

Introducing English Vocabulary to Young Learners Through Flashcards: Evidence from Indonesian Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Introducing English vocabulary to young learners, particularly those in elementary schools is crucial. The present study aims to introduce English vocabulary for elementary school students by using flashcard media viewed from the elementary school teachers' perspectives. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with three teachers at elementary schools in Indonesia. In analyzing the data, we used several procedures consisting of listening to recorded interviews, conducting interview transcripts by reading the interview results to gain an understanding of data about digital-based mosques, interpreting data from the words of sources, and checking the accuracy of data from sources. To ensure data validity, we used source triangulation by matching data from both sources. The results revealed that flashcards could be used as a medium to introduce English vocabulary among elementary school students. In addition, it helps them comprehend and memorize English vocabulary. Interestingly, they felt enthusiastic about learning English using flashcards. The implication of the study was discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

English has been widely studied in several countries including Indonesia. It has been mandated in the education curriculum in Indonesia starting from the level of high school education to higher education. However, it is considered essential to introduce English vocabulary to young learners as a part of children's language acquisition. Although expanding children's vocabulary is increasingly recognized as an important thing to learn, it is not easy for every child. To have good English skills, students should have enough vocabulary to help improve their English skills (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, [2020](#); Wahyuningsih & Novita, [2021](#); Wahyuningsih, [2021](#)). Many young learners have not acquired basic reading component skills such as making vocal correspondence despite formal instruction. Teaching young children to decode words facilitates their efforts to read and spell words they do not

know. In this matter, teachers play an important role in enhancing students' motivation in learning English achieved by using media. Dealing with it, flashcards could be used as media to teach elementary school students in learning English vocabulary. In addition, teaching young learners to associate letters with their respective sounds helps the child acquire phonemic awareness (that is, alertness and manipulation of sounds in spoken words), which is associated with positive reading results. Learners who receive voicemail association instructions can decode words that are unfamiliar to them. They need additional methods either in small groups or in a one-to-one instructional context. There are several ways to provide additional instruction, explicit methods consisting of many practice opportunities are generally effective for teaching basic academic skills. Therefore, creative and innovative learning media such as flashcards are needed in learning English vocabulary to increase students' interest and ability to learn English.

With regard to basic reading skills, flashcard drill, and practice is one type of method that is often used to complement the general curriculum. Effective flashcard exercises at low cost and additional low-tech methods help the students acquire and practice reading skills. There are different types of flash cards namely paper flashcards, digital flashcards (virtual), and Augmented Reality (AR) digital flashcards. These traditional paper flashcards are not only effective but also efficient to help students acquire and become fluent in reading high-frequency words (Joseph et al., [2012](#)). Flashcards allow them to connect the meaning of new words with simple images.

Several studies related to the use of flashcards in education. Kusumawardhani ([2019](#)) investigates the utilization of flashcards to teach writing to young learners. The results indicate that learners are interested in seeing flashcards and they have increased their writing by making a story in English. Yüksel et al., ([2020](#)) reported the use of digital flashcards for teaching English. The study reveals that students could learn numerous technical vocabularies using digital flashcards and they responded positively. Wissman et al., ([2012](#)) in their study emphasize that learners generally utilized flashcards to self-test for monitoring learning. Pinpoint that flashcards could help teachers in the process of teaching and learning including English subjects.

Referring to the above elaboration, it shows that many studies investigate the use of flashcards as a medium to teach subjects including English. However, the use of flashcards to introduce English, particularly vocabulary to elementary school

students has been less investigated especially in the Indonesian context. More specifically, the English teachers utilized both digital and paper flashcards. Therefore, the present study mainly explores the use of flashcards to introduce English vocabulary to elementary school students in Indonesia viewed from the teachers' perspective.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative case study method where data were collected by conducting interviews. This qualitative method is an approach used to describe a situation as it is that occurs in the field to know how the process of developing flashcard media and whether the application of flashcard media can improve the ability to remember English vocabulary for elementary school students. The study involved 3 teachers to be interviewed and as a source to find out the developments in the use of flashcard media that have been applied in three elementary schools located in Jepara, Kudus, and Pati Regency, Indonesia.

The name of the teachers used a pseudonym to maintain their identity and confidentiality. The three teachers are Teachers 1, 2, and 3. They were chosen because of their availability to be interviewed in this study. These teachers are around 30-40 years old. Teacher 1 (30 years), teacher 2 (35 years), teacher 3 (40 years). Teacher 1 teaches English at an elementary school located in Kudus, Teacher teaches English at an elementary school located in Jepara, and Teacher 3 teaches English at an elementary school located in Pati. Each of these teachers has given permission and is willing to be involved in this research. The data collection was carried out on December 22 - 25, 2022. In maintaining the research ethic, we first asked for permission from the English teachers and explain our purpose of study, we also utilized interview guides as an instrument of the study to help us during the process of interviews. These comprise some topics and questions in by study being investigated. More importantly, we made lists of questions validated by some experts in English language teaching, especially on teaching methods, teaching media, English curriculum, and elementary school contexts.

The interview was conducted via WhatsApp by sending questions to the teachers by giving questions to answer. During the interviews, we made sure to maintain confidentiality and disguise all the identities of the participants. The researchers also made sure to disguise the names of the participants. To obtain complete data with the most efficient time possible in this study, we consider it

necessary to use several methods in data collection. The results of the interview are then transcribed to reduce data, code, and find the results of the study.

Then, the process of analyzing data was carried out with several procedures including listening to recorded interviews, conducting interview transcripts by reading the interview results to gain an understanding of data about digital-based mosques, interpreting data from the words of sources, and checking the accuracy of data from sources Widodo, (2014). To ensure data validity, we used source triangulation by matching data from both sources.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Voices in Using Flashcards to Introduce English Vocabulary for Elementary School Students. The followings are the views of teachers related to the use of flashcards in teaching English to elementary school students:

Flashcards are a Beneficial Media to Introduce English Vocabulary to Elementary school Students

From the interview, we ascertained to the participants whether they used flashcard media or not for daily learning especially in English subjects. Based on interviews that have been conducted by researchers with participants. The teachers used flashcard media as a learning method in introducing English to elementary school students. Flashcard is a paper-shaped learning media that contains images, symbols, and text that are useful for making it easier for children to learn and remember English vocabulary. In addition, they added that the use of this flashcard media is very important to implement. It was strengthened by the following excerpts:

Teacher 1:

"Yes, I used flashcard media for children's learning in introducing English vocabulary to students at school. I searched for flashcards on the internet. Then I can adjust it to the topic of English that we learned. For instance, transportation, parts of the body, and so on".

Teacher 2:

"We use the flashcards media because it contains funny pictures that can attract students to learn English, especially English vocabulary."

Teacher 3:

"Yes, I use flashcard media because it helps students learn English vocabulary and they easily remember English vocabulary."

From the results of the interview above, it can be seen that the use of this flashcard is very useful for students learning English. The teacher explained that in learning English, students could use flashcards in the learning process (Wissman et al., [2012](#)). In fostering students' interest in learning English, they should use interesting media including flashcards. Students are more interested in learning by using media. In learning, teachers relied on flashcards or images to introduce new vocabulary (Alamri & Rogers, [2018](#)). Based on the description above, teachers choose the flashcard method for early childhood learning because it can help students learn English vocabulary.

The finding of the study is strengthened by the documentation of paper flashcards used by English teachers in introducing English vocabulary to students in elementary schools. This is evidenced by the following figure.



Figure 1. Paper flashcards used by teachers in teaching English

Figure 1 shows that paper flashcard was utilized by the teachers in introducing English vocabulary. In this matter, students can learn a lot of vocabulary based on the initial letter such as a balloon, carrot, dog, egg, fish, gift, and so on.

Flashcards Can Help Students Memorize English Vocabulary

Flashcard media can train students in honing English vocabulary skills and can make it easier for teachers in teaching English. This flashcard can attract students' attention to learning English vocabulary, and the existence of various flashcard media can make it easier for children to learn English vocabulary. Besides, students

are more interested in learning vocabulary using flashcards since it was accomplished by interesting images. Therefore, the students will not get bored while learning English vocabulary with flashcard media. Interestingly, students can memorize some English vocabulary through flashcards provided by the teachers. This is evidenced by the following excerpts:

Teacher 1:

"I think flashcards could be used as media to teach English vocabulary to elementary school students. The flashcards are completed with interesting pictures and words so that students will be more interested in learning English particularly vocabulary based on the topics or subjects. Yes, because children remember easily because the cards contain words and pictures".

Teacher 2:

"Flashcard media can help children remember English vocabulary. In addition, there are some pictures in the flashcards that can make students easily remember English vocabulary".

Teacher 3:

"By using flashcard media, students easily memorize English vocabulary because they will remember more if the learning process used media. Moreover, the flashcard media used many interesting pictures".

From the interview results of the three teachers, it can be inferred that the use of this flashcard media can make students easily learn English and memorize it. Indeed, flashcards contain funny pictures and words so that students are interested and motivated in learning English vocabulary. In addition, teachers reported that flashcards could help students remember and memorize their English vocabulary as well as their learning attitudes (Li & Tong, [2019](#)).

There are Paper flashcards and digital flashcards that can be used as media to teach English. Both are equally useful for helping children in learning English vocabulary. Paper flashcards are media presented in the form of illustrated paper cards while digital flashcards are modern flashcards that are usually used on gadgets using flashcard applications. In this interview, the three teachers added that students are more interested in learning English using digital flashcards than paper flashcards. As illustrated in the following excerpts:

Teacher 1:

"I think, students are more interested in learning English using Digital flashcards because, in addition to having pictures and words, digital flashcards are also equipped with visuals, so the students could imitate the way to speak."

Teacher 2:

"I think students prefer digital flashcards because they are simpler and easier to carry everywhere."

Teacher 3:

"Children prefer digital flashcards because the pictures are more interesting so they do not get bored."

Based on the interviews, it could be seen that students prefer digital flashcards to paper flashcards. In this digital era, emerging technology can provide early childhood with a variety of educational tools to access educational content anytime and anywhere. They found positive relationships, citing reasons such as mobile technology that supports self-learning, comparing digital devices with each other for flashcard use, or viewing flashcards through smartphone apps. Given the unique affordability of smartphones relative to other technologies (Sage et al., [2020](#)). Thus, with the existence of digital flashcard media, learning is more flexible and simpler. Paper flashcard media and digital flashcards are equally effective and make it easier for children to learn. Children also use both media to learn English vocabulary. However, in this study, students prefer digital flashcard media to paper flashcards. This is in line with the study conducted by Hirschel & Fritz ([2013](#)). The utilization of digital flashcards is evidenced by the following figure:

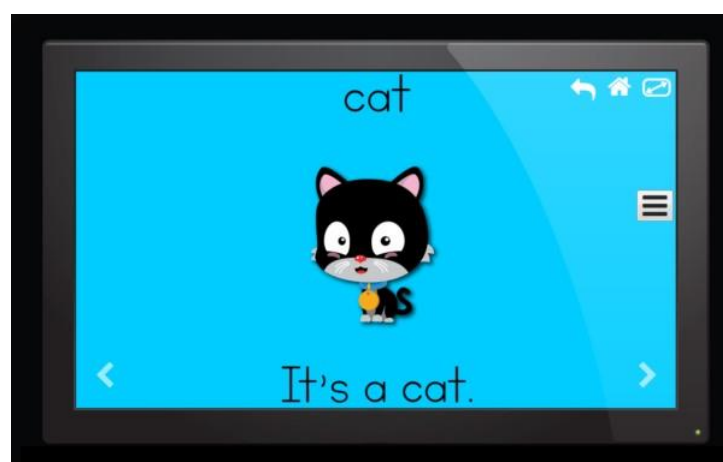


Figure 2. Digital Flashcards used by teachers in teaching English

Figure 2 depicts that apart from paper flashcards, the teachers also utilized digital flashcard equipped with digital flashcards equipped with visuals and voice so the students could imitate the way to speak. Referring to this figure, it could be deduced that teachers had made use of both paper and digital flashcards to introduce English to elementary school students.

Students Show their Positive Response toward the use of Flashcards in Learning English Vocabulary

Based on the interview, the three teachers reported that students show a positive response toward the use of flashcards in learning English vocabulary. This was evidenced by the enthusiastic attitude and good motivation among students in learning English vocabulary. Moreover, they are more curious to answer questions related to English vocabulary. Indeed, they were very active during the process of learning activities. As has been reported by the following teachers:

Teacher 1:

“The students are very enthusiastic in learning English. In addition, they are so curious and looking for something new in the learning process”.

Teacher 2:

“They were very enthusiastic in learning English vocabulary using flashcards. They were actively responding to the questions of English vocabulary”.

Teacher 3:

“The students were very active and enthusiastic. They prefer flashcards with pictures, words, and audio”.

From the elaboration above, we could assume that students are very enthusiastic and happy during using flashcards as media to learn English vocabulary. After teachers used flashcards in class to teach words or symbols, they realized that early childhood is very eager to learn vocabulary through the medium of flashcards (Yüksel et al., 2020). Using paper flashcards or digital flashcards, both children like it. However, they are more enthusiastic if they learn to use a digital flashcard. Students seem very interested in using this flashcard media. After teachers used flashcards in class to teach words or symbols, they realized that students are very eager to learn vocabulary through flashcards because of the interesting and mages words that can attract their attention to learn English

vocabulary. Based on these findings, it seems reasonable to conclude that students' perceptions of the usefulness of flashcards can increase students' of learning English vocabulary.

The Acquisition of English Vocabulary of Students has Improved

Based on the results of the interview, in accordance with the acquisition of English vocabulary, students could increase the number of English vocabulary using flashcards. This means that they could add vocabulary mastery related to the topics. This includes the vocabulary related to kinds of transportation, parts of the body, numbers, professions, family members, and so on. This was strengthened by the following excerpts advocated by the three teachers:

Teacher 1:

"Flashcards help me a lot in teaching English vocabulary. Students could mention and memorize English words based on the topics. For instance, on the topic of transportation, they could mention the kinds of transportation like cars, motorcycles, buses, trains, planes, ships, and so on".

Teacher 2:

"English vocabulary mastery of students has improved because flashcard media is not boring for them. They could memorize various English vocabularies including the topic of parts body like hand, head, face, nose, ears, eyes, leg and others".

Teacher 3:

"The vocabulary mastery of students has increased. By using flashcard media, the children are more enthusiastic about learning, especially accompanied by the use of music rhythms, children will memorize faster."

The finding is also strengthened by the following documentation of using paper flashcards in enriching students' English vocabulary.



Figure 3. Letter H Flash Cards

Figure 3 indicates that students can enrich their English vocabulary through flashcards. For instance, they can mention some vocabularies based on the Letter H such as hand, hot, head, heart, hen, hill, horse, and house. In this matter, they can add vocabulary about parts of the body, animals, and things around them.

The elaborations above also show that by using flashcard media, students' vocabulary mastery in English has greatly increased. This finding is strengthened by the study conducted by Chen & Chan (2019) emphasizing that students make significant progress in their learning grades with the help of supporting media. In learning English vocabulary using interesting media, there needs to be development in the learning process (Wahyuningsih & Novita, 2021; Wahyuningsih, 2017). Concerning the use of flashcards media, children could easily learn and memorize English vocabulary from various topics. The use of flashcard media makes learners reportedly enjoy learning through mobile applications and find them facilitating vocabulary development (Xodabande et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the use of flashcard media is very important to use in introducing English vocabulary to young learners at elementary schools. The results of the interviews revealed that the three teachers at Indonesian elementary schools advocated that flashcards are considered a beneficial media to introduce English vocabulary to elementary school students, flashcards can help students memorize English vocabulary, and students show their positive response towards the use of flashcards in learning English vocabulary, and the acquisition of English vocabulary of students has improved. This study promotes the need of getting up to date for teachers especially elementary school teachers dealing with the use of a variety of media in enhancing the learning process to attract the student's interest. Moreover, in utilizing learning media, teachers should consider the subject and topics they deliver to the students. Finally, it is kindly recommended that future scholars conduct studies of learning media in other fields from wider perspectives. By having this study, readers could have information on how the learning media especially flashcards is utilized in introducing English to young learners in elementary schools.

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