

FLASHCARDS AS A MEANS TO IMPROVE EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to know whether the use of flashcards can improve the vocabulary mastery of Junior High School Students in Indonesian. The research design used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR) in which it was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The research instruments used are observation checklist, test, field note, and documentation. In the implementation of improving students' vocabulary mastery by using flashcards the researchers stimulated students' prior knowledge by asking question, introduction the topic, and introduction about the media. The implementation of the planning in the first cycle was not successful. In the second cycle, the result of the students' evaluation test showed that 84% of the student passed the minimum score in the criteria of success, and 80% of the students did the activities designed in the second cycle. From the result, it can be concluded that the implementation of flashcards is successful in improving the students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: *Classroom Action Research, Vocabulary, flashcard*

INTRODUCTION

As a foreign language, English is difficult to learn especially in Indonesia since there are differences between English and Indonesian language. Therefore, it needs a full seriousness to learn the language, and

it also needs good skills in order to make English as familiar as possible. In learning language, students need to learn the lexis of the language. They need to learn what words mean and how they are used. Therefore, vocabulary is an important element in language. Mastering a large amount of vocabulary is very important for the students to study English because it will make students understand and master English easily. Without mastering vocabulary they will get trouble in developing their language skills and they often gradually lose interest in learning.

Definition of vocabulary are proposed by some linguists. Evelyn and Cheryl (1995: 1) stated that vocabulary is a list or set of words for particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use. Vocabulary is the total of words in a language or all of known to a person or used in particular book, subject, etc. (Hornby, 1995: 1331). According to Ur (1998: 60), vocabulary can be mean as the words we teach in foreign language. It means that vocabulary is written or spoken unit of language as symbol of idea in foreign language for the learners.

Vocabulary is words as units that were part of grammatical patterns. In that sense, a word could be an element which can stand alone as an utterance, it cannot be divided into two or more part similarity characterized (Lado, 1964: 182). It means that vocabulary is basic of skill in the language. Vocabulary is the words with a meaning that come out from the mouth and produced by a person for communicating from one person to others

Mc Whorter (1980: 311) says that vocabulary means the ability to recognize individual words and to associate the other word; vocabulary is the competence or skill in recognizing words and its meaning. Words are symbols, groups of letter that stand for, or represent, either a physical object or an idea. Recognizing words means knowing its meaning or idea and how they are formed by a combination of letters. Based on the all definitions above, vocabulary can be constructed as a series of words in foreign language to express meaning.

Teaching vocabulary is clearly more than just presenting new words. One of the problems of vocabulary teaching is how to select what words to teach. Teacher can decide which words should be taught on the

basis of how frequently they are used by speakers of the language. The words which are most commonly used are the ones should be taught first (Jeremy, 1991:154).

Vocabulary development is an important aspect of language development. A variety of studies have proven that appropriate vocabulary instruction benefits language students, especially school age learners. According to Mc Keown and Beck (2003), it is important to use both formal and informal vocabulary instruction that engages students' cognitive skills and gives opportunities for the learners to actually use the words. Formal and Informal vocabulary are words to be brief in used. For example the researcher used formal when people say "she will, and an informal person says "she'll".

According to Graves (1998: 323), there are two approaches in teaching vocabulary. They are indirect approaches and direct approaches. Many students with learning and behavior problems are less likely to learn words indirectly than are their average achieving peers. Because of this, directly teaching vocabulary is recommended as an effective approach to improve vocabulary knowledge for poor reader or at risk. In the direct approach to vocabulary instruction, students learn difficult words that are not usually part of their everyday experience through systematic, explicit instruction individual words and words learning strategies. The students use thinking skills such as analyzing which of two words would be better choice in a sentence. Teacher also can give students opportunities to use them by planning game or responding to complex question that include the words (Linse and Numan, 2006: 122).

Learning vocabulary is very important in language learning. One of difficulties is focusing on vocabulary. So, the teacher must be creative to improve students' vocabulary. According to Adwin (2003: 135-140), there are four principles of teaching vocabulary. They are namely focus on the most useful vocabulary, focus on the vocabulary in the most to appropriate way, give attention to high frequency words across the four stands of a course, and encourage learners to reflect on and take responsibility for learning.

Teaching and learning English vocabulary in Junior High School is to make students fun in learning English. However, there are many problems arise during teaching learning process because English is a foreign language, and the student seldom use it outside class to study or practice it. One of the problems is that the students are less motivation and difficult to understand English. The other problems are the methods or techniques and media used to present the material. They are not suitable with the students' condition. These problems make the students' lack of motivation in learning English. This condition makes the class noisy and boring. These problems are also faced by the students of one Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia. Therefore, the teacher has to be creative in making the student interested in learning and understand English easily.

The teacher needs something different to make students interested in which it can motivate them. It is based on the characteristics and attitude of the children that they are curious and often seeks something that the teacher notices then and shows appreciation for what they are doing. There are many occasions when form of presentation and explanation is the best way to bring new words into the classroom. Teacher can use pictures to teach the students. Pictures can be board drawings, wall pictures and charts, flashcards, magazine pictures and any other non-technical visual presentation. Picture can be used to explain the meaning of vocabulary items (Jeremy, 1991: 155). So, to motivate students, teachers need something new that can stimulate their curiosity.

One technique and media for teaching English vocabulary is by using flashcards. Flashcards is a kind of reminder cards or cards that are shown a glimpse of the students. Size is flexible depending on the size of the class. Flashcard is a picture card that is used in a manner shown to students quickly (Arsyad, 2010: 87). In used, flashcard learning is not only as a medium, but it can be played as well. It can make students feel happy, not bored, raise motivation and stimulation of learning activities and even carry psychological effects on students in learning the English language. Therefore, teachers are required to have a range of skills that

support the teaching. One of these skills is how teachers can use the instructional media.

Based on the description above, then, the researcher conducts a research on the use of flashcards to improve vocabulary mastery of one Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia, in learning English. This study is intended to know the implementation of flashcard to improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is designed to solve the problem dealing with the improvement of vocabulary mastery of students at one Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia. The design of this study is classroom action research (CAR). It is a method of finding out what works best in classroom so that it can improve students' learning. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is an effective media in improving the quality of English teacher performance in instruction as well as students achievement learning English in the classroom (Latif, 2012: 144). According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1998: 5), action research is trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about curriculum, teaching and learning. It means that a teacher should be able to increase the capacity of students to be more developed than previously

The research design employed in this study is collaborative action research. In conducting the research, the researcher worked together with one of the classroom teacher to solve students' problem in English vocabulary. The researcher implemented the planning, while the observer observed the implementation of the strategy. The aim of having a collaborator in this research is to make it easy for the researcher to implement flashcards in the teaching and learning process to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

The subject of this study is the seventh grade students of one Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia in academic year 2013/2014. The subjects are 38 students. In this class, many students were weak with their vocabulary. So, the researcher focuses on the practicing English with flashcards media that is used to teach the new English vocabulary.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative data. Those data will be taken from different sources. The qualitative data is taken from the process of teaching and learning vocabulary, the students' attitude and involvement during the implementation of flashcard. Observation sheet, field notes and documentation will be used as the instruments. The quantitative data is taken from the students' score from the test as the instrument.

The research procedures used are: (1) planning action, (2) implementing of action, (3) observing of action, and (4) analysis and reflecting. This study is considered successful if 1) at least 75% of students are actively involved in the teaching and learning process, and 2) at least 75% of the students get minimum score 75 in the evaluation test.

If the criterion of success to teaching vocabulary mastery by using flashcards has not been achieved, it should be continued to the next cycle or repeat cycle again.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The implementation of the research was conducted in collaboration with the English teacher of the school. Before conducting the research, teacher and the researchers shared a common knowledge about action research. Teacher seemed enthusiastic and she agreed to work together with the researchers. Then, the action research was conducted collaboratively. The teacher was the observer who observed the action, and the researchers were the practitioner.

They also discussed the research implementation result during the teaching learning process in the reflection phase. The implementation of teaching vocabulary mastery by using flashcards through classroom action research consisted of two cycles. The researcher used flashcards to teach vocabulary with a genre "procedure text". Every cycle consisted of a series of steps: planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting.

First Cycle

The first cycle consists of planning, implementing, observing, and implementing. The description of each step is as follows:

Planning

In this step, the researchers draw up sets of equipments of teaching and learning that consists of lesson plan 1, question of formative test 1, and the supporting instruments or media of teaching. In preparing the equipments, the researchers collaborate with the English teacher of the school as the collaborator of classroom action research (CAR). The use of this method/media is to help the students easier in memorizing English vocabulary.

The researchers were doing the cycle 1 from April 22th up to 23th, 2014. The first meeting was giving treatment by using flashcards media on the material procedure text, and the meeting the researcher give a test for the students.

Implementing

In this step, the researchers conducted what had been planned in the planning step according to the schedule that was arranged. There were two meetings for implementing the plan that were as follow:

1) The First Meeting

The first meeting was held on 22th April 2014. The researchers explained to the students about how to use flashcards in procedure text. The researchers gave example to the students how to use flashcards in procedure text and analyzed it together. Then, the researchers divided the students into 4 groups by counting 1-4 and repeated until students got group.

The researchers showed flashcards to students with duration of 1 second fast. Next the researchers provided flashcards the names of foods, and drinks to each group. Each group discussed the name of the food, and drinks based on flashcards given. Then the researchers asked students to compose sentences so that they could be a procedure text. Then the researchers pointed to one

student in each group should be read in front of class how to make food and drink based on flash card that they got.

2) The Second Meeting

The second meeting was held on 23th April 2014. The researchers asked the students to make the procedure text individually based on their flashcards that had been discussed in their group. The researchers did evaluation for first cycle with make a test.

Observing

In this research, the researchers analyzed the students' activities by using the observation checklist in order to evaluate the results, collect the data and monitor the teaching learning process. It was used to know the action in teaching learning process by using flashcards media.

In the step of observation, the researchers knew the results of teaching learning process. It was as follows:

1) The First Meeting

The first meeting, the students' attendance was 36 students from 38 students, because two students were sick. From the observation checklist, the researchers knew that the students gave attention to the researcher's explanation about flashcards in the procedure text. The researchers were found some students did not pay attention to the researcher's explanation.

The purpose of this activity was to evaluate the results, collect the data and monitor the teaching learning process. The observation data got from the observation checklist and field note. The result of the observation was 57% students be active in the teaching and learning process. Whereas the students minimally actively in the teaching and learning process was 75%. So, it is should be continued to the next cycle or repeat cycle again.

2) The Second Meeting

In the second meeting, the students' attendance was 36 from 38. The researchers knew that some students were confused to

make procedure text by using flashcards given by the researcher. In this meeting, the students asked to the researchers how to make procedure text by using flashcards based on discussed in their group. The researchers explained again about it. After this, the researchers gave some evaluation test for the students. There were 20 questions of multiple choices.

Reflecting

The students' activities in the teaching learning process were not maximal. It was caused by some students who did not pay attention to the researcher. Many students made a dialog with their friends when teaching learning process. When they were sitting in their group, they just talked to others. The students' learning process was still less maximal.

The researchers assessed the students' vocabulary mastery after whole activity had finished. From the students' vocabulary test result, the researcher could calculate the mean of the students score in the test about procedure text. The result of the evaluation test in cycle 1 showed that from 36 students, 6 students passed, and 30 students failed. The percentage of successful students is 17 %. It means that the criteria of success had not been achieved yet. The researchers then do next cycle.

Second Cycle

The second cycle was done on April 29th and 30th, 2014. The researchers conducted the second cycle by using the similar steps in the first cycle. It consists of four steps: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The descriptions of each step are as follows.

Planning

The planning of the second cycle was similar in the planning of the first cycle. The researchers prepared the teaching learning design, such as arranging the lesson plan based on the teaching objective, preparing and improving the strategy, and the last was

preparing the research instrument. The research instruments are included observation checklist, field note, and evaluation of vocabulary mastery test.

Implementing

In this step, the researchers conducted what had been planned in the planning step according to the schedule that was arranged. This step was done the teaching process that had been planned by researchers. The teaching process in the second cycle was same with teaching process in the first cycle, but in the second cycle was different with in the first cycle. The differences showed about flashcard. The activities in learning process were as follow.

1) The First Meeting

In the first meeting was held on 29th April 2014. The researchers explained again about the material, although it had been done on the first meeting of cycle I. Then, the researchers asked the students about their problem on the previous lesson and the researchers had to give the solution of the students' problem. After they were sharing, the researchers gave a procedure text and translate it into Indonesian. Then the researchers asked them to analyze the text in their groups.

2) The Second Meeting

The second meeting was held on 30th May 2014. The researchers explained about procedure text, and she gave the theme to be considered in making a procedure text by using flashcards. Each group could decide their theme by discussing in their groups. Then, the researchers asked to the students to make the procedure text individually based on their flashcards that had been discussed in their group. The last, the researchers did evaluation test for the second cycle.

Observing

The researchers observed the students' activity of second cycle by using the observation checklist. It was similar to the first cycle. From the observational checklist on the second cycle, the researchers knew the results, and they were as follow.

1. The First Meeting

In the first meeting, the students' attendance was 38. So, all of them attended. From the observation checklist in the first meeting, the researchers knew that the material was explained clearly, and the students were more interested in the researchers' explanation. It influenced to learning process, because the students were more active and creative when they were discussing in their group. The result of the observation was 80% of the student active in the teaching and learning process. So, it had been achieved the criteria of success

2. The Second Meeting

In the second meeting, the students' attendance was 38. So, all of them was present. In the learning activity, the students asked to make procedure text based on the flashcards were given by the researchers. The flashcards discussed in each group. Then, the students were asked to read the procedure text individually based on the flashcards that had been discussed in their group. In this meeting, the students were more active and creative. It can be seen that many students asked to the researcher about vocabularies based on the flashcards.

Reflecting

The students' activities in the teaching learning process were maximal enough. The researchers gave motivation to the students, and it had made students more interested and had self-confidence to express their ideas. When they were discussing the flashcard in their group, they were more active and creative than in the first cycle. Moreover, the students were active when they read procedure text individually. The students also asked to the researchers about the meaning of difficult words.

The researchers assessed the students' vocabulary mastery after whole activity had finished. It was more successful than in the first cycle. From the students' vocabulary test result, the researcher could calculate the mean of the students score in procedure text. The result of the evaluation test was that many students can be success in the cycle 2. From 38 students, there are 32 students who passed, and 6 students failed. The percentage of the students who could achieve the criteria of success was 84% of the students. The research in this cycle was success. The comparison of the students' activeness and students' average score in vocabulary mastery in the Cycle I and Cycle II can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 The comparison of the students' activeness and students' vocabulary mastery in Cycle I and Cycle II

Cycle	Students' Activeness	Students' Vocabulary mastery
I	57 %	17 %
II	80 %	84 %

DISCUSSION

This study provides more evidence that the implementation of flashcard can improve not only students' vocabulary mastery, but also students' activeness in the process of teaching and learning. The improvement of students' vocabulary mastery and students' activeness were indicated by the results of the study.

The students' activeness in the process of teaching and learning can be seen from the result of the observation checklist. The result of the observation in the second cycle was 80% of the student active in the teaching and learning process. So, it had been achieved the criteria of success. It were caused by the existence of visual technique provided in flashcard. It is in line with Gairns' statement (1991) that the use of visual media (e.g.flashcards)can be extensively used for conveying meaning and particularly useful for teaching concrete items of vocabulary. Jeremy (1991: 155) said that there are many occasions when form of presentation

and explanation is the best way to bring new words into the classroom. Teacher may use pictures to teach the students. Pictures can be on board drawings, wall pictures and charts, flashcards, magazine pictures and any other non-technical visual presentation. Picture can be used to explain the meaning of vocabulary items. So, to motivate students, teachers need something new that can stimulate their curiosity.

From the vocabulary test, the researcher could know the students' vocabulary mastery. It is from the calculation of the mean of the students score in procedure text. The result of the evaluation test was that many students can be success in the cycle 2. From 38 students, there were 32 students who passed, and 6 students failed. The percentage of the students who could achieve the criteria of success was 84% of the students. The research in this cycle was success.

Flashcard is a teaching media which is effective to guide students in learning, especially in vocabulary mastery. It is a card drawn or written or marked to provide guidance and stimulation for students to think or do something (Arsyad, 2010). The purpose of this method/media is to train the right brain's ability to be able to remember the pictures and words, so that the vocabulary can be trained possessed from an early age. The basis of this method is to see how the students memorize the association between images and vocabulary. So that when students see vocabulary in the future, students can remember and pronounce.

The vocabulary instruction media used in this study was in line with the principles of teaching vocabulary proposed by Adwin (2003). He said that there four principles of teaching vocabulary, and the use of flashcard is appropriate with the second principle: focus on the vocabulary in the most to appropriate way. This principle looks at how they should be taught and learned. Using word card is one of the four most important vocabulary learning strategies. Using word cards involves making small cards and writing the English word on one side and the first language translation on the other.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this research, the researcher concluded that the implementation of flashcards media can improve the students' vocabulary mastery in the procedure text. The research was done in two cycles, and each cycle included two meetings.

In the cycle 1, the implementation of flashcards media did not successful yet, because there were many problems that were faced by the students. Such as, when they were asked to make a procedure text, they were confused how to do it. Besides, they had only few vocabularies to describe it, thus when they read they feel confused and it was difficult. In summary, the students were still less active in the classroom.

In the cycle 2, the implementation of flashcards media was more success than in the cycle 1. In this cycle, the students focused on the material that was given by the researcher. They were more enjoyed to study English. The students also began to understand about the vocabulary explained by the researcher.

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