

Using Translation Activities to Improve Learning Engagement and English Vocabulary Mastery Among Grade X Students at SMAS Darussaadah

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan aktivitas belajar dan penguasaan kosakata siswa melalui penerapan teknik translation activity. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X SMAS Darussaadah pada tahun ajaran 2025/2026 dengan total 28 siswa. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis data kuantitatif. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, dengan masing-masing siklus terdiri dari tiga pertemuan. Berdasarkan analisis temuan penelitian, penguasaan kosakata siswa meningkat melalui penggunaan teknik translation activity, sebagaimana ditunjukkan oleh data kuantitatif maupun kualitatif. Data kuantitatif menunjukkan adanya peningkatan nilai rata-rata dari post-test siklus 1 ke siklus 2. Nilai rata-rata pada siklus 1 adalah 62,07, dengan 16 siswa (57,14%) mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal. Sementara pada siklus 2, nilai rata-rata mencapai 77,93, dengan 21 siswa (75%) mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal. Selain itu, peningkatan ini juga terlihat dari data kualitatif, seperti hasil lembar observasi siswa dari siklus 1 ke siklus 2. Nilai rata-rata pada siklus 1 adalah 6,41, sedangkan pada siklus 2 adalah 7,31. Peningkatan aktivitas belajar siswa dari siklus 1 ke siklus 2 tercatat sebesar 0,90. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa tampak lebih termotivasi dan percaya diri dalam mempelajari kosakata. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penerapan teknik translation activity mampu meningkatkan aktivitas belajar dan penguasaan kosakata siswa kelas X SMAS Darussaadah.

Kata Kunci: Aktivitas Belajar, Kosakata, Teknik Translation Activity

Abstract

The aim of this research was to improve students' learning activities and vocabulary mastery through the implementation of the translation activity technique. The subjects of this research were tenth-grade students of SMAS Darussaadah in the 2025/2026 academic year, with a total of 28 students. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and quantitative data analysis. This research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of three meetings. Based on the analysis of the research findings, students' vocabulary mastery improved through the use of the translation activity technique, as demonstrated by both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data showed an increase in the mean score from the post-test of cycle 1 to cycle 2. The mean score in cycle 1 was 62.07, with 16 students (57.14%) achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion; meanwhile, in cycle 2, the mean score reached 77.93, with 21 students (75%) achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion. Furthermore, this improvement was also reflected in the qualitative data, such as the results of the student observation sheets from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The mean score in cycle 1 was 6.41, whereas in cycle 2 it was 7.31. The increase in students' learning activities from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was recorded at 0.90. This indicates that the students appeared more motivated and confident in learning vocabulary. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the translation activity technique is able to improve the learning activities and vocabulary mastery of tenth-grade students at SMAS Darussaadah.

Keywords: Learning Activities, Vocabulary, Translation Activity Technique.

A. Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component in learning English as a foreign language. Adequate vocabulary mastery is a prerequisite for students to develop the four language skills (Thornbury, 2002): listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without good vocabulary mastery, students will experience difficulties in understanding information, expressing ideas, and communicating effectively in English. With the increasing demands of 21st-century competencies and the need for global communication skills, vocabulary learning is no longer viewed as simply memorizing lists of words, but rather as a process of building an understanding of meaning and contextual use of language. Therefore, improving vocabulary mastery is a crucial focus in efforts to improve the quality of English learning at the secondary school level.

Based on initial observations of 10th-grade students at Darussaadah Senior High School in the 2025/2026 academic year, learning conditions in the field still demonstrate various problems that hinder the achievement of these competencies. It was found that the majority of students have low vocabulary mastery. The difficulties experienced by students include limitations in remembering vocabulary meanings, distinguishing word classes, and using vocabulary appropriately in sentence contexts. This condition impacts low learning outcomes, as indicated by class average scores that fall short of the school's Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). In addition to impacting cognitive aspects, low vocabulary mastery also leads to low student learning activity during the learning process. Observations indicate that English language learning at Darussaadah Senior High School is still dominated by a teacher-centered approach, resulting in low student engagement in learning activities. Most students tend to be passive, lack confidence in expressing opinions, are reluctant to ask questions, and are inactive in group discussions. Learning patterns that still emphasize memorizing vocabulary in isolation without providing context for use result in students lacking a deep understanding of word meanings (Thornbury, 2002). As a result, learning motivation declines, and students experience difficulty connecting learned vocabulary to real-life communication situations. These conditions indicate that learning problems are not only related to low vocabulary mastery but also to low student learning activity, which has the potential to hinder the success of the overall learning process.

One effort teachers can make to address these two issues is the implementation of translation activities. This technique positions translation activities as a means of building connections between the first language and the target language through the use of vocabulary in meaningful contexts (Mbeudeu, 2017). Through translation activities, students not only

memorize equivalents but are also required to understand the meaning, sentence structure, and function of vocabulary in the context of its use. This process encourages deeper cognitive engagement while increasing interaction between students through discussion, collaboration, and collaborative problem-solving. Thus, translation activities have the potential not only to improve vocabulary mastery but also to create more active, communicative, and student-centered learning. The effectiveness of using translation techniques in English learning has been reported in several previous studies. Lestari and Isma (2019) found in their study that implementing translation activities through Classroom Action Research (CAR) improved high school students' vocabulary mastery while increasing student participation during the learning process. Subsequent researchers, Rahmayani, Thamrin, Nirwana, and Jamiluddin (2026), found that implementing translation techniques in vocational high school students had a positive impact on improving vocabulary mastery and helping students use vocabulary more appropriately in various English learning contexts. This finding was further supported by research by Ningrum and Dhewi (2023), who demonstrated a positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and translation ability, indicating that the better students' vocabulary mastery, the better their translation skills. These findings indicate that translation techniques have strong potential as a vocabulary learning technique in learning English as a foreign language.

However, a review of previous research indicates several research gaps. Most previous studies have focused more on improving cognitive learning outcomes in the form of vocabulary mastery or translation ability, while the aspect of student learning activities during the learning process has received relatively limited attention. Furthermore, research on the implementation of translation activities at the senior high school level, particularly in the context of Classroom Action Research (CAR), which simultaneously integrates learning activities and vocabulary mastery, is still scarce. Learning activities are a crucial indicator reflecting student engagement in the learning process and are a key factor influencing successful learning outcomes.

Based on this gap, this study offers a novel approach in the form of implementing translation activity techniques as a learning strategy that focuses not only on improving vocabulary mastery but also on simultaneously enhancing student learning activities through a two-cycle Classroom Action Research design for tenth-grade students at Darussaadah Senior High School. Thus, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of translation activities, as it simultaneously evaluates changes in cognitive aspects and learning processes within the context of English language learning in senior high schools. Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing translation activity techniques in improving learning activities and English vocabulary mastery among tenth-grade students at Darussaadah Senior High School. The research results are expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of more active, contextual, and student-centered English learning strategies, as well as being an alternative solution for teachers in improving the quality of the process and outcomes of English learning at the secondary school level.

B. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, implemented collaboratively between the researcher and the tenth-grade English teacher. This study adheres to the cycle model of (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). This design consists of a continuous chain of cycles, each encompassing four main, interconnected stages:

1. Planning: Developing a lesson plan (RPP), preparing evaluation instruments, text materials, and activity observation sheets.
 2. Acting: Implementing the translation activity technique in the English learning process in the classroom.
 3. Observing: Observing and recording student activities and learning behaviors during the action using the observation sheet.
 4. Reflecting: Analyzing the results of the evaluation and observation tests at the end of the cycle to determine the success of the action and formulate improvements for the next cycle.
- This research was designed and implemented in two cycles, each consisting of three meetings.

Research Subjects and Location

This research was conducted at Darussaadah Senior High School during the 2025/2026 academic year. The subjects of this classroom action research were 28 tenth-grade students, 12 male and 16 female. The selection of these subjects was based on real-world problems encountered in the classroom, namely low learning activity and limited English vocabulary mastery.

Data Collection Techniques

Research data was collected using two approaches: quantitative and qualitative:

Quantitative Data: Obtained through a written test instrument in the form of a post-test administered at the end of each cycle. This test was specifically designed to measure students' vocabulary mastery after receiving learning activities using the translation activity technique.

Qualitative Data: Obtained through non-systematic observation techniques using a student learning activity observation sheet. Observations were conducted throughout the learning process to assess students' activeness, motivation, teamwork, and self-confidence in carrying out translation activities.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were then processed and analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics and quantitative data analysis techniques:

1. Analysis of Class Average Score: The average vocabulary mastery learning outcome score was calculated by dividing the total score of all students by the total number of students in the class (N = 28).
2. Analysis of Classical Learning Completion Percentage: Calculating the percentage of students who successfully achieved the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) using the formula (Arikunto, 2021).

$$\text{Completion Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of Students Completed}}{\text{TTotal Students (N)}} \times 100$$

Observation Data Analysis: The average value of quantitative data from the activity observation sheet was calculated for each cycle, then the difference in improvement was calculated to observe the dynamics of student learning activity development from Cycle I to Cycle II.

C. Results and Discussion

Research Results

Improving Student Vocabulary Mastery

The implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted over two cycles, demonstrated consistent changes in the English vocabulary mastery of tenth-grade students at SMAS Darussaadah in the 2025/2026 academic year after the implementation of the translation activity technique. This change was reflected not only in the increase in average learning outcomes but also in the increase in the number of students achieving the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) and the percentage of learning completion in the classroom. These findings indicate that the interventions provided had a positive impact on the development of students' cognitive abilities throughout the learning process.

In general, the quantitative data showed a trend toward improving learning outcomes from Cycle I to Cycle II. Although some students still experienced difficulty understanding the learning patterns applied in the first cycle, the process of reflection and refinement of the interventions in subsequent cycles resulted in more optimal progress. Thus, the gradual implementation of the interventions resulted in progressive learning changes, consistent with the characteristics of classroom action research.

Table 1. Comparison of Vocabulary Mastery Post-Test Results

Parameters		Cycle I	Cycle II	Improvement
Average Score		62,07	77,93	15,86
Students	Achieve			
Minimum	Competency	16	21	5 siswa
(KKM)				
Classical Completion		57,14%	75,00%	17,86%

Table 1 shows that improvement occurred not only in one learning outcome indicator, but consistently across all measured parameters. The average class score increased by 15.86 points, from 62.07 in Cycle I to 77.93 in Cycle II. This increase indicates that the majority of students experienced improvements in their ability to understand and use English vocabulary after gaining learning experience through systematic translation activities.

In addition to the increase in average scores, changes were also evident in the number of students who successfully achieved the Minimum Competency (KKM). In Cycle I, only 16 students, or 57.14%, were declared successful. This percentage indicates that more than a third of students still experienced difficulties in achieving the expected competencies. This condition indicates that in the initial stages of implementation, students were still in the adaptation phase to a different learning strategy than previously implemented. Translation activities, which require the ability to understand word meaning based on sentence context, were a relatively new learning experience, so some students still needed time to adjust.

The results of reflection on the implementation of Cycle I served as the basis for refining the actions in Cycle II. Improvements were made through increased teacher guidance, strengthening group work, providing more varied translation examples, and providing direct feedback on student errors during the learning process. These improvements had a positive impact on student learning outcomes. The average class score increased to 77.93, while the number of students achieving the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM) increased to 21, or 75.00% of the total student body.

Interestingly, this improvement not only indicates an increase in the number of students successfully achieving the minimum competency standards but also indicates that the variation in ability among students is beginning to decrease. In Cycle I, the improvement in learning outcomes was still dominated by students with relatively high academic abilities, while in Cycle II, the improvement began to occur more evenly. This indicates that the implementation of translation activities provides opportunities for students with diverse abilities to actively participate according to their respective levels of understanding.

The increase in classical completion to 75.00% also indicates that the research success indicators have been met. By achieving these targets, the implemented actions can be said to have resulted in learning changes that are not only individual but also impact the quality of learning as a whole. These findings demonstrate that the reflection process, a key characteristic of Classroom Action Research, plays a crucial role in refining learning strategies, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the actions in each cycle.

Overall, the pattern of improvement demonstrated that changes in learning outcomes did not occur instantly, but rather developed gradually through a process of adaptation, practice, reflection, and refinement of the actions. This pattern demonstrates that the success of learning using translation activities is not solely due to the translation activities, but also to the quality of the implementation of the actions, which became increasingly effective from one cycle to the next.

Improvement in Student Learning Activities

In addition to impacting cognitive aspects such as vocabulary mastery, the application of translation activity techniques also resulted in changes in student learning activities throughout the learning process. Learning activities are an important indicator in classroom action research because they reflect the level of student engagement in constructing knowledge through interactions with the teacher, peers, and learning materials. Therefore, increased learning activities are an indicator that the learning process not only results in improved grades but also changes in student learning behavior.

Table 2. Development of Learning Activities

Category	Cycle I	Cycle II	Improvement
Activity observation score	6,41	7,31	0,90

Table 2 shows an increase in the average student learning activity score, from 6.41 in Cycle I to 7.31 in Cycle II, representing a 0.90 point increase. Although this increase appears smaller numerically than the increase in learning outcomes, it is significant because it reflects a change in student learning behavior during the learning process.

In Cycle I, learning activities were still dominated by a small number of students who were more willing to participate. Conversely, the majority of students remained passive, tending to wait for teacher direction, and lacking confidence in presenting their translations in front of the class. This situation resulted in suboptimal group discussions, resulting in relatively limited academic interaction between students.

After reflecting on the implementation of Cycle I, the teacher made several improvements to the learning strategy in Cycle II. These improvements included forming more heterogeneous study groups, increasing the intensity of mentoring during discussions, rewarding student participation, and providing translation examples that more closely relate to students' everyday experiences. These strategic changes had a positive impact on increasing learning activity throughout the learning process.

Observations indicate that students are beginning to demonstrate more active learning behavior compared to the previous cycle. Group discussions became more dynamic, with students asking more questions, responding to each other's opinions, and confidently presenting their translations to the class. Furthermore, teacher-student interactions intensified, as the teacher acted as a facilitator, providing guidance when students encountered difficulties in determining equivalents or understanding sentence contexts.

This increase in learning activity demonstrates that the implementation of translation activities not only encourages students to acquire new knowledge but also creates a more collaborative and participatory learning environment. With increased student involvement in each stage of learning, the knowledge construction process becomes more active, providing a strong foundation for improving learning outcomes in vocabulary mastery.

Overall, the research results demonstrate a consistent relationship between increased learning activity and improved student learning outcomes. Changes in increasingly active learning behavior are accompanied by improved vocabulary mastery, demonstrating a mutually supportive developmental trend across the learning process. These findings provide an important foundation for understanding the mechanisms by which translation activities can improve both the process and the outcomes of English language learning.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of translation activities improved vocabulary mastery and learning activities of tenth-grade students at Darussaadah Senior High School. This improvement was evident in two key indicators of the study. In terms of learning outcomes, the average student score increased from 62.07 in Cycle I to 77.93 in Cycle II, while the percentage of classical completion increased from 57.14% to 75.00%. At the same time, student learning activities also improved, as indicated by an increase in observation scores from 6.41 to 7.31. This pattern of improvement indicates that the changes occurred not only in the cognitive aspect of vocabulary mastery but also in the learning process, as indicated by increased student engagement during the learning activities. Thus, the implementation of translation activities impacted the overall quality of learning, both in learning outcomes and in student learning behavior in the classroom.

This improvement in vocabulary mastery is understandable because translation activities position students as active subjects in constructing linguistic meaning (Dagilienė, 2012). Unlike learning that solely emphasizes memorizing vocabulary lists, translation activities require students to understand the relationship between word form, sentence structure, and the context in which they are used. When students search for appropriate equivalents, they not only remember lexical meaning but also consider grammatical function, contextual meaning, and appropriateness of use within the sentence. This type of thinking process indicates that learning occurs at a deeper level of processing, making the acquired information more easily retained in long-term memory than learning that is solely oriented toward memorization.

In addition to involving a more complex meaning-making process, translation activities also enable students to connect knowledge already acquired in their first language with new information in English. This connection between the two language systems makes it easier for students to construct a more complete representation of meaning, so that new vocabulary is not learned as isolated information but rather becomes part of their pre-existing knowledge structure. This facilitates retrieval when students encounter problems or communication situations that require the use of that vocabulary. In other words, translation activities function as cognitive bridges that help students connect previous learning experiences with new material in a more meaningful way (Jiménez et al. 2015).

The higher learning outcomes in Cycle II indicate that the effectiveness of the intervention did not occur instantly, but developed through a continuous adaptation process. In Cycle I, some students still tended to translate literally and were not yet accustomed to understanding meaning based on the context of the sentence. The reflection results at the end of the cycle served as a basis for the teacher to improve learning strategies by providing more contextual examples, increasing the intensity of guidance, strengthening group discussions, and providing feedback on student errors. These improvements helped students better understand translation procedures, allowing them to no longer focus solely on word meanings but also begin to consider the relationships between words in constructing the meaning of a sentence. This change in learning strategy explains why the improvement in learning outcomes in Cycle II was more optimal than in the previous cycle.

From a constructivist learning perspective, these results indicate that language knowledge develops through interaction and negotiation of meaning (Schaap, van der Schaaf, & de Bruijn, 2017). During the translation activity, students discussed the most appropriate equivalents, provided reasons for their choices, and then received corrections from the teacher and their peers. This interaction created opportunities for students to gradually revise their understanding until they acquired a more precise concept. Therefore, the increase in vocabulary mastery in this study was influenced not only by individual activities but also by the collaborative process that took place during the learning process.

These research findings align with those of Lestari and Isma (2019), who demonstrated that translation activities can improve students' vocabulary mastery through Classroom Action Research. Both studies demonstrated that translation activities help students understand vocabulary meanings contextually, eliminating the need for memorization. These results also support the findings of Rahmayani et al. (2026), who stated that translation techniques positively contribute to improving vocabulary mastery in English language learning. These similar results indicate that the effectiveness of translation activities is relatively consistent in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Furthermore, research by Ningrum and Dhewi (2023) demonstrated a positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and translation ability. This study's findings complement those findings by demonstrating a reciprocal relationship: translation skills can be a means of strengthening vocabulary mastery, while good vocabulary mastery also supports the quality of translation results.

In addition to improving learning outcomes, this study also demonstrated significant changes in student learning activities. During Cycle I, the learning process was still dominated by a few active students, while the majority tended to be passive, hesitant to express their opinions, and lacked confidence when asked to present their translations. After corrective actions were implemented in Cycle II, the learning atmosphere became more interactive. Students began to engage in group discussions, provide feedback on their translations, and become more confident in expressing their opinions in front of the class. This increased activity demonstrates that translation activities not only serve as a strategy for improving language skills but also foster a more participatory learning environment.

These changes in learning behavior can be explained by the characteristics of student-centered learning, which provides opportunities for students to play an active role in constructing their own knowledge. In this study, the teacher was no longer the sole source of information, but instead acted as a facilitator, guiding students throughout the discussion and translation process. This shift in role provided more space for students to ask questions, express opinions, and reflect on their work (Gautam & Agarwal, 2023). As a result, student engagement in the learning process increased, and their self-confidence gradually developed. This situation demonstrates that high levels of learning activity are a logical consequence of learning that provides opportunities for students to actively participate.

The findings of this study also demonstrate a mutually reinforcing relationship between learning activities and vocabulary mastery. Increased student participation during learning provides more opportunities for discussion, asking questions, using vocabulary in context, and receiving direct feedback. Conversely, as students begin to understand vocabulary better, their confidence in engaging in learning also increases. This reciprocal relationship leads to simultaneous improvements in both variables throughout the implementation of the activity. Therefore, the success of the translation activity in this study lies not only in its ability to improve learning outcomes but also in its ability to create a more active, collaborative, and meaningful learning process. This finding provides implications that English teachers can utilize translation activity as an alternative learning strategy that integrates the development of cognitive aspects and students' learning activities simultaneously, so that learning is not only

oriented towards achieving grades, but also towards improving the quality of the learning process in the classroom.

D. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion of the Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was conducted over two cycles, it can be concluded that the application of the translation activity technique improved the learning activities and vocabulary mastery of tenth-grade students at Darussaadah Senior High School in the 2025/2026 academic year.

Quantitatively, the improvement in vocabulary mastery was evident in the increase in the average post-test score, from 62.07 in Cycle I to 77.93 in Cycle II. This increase was accompanied by a sharp increase in the percentage of classical learning completion, from only 57.14% (16 students) in Cycle I to exactly 75.00% (21 students) in Cycle II, thus meeting the established success indicators.

Qualitatively, the application of this technique also proved effective in enlivening classroom dynamics and boosting student learning activities by 0.90 points, with the average activity observation score increasing from 6.41 in Cycle I to 7.31 in Cycle II. Through collaborative translation activities, students become more motivated, actively interact, and grow in their confidence in learning English vocabulary.

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