

KIM VOCABULARY BUILDING STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCABULARY TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The focus of teaching English at schools, especially for beginners, is to build vocabulary knowledge in addition to language skills and components. To achieve the goal, KIM Strategy can be implemented, which becomes the topic of this paper. Hence, this paper aims to review the related literature on the implementation and implication of KIM Strategy for vocabulary teaching. This is a library research, in which two types of data were presented. They were primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained from the original work of Kristen Vibas (1970), the proponent of the KIM Strategy, entitled KIM: A highly effective strategy to build vocabulary across any content area. Whilst, the secondary data were collected from journal articles published in the past 10 years, 2014-2024. The results revealed that the KIM Strategy is effective in improving students' vocabulary knowledge due to its teaching principles that support various principles of inquiry learning, self-directed learning, and social learning. The KIM Strategy is also a strategy for enhancing logical, convergent, and divergent thinking skills.

Keywords: *KIM Strategy; Vocabulary Knowledge; Vocabulary Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the key to language acquisition and language development. Without having a robust vocabulary, an English language learner will not be able to communicate well because communication is fully supported by the number of vocabulary the learner has. Rosdiani *et al.* (2022) point out that the more the learner has the words, the easier they express ideas and understand the written and spoken language. In other words, the learner's ability in mastering the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is highly influenced by their vocabulary mastery.

Nonetheless, mastering vocabulary requires a lot of effort and consistency, especially for beginners. The size and function of words as well as differences in word form and pronunciation are some challenges they may encounter in the process. Aspects like intra-lexical, inter-lexical, retention, learning environment, motivation to

learn and language instructions also determine vocabulary learning (Erniwati et al., 2024; Nunan, 2015). Thus, the success of vocabulary mastery involves some factors, including cognitive, affective and language instructions or teaching.

As one of the factors affecting the success of vocabulary learning, teaching strategies should be catered to learners' needs. For this reason, teachers are supposed to adapt the instructional strategies into a plan of action aiming to achieve either a specific or a series of goals (Hasanova et al., 2021). Through these strategies teachers can help students improve their vocabulary learning and obtain better learning outcomes (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Pamungkas, 2021). Choosing appropriate teaching strategies therefore is necessary as the teaching strategies undoubtedly affect students' vocabulary learning.

Some popular strategies for vocabulary instructions are Word Games, Flashcards, Word Wall, Contextual Learning, Vocabulary Journal, and KIM strategy. The latter was originally introduced by Kristen Vibas in 1970 as a way to improve students' vocabulary words in any subject. The KIM strategy utilizes an acronym to assist with the direct instruction of vocabulary using visual media. It is a sketch to help different types of learners cement the vocabulary into their memory (Soe, 2014; Vibas, 2016). In other words, the KIM strategy is a vocabulary strategy to help students remember new words introduced.

Although several studies have indicated that the KIM strategy is effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery (Ramli & Rivaldin, 2021; Benedikta & Juliari, 2020; Hariadi & Amir, 2014), a number of questions regarding this strategy and how it can be effective remain to be addressed. Additional study to understand more completely the implementation of the KIM strategy and the impact on vocabulary teaching and learning is required. Therefore, this paper aims to review the literature relevant to the KIM strategy and discuss the implications on vocabulary instructions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a-library research, that is a method of gathering data from various literature sources to analyze and answer research problems without doing fieldwork and focus on theories, principles, and ideas from existing literature (Zafira et al., 2022). Data sources of library research are divided into primary sources and

secondary sources (Ajayi, 2017). The primary source was original work of the KIM strategy proponent, Kristen Vibes (1970), entitled *K.I.M. – A highly effective strategy to build vocabulary across any content area*. The secondary sources were obtained from article journals and theses on using KIM Strategy in vocabulary teaching published in the past 10 years, 2014-2024.


RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

KIM Strategy and the implementation in vocabulary teaching

The KIM strategy is an abbreviation of *Key words* – new vocabulary terms or concepts, *Important information* is a definition or technical explanation of the term or concept, and *Memory clues* in which students can solidify their understanding of concepts by creating visual representations to help them remember the meaning of terms. Through drawing simple pictures to illustrate key ideas, students can process and interpret new information, effectively integrating it into their own knowledge. Students internalize the given information and arrange it into a visual organizer when they encounter a new word (Vibas, 2016).

The KIM strategy is a three-column graphic organizer. The first column, or column 'K', is where the key ideas or terms go. The second column, or column 'I', is where the information about the key idea goes. The final column, or column 'M' is where students generate memory clues (Wiebe, 2009). Column M can be a picture sketch or sentence to help students remember the key words. Having students write a sentence using the key word can be added to the classroom practice. The following is an example of a graphic organizer using the KIM strategy suggested by Willis (2023).

1. Record the key word (K).
2. Write down important information about the key word including a user-friendly definition (I).
3. Draw what the key word means, and link it to an unusual connection to create a memory device (M).
4. Write the key word in a context-rich sentence for application.

K. (K = Key Vocabulary Word)	I. (I = Information/Definition)	M. (M = Memory Cue/Picture)
defeat (v.)	to win victory over	
Your Sentence: Bush <u>defeated</u> Kerry in the 2004 election by winning the electoral college.		

The following are the steps for teaching vocabulary using the KIM strategy as adapted from Willis (2023).

1. Students create a three-column chart and put labels on them K, I, M.

2. When new words are introduced, students put them on the “K” column. For instance, the word “crack (n)”
3. Students present essential information that explains the word and put this information in the “I” column. For example, the important information for the word "crack" is "a line on the surface of something along which it has split without breaking into separate parts".
4. Next, students write or draw memory cues that can help them remember new words and put them in the “M” column.
5. Students can also write sentences using the new terms. For example, the sentence for “crack” is “The mirror was cracked.”

The Effectiveness of KIM Strategy and the implications for vocabulary teaching

The KIM strategy has some merits when implemented in vocabulary teaching. The KIM strategy allows for quicker acquisition of the meanings of new words. It involves linking unfamiliar words to familiar concepts to enhance students' understanding of the word. This strategy personalizes new words so that the students can remember the meaning of the words more easily. It is a useful strategy as it can aid the learner's ability to take charge of their own learning (Koller, 2015). Hence, the KIM strategy supports the learner's autonomy and self-regulation. This strategy is of course rewarding as emphasized by Nakata (2014), that the more self-regulated the learners in learning a foreign language the more skillful they are. The more skillful the learners, the more responsible and autonomous they are. As a result, a better sense of agency as a lifelong language learner develops so that the learners can continue their learning throughout their lives and move forward on their own.

The KIM strategy helps students learn several words at once and encourages them to expand their understanding on key terms of the intended words. This is because the KIM strategy uses visual media in the form of graphic organizers to assist students in retaining their understanding of important terms and concepts. The use of graphic organizers in KIM Strategy brings significant impacts on vocabulary teaching. Duc (2015) points out that graphic organizers make teaching and learning more beneficial. Key concepts and vocabulary are underscored, along with the connections among them. These ‘mental tools’, according to Vygotsky (1962), function as aids for students to understand and acquire important information and the connections

between them. The similarity between graphic organizers and networks makes it easier for students to adjust their existing knowledge by observing the links and discrepancies between their current understanding and what they aim to learn or know.

The KIM Strategy uses mnemonic devices to explain various steps or columns in the graphic organizers. The device apparently provides a big contribution to vocabulary teaching as using mnemonic tactics enables the recall of specific information or relevant concepts by making connections and associations with related or proximate events. It allows the students to reminisce information from a single perception of each element. Utilizing mnemonics also enhances students' capacity to remember and access vocabulary by simplifying the process of recalling previously learned information, thus facilitating its immediate retrieval when needed. It brings out a sense of agency and independence in the students' own learning journey as they find new ways to engage with the target language (Siagian et al., 2023; Nazihovna & Kizi, 2022; Hill, 2022; Ramli & Rivaldin, 2021). In other words, mnemonic devices help students to easily memorize and retrieve vocabulary as necessary.

Furthermore, the memory cue column (M) is very useful especially for visual learners. Adding color to memory cues has been shown to increase their meaning. The uniqueness of memory cues also increases student retention. Research shows that combining words with visual representations is a useful strategy for developing mental understanding as pointed out by Erniwati et al. (2022), Nashruddin et al. (2022), and Sweller et al. (2019) that picture activates the whole-brain for linear thinking, control mental effort and reduce the unnecessary mental effort that students go through. It also assists learners in grasping the idea, simplifying and explaining the information they are studying or attempting to comprehend. The creation of vivid mental images or associations that link the new vocabulary to something familiar or easily remembered can be very powerful. The memory clue encourages students to visualize the meaning of the term by using memorable images or symbols.

In addition, the KIM Strategy promotes the enhancement of logical, convergent, and divergent thinking skills as reported by El-hallim (2024) and Hariadi & Amir (2014) that the KIM Strategy allows students to think logically, critically and creatively. The following are properties of both critical and creative thinking that can be enhanced through the KIM Strategy as suggested by Harris (2012).

Table 1. Critical Thinking Vs. Creative Thinking

Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking
Analytic	Generative
Convergent	Divergent
Vertical	Lateral
Probability	Possibility
Judgment	suspended judgment
Focused	Diffuse
Objective	Subjective
Answer	an answer
left brain	right brain
Verbal	Visual
Linear	Associative
Reasoning	richness, novelty
yes but	yes and

Having logical thinking skills is important especially for children due to the shift of thinking process from concrete to abstract. Furthermore, students who engage in critical thinking can develop advanced thinking skills known as high-order thinking skills (HOTS). Critical thinking improves their capacity for comprehending, solving problems, and making decisions, while creative thinking encompasses the use of analytical skills, adaptability, uniqueness, idea generation, effective communication, etc. (Gladushyna, 2019; Rahayu et al., 2018). The implication of integrated thinking skills in language teaching is remarkable as they can facilitate the improvement of language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

From the research that has been undertaken, it is possible to conclude that the KIM Strategy is an effective strategy for boosting students' vocabulary knowledge. The effectiveness is due to its teaching principles that highly support principles of modern learning as depicted by Olsen (2024) in teach Thought Staff, including inquiry learning (compile, contribute, combine, change), self-directed learning (correlate, compare, catch, cooperate), and social learning (connecting, communicating, collaborating, learning collectively). This strategy also supports students to have logical, critical and creative thinking skills.

This research was concerned with vocabulary teaching; however, the results should be applicable also to the teaching of reading and speaking skills. For example, the KIM Strategy can be used before the students begin reading a piece of text. The

memory cue can be performed in collaboration with a partner. Thus, not only are the students helped with vocabulary building, but also with collaboration and communication skills. Moreover, further study on the use of KIM Strategy in teaching reading skills is necessary to extend our knowledge of vocabulary building strategies related to teaching language skills.

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