features such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, discourse, and spelling, with the goal of learning such language features (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012).

Word cards are a beneficial example of strategies/activities in this strand. They have been widely recognized as a time-efficient and effective way for learning vocabulary deliberately (Wilkinson, 2017; 2020). Word cards also enhance both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge for students (Kocaman et al., 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that using both paper and electronic dictionaries can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition (Chen, 2012; Mokhtar et al., 2017; Ma & Cheon, 2018).

## 2.4 Fluency development

Fluency refers to the ability to process language receptively and productively at a reasonable speed (Nation, 2014). In terms of receptive skills (listening and reading) fluency in listening happens when a person can understand spoken English, to the degree necessary and in different situations. In reading, fluency is characterized by understanding English at a speed closer to L1 readers. In the output aspect belonging to productive skills (writing and speaking), fluency in speaking is when a person is able to speak relatively in natural speed with not so many errors, so that meaning is understood by the listener. In the same way, fluency on writing refers to the ability in thinking and writing at the same time in a relatively natural speed, with a focus on expressing meaning with a relatively average number of revisions (Herder & Sholdt, 2014).

Unlike the other three strands, the fluency development strand does not include the acquisition of new vocabulary or language features. It enables students to become fluent in applying what they already know in order to comprehend and produce language at an acceptable rate (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012). Compared to meaning-focused input and meaning-focused output, which should be beyond the students' current level of proficiency, fluency development input and output should be within their current knowledge (Webb & Nation, 2017). Listening to stories as an example of fluency development is considered to enhance students' vocabulary (Inal & Cakir, 2014; Lin, 2014; Quy, 2017; Bhatti et al., 2022). Moreover, the 4/3/2 technique proves to be a successful technique in enhancing students' mastery of vocabulary. (Permata et al., 2019; Yang, 2014; Yufrizal, 2018).

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In sum, because the principles of the four strands, as explained in the aforementioned explanation, are not content-specific, they can be implemented in any focus or learning, including vocabulary learning. Knowing various activities related to vocabulary acquisition across the four strands is important for teachers in order to teach vocabulary more effectively. The important thing is that the activities used to learn a language are balanced. If it is done, optimal vocabulary learning can be achieved (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012).

In this study, strategies/activities involved in the four strands—meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development—related to vocabulary teaching are investigated, as each strand emphasizes a different aspect of receptive and productive skill and contributes significantly to vocabulary development in its own way.

### 3. Method

The study employed a survey research design. It was aimed to investigate strategies or activities employed by teachers in teaching vocabulary in the context of Islamic senior high schools or *Madrasah Aliyah* in Indonesia. The study was conducted in two-phase survey design. The first phase was collecting and analysing of quantitative data followed by collecting and analysing of qualitative data as the second phase. Thus, the present study employed both quantitative and qualitative data by using the two instruments.

The target population was English teachers in Islamic senior high school or *Madrasah Aliyah*, both public and private schools in West Sumatera as their vocabulary teaching strategies seem to have yet been studied. Convenience sampling was employed due to the limited accessibility to cover all teachers in West Sumatera, and the study finally recruited 42 teachers to represent the population. Meanwhile, for the interview, samples were selected based on the willingness of the respondents to be interviewed further about the questionnaire responses. Finally, 4 respondents were chosen for interview.

The instruments needed to answer the question in this survey were questionnaire and interview guide. All of the items were given in Bahasa Indonesia to make the respondents easier to understand the instruments and the researcher would get better data to be analysed (Dornyei & Csizer, 2012). Quantitative data as primary data were collected through a questionnaire. Qualitative data as the secondary data was gained from semi-structured interview.

In collecting data in survey research, several steps were applied. The first step was designing a questionnaire. The questionnaire items are designed by the researcher herself based on the framework of language learning activities or well-known as four strands proposed by Nation (2007). The questionnaire consists of 16 total items grouped into 4 major parts: 1). meaning-focused input, 2) meaning-focused output, 3) language-focused learning, and 4) fluency development. The meaning-focused input consists of four items, including extensive listening/viewing and extensive reading activities. The meaning-focused output consists of four items regarding task-focused spoken interaction, writing with feedback, linked skills, and writing productively strategies. Then, the language-focused learning consists of four items, including word cards, keyword technique, dictionary use, and guessing from context strategies. Finally, the fluency development consists of four items, which cover listening to stories, 4/3/2 strategies, speed reading, and ten-minute writing activities.

The instruments were then piloted and reviewed by three teachers. After developing and improving the items based on the feedback, items of the questionnaire have been validated by a professor in English language teaching. Then, it was tried out to 15 respondents who were similar to the target group. Cronbach Alpha which was employed to check the internal consistency of the try-out showed 0.838 (high) alpha score.

In collecting quantitative data, the questionnaire was distributed to *Madrasah Aliyah* English teachers in West Sumatera via WhatsApp group of English Teacher Organization (MGMP). The respondents were given two weeks to respond to the instrument. Finally, 42 questionnaires were returned and completely filled out. In the second phase, qualitative interview was conducted as a follow-up of the previous phase to enhance the results of the questionnaire. The telephone interviews were conducted through voice WhatsApp calls to yield in-depth analysis and let the participants explain and clarify their answer. All the interviews were recorded and conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Then, the data from the interview was analysed along with the data gain from open ended questionnaire. The obtained data then were analysed to give more explanation and expand the finding of the quantitative data.

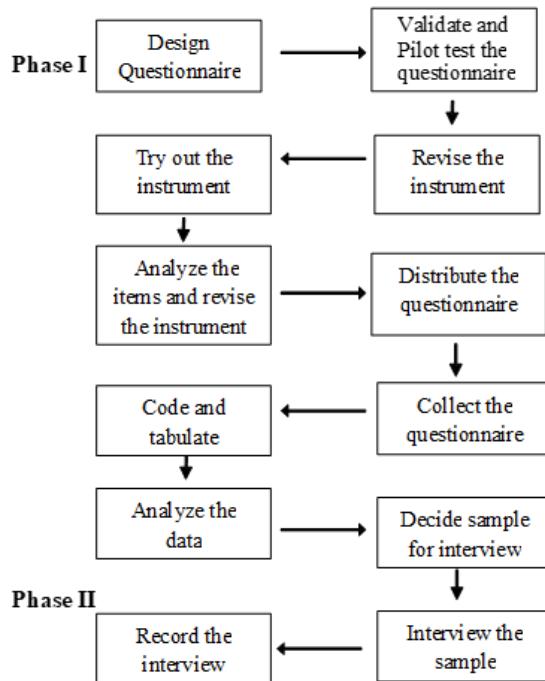


Figure 1. Data collection scheme

This analysis activity consisted of two phases: descriptive analysis for the close ended questionnaire and thematic analysis for the open-ended questionnaire and the interview. In preparing data for analysis, the researcher created a code to each response category in the questionnaire. This code intends to diminish mistakes during the analysis process (Friedman, 2012). In this part, the response “Never” was scored as 1, “Rarely” as 2, “Sometimes” as 3, and “Often” as 4. The next step was examining the data to answer the research question, using descriptive statistics to investigate the question “*What strategies/activities are employed by teachers in teaching vocabulary in Islamic senior high schools?*” Frequencies, percentages, and means were explained further.

In analysing teachers’ responses, the score was generated for each participant by adding the score of all the 16 items, which ranged from 1 to 4 to see the percentage and the tendency whether they frequently applied strategies in teaching vocabulary. For analysing qualitative data, the open-ended questionnaire and interview recordings were transcribed manually, and the content analysis generated 4 themes of clustered similar code (Creswell, 2012).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Teachers’ Strategies/Activities based on Meaning-focused Input

This part of the questionnaire begins with four items obtaining information about strategies/activities that belong to meaning-focused input. In this strand, there are two kinds of strategies/activities investigated: extensive reading (item no. 1 and no. 2) and extensive listening and viewing (no. 3 and no. 4).

The result of the closed-ended questionnaire revealed that on average, 44% of teachers demonstrated often, 43.5% of teachers demonstrated sometimes, 10.7% of teachers demonstrated rarely, and 1.8% of teachers demonstrated never in applying strategies/activities that belong to meaning-focused input in teaching vocabulary. When the data about the application of vocabulary activities in the questionnaire items were examined further, extensive listening were considered as used often and extensive reading were identified as used sometimes by the teachers. Finding shows that teachers often play the audio several times (1-4x) to the students and adjust the audio speed according to the students’ abilities. Their responses indicated that on average, 20 out of 42 teachers or 47.6% stated that they often applied this strategy/activity. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales.

Furthermore, the teachers also often use most common vocabulary in order the students understand what the teachers said. The data showed that on average, 34 out of 42 teachers or 81% said that they often applied the activity. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales. The result of the open-ended questionnaire also showed that teachers applied extensive listening as their activity in teaching vocabulary. In this session, listening songs appeared three times and watching videos appeared once. Though vocabulary activities belong to meaning-focused input appeared in close-ended question and in open-ended question in questionnaire, these activities did not emerge in the interview section. This is inconsistent with the result of the questionnaire.

#### **4.2 Teachers' Strategies/Activities based on Meaning-focused Output**

The second part of vocabulary teaching strategies/activities in the Four Strand is meaning-focused output. There are four items investigated: task-focused spoken interaction (item no. 5), writing with feedback (no. 6), linked skills (no. 7), and writing productively (no. 8). The finding shows that on average, 35.7% of teachers demonstrated often, 45.8% of teachers demonstrated sometimes, 11.9% of teachers demonstrated rarely, and 6.5% of teachers demonstrated never in applying strategies/activities that belong to meaning-focused output in teaching vocabulary. When the data were examined further, 2 out of 4 strategies were considered as used often and 2 were identified as used sometimes by the teachers. Finding reveals that teachers often familiarize the students with working in small groups to solve the given problems to facilitate active interaction in English (item no.5). Their responses indicated that on average, 20 out of 42 teachers or 47.6% stated that they often applied this activity. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales. Furthermore, the teachers also often assign students to write about a particular topic and provide feedback on the use of vocabulary and words choice in their writing (item no.6). The data showed that on average, 23 out of 42 teachers or 54.8% said that they often applied the activity. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales.

The result of close-ended questions is also supported by the result of the open-ended question. It can be seen from six teachers who admitted that they instructed their students to practice English in and out of class. Meanwhile, a teacher claimed that writing some paragraphs or text in English is as her strategy in teaching vocabulary. In line with the results of the questionnaire, a teacher also revealed writing with feedback as her strategy to teach vocabulary in the interview section. As stated by Respondent 1:

“After that they write a text using the words they have learnt. Each student will show the text in front of the classroom. Then, the rest of the students and I will give feedback to the texts.” — **R1**

Another strategy, task-focused spoken interaction also emerged in interview section. As Respondent 3 stated:

“I play a game to students. They are divided into 2 large groups. I start the game by saying a word. Then, a member of group has to say a sentence that contain the word that I have said and so on until the last member of each group say his/her sentence.” — **R3**

The results of the questionnaire showed that they were congruent with the results of the interview. The result from the questionnaire revealed that in total 23 out of 42 teachers or 54.8% frequently applied writing with feedback strategy in their teaching and 20 out of 42 teachers or 47.6% frequently applied task-focused spoken interaction.

#### **4.3 Teachers' Strategies/Activities based on Language-focused Learning**

The next four items of the questionnaire are about language-focused learning strand that consist of word cards (item no. 9), keyword technique (no.10), dictionary use (no. 11), and guessing from context strategies (no.12).

Based on the finding, on average, 37.5% of teachers demonstrated often, 36.9% of teachers demonstrated sometimes, 11.3% of teachers demonstrated rarely, and 14.3% of teachers demonstrated never in applying strategies / activities that belong to language-focused learning. Out of 4 strategies, only 1 was identified as used often and 3 were considered as used sometimes by the teachers. Finding reveals that teachers often train students to use a dictionary to look up the meaning of a vocabulary they don't know. The data showed that on average, 31 out of 42 teachers or 73.8% said that they often applied the strategy. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales.

Aside from the strategies that were mentioned in the closed-ended questionnaire, some strategies emerged from the result of open-ended questionnaire. These strategies are word cards, using dictionary, drilling, crossword puzzle, mind mapping, synonym and antonym, translation, and dictation.

In line with the result of the questionnaire, two teachers also brought using dictionary as their strategies to teach vocabulary in the interview section. As stated by Respondent 2:

“Before discussing a text, I ask students to write down some difficult words and ask them to look for the meaning in a dictionary.” — **R2**

Additionally, Respondent 4 stated:

“I will give students some new words that I have got from the text that they will learn. Then, I ask them to consult their dictionary to find the meaning of the words.” — **R4**

Furthermore, word cards strategy also emerged in interview section. Here several responses narrated by the respondents:

“To enrich my students’ vocabulary, I usually give them some vocabulary and asked them to drill the vocabulary until they memorize them.” — **R1**

“My strategy is by giving 20 new words to students and ask them to memorize them. After that, a week later, the students recite the vocabulary in front of the class.” — **R3**

Besides two strategies above, a respondent also revealed that keyword technique is one of strategies she applied to introduce new vocabulary. As she stated:

“I also ask my students to memorize vocabulary by finding other words that have the same sound with the vocabulary they learn. For example, the new word is doll. Then, I make a sentence, My doll eats a dodol. Dodol here is the word that has the same sound with doll.” — **R3**

From the result of data obtained from questionnaire, it was found that teachers provided more strategies during the interview session compared to information provided by the questionnaire. This way, it is assumed that in-depth interview is very much helpful in providing information which is not revealed from the questionnaire.

#### **4.4 Teachers’ Strategies/Activities based on Fluency Development**

The fourth part of the Four Strands is Fluency Development that consists of listening to stories (item no. 13), 4/3/2 strategy (no. 14), speed reading (no. 15) and ten-minute writing activities (no. 16).

The finding shows that on average, 31% of teachers demonstrated often, 41.1% of teachers demonstrated sometimes, 16.1% of teachers demonstrated rarely, and 11.9% of teachers demonstrated never in applying strategies/activities that belong to fluency development in teaching vocabulary. When the data about the application of vocabulary strategies/activities in the questionnaire items were examined further, out of 4 activities, 1 was considered as used often and 3 were identified as used sometimes by the teachers. Finding shows that teachers often play English stories to students in a language they can easily understand at a slow pace. Their responses indicated that on average, 23 out of 42 teachers or 54.8% stated that they often applied this activity. This item had the highest percentage of responses compared to other scales.

In the open-ended questionnaire, 8 respondents revealed that playing games were one of their activities in teaching vocabulary. Meanwhile, during the interview, a respondent stated ten-minute writing as her strategy/activity in teaching vocabulary. She stated:

“In every meeting, before starting the class, the students will do a quiz first. They will write a short text that contain vocabulary that they learnt a week before.” — **R4**

It was found that the result obtained from the questionnaire were in line with the result of the interview. Teachers mentioned some strategies/activities they applied to develop students’ fluency development in relation to their vocabulary competence namely listening to stories, doing 4/3/2 strategies, having speed reading, and ten-minute writing.

Overall, the result from the questionnaire and the interview conclude that the teachers applied various strategies/activities in teaching vocabulary, but there are some strategies/activities the teachers used most frequently.

## 5. Discussion

The discussion regarding the finding is presented in relation to four key points referring to four teachers' strategies when teaching vocabulary. They are meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development strands.

### 5.1 Strategies/Activities Emerged in the Meaning-focused Input

#### 5.1.1 Extensive listening activities as a frequent activity in the meaning-focused input

The finding revealed that teachers frequently used extensive listening as their strategy/activity to teach students vocabulary and this one belongs to meaning-focused input. This is also in line with [Rodgers \(2018\)](#) who stated that vocabulary learning can occur through extensive listening. In teaching process when communicating with the students, the teachers use most common vocabulary (high frequency words) in order the students understand what the teachers said. Teachers avoid using vocabulary students less encounter and choose every day or frequently used vocabulary to enhance students' comprehension and facilitate better meaning transfer. This is true for more frequent words are more easily learned than less frequent words, so generally they learn high-frequency words first ([Nation, 2013](#); [John & Wilke, 2018](#); [Dang et al., 2020](#))

Furthermore, to help students learn better teachers usually make use of audio as their learning tools. When exposing students to English learning via audio, teachers played the audio several times (1-4x) to the students and adjusted the audio speed according to the students' abilities. They would like to repeat the listening audio for example several times after knowing that students still cannot get the idea on what is stated from the audio. Once they knew that their students are still facing difficulties the frequency of repeating the listening audio can be added. This repetition provides fluency-development in listening and this fluency development provides opportunities for strengthening and enriching vocabulary ([McLean & Rouault, 2017](#)). Not only repeating the frequency, but they also tend to choose audio speed by adjusting and suiting to students' ability. This finding is in a line with [Webb and Nation \(2017\)](#) who state that in extensive listening, a large amount of input should be in the form of input which is comprehensible and familiar for students. Probably the most consistent finding related to good vocabulary instruction is that students need multiple exposures and repeated encounters to a word to learn it well ([Lawrence et al., 2010](#); [Feng & Webb, 2019](#)). As listening is receptive (passive), students need to have sufficient exposure to comprehensible input. The comprehensible input here refers to effort done by teachers to repeat the audio in English several times until comprehension can be achieved ([Daller, Milton, & Treffers-Daller, 2007](#); [Kamil & Hiebert, 2005](#)). In other words, repetition is important for learning for large amounts of input that are needed for substantial vocabulary learning to occur. Because repetition is essential for learning, having an arrangement in place for returning to the same content ensures that there is sufficient of repetition. Returning to the same content is as simple as repeating a task or changing it in some way ([Nation, 2020](#)).

#### 5.1.2 Extensive reading activities

Another activity performed by teacher to teach students vocabulary is through Extensive Reading (ER). Though it is less done than Extensive listening, this activity is also believed helpful to enhance students' vocabulary. Second language vocabulary can be learned and increased incidentally when the learner is engaged in extensive reading or reading for meaning ([Nation & Waring, 2020](#); [Feng & Webb, 2019](#); [Webb & Nation, 2017](#)). Through Extensive Reading (ER) students will learn more new words from reading more texts. Consequently, they will be more aware on morphological processes a word may encounter. Research suggests that students with better morphological awareness have better vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension ([Kieffer & Lesaux, 2008](#)). Moreover, from ER, students will learn not only the common words that all students are likely to know or the words that likely to encounter in texts for one content area but rather general academic words. [Nation \(2015\)](#) also claimed that teachers should link Extensive Reading to meaning-focused output, such as speaking and writing, by having learners talk and write about what they have read. Extensive reading and extensive listening programs have a wide range of effects, and there is plenty of evidence of their contribution to vocabulary growth ([Nation, 2020](#)).

## 5.2 Speaking and Writing Activities Used in Meaning-focused Output

### 5.2.1 Task-focus spoken interaction

Spoken interaction is an exchange of information that is formed by both the sender and the receiver that produces input (Ellis, 2015). This activity provides opportunities to negotiate meaning through interaction and thus it can facilitate comprehension. In other words, spoken activity enables students to have opportunities for incidental learning of vocabulary (Webb & Nation, 2017). Activities involving speaking skills like retelling stories from the book they have just read is one of the examples of task focus spoken interaction. There are other studies which give certain evidences on how spoken interaction can be one of the ways for vocabulary learning in which learners are involved in spoken interaction. They are spoken interaction through presentation, practice, and production (De la Fuente, 2002) four communication tasks (Newton, 2013); collaborative dialogue/ pair conversation (Nation, 2020). In other words, speaking activities labelled as output plays a key role for productive lexical or vocabulary acquisition.

### 5.2.2 Writing with feedback activities.

The second strategy used by the teacher is to give feedback on the students' writing, which is also listed in the meaning-focused output strategy proposed by Nation (2020). In this strategy, teachers can give feedback to the students' writing (Webb & Nation, 2013). The feedback can be of different types. One of which is feedback related to the correct use of vocabulary. A teacher can suggest specific vocabulary to be used in their students' writing. In this way, students learn that vocabulary should be appropriate to the context of writing. Therefore, teachers need to encourage students to write a lot and give feedback on students' writing that includes correction of vocabulary errors and choice of vocabulary items. When giving feedback, teachers can either explain directly in class when students make common errors, or they can give feedback on a piece of paper by marking the error and asking the students to correct it.

Giving feedback to students' writing is deemed helpful in expanding students' vocabulary acquisition. Previous studies regarding giving feedback on student's writing give evidence to the claim. Bruton (2007) and Ko (2019) for example are those who have practiced it through their writing. They mentioned that giving feedback is helpful in expanding students' vocabulary acquisition in terms of improving students' word use (Ko, 2019). Furthermore, Zhang and Wang (2022) also showed the good effects on student's vocabulary development after being given model-as-feedback writing task (MAFW) on English as a foreign language (EFL). They proved that giving feedback can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition.

This evidence clearly shows that there is a benefit from the activity of giving feedback to students' writing. In the long run, giving feedback to students' writing can boost students' vocabulary acquisition. Thus, as students' vocabulary more develop, they will easily communicate their ideas through their writing. Their ability in transferring ideas smoothly through a piece of writing will support their communicative competence and is therefore a core element in language mastery (Baharudin & Ismail, 2014).

## 5.3 Strategies/Activities Applied in Language-focused Learning

### 5.3.1 The use of dictionaries and guessing from context as the most widely used strategies

The use of dictionaries is one of the effective ways to teach vocabulary that may be found in literature. The usefulness of this approach has been demonstrated in numerous research (Alqarni, 2018; Mokhtar et al., 2017; Shen, 2013) which come up with the same idea that using a dictionary may assist EFL learners both have long-term retention of the vocabulary and find unknown words. To sum up, dictionary use both manual and electronic ones are proven to help EFL learning learn vocabulary better (Chen, 2012; Amirian et al., 2013; Zou, 2016; Ma & Cheon, 2018).

Besides the dictionary use, the practice of guessing meaning from context also facilitates learning. This is good for learners as they can gain some knowledge of the unknown language items through context clues and background knowledge (Nation, 2007).

### 5.3.2 Other strategies/activities used in language-focused learning

Teaching students using synonymy and antonymy is another strategy mentioned by the teacher of the present study. This has a relation to dictionary strategy that is previously mentioned. This happen because students may learn new word from synonym and antonym that they look for from a dictionary. This is in line with Hang and Du (2021) who stated that for high school teachers should use synonym and antonym

dictionaries more often in their teaching English, especially teaching vocabulary. The results show that, most students expose positive attitudes, high appreciation, and good behaviour to the use of the synonym and antonym dictionary to learn vocabulary. Teaching synonyms and antonyms gives the language learners an opportunity to enhance their memory for semantically related words; teaching synonyms and antonyms in separate sessions with short intervals in between might positively affect the students' long-term memory for words and consolidate their experience of learning words in a foreign language (Tajik, 2018).

- Over the years, many studies have shown that the use of word cards or flash cards in learning vocabulary prove its efficiency and effectiveness (Saeidi, & Mozaheb, 2012; Nation, 2013; Nikoopour & Kazemi, 2014). Moreover, more studies showed a larger effect for using word cards in an intentional learning condition compared with an incidental learning condition (Lei & Reynolds, 2022). Because of its effectiveness in vocabulary growth, teachers should provide their students some training to use word cards so that they can do it most effectively and independently (Lei & Reynolds, 2022; Nation, 2013). Besides traditional flashcard, the digital flashcards can also serve as media for vocabulary learning (Hung, 2015; Chen & Chan, 2019; Li & Tong, 2019; Yuksel et al., 2022).

The teachers also mentioned other strategies like drilling which they use to expand students' vocabulary. This is in line with studies by Christensen et al., (2007) and Jia et al., (2022) stating that learning vocabulary through drilling can provide good opportunity for vocabulary acquisition. Next, using mind mapping is also mentioned to be one of the option in learning vocabulary which provides students the opportunity to improve their vocabulary list and vocabulary retention (Heidari & Karimi, 2015; Aziz & Yamat, 2016; Jiang 2020). Then, dictation was also mentioned by teachers in the open-ended questionnaire as their strategy to improve students' vocab and this in in the same vein as (Tang, 2012; Chiang, 2019).

Another strategy that teachers employ is using translation which in this case is L1 translation. Teachers translate the English word into bahasa Indonesia and vice versa which aims at expanding students' vocabulary acquisition. This way students learn better in vocabulary when having translation from L1 rather than in L2 context (Alroe & Reinders, 2015). This statement is also in line with Joyce (2018) who stated that the first language could still offer considerable benefits when used in cooperation with the target language through a meaningful and purposeful approach (Joyce, 2018). This statement is also supported by Alahmadi (2020), learning through lexical translation can increase students' vocabulary size.

## 5.4 Strategies/Activities Applied in Fluency Development

### 5.4.1 Telling Stories as the Most Widely Used Activities

For years, stories are considered as a great tool to teach new vocabulary. Telling or listening to stories is an activity where the students are listening while being read to the stories (Nation, 2013). The use of storytelling in classrooms continues to grow, and research demonstrates this method has many benefits for students for assisting them in learning new words in a memorable way and motivating them to participate in the classroom activities (Inal & Cakir, 2014). This finding is in line with the study conducted by Bhatti et al., (2022) implies that primary school English teachers should use short stories to increase their students' vocabulary. When a student listens to a story, not only are the vocabulary areas of the brain activated but also the sensory areas of the cortex as the topic is given life through story (Chow et al., 2014).

Students can get benefit from listening stories if the teachers are able to design some plans to use them (Kirsch, 2012). Storytelling give effect to students' lexical items when the teachers use a range of strategies such as mime, gesture, voice modulation, visuals or paraphrase and offer multiple and meaningful opportunities for language use. Story telling gives an opportunity for students to expand their vocabulary as they decode the meaning of words, focused on the context of the story they hear or read. Also listening to stories improve students' understanding of grammar and literary devices as they see them within a story. Learning and recalling vocabulary items have ways been problematic especially for learners in teaching and learning process. For that reason, the teacher can use storytelling activities in classroom settings in order to foster the success of vocabulary learning and retrieving (Abdulla, 2012; Lenhart et al., 2017).

### 5.4.2 Other strategies/activities used in fluency development

Not only storytelling, but teachers also perform 4/3/2 strategy to develop speaking fluency. A study by Yang (2014) confirms that this strategy is useful to help learners develop their fluency in speaking. This is very useful to develop students' communicative language competence. Besides, 4//3/2 strategy, speed

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reading is another strategy/activity to enhance students' fluency. Research by [Underwood et al., \(2011\)](#) mentioned that speed reading does not only enhance students' reading comprehension but also student' vocabulary development for students. This is strengthened by [Alderson \(2003\)](#) who once stated that measures of readers' vocabulary knowledge routinely correlate highly with measures of reading comprehension, and are often, indeed, the single best predictor of text comprehension. In other words, when students' comprehension is good then their vocabulary knowledge goes in line too. Lastly, ten-minute writing is another activity employed by the teachers. Ten-minute writing is a nonstop, non-editing writing practice that has students write freely on whatever they think at the time. This ten-minute writing requires students to write on topic they have learned in the previous meeting. [Komiyama \(2017\)](#) proved that this technique is so much helpful in enhancing students' vocabulary for through students writing teachers can know and evaluate on how students have improved in their vocabulary.

To sum up, consistent with the previous literature, this study discovers that teachers have implemented various strategies/activities in teaching vocabulary to students. Their teaching strategies/activities were revealed from the questionnaires they have filled in and more information to strengthen the result of questionnaire was given strengthened during in depth interview. Therefore, strategies/activities which formerly were not delivered during the questionnaire session can be well elaborated in the interview session.

Strategies teachers show in teaching vocabulary is very important to know for it can give an information on efforts teachers have done to develop students' vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of language aspects students need to master well for it serves as one important aspect of language which should be mastered to gain success in second or foreign language learning. Finally, this study has several limitations. Since it involves a small number of participants, its outcomes cannot be generalised to EFL teachers at different regions and educational levels. Future research should aim to increase the sample size for more generalisable findings. Moreover, this study does not encompass all of the strategies/ activities belongs to the four strands. Further studies might need to incorporate more strategies/activities in their study.

## 6. Conclusion

This study employs survey research design which aim to investigate teachers' strategies in teaching vocabulary following the Four Strands by [Nation \(2007\)](#). They are teachers' strategies based on meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language focused learning, and fluency development. Deliberate learning occurs in the language-focused learning strand, while incidental learning occurs through the other three strands. The findings show that the teachers tend to employ extensive listening more than extensive reading in teaching vocabulary. The findings also indicate that teachers are not sufficiently accustomed to applying fluency development and often omit it from their teaching activities. This is evidenced by the low percentage of teachers who reported using fluency development as a vocabulary teaching strategy. Telling stories is a preferred strategy for them to use. Storytelling allows students not only to listen but also to participate, giving them the opportunity to experience a new language.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to vocabulary teaching strategies in Islamic senior high schools in West Sumatera. The study provides information and advances understanding of the principles of the Four Strands that can be implemented in vocabulary teaching strategies. It also provides teachers with some useful vocabulary teaching strategies/activities that are suitable for their students' needs in learning vocabulary. Moreover, it will help teachers choose and create techniques and ways in which the students interact and actively use the word meaning.

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