



Teacher's and Parents' Collaboration in Supporting English Vocabulary Learning for Deaf Students

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Abstract

Deaf students often experience barriers in acquiring English vocabulary because their limited access to auditory input reduces opportunities for exposure, practice, and comprehension. Overcoming these challenges requires the use of creative teaching strategies and strong collaboration between teachers and parents to ensure that learning continues beyond the classroom. The purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies employed by teachers in teaching basic English vocabulary to deaf students, how parents reinforce this learning at home, and how collaboration between both parties supports students' progress. A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted, involving interviews and observations with teachers and parents at SMALBS Muhammadiyah Golokan Sidayu. Data were analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman's framework, allowing key themes to emerge naturally from participants' experiences. The results showed that teachers used multimodal strategies, with visual aids, sign-supported speech, repetition, and contextual activities being the most frequently applied. Parents played a complementary role by repeating vocabulary during daily routines, using gestures and signs, and embedding new words in meaningful contexts. Despite these efforts, challenges such as sustaining attention and teaching abstract words were identified. A significant finding of the study was the presence of a continuous feedback loop, where teachers and parents shared observations, adapted strategies, and monitored students' development together. The study concludes that effective vocabulary development for deaf students requires an active partnership between teachers and parents, ensuring that learning is reinforced and contextualized across settings. These insights highlight the value of inclusive practices and suggest that further research should explore technological and community-based approaches to strengthen language acquisition among deaf learners.

Keywords: deaf students, vocabulary comprehension, teacher strategies, parental support, collaboration

Introduction

Inclusive education for students with hearing impairments remains a challenge in Indonesia. Although policies guarantee the right to equal education, many deaf students continue to face barriers such as a lack of trained teachers, limited resources, and insufficient support for language learning (Putri & Musthafa, 2020; Nugroho & Retnaningdyah, 2019). As Marschark and Hauser (2022) highlight, the academic development of deaf learners is less about cognitive limitations and more about the accessibility of communication and instruction. Within this context, English learning in special schools is often narrowed to the most basic level, with vocabulary taught as the central component.

Vocabulary is considered the foundation of language skills, enabling learners to comprehend, express, and interact across different contexts (Nation, 2013). For deaf students, however, acquiring vocabulary is particularly complex because they rely on visual rather than auditory input. Concrete words may be accessible through pictures or gestures, yet abstract vocabulary is often more difficult to grasp (Yuliana & Saputri, 2023). Teachers therefore employ strategies such as sign-supported speech, visual aids, and interactive games to strengthen comprehension (Wahyuningtyas & Kurniasih, 2015; Prasetya et al., 2023). In recent years, technology-based tools have also been developed to provide visual and repetitive learning opportunities (Pratama & Mulyani, 2025).

Despite these advances, existing research has largely focused on classroom instruction, overlooking the role of parents in reinforcing vocabulary at home. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue, understanding education requires capturing the “multiple realities constructed by participants,” which in this case include both teachers and parents. Parents observe whether vocabulary learned at school is remembered and applied in daily contexts, offering insights that complement the teacher’s classroom perspective. Their involvement is essential, yet underrepresented in previous studies.

To address this gap, the present study explores both teachers’ and parents’ perspectives on the English vocabulary comprehension of deaf students at SMALBS Muhammadiyah Golokan Sidayu. Framed within Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development, the study highlights how collaborative support between teachers and parents contributes to vocabulary development. By examining these perspectives, this research seeks to provide a holistic understanding of school–home collaboration while offering practical implications for inclusive pedagogy..

Literature Review

Research on English vocabulary learning for deaf students has consistently highlighted the importance of adapted instructional strategies. Putra and Pratama (2023) found that visual-based methods, such as pictures and real objects, were highly effective in enabling students to connect meaning with form. Similarly, Wahyuningtyas and Kurniasih (2015) emphasized the value of Total Communication, which integrates sign language, written text, and gestures, as it provides multiple channels for input and helps overcome the limitations of relying on a single modality. These studies illustrate that deaf learners benefit from instruction that is both multimodal and repetitive.

More recent work has investigated the challenges faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms. Prasetya et al. (2023) reported that many educators lack specialized training in deaf education, forcing them to rely on creativity and

improvisation to adapt materials. Teachers often struggle to present abstract vocabulary, which lacks tangible referents, and must therefore design strategies that link words with meaningful contexts. As Mayer and Leigh (2010) note, deaf learners are highly visual, which makes images, sign-supported explanations, and multimedia resources critical to their comprehension.

In addition to classroom practices, scholars have begun to explore how technology can enhance vocabulary acquisition. Pratama and Mulyani (2025) developed a digital learning application specifically designed for deaf students, incorporating sign language videos, animations, and quizzes. Their findings suggest that digital tools provide not only accessible input but also opportunities for independent practice outside school. This aligns with Rahmatullah's (2023) assertion that integrating multisensory and contextualized approaches can significantly improve both receptive and expressive vocabulary.

While these studies provide valuable insights, they remain largely teacher-centered. The role of parents in supporting vocabulary learning has received limited attention, even though parents are key figures in reinforcing language outside the classroom. According to Illeris (2018), learning is shaped not only by cognitive engagement but also by emotional and social support from significant others. In line with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which stresses the importance of guidance and scaffolding from "more knowledgeable others," both teachers and parents can be viewed as central agents in the vocabulary development of deaf learners. Thus, integrating parental perspectives with teachers' experiences can offer a more holistic understanding of how school and home jointly shape language acquisition.

Research Methods

This research applied a *qualitative descriptive design* under an *interpretivist paradigm*. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to understand the participants' lived experiences and interpret their perspectives in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study aimed to capture how both teachers and parents perceive the English vocabulary comprehension of deaf students, rather than to quantify or generalize results.

Population and Sample

The population of this research consisted of teachers and parents of deaf students at SMALBS Muhammadiyah Golokan Sidayu, East Java, Indonesia. Using purposive sampling, one English teacher and two parents of Grade 10 deaf students were selected as participants. The selection was based on their active involvement in supporting the students' vocabulary learning both in school and at home. The

teacher provided insights into classroom strategies and challenges, while the parents reflected on the reinforcement and application of vocabulary in daily life.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation. The semi-structured interview guide contained open-ended questions that explored participants' perspectives on vocabulary comprehension, instructional strategies, home support, and collaboration between teachers and parents. This method ensured that the key issues were covered while also giving participants the freedom to elaborate on their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Documentation, including vocabulary lists, teaching media, and student notes, was also examined to provide contextual support and triangulation.

Operational Definition of Variables

In this study, the term *variable* is conceptualized as the research focus, given the qualitative nature of the design. The *first focus* is the teacher's perspective on how deaf students comprehend English vocabulary and the strategies used in the classroom. The *second focus* is the parents' perspective on vocabulary retention and use at home. The *third focus* is the collaborative efforts between teachers and parents in reinforcing vocabulary learning. These operational definitions served as the basis for data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves three concurrent steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, then coded to identify recurring themes related to perspectives, strategies, challenges, and collaboration. Documentation was used to cross-check and enrich the interview findings.

Trustworthiness of the Data

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed several strategies from Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility (member checking with participants), dependability (peer review and audit trail), confirmability (maintaining researcher neutrality), and transferability (providing thick descriptions of the research setting). Ethical considerations were observed by keeping participants' identities confidential and ensuring voluntary participation.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of interviews and documentation. The data reveal three main themes related to English vocabulary comprehension in deaf students at SMALBS Muhammadiyah Golokan Sidayu, namely: (1) teacher's perspective, (2) parents' perspective, and (3) teacher and parents' collaboration. Illustrative quotations and tables are provided to clarify the results.

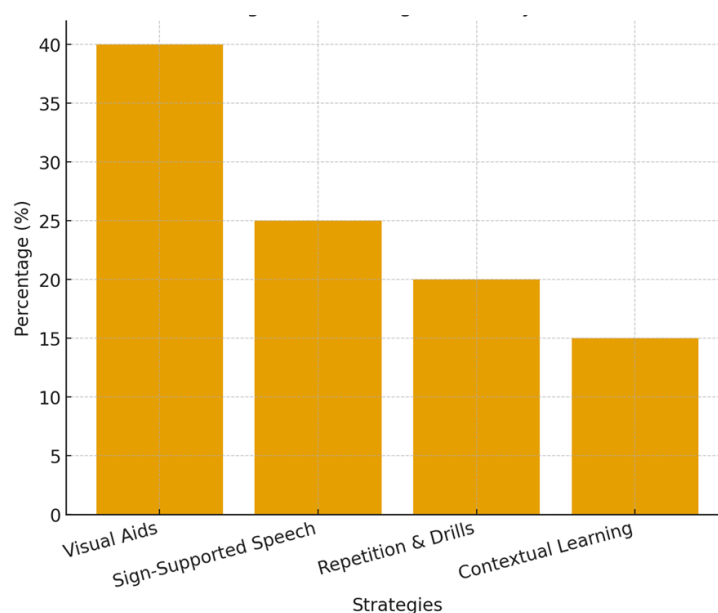
Teacher's Perspective

The English teacher emphasized that vocabulary comprehension among deaf students is highly dependent on the use of visual strategies. The teacher frequently employed pictures, real objects, gestures, and sign-supported speech. Repetition and contextual learning were also noted as essential practices. However, the teacher reported difficulties in teaching abstract words such as 'hope' or 'freedom,' as these lacked direct visual representations.

Table 1 : Vocabulary Strategies Used by the Teacher

Strategy	Description
Visual Aids	Using pictures, real objects, and multimedia to represent meaning.
Sign-Supported Speech	Combining signs with spoken or written English to reinforce vocabulary.
Repetition & Drills	Reinforcing vocabulary through frequent practice.
Contextual Learning	Teaching vocabulary within meaningful contexts or daily activities.

Diagram 1 : Bar Chart Vocabulary Strategies Used by the Teacher



This figure illustrates the frequency of strategies used by the teacher in teaching English vocabulary to deaf students. It may include categories such as visual aids, sign-supported speech, repetition, and contextual learning.

Parents' Perspective

Parents expressed that vocabulary learning extended beyond the classroom into daily routines. They observed that their children remembered words more effectively when supported with consistent repetition at home, often accompanied by sign language or gestures. Parents also highlighted challenges in sustaining their children's attention and reported that some words taught in school were difficult to apply in everyday contexts.

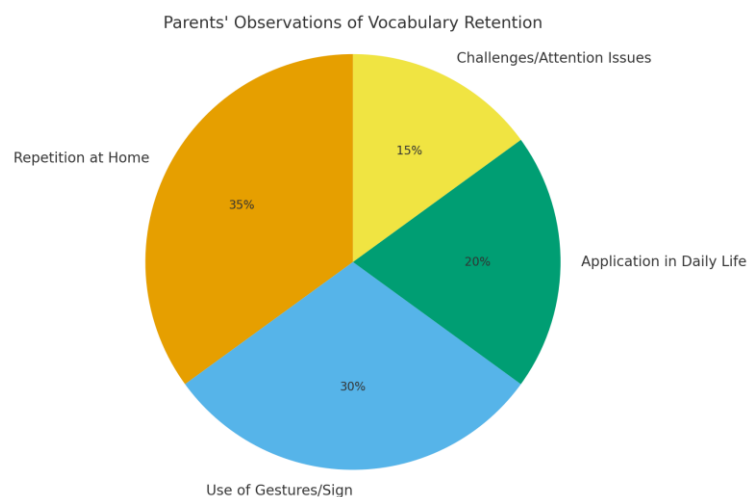


Diagram 2 :Pie Chart Teacher–Parents' Collaboration Model

This figure displays a diagram of the collaborative relationship between teacher and parents in reinforcing vocabulary learning, illustrating the flow of communication and shared strategies.

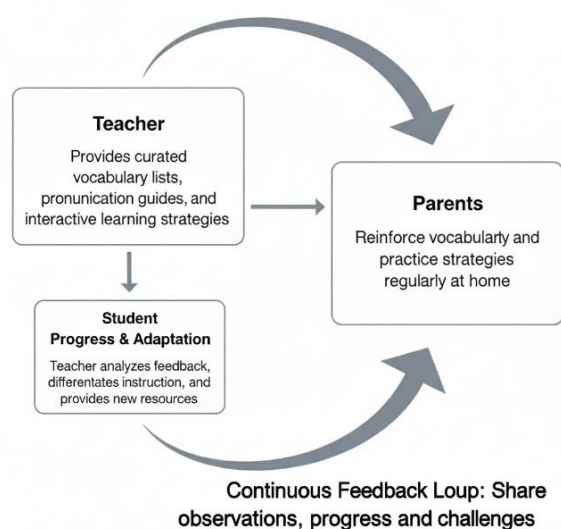
Teacher–Parents' Collaboration

Both the teacher and parents acknowledged the importance of collaboration in supporting vocabulary comprehension. Teachers regularly communicated vocabulary lists to parents, who then reinforced the words at home. Parents reported appreciating the strategies shared by the teacher, which helped them guide their children more effectively. This partnership was considered essential in bridging the gap between school instruction and home practice.

Table 2 : Forms of Teacher–Parents’ Collaboration

Form of Collaboration	Description
Vocabulary List Sharing	The teacher provides weekly vocabulary lists to parents.
Visual Reinforcement at Home	Parents use pictures or gestures to review vocabulary.
Repetition and Review	Parents practice vocabulary repeatedly at home.
Sharing Strategies	The teacher explains classroom strategies so parents can apply them at home.

Figure 1 : Teacher-Parents Collaboration



This figure illustrates the collaborative cycle between teachers, parents, and students in supporting vocabulary learning. Teachers provide curated vocabulary lists, pronunciation guides, and interactive strategies, which parents reinforce at home through regular practice. Students’ progress and adaptation are monitored, and teachers adjust instruction accordingly by offering new resources and differentiated guidance. A continuous feedback loop is established, where both teachers and parents share observations, progress, and challenges. This reciprocal relationship ensures that vocabulary learning extends beyond the classroom and becomes embedded in students’ daily lives.

Discussions

The results of this study provide important insights into how English vocabulary comprehension is fostered among deaf students through classroom practices, parental support, and collaboration between the two.

First, the teacher’s reliance on visual aids, sign-supported speech, and repetition confirms the central role of multimodal input in deaf education. As Mayer and Leigh (2010) argue, visual modalities are indispensable for deaf learners, since access to auditory information is limited or absent. The frequent use of pictures, real objects, and gestures by the teacher illustrates an intentional attempt to anchor

abstract symbols to concrete representations, a practice also highlighted by Domagała-Zyśk (2013) in her work on foreign language learning for the deaf. Repetition and contextualized activities further reflect principles of Asher's (1977) Total Physical Response, which stresses that repeated exposure and bodily engagement help strengthen memory retention. These findings collectively show that effective instruction for deaf students is not merely about translation into sign language, but about creating multimodal pathways for understanding.

Second, parents' perspectives revealed the importance of continuity between school and home. Parents observed that vocabulary retention improved when words were repeated during daily routines and reinforced with gestures or signs. This finding resonates with Illeris's (2018) theory of learning, which underlines that learning processes are shaped not only by cognition but also by social and emotional contexts. In this case, parents became co-educators, extending learning opportunities beyond the classroom. However, they also identified difficulties, such as maintaining attention and applying abstract words, challenges consistent with earlier findings that abstract vocabulary remains a barrier for deaf students (Yuliana & Saputri, 2023). These observations highlight the need for ongoing communication between teachers and parents to address gaps in learning.

Third, the findings emphasize that collaboration between teachers and parents is a cornerstone of successful vocabulary acquisition for deaf students. The teacher regularly communicated vocabulary lists, while parents reinforced them at home through repetition and visual reinforcement. This reciprocal relationship exemplifies Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, particularly the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners achieve higher levels of performance with the guidance of more knowledgeable others. Both teachers and parents served as these "knowledgeable others," scaffolding the students' vocabulary learning through complementary roles. This is in line with Rahmatullah (2023), who suggests that inclusive education requires a multisensory, contextual, and community-based approach to learning.

Taken together, these findings underline that vocabulary development among deaf students is not the result of a single strategy or context, but rather the product of interaction between school-based instruction and home-based reinforcement. The novelty of this study lies in combining both teacher and parent perspectives, offering a more holistic view than studies that focus solely on classroom practices. This integrated perspective provides valuable implications for educators, parents, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the quality of English language education for deaf learners.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' and parents' perspectives on English vocabulary comprehension of deaf students at SMALBS Muhammadiyah Golokan Sidayu. The findings revealed that vocabulary learning was strongly supported by multimodal strategies in the classroom—particularly through visual aids, sign-supported speech, repetition, and contextual activities—while parents extended this learning at home by reinforcing vocabulary during daily routines. The collaborative efforts between teachers and parents created a continuous feedback loop, ensuring that vocabulary was not only introduced in the classroom but also practiced and applied in everyday life. Together, these insights highlight that deaf students' vocabulary development is shaped by the dynamic interaction between school-based instruction and family involvement.

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the importance of integrating home and school contexts to strengthen the vocabulary acquisition of deaf learners. While the research provides a holistic view by including both teachers and parents, it was limited by the small sample size and focus on a single institution, which may restrict the transferability of findings. Future research could expand the scope by involving more schools, examining the role of technology in supporting deaf learners, and exploring how different types of collaboration influence long-term language outcomes. Despite these limitations, the study underscores that vocabulary learning for deaf students thrives most effectively when guided by strong teacher–parent partnerships.

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