STUDENT PERCEPTION OF TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS USING FLASHCARDS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to observe how fourth-grade elementary school students perceive using flashcards as a learning method for vocabulary acquisition. This study employs a qualitative research method. It will provide a detailed explanation of young learners, flashcards as a medium, and vocabulary, and draw conclusions based on the research conducted. The participants involved in this study were six people, namely five fourth-grade students and one English teacher. This study used data collection methods involving observation and interviews. The study results show that students prefer the flashcard learning method to traditional methods, such as writing what the teacher writes on the blackboard in their notebooks. In addition, students are also more enthusiastic about learning vocabulary using flashcards because of their attractive and simple design.

Keywords: *English Young Learner, Flashcard, Vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language. Students in Indonesia learn English starting in elementary school and continuing to junior high school, then senior high school, and then higher education. (Lie 2017 cited in Hamid et al. 2020) English is connected to political influence, privilege, and social

status, so many countries have incorporated English into their school programs. Wahyudi (2018) also stated that the formal curriculum includes English as an official subject from grade seven through university. Therefore, English is recognized as a formal subject for students from secondary school to higher education. However, due to globalization, parents and society continually expect improvements. The fundamentals of skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Vocabulary is the fundamental element of the four language skills; thus, learners must become proficient. According to Anwar (2020), in Farika et al. (2025), vocabulary plays a vital role in learning English. A student with a small vocabulary will struggle to become proficient in the language. "Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learning," according to Coday and Huckin (1997: 5) in Ariffin (2020). By expanding their vocabulary, students can learn new words they may not be familiar with and use them daily. According to Murcia (2001:285) as cited in Parmawati (2018), vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in acquiring a language, regardless of whether it is a first, second, or foreign language. It implies that, irrespective of its use, everyone should learn as much vocabulary as possible daily, for it is needed in education.

In Indonesia itself, a policy has recently been enacted stating that English does not have to be included in elementary school subjects. This policy certainly has various impacts, both positive and negative. However, early childhood education is considered very useful, especially in language education, including English. (Nunan 2005, McKay 2008, and Philp et al. 2008. Cited by Erlina et al. 2022) explain that young English learners aged from 2 to 13 years old are an important phase of learning at this age, because when people get older, they will face more difficulty in learning a language. Henceforth, we should use it while it lasts to teach young learners English. As mentioned by Krashen in Pratiwi (2017), the natural way of learning occurs during childhood because adults generally find it harder to memorize vocabulary due to reduced sensitivity at later ages.

Young students are still in the stage of growth and development, so they are still learning how to manage their

behavior and feelings (Moon 2005, in Erlina et al. 2022). In this case, they are confused about how to control their emotions appropriately, whether they are sad, happy, or angry. This is undoubtedly very unpredictable and can happen suddenly; therefore, the role of parents and teachers as supervisors is needed to monitor and provide solutions if they are confused about what to do in situations they have never experienced.

Every child grows differently. Sometimes, some children develop cognitively and emotionally faster than others, as stated by Nunan (2005 in Erlina et al. 2022), that every young learner has their growth pattern. Some children can read and write faster than their peers, and sometimes some lag behind others. This is a challenge that teachers and students will face in teaching young learners, where they must be able to adjust the learning provided according to each child's level of growth. Flashcards can solve the problem of learning English for young learners. Their concise and attractive yet straightforward form can be an alternative to learning vocabulary, at least more interesting than looking at an extensive dictionary or textbooks that are open daily and may seem dull. (Lado, 1964:197 in Rahmawati, 2019) states that the term "flashcard" comes from the word "flash," which means fast, brief, or instant, and "card," which refers to a piece of thick paper or thin cardboard used for various purposes. While Teng and He 2015, cited in Pratiwi 2022) define flashcards as a collection of cards that display information—such as words, pictures, or numbers—on one or both sides, commonly used for practice in classrooms or individual study. Flashcards with attractive images will make it easier for students to remember the vocabulary on the cards. Weaver (1950:5 in Rahmawati 2019) states that learning with visual materials is more effective than learning through verbal explanation and description. This suggests that flashcards can positively impact students and make the learning experience more enjoyable for them. (Schmitt and Schmitt 2020 cited in Ansi et al. 2025) explain that flashcards assist learners in concentrating on specific vocabulary items in a simple format, which helps them remember words more effectively.

From the points mentioned above, in teaching English to young learners, especially in vocabulary learning, careful consideration is needed on how to deal with young learners

who are unpredictable. Teachers often teach using traditional methods without considering how enthusiastic students are about these methods. The need for innovation and motivation in learning raises the following questions:

1. How do students perceive the vocabulary learning method using flashcards?
2. What are the effects of learning using flashcards?
3. What are the striking differences between using flashcards and textbooks?

This study will explain how the above questions are answered by conducting direct research on fourth-grade students at SDN I Sadeng. By applying the flashcard method in this study, the researcher will observe how students respond to this method.

METHODS

The researchers in this study employed a qualitative methodology, meaning that the findings are interpreted based on their significance and meaning rather than through statistical or numerical measurement, as stated by Djunaidi & Fauzan (2012) in Fauzan et al. (2023). This study involved several subjects, namely five fourth-grade students out of a total of twenty-three fourth-grade students who were in the room at that time, as well as the teacher who was teaching, to assist in data collection and also as a source of information about what the students had learned, so that the researcher could adjust accordingly. The selected subjects had vocabulary skills that were not too different from one another, and the teacher provided information on the topics that should be used during data collection.

After a brief discussion with the English teacher, the researcher chose a topic that had just been taught by the teacher last week, namely "objects around us, more specifically objects in the classroom." This research was conducted at SDN I Sadeng I, Gunungpati, in Semarang. The researcher chose this elementary school because the English language teaching system at this school still uses traditional methods that are teacher-centered, and students are perceived to be less active in the learning process.

The data collection methods used were observation and interviews. The researcher conducted observations before presenting the material to ensure the condition of the classroom and to assess the students' vocabulary skills related to the theme before the researcher conducted the research. In addition to interviewing teachers to determine the topic for the study, interviews were conducted with the students to assess their abilities before the research and to find out their initial opinions about flashcards.

The data analysis technique used by the researcher is qualitative data analysis. The data obtained from this study comes from observations of student learning and interviews conducted. After that, the data will be collected and grouped with the appropriate data, then analyzed and interpreted to describe the research object in question and arrive at a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher will observe the subjects' perceptions of teaching and learning activities using flashcards in this study. From the first to the third day, it can be observed that none of the participants showed negative impressions of learning vocabulary on the topic of "objects in the classroom."

The researchers interviewed all subjects to obtain more specific results regarding their perceptions of this learning method. It can be observed that learning using flashcards received positive responses and improved the vocabulary of fourth-grade students at SDN I Sadeng.

Interviews with subjects showed that their perception of vocabulary learning using flashcards was better than traditional methods, such as reading directly from books or taking notes directly from the blackboard to their notebooks. They appeared to be more enthusiastic about flashcards, which they considered more straightforward, concise, and engaging.

Flashcards are a learning medium with one or two sides, one containing text and the other containing attractive images. Of course, both sides contain the same information: one includes the definition or name of the object, and the other contains a picture of the object. The aim is that these concise cards will

help learners to remember the word in question. This aligns with the views of Supriatin & Rizkilillah (2018) and Tsai (2018), who state that flashcards are educational tools composed of picture cards. Both images and text on Flashcards can be handwritten or drawn directly, or they can be printed.

The researcher conducted a simple test on the five subjects in the first meeting. These five subjects involved writing five vocabulary words on the board: Chair, Table, White Board, Pen, and Pencils. Although the vocabulary words written appeared simple and all subjects understood the meaning of the five words, all subjects seemed bored and unenthusiastic, preferring to chat with each other instead.

After observing how the subjects reacted to conventional learning methods with less enthusiasm, the researcher immediately tried applying the flashcard method. The five subjects were asked to make their flashcards using the tools and materials provided by the researcher, namely colored paper, markers, and scissors. The subjects used these tools to make their flashcards. After they are done making their own. Using flashcards, the researcher asked them about the vocabulary and their meaning in Bahasa Indonesia. As expected, they knew all five vocabulary words taught today.

In the second meeting, the researchers reviewed the five vocabulary words learned yesterday: Chair, Table, White Board, Pen, and Pencils. These had already been made into flashcards in the previous meeting. After confirming that the participants remembered the previous vocabulary well, the researchers added five new vocabulary words: Bag, Ruler, Door, Eraser, and Book. Then, as in the last meeting, the subjects were asked to make flashcards about the new vocabulary: Bag, Ruler, Door, Eraser, and Book. Although some students had problems with the new language, they appeared enthusiastic about making their flashcards. They did not seem bored, sleepy, or distracted as usual during regular lessons.

At the last meeting, all subjects, including educators, were involved in testing the results of vocabulary memorized from flashcards created two days earlier.

In this stage, the educator will show a picture, and the students will be asked to take turns answering questions based

on the vocabulary they have previously learned through flashcards created by the subjects. Of the ten vocabulary words learned previously related to objects in the classroom, one will be mentioned randomly, and the five subjects will take turns answering one by one.

It can be observed that all subjects can mention all the vocabulary learned in the last two meetings using flashcards. This result shows that learning vocabulary utilizing the flashcard method has received a good response from students, because this method involves working and creating independently, which is more interesting than just listening to the teacher explain and writing down material on the board.

Putri (2023) states that enjoyable learning is a teaching approach that creates a comfortable classroom environment, allowing students to focus fully during lessons. In addition, according to Lestari (2022), enjoyable learning is an interesting and fun learning approach that focuses on students' mental and psychological conditions and the surrounding environment during learning activities. Using the proper learning methods, even teaching and sometimes boring activities, can feel better and more enjoyable. Therefore, educators need to pay more attention to using appropriate techniques that are not monotonous. Below are the responses to the question "What's your opinion about learning vocabulary with flashcards?"

Respondent	Response	Response type
Dwi	It's more fun this way, no need to see the book.	Strongly agree
Hendrik	This is different than book, this one is simpler	Agree
Keysha	This one is better than taking note of what is in the white board.	Strongly agree
Nala	This one is cuter.	Strongly agree

Ridho	For me it's almost the same, but this one is better.	Strongly agree
Pak Adi	The students seem more enthusiastic than usual, also more active in this.	Agree

Below are the responses to the question, "What if this method is applied in the future?"

Respondent	Response	Response type
Dwi	Yes please! It's better than taking notes	Strongly agree
Hendrik	Sure, I will tell Mr. Adi later, okay?	Strongly agree
Keysha	Yes, I prefer this way, no need to write it on book.	Strongly agree
Nala	This one is more fun and cuter!	Strongly agree
Ridho	It's better than facing the book continuously, makes me sleepy.	Strongly agree
Pak Adi	It might be good to do this once in a while, not always, would be boring it does.	Agree

Student perception of Flash Card Learning
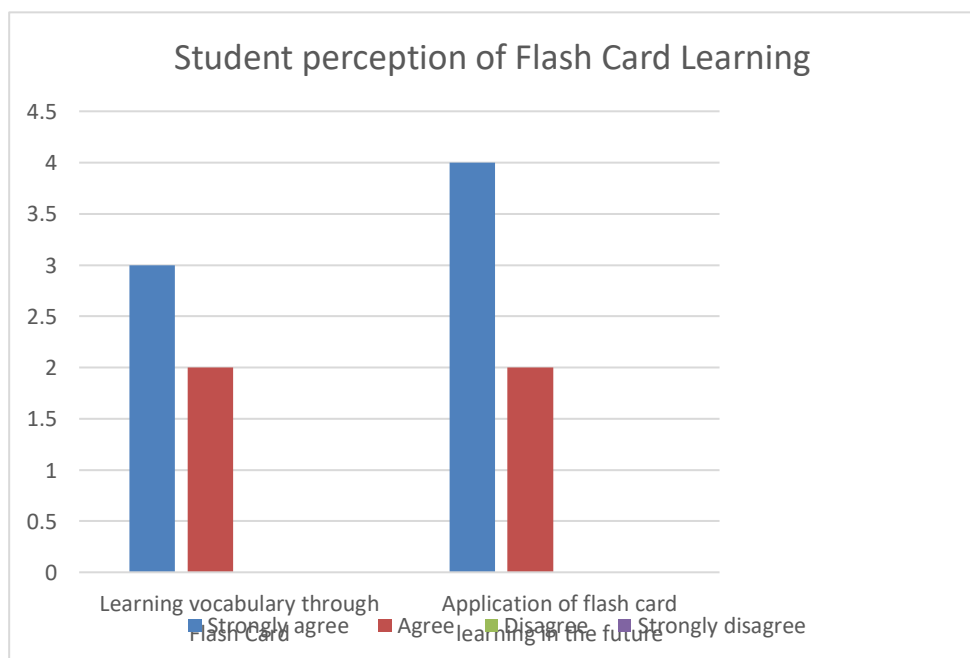
The interview result, as presented in the chart above, indicates that implementing Learning vocabulary through the Flashcard method effectively teaches vocabulary while creating a fun atmosphere in the class, and is also supported by the teacher. A majority of three respondents strongly agreed, and two agreed that Learning vocabulary through flashcards is better than the traditional method. Additionally, the data shows that four respondents strongly agreed and two others agreed that the Application of flashcards is possible in the future. This implies that learning vocabulary with the flashcard method is interesting, from making their flashcard to remembering the vocabulary by looking at it. It can be seen from the response above that both the students and the teacher prefer the flashcard method in learning vocabulary. The mostly positive reaction shows that flashcards may be an effective learning method for vocabulary learning and possibly more in the future.

Based on the research results conducted at SDN I Sadeng, using the correct learning methods can make teaching and learning activities that previously seemed dull and monotonous more enjoyable. It can be seen from the observations and interviews that have been conducted by the

researcher, which show that students prefer learning that is interesting and not bound by traditional methods such as sitting and watching the teacher explain while writing on the blackboard. This shows the importance of innovation in everything, and education is no exception, because basically, doing the same thing repeatedly will eventually lead to boredom. Harmer (2001), in Fauzan et al. (2023), states that teachers must do whatever it takes to make students feel that they have learned something valuable from the lesson.

CONCLUSION

The use of flashcards to learn vocabulary was well received by fourth-grade students at SDN I Sadeng. This is evidenced by their positive responses to the activity and their ability to remain focused without being distracted by other things. However, it takes some work to make flashcards facilitate vocabulary memorization because they are simpler in form than the usual thick textbooks, and flashcards are more enjoyable than copying what is written on the blackboard into a notebook.

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