

Increasing Vocabulary of Grade VIII Students at Mts Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru Through Flashcards

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ABSTRAK

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The objective of this research is to find out if using flashcards can increase students' vocabulary of grade VIII students at MTs Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru. The researcher used quasi-experimental design with two classes, experimental class and control class. The experimental class consisted of 24 students and control class consisted of 20 students selected through total sampling technique. In collecting data, the researcher administered pretest and posttest to both the experimental class and control class. The data were analyzed statistically in order to find out the significant difference of students' achievement before and after treatments. Using 0.05 level of significance and 42 degree of freedom (df), the researcher found that the value of t-table was 2.019, which was lower than the of t_{counted} (4.65). It means that the hypothesis is accepted. In other words, using flashcards can increase students' vocabulary.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the basic language aspect that must be mastered before mastering English skills. Without having much vocabulary English language learners cannot express themselves well both in oral and written form. They will not get what speakers are saying when their vocabulary is not rich. Similarly, they cannot understand what they are reading if they do not have a lot of vocabulary. Erniwati, Mertosono, Arid & Anggreni (2021, p.382) state, "Vocabulary is crucial; it is the main tool for language learners to use the language effectively." In short, vocabulary is required in language skills development.

Vocabulary mastery is very important for every language learners. Undeniably, vocabulary affects the whole process of communication and learning. In the process of learning the English language, English language learners' chance of understanding or being understood depends on their vocabulary mastery. Thus, it is necessary to increase the vocabulary mastery as it is said that the more someone masters the vocabulary the better the chance he has in understanding or making themselves understood.

Vocabulary learning at schools especially in junior high school is always integrated with language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as the other language components such as grammar and pronunciation. It is stated in the document of 2013 Curriculum that grade eight students are expected to be able to use nouns and adjectives related to people, animals, and things around the classroom, school, and house (Permendikbud, 2018).

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Unfortunately, the curriculum expectation has not been fulfilled yet. The result of interview with the English teacher of grade eight students of MTs Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru in October 2022 indicated that most students lacked vocabulary. They found English uninteresting subject. They were not motivated to learn English. This is seemingly caused by the monotonous teaching method by which the students were assigned to memorize five words along with the meaning each meeting. The words were indeed closely related to the topic discussed. She never taught the vocabulary words; consequently, the students got bored with the teaching and learning activities.

Having interviewed the English teacher, the researcher randomly asked grade eight students some vocabulary words related to things around them such as roof, field, ceiling, etc. The result showed that most students could not identify the words. For example, of 20 words being asked they could recognize five words only. This clearly indicated that the students' vocabulary size was poor. Undeniably, when their vocabulary size is poor, surely their vocabulary mastery is not better.

In relation to the problems above, the researcher plans to apply a new strategy to help students with their vocabulary mastery. The strategy will use card, in this case flashcards as a medium of teaching. The flashcards are considered as interesting media that can be used to teach vocabulary to the junior high school students. The flashcards will make the students easy to learn, enjoy the activity and active in the learning process. It is also easy to create and to bring. Considering the benefits of using flashcards in teaching vocabulary, the researcher is expecting by using flashcards the students' vocabulary mastery can be increased, while at the same time they can enjoy the learning process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings. According to Rohmatillah (2014:72), "Vocabulary is a list of words as a basic component of language proficiency which has a form or expression and contains of aspect." Vocabulary plays an important role in communication especially for students who want to learn English Language. Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read, and write. Alharthi (2020, p.37) argues, "Vocabulary is a crucial element of language knowledge, is necessary for successful communication." Without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners will have some difficulties to listen the native speaker, to use language in different context, to read or to watch the English movies.

Vocabulary is the key of the language. In mastering the four language skills, the students should first develop their vocabulary. Most of the students who are lacking vocabulary get difficulty to speak or to write. Surmanov & Azimova (2020, p.144) note, "Vocabulary is considered as an essential part of developing good fluency and lexical ability plays important role in language learning." It is impossible to use language skillfully when the students have limited numbers of vocabulary stock in their minds. Without vocabulary, the students are unable to speak and express their ideas to others.

Vocabulary helps the students to arrange idea to speak and write. With having much vocabulary the students will be easier to express what they are thinking. They can communicate with others by using their own vocabulary. They can interact to each other well because they have much vocabulary to communicate. Ayu & Zuraida (2020, p.14) note, "By having much vocabulary students are easier to master some skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing." In addition, Khodareza & Komachali (2012, p.137) explain, "Vocabulary learning is needed to acquire a lot of words so students can use the vocabulary in any needs especially academic needs." In other words, vocabulary is a help of students' academic success in learning a language.

A. Nouns

Noun is a name of person, thing, place, etc. Nouns can be the subject or the object of verb; they can be modified by an adjective and can take a determiner." Noun divided into common nouns; countable nouns; uncountable nouns; proper nouns; concrete or abstract nouns; collective nouns and compound nouns.

- Common noun

Common noun is the generic name of person, place or thing in a class. "A common noun is a noun referring to a person, places, or thing, it is not capitalized. Common noun is preceded by article or determiner. Form of common noun can be elaborated in singular and plural form" (Aswarina, 2015, pp.16-17). Common noun can be concrete (perceptible to the sense), abstract (involving general ideas or qualities), or collective (referring to a group or collection). For example: book/books, shoes, bag, school, etc.

Example:

- My mother bought me the book yesterday.

- Concrete Nouns

A concrete noun is simply a person, place or thing that is experienced through one or more of your five senses "A concrete noun is a noun which names anything (or anyone) that perceives physical sense of human" (Aswarina, 2015, p.17). A concrete nouns is a word for a physical object that can be perceived by the sense we can see, touch, smell the object (flower, girl)

B. Adjectives

Words that tell more about nouns and pronouns are called adjectives. An adjective is a word which describes or modifies a noun or pronoun. "The adjective limits, changes, or alters the meaning of a noun or pronoun. Adjectives are usually placed before the noun. Adjectives are describing words which add details about the nouns in a sentence. Adjectives are usually placed before the nouns or pronouns they modify.

- Descriptive Adjectives

A descriptive adjective is a word which describes nouns and pronouns. Most of the adjectives belong to this type. These adjectives provide information and attribute to the nouns or pronouns they modify or describe "Descriptive adjectives are the most numerous of the different types of adjectives" (Ahmed, 2020, p.65). These adjectives describe nouns that refer to an action, state, dangerous, excited, sad, fast, black, white, big and fat. Descriptive adjectives are also called qualitative adjectives.

For example:

- I have a fast car. (The word 'fast' is describing an attribute of the car)

- Personality Adjectives

Personality adjectives are adjectives that we use to describe a person and their character or personality. Roivainen (2013, p.418) states, "Personality adjectives and factors is to measure the general popularity of the personality adjectives that describe the factors. Because, many personality adjectives, such as friendly, are highly common words that may be used to describe a multitude of concepts." Everybody has different personalities. Personality adjectives can be roughly divided into "good" and "bad" or positive and negative.

Example:

- John has a polite character.

Vocabulary plays an important role in English learning. It is the basic need to master language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students who want to succeed in learning English are supposed to have much vocabulary. Alqahthani (2015, p.22) asserts, "Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary." Therefore, it is necessary for students to have a lot of vocabulary at their disposal.

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Nevertheless, learning new vocabulary is not that easy because knowing a word implies “knowing many things about the word – its literal meaning, its various connotations, the sorts of syntactic constructions into which it enters, the morphological options it offers and a rich array of semantics associates such as synonyms and antonyms” (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005, p.51). For that reason, teacher needs to provide an appropriate technique or method that can help students acquire new words. The technique or method should be based on particular classroom settings, ages, levels and learning styles of the students.

2.2 Flashcards

There are many definitions of flashcards. Baleghizadeh & Ashoori (2011, p.4) note, “Flashcards is a piece of cardboard consisting of a simple picture, word, or a sentence on it. Flashcards usually have 8x12 cm or it can be adapt by big or small class.” Meanwhile, Suyanto (2014, p.109) defines the flashcards as “cards with a big size. Usually the teacher holds and moves some flashcards is in a pile of flashcards to front side. The movement of cards quickly, maybe it is the reason, why does it called by flashcard.” Therefore, flashcards are cards with a word or words, number, or a picture used in the classroom to help students learn and memorize new words.

Flashcards are one of the visual aids used to make students more interested and enjoy in teaching learning process and to increase their understanding on the material given. Yet, using the flashcards requires considerable attention including the way of handle and moves the cards, and when to change the picture. Pictures have to clear enough to be seen and it moves quickly from back side to front side. In other words, flashcards are really handy, but the way the card is shown and flipped needs to be done properly.

Basically, there are two types of flashcards, namely picture flashcards and word flashcards. Picture flashcard is very useful to present and practice vocabulary for the students. Picture flashcards also can help the students identify verb on action, as well as to improvise in a dialogue. Picture flashcards should be interesting, and large enough for the whole class to see what is on the flashcard. “Picture flashcards can be used as prompts for simple substitution drills. Picture flashcards are also useful for identifying verbs on action” (Nugroho, Nurkamto & Sulistyowati, 2012, pp.5-6).

Word flashcards, on the other hand, are cards bearing no picture but word. According to Nugroho et al. (2012, p.5), “Word flashcards are cards on which words have been printed. The word flashcards also can be used to practice structure.” The cards can be placed randomly on the class board. Then, the teacher can ask the students to put the cards to form an order sentence.

There are some advantages of using flashcards in teaching vocabulary. Azabdaftari & Mozaheb (2012, p.53) list the advantages of flashcards as follows:

- Flashcards are easy to use;
- Flashcards can be used in games for learning vocabularies, new word can be practiced easily;
- Learners can separate words into different categories;
- Flashcards can be fun.

The researcher formulates the research hypothesis as follows:

“The achievement of grade eight students who are instructed using flashcards is significantly different from the achievement of those who receive regular instruction only. The researcher decided to use non-directional hypothesis for a reason. Vocabulary mastery of the proposed students is poor. They need to be taught regularly to get better result. This study is carried out within a month and it is clearly a short space of time for changes.

3. Methodology

In this research, the researcher used quantitative research. This research used one of the designs in quasi-experimental called the nonequivalent control group design. There were two classes involved in this study. They were control class and experimental class. Both classes were pretested and posttested. The control class was taught using conventional method, while the experimental class was taught using flashcards technique as shown below.

E O1 X O2
F O3 O4

Where:

E : experimental class F : control class X : treatment
 O1 O3 : pretest O2 O4 : posttest

Arikunto (2013, p.87)

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of this research was grade eight students of MTs Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru distributed in two classes, class A and B. The class A consisted of 24 students, and class B consisted of 20 students. Therefore, total number of population was 44 students. The following table presents the class distribution.

Since grade eight students comprised of two classes while the researcher used quasi experimental with two classes, the sample was selected through purposive sampling called total population sampling. It means, entire population is the samples of the research.

3.2 Variables of the Research

There are two variables involved in this research; independent variable and dependent variable. The independent variable is flashcards. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is students' vocabulary mastery. In other words, flashcards is the cause to a change of students' vocabulary mastery.

3.3 Technique of data collection

Technique of data collection is a way to get data to support the research. The technique used to collect the data in this research was paper-and-pencil method. The research instrument was a test. The test consisted of pretest and posttest.

3.4 Technique of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher employed a simple statistical analysis. Firstly, she analyzed the students' individual scores both on pre-test and post-test using the formula proposed by Arikunto (2013, p.308) as follows:

$$\sum x = \frac{x}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

$\sum x$ = standard score x = the score obtained N = maximum score

Next, to analyze the group mean score on pretest and posttest she used the formula of Arikunto (2013, p.315) as shown below.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = mean score $\sum x$ = students standard score N = number of students

Then, to analyze the sum square deviation score, she used the following formula suggested by Arikunto (2013, p.355).

$$\sum x^2 = \sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{N}$$

$$\sum y^2 = \sum Y^2 - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{N}$$

Where:

$\sum x^2$ = sum of square deviation of experimental class $\sum y^2$ = sum of square deviation of comparison class
 N = total number of students $\sum X^2$ = the square deviation sum of experimental class

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$\sum Y^2$ = the square deviation sum of comparison class

Last, she analyzed the t-counted value using the formula of Arikunto (2013, p.354) as follows:

$$t = \frac{MX - MY}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2}{N_x + N_y - 2}\right) \left(\frac{1}{N_x} + \frac{1}{N_y}\right)}}$$

Where:

Mx = mean score of experimental class

My = mean score of control class

$\sum x^2$ = the total square of experimental class

$\sum y^2$ = the total square of control class

N_x = total number of students of experimental class

N_y = total number of students of control class

4. Results and Discussion

The mean score pretest of experimental was 38.83 and control class was 48.6. While, the mean score posttest of experimental class was 75.67 and control class was 66.40. Total deviation of experimental class was 884 and total square deviation of experimental class was 38224. Total deviation of control class was 356 and total square deviation of control class was 8496. The computation indicated that t-table value was 2.019. Since the t-counted value of 4.65 is higher than t-table value of 2.019, the research hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the classroom treatment using flashcards positively affects the students' vocabulary mastery. In other words, using flashcards can increase vocabulary mastery of grade eight students of MTs Luqmanul Hakim.

This research was started by the researcher's pre-assumption that vocabulary mastery of grade eight students at MTs Luqmanul Hakim is poor. For that reason, she proposed to teach the sampled students using flashcards. In other words, the goal of this study is to determine the impact of using flashcards on students' vocabulary mastery. To validate his presumption, a pretest was administered to both experimental and control class. The results demonstrated that of 44 students participate in the test, 98 percents of the participants were categorized 'poor' in terms of vocabulary mastery. However, after the students of the experimental class were taught using flashcards, their vocabulary mastery was increased significantly, left 25 percent of the 'poor category'. When being analyzed with t_{test} formula, it was also found that t_{counted} value was higher than t_{table} value.

The findings are in accordance with the research hypothesis stating that the achievement of grade eight students who are instructed using flashcards is significantly different from the achievement of those who receive regular instruction only. The success of using flashcards, especially picture flashcards in teaching vocabulary does not apart from its nature. A combination of pictorial and textual annotations allows students to experience both linguistic and visual codes. Flashcards enables students to easily recall and memorize the words being learned. This is due to presentation of a word illustration may have learners create a mental sketch while domain specific mechanisms (visual) exist within the working memory. "Pictures can express meaning and are memorable, which would seem to make them suitable aids to learning" (Bates and Son, 2020, p.3). Thus, using flashcards help students retain vocabulary words in their long-term memory. The stored vocabulary subsequently boosts their performance in language learning.

Also, the findings justify the previous studies carried out by Rahmawati & Utami (2019); Wulandari (2017); Rejeki (2020); and Yulsardi & Ratmanida (2021) who reported that flashcards can increase vocabulary mastery of junior high school students. Flashcards is considered effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery for some reason. Komachali & Khodareza (2012, p.141) note, "Flashcards provides learners with opportunities to encounter vocabulary repeatedly." Besides, it allows students to understand the meaning of English words and their pronunciation (Milles & Ehri, 2017; Herlina & Dewi, 2017; Daulay, 2016). Furthermore, Flashcards may also be beneficial to learning because "they can increase the degree to which learners can experience target word meaning" (Bates and Son, 2020, p.3). In addition, this flashcard is representative of the utilization of the right brain and balances it with the left brain where it is very effective in improving a learner's ability in exploring new information and new vocabulary (Sitompul, 2013; Maryanto & Christmastianto, 2018; Harisanty, Srirahayu, Kusumaningtiyas, Anugrah & Permata, 2020). Therefore, flashcards can be an alternative idea for teaching English vocabulary.

In spite of the benefits, using flashcards can be less useful when describing too complicated words and images as Bates and Son (2020, p.3) mention, "The use of pictorial forms in vocabulary teaching appears limited due to their inability to accurately express complicated word meanings and abstract words which represent more intangible concepts." The abstract words representing concepts and ideas involve more emotional associations based on affective experiences (Vigliocco,

Kousta, Della Rossa, Vinson, Tettamanti, Devlin & Cappa, 2014) can be very difficult to be visually represented in flashcards because “not all words are picturable” (Nations, 2013, p.13). Furthermore, this study is limited in timing of study. A short period of classroom treatment highly affects second language acquisition. When the learners get more exposure to the target language, they will learn more and faster to use the language (Krúger, 2018; Ellis, 2005). For that reason, it is necessary to have a long-term mediation so that students can perform better.

In addition, the findings of this study raise a number of opportunities for future research in English language teaching. The future research undoubtedly will refine and validate the concepts, and further elaborate the findings of this study. While this study focuses on statistical data that point to experimental study on the effectiveness of using flashcards in teaching vocabulary mastery, it can thus be extended in search of analytical one. For example, further research investigates about the impact of the lack of understanding to what the images represented due to the difference between the mother tongue and the target language. Thus, fellow scholars and readers can get more information about the flashcards, how to design and use flashcards in teaching vocabulary to EFL students of all ages and levels.

5. Conclusion

Using flashcards can increase vocabulary mastery of grade eight students at Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru. It is proved by the t-counted value (4.65) which is greater than t-table value (2.019). The t-counted value is higher than the t-table value; as a result, the research hypothesis is accepted. In other words, using flashcards positively affects the vocabulary mastery of grade eight students at Luqmanul Hakim Ngatabaru.

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