

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GUIDED CONVERSATION TECHNIQUE IN IMPROVING LEARNERS' VOCABULARY SKILL IN AL ASY'ARIYYAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the implementation and effectiveness of the guided conversation technique in improving vocabulary skills at Al-Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School. Using a quantitative quasi-experimental design, it involved an experimental class (23 learners) and a control class (22 learners). Data were collected through observation, tests, and documentation, and were analyzed using SPSS 25 with descriptive statistics, normality, homogeneity, paired sample t-test, and independent sample t-test. Results showed that while both classes had similar pre-test scores, the experimental class showed a significant post-test improvement (average 84.87) compared to the control class (average 70.09). The N-Gain test indicated that 91.3% of students in the experimental group experienced high improvement. The guided conversation technique proved effective in enhancing vocabulary skills through structured, contextual, and collaborative learning. It was recommended for regular classroom use, curriculum integration, and continuous student practice.

Keywords: guided conversation, vocabulary skill, learners

Introduction

English has long been regarded as a global language, playing a vital role in communication, education, business, and technology. As Hill & Flynn, (2014) note, As Hill and Flynn (2014) note, English serves as the primary medium connecting individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds, making it crucial for students to master its components effectively. In many countries, including Indonesia, English proficiency is

considered essential for participating in the globalized world and accessing vast knowledge resources. Consequently, the Indonesian government has integrated English into its educational policies, as exemplified by the Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional (RSBI) program under the Law No. 20 of 2003, which encourages English use not only as a subject but also as a medium of instruction Purnami, (2011).

In educational contexts, mastering English involves four core language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing, supported by vocabulary as a critical micro-skill. Vocabulary plays a foundational role in facilitating comprehension and communication across all language skills. However, many students struggle with vocabulary acquisition due to limited language exposure, ineffective teaching methods, Widiyanti, Rofik, & Ariyani (2023) , and insufficient opportunities for practice Asra & Haryadi, (2016). These challenges are even more pronounced in Islamic boarding schools, where English learning is often not prioritized and is hindered by time constraints, a lack of interaction in English, and limited learning resources.

Islamic boarding schools traditionally emphasize Arabic for religious purposes, often leaving English underemphasized despite its growing relevance in modern education and global communication. Moreover, students in these institutions face the additional challenge of navigating three different languages Indonesian, Arabic, and English which have distinct grammatical systems. This linguistic complexity further complicates their English learning experience.

Given these challenges, effective and engaging teaching strategies are needed to support students in mastering English vocabulary. One promising approach is the guided conversation technique, which encourages students to engage in structured dialogues using target vocabulary with support and scaffolding from the teacher. This technique promotes contextualized learning, active usage, and collaborative communication, all of which can significantly enhance vocabulary retention and understanding.

In light of this context, the present study investigates the implementation and effectiveness of the guided conversation technique in improving vocabulary skills at Al-Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School. The study aims to address the persistent vocabulary learning challenges faced by students and provide insights into how guided conversations

can create a more interactive, meaningful, and student-centered learning environment. By doing so, the research seeks to contribute to the development of more effective vocabulary teaching methods tailored to the unique needs of learners in Islamic boarding schools.

Literary Review

Vocabulary Skill

Vocabulary is an important part of language skills, and a wider vocabulary mastery will increase fluency and accuracy in communication. Conversely, limited vocabulary can cause a person to have difficulty finding the right words, which can hinder communication and reduce the quality of understanding Nation & Nation (2001). Thornbury (2002) argues that vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency because it enables clear and effective communication. Stahl & Nagy (2007) emphasize that effective vocabulary learning requires introducing words in various contexts and repeated exposure to help transfer knowledge into long-term memory.

Guided Conversation Technique

Guided Conversation Technique is a language learning technique that encourages learners to practice speaking in controlled situations with teacher guidance. This technique allows learners to use the target language in a more natural context, but still in a structured environment so they can learn more confidently. The Guided Conversation Technique is a language learning method that encourages learners to practice speaking in structured situations with teacher guidance Harmer (2007). Interaction-based approaches such as Guided Conversation improve vocabulary retention and motivate learners in learning a language Brown (2001). The main stages in implementing this technique include:

1. Vocabulary Introduction

In the early stages, teachers introduce new words that are relevant to the learning topic. According to Nation (2013) vocabulary introduction should be done in an interesting way, such as through pictures, examples in sentences, or associations with familiar words. This technique helps students build connections between new vocabulary and concepts they already know.

2. Pair or Group Exercises

After understanding the meaning of vocabulary, students practice using it in conversations guided by the teacher. This exercise can be done in small groups or pairs, where they are encouraged to create dialogues that integrate new words. According to Thornbury (2005), conversation-based exercises help students to be more confident in using language and improve their fluency in speaking.

3. Real Situation Simulation

At this stage, learners are given conversation scenarios that are relevant to everyday life. For example, they can simulate conversations in restaurants, at the airport, or in other social situations. According to Spada & Lightbown (2019), simulations like this allow learners to understand the use of vocabulary in various contexts and improve their communication skills.

4. Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation and Feedback in language learning can be conducted using many strategies such as correction and error identification (Rofik et al. 2023). Particularly in the speaking skill, after the conversation session, the teacher provides feedback on the use of vocabulary and the students' speaking. Feedback can include correction of grammatical errors, pronunciation, or inappropriate word choices. According to Ellis (2008) feedback given directly after speaking activities can accelerate the learning process and help students avoid repeating mistakes.

By using the Guided Conversation Technique, learners not only learn to speak more fluently, but also understand how language is used in various social and situational contexts. This technique is one of the most recommended methods in communicative language teaching because it supports the development of speaking skills with a more natural and directed approach.

Implementation of Guided Conversation in Vocabulary Learning within Islamic Boarding School Environment

Islamic boarding schools offer a unique language learning environment where students live and interact intensively, often using the target language in daily routines. Krashen (1982) argues that language acquisition is more effective in environments rich in comprehensible input, which aligns with the immersive nature of boarding schools.

Guided Conversation can be effectively implemented in this context through steps such as vocabulary presentation, guided pair practice, and real-life simulations. Nation (2013) emphasizes that vocabulary should be introduced with meaningful examples and reinforced through frequent use. When learners repeatedly use new words in conversation, they are more likely to retain them and use them accurately.

Richards & Rodgers (2014) also support the idea that communicative activities involving real interaction lead to better vocabulary retention and overall language development. Despite challenges such as limited access to digital tools in some boarding schools, this technique remains practical and effective due to its adaptability and focus on learner engagement.

Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental quantitative research design to investigate the effectiveness of the Guided Conversation Technique in enhancing students' vocabulary skills. The research was conducted at Al Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School, located in Wonosobo, Central Java. The study involved two classes randomly selected from the elementary level: Chamber B, consisting of 23 students as the experimental group, and Chamber H1, with 22 students as the control group. Both groups were administered a pre-test prior to the treatment to assess their baseline vocabulary proficiency. The experimental group received the treatment using the Guided Conversation Technique across two instructional sessions, while the control group followed conventional instructional methods. After the treatment, a post-test was conducted for both groups to evaluate improvements in vocabulary knowledge.

Data were collected through observation, vocabulary tests, and documentation. Observations focused on classroom interaction, instructional techniques, and student participation during the treatment. The vocabulary tests consisted of 10 multiple-choice items and 5 matching items, designed to measure learners' ability to recognize and apply vocabulary in communicative contexts. Documentation included lesson plans, attendance records, photos of classroom activities, and teacher reflections to provide qualitative support for the findings.

The research instruments included an observation checklist, pre-test and post-test worksheets, and documentation logs. The data collection procedure involved initial classroom observations, administering the pre-test, delivering the treatment to the experimental group, conducting the post-test, and documenting all relevant classroom activities. To ensure data reliability and validity, all tests were conducted under similar conditions for both groups.

Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the pre-test and post-test results. Normality tests were applied to determine the distribution of the data, followed by a test for homogeneity of variance to confirm the comparability of the two groups. A paired sample t-test was used to examine the significance of the improvement within each group, and an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the performance between the experimental and control groups. This analytical approach allowed the researcher to determine whether the Guided Conversation Technique had a statistically significant effect on students' vocabulary acquisition

Findings and Discussions

Students' vocabulary skills before being given the learning treatment showed that the level of vocabulary mastery was still in the moderate to low category, both in the control and experimental classes. In the control class, students' pretest scores had an average of 62.36 with the lowest score of 48 and the highest score of 70, and a standard deviation of 6.161. This shows that students' initial ability in mastering vocabulary is relatively varied, but most students have not reached the high category. Meanwhile, in the experimental class, the pretest scores showed a slightly higher average of 66.87 with a minimum score of 50 and a maximum of 78, and a standard deviation of 6.628. This condition indicates that before the treatment, students in the experimental class had a slightly better initial vocabulary ability than the control class, but the difference was not significant. From these two pretest data, it can be seen that both classes had relatively equal vocabulary ability before the learning was carried out, although the experimental class was slightly superior. This equality is important because it is a fair basis for comparing the effectiveness of the learning methods that will be given in

each class, namely conventional learning in the control class and guided conversation technique in the experimental class.

Table 1. 1
Descriptive Data on Pre-Test Scores

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test control class	22	48	70	62.36	6.161
Pre-test experiment class	23	50	78	66.87	6.628
Valid N (listwise)	22				

Table 4. 2
Descriptive Data on Post-Test Scores

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pos-test control class	22	58	82	70.09	6.094
Pos-test experiment class	23	70	92	84.87	6.145
Valid N (listwise)	22				

Based on the pretest data previously presented, it can be concluded that the use of guided conversation technique has a positive effect on the vocabulary skills of students at Al-Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School. This can be seen from the increase in the average score between the pretest and post-test in the experimental class that was treated using the technique. In the pretest results, the average score of students in the experimental class was moderate, but after applying the guided conversation technique in the learning process, the post-test scores showed a significant increase, both in average and the range of the highest and lowest scores.

The results of statistical tests conducted through paired sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which means there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results in the experimental class. In addition, the N-Gain value showed that most students in the experimental class experienced an increase in vocabulary skills in the high category (91.3%), while the rest were in the medium category (8.7%), and none were in the low category. In contrast, in the control class, which was not treated with guided conversation technique, only 36.36% of the students showed an improvement in the high category, while 63.64% were in the medium category, and none achieved a significant improvement equivalent to the experimental class.

Table 1. 3
Classification of N-Gain Values

N-Gain value	Category Improvement	Control Class	Experimental Class
>0.7	high	8 (36,36%)	21 (91,3%)
0.3 – 0.7	medium	14 (63,64%)	2 (8,7%)
< 0.3	low	0	0

Table 1. 4
Control Class N-Gain Values

N	22
Total	1542
Average	70,09091
Xmax	82
Xmin	58
Std Dev	5,953678

Table 1. 5
Experiment Class N-Gain Values

N	23
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Total	1952
Average	84,86957
Xmax	92
Xmin	70
Std Dev	6,009444

Table 1. 6
Normality test results

Tests of Normality			
	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test control class	.914	22	.057
Post-test experiment class	.923	23	.076
Pre-test control class	.972	22	.760
Post-test experiment class	.843	23	.062

Table 1. 7
Paired Sample T-Test Results

Paired Samples Correlations			
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Pre-test control class & Post-test control class	22	.826	.000
Pair 2 Pre-test experiment class & Post-test experiment class	23	.695	.000

Paired Samples Test						
	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			

Pre-test control class – Post-test control class	-7.727	3.615	.771	-10.027	21	.000
Pre-test – Poss-test experiment class	-18.000	5.009	1.044	-17.234	22	.000

Table 1. 8

Homogeneity Test Results

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	.305	1	43	.583
Based on Median	.053	1	43	.819
Based on Median and with adjusted df	.053	1	39.383	.819
Based on trimmed mean	.216	1	43	.645

Table 1. 9

Independent Sample t-Test Results

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pre-test control class- Post-test control class	-7.727	3.615	.771	-9.330	-6.125	10.027	21	.000	
Pre-test experiment class- Post-test experiment class	-18.000	5.009	1.044	-20.166	-15.834	17.234	22	.000	

The homogeneity test through Levene Statistic shows a significant result of 0.583 (> 0.05), which indicates that the data variance of the two

classes is homogeneous, so that the independent sample t-test can be conducted validly. The test also showed a significant difference between the posttest results of the control class and the experimental class. This strengthens the evidence that guided conversation technique is effective in improving students' vocabulary acquisition more meaningfully than conventional learning methods.

Thus, guided conversation technique proved to be an effective teaching strategy in enriching the vocabulary skills of the students at Al-Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School. This technique not only improves students' verbal ability significantly, but also helps them to be more confident in applying the vocabulary they have learned in real conversational contexts

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the guided conversation technique is an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing vocabulary skills among learners at Al Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School. Implemented in a structured manner through planning, implementation, and reflection, this method offers a student-centered and context-based learning experience. In the planning phase, teachers designed meaningful conversation scenarios drawn from real-life contexts such as greetings, shopping, or self-introduction accompanied by key vocabulary, functional expressions, and visual media. During implementation, these materials were used to facilitate interactive vocabulary presentation and pair or group practice, allowing learners to engage in guided communicative tasks. The final reflection phase helped consolidate learning through student self-assessment and reinforcement activities such as vocabulary games and writing exercises.

The findings of this study reveal that this method significantly outperforms conventional vocabulary teaching approaches. Quantitative data from pre-test and post-test scores, analyzed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests, show that learners in the experimental class experienced a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition. The mean post-test score of the experimental group was considerably higher than that of the control group, supported by N-Gain values, which indicated that over 90% of the experimental class achieved a high level of vocabulary improvement. Additionally, the

results of the homogeneity of variance test (Levene's Test) confirmed that both classes had comparable variance, ensuring that the comparison was statistically valid and reliable.

Beyond the statistical results, the guided conversation technique fostered a more active, confident, and communicative classroom environment. Students were not only able to memorize vocabulary more effectively but also apply it in meaningful, real-life dialogues. The emphasis on immediate feedback, collaborative learning, and authentic language use contributed to the development of both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

In conclusion, the guided conversation technique offers a practical and impactful solution for vocabulary instruction, especially in language learning contexts like Islamic boarding schools, where communicative competence in English is becoming increasingly important. This method supports vocabulary acquisition in a way that is engaging, contextually relevant, and pedagogically sound. Future research could explore its application in other language skills—such as speaking or listening comprehension—or in different educational settings to further validate and expand its instructional potential.

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