

## TEACHING VOCABULARY USING FLASHCARDS AND WORD LIST

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**Abstract:** The study was conducted to investigate the effect of using flashcards or word list on fifty graders' vocabulary mastery and to discover the students' responses toward both strategies in learning English vocabulary. This study employed a quasi-experimental research design which involved two classes, grouped into experimental and control groups with a relatively similar vocabulary mastery before treatment. The experimental group received flashcards treatment while the control group received word list treatment. The results showed that students' vocabulary mastery improved after they were taught by using flashcards and wordlist. The students in experimental group admitted that they could memorize the words easily, be more motivated to learn English and understand vocabulary easily. On the other hand, students in the control group perceived that word list was a tedious strategy. Hence, it was concluded that flashcards is recommended to teach vocabulary to young learners.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary, vocabulary learning, flashcards, word list, teaching strategy*

### Introduction

Vocabulary is an essential component in second/foreign language learning because it is needed for expressing meaning and conveying thoughts through both receptive and productive skills (Mehring, 2005, Carpenter & Olson, 2011). Furthermore, Cameron (2001) believes that vocabulary is central to the learning of language at primary level to enrich learners' language. Thus, there should be a strategy to help students learn vocabulary.

Many strategies can be applied by a teacher to teach vocabulary effectively, such as word list and flashcards. Some researchers discovered that teaching with flashcards help learners to acquire words more effectively than word list (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995). It is in line with Thornbury (2002) who states that flashcards help teacher to demonstrate a simple sequence of activities to the learners.

Moreover, in one investigation on flashcards, Komachali & Khodareza (2012) studied the effect of using vocabulary flashcard on Iranian pre-university

students' vocabulary knowledge. The result showed that flashcards could lead the students to a higher level of vocabulary improvement.

On the other hand, Baleghizadeh & Ashoori (2011) argue that word list is a method largely used in teaching vocabulary to learners. Word list is still used as a good strategy because it is very economical for students to learn vocabulary in short time (Thornbury, 2002). However, Komachali & Khodareza (2012) argue that learners paid less attention in learning words through word list because it is monotonous.

The studies on teaching vocabulary using flashcards and word list for young learners are still rare. Therefore, this study empirically analyzes the teaching vocabulary using flashcards and word list.

Based on the background above, the research attempts to investigate the answers of the following research questions, as follows:

1. To what extent can flashcards as a strategy help students' vocabulary mastery?
2. To what extent can word list as a strategy help students' vocabulary mastery?
3. How do the students respond toward both strategies in learning vocabulary?

## **Literature Review**

### **Vocabulary and Vocabulary Learning**

Vocabulary is a list of words and their combination in particular language (Joklova, 2009). Vocabulary learning is important because it is needed by learners to acquire a lot of words so they can use the vocabulary in any needs especially academic needs (Komachali and Khodareza, 2012). Vocabulary learning can be applied in classroom activities by teachers by considering the level of language proficiency of the students so a successful and effective vocabulary learning can be reached.

### **Flashcard as a Teaching Strategy**

Flashcard is a cardboard consisting of a word, a sentence, or a simple picture on it (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012). Flashcard is considered as a helpful strategy because its benefits. Moreover, teachers can also use flashcards for drilling and presenting new words.

### **Wordlist as a Teaching Strategy**

Word list can be defined as a sheet paper where learners write the second language (L2) along with their first language (L1) definition (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2011). Word list is one of effective strategy that can be applied in classroom because it is cheap and widely-used among the students. It can also be learned in short time (Thornbury, 2002).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A quantitative research was selected due to the nature of this research and the research questions. Besides, the appropriate design for this study was a quasi-experimental design to investigate the extent to which the use of flashcards and word list could help students' vocabulary mastery. Two groups were selected. One group served as the experimental group received flashcards as treatment while the control group received word list as the treatment.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

First, the try-out test was administered to another class which is different from the control and experimental group to find out the validity, reliability, discriminating power and difficulty index of the item test. From 50 questions, there were 25 valid item numbers that could be used in the pre and post-test.

At the first session, the pre-test was administered to find out the relatively similar vocabulary mastery of both classes. Both classes were taught the same lessons for several weeks. At the end of the teaching phase, both classes were tested using the post-test.

### Data Analysis

In order to answer research questions, the data were analyzed by the following methods through SPSS software.

1. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the mean and standard deviation of each group on the pre-test and post-test.
2. Independent t-test was used to find the difference between the levels of the students of both groups on post-test.
3. Paired t-test was used to compared the difference before and after treatment in both groups.

### Data Presentation and Discussion

The descriptive analyses of pre-test and post-test results of participants are presented in the Table1.

Table 1: The Descriptive Analysis of Pre and Post-test Results

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Experimental Group	30	68.00	16.00	3.038
	Control Group	30	62.00	14.546	2.633
Post-test	Experimental Group	30	80.53	11.872	2.273
	Control Group	30	74.00	12.418	2.273

Table 2: Pre-Post Test Comparison of the Experimental Group

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Paired	Pre-test Post-Test	- 12.533	6.867	1.254	-15.097	-9.969	-9.997	29	.000

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test Post-Test	-12.0000	4.69776	.85769	-13.75417	-10.24583	-13.991	29	.000

Table 3: Pre-Post Test Comparison of the Control Group

The first and second research questions investigated whether flashcards or word list can help students' vocabulary mastery before and after treatment. The result of the paired-samples t-test has shown that post-test score of the experimental group (M= 80.53) is statistically higher than the pre-test score of the experimental group (M=68.00) (see Table 2). On the other hand, in the control group, the result of the paired-samples t-test has shown that the post-test score (M= 74.00) is statistically higher than the pre-test score (M= 62.00) (see table 3). This finding shows that both strategies help students' vocabulary mastery. However, students' vocabulary in experimental group increased more significantly than the control group.

The third research question investigated the students' responses toward the use of flashcards and word list in learning vocabulary and supported the data from analysis of each instrument. The interview results in experimental group concerned on two aspects, such as: students' interest in learning English before and after treatment and the benefits of flashcards. Before treatment, there are two of ten students were interested in learning English. The rest answered English was difficult to understand and a little bit confusing. After treatment, all the students were motivated and interested in learning English. Flashcards give many benefits to the students in learning vocabulary, such as: they became motivated and interested in learning English, understood the words easily and memorized the words faster.

The interview results in the control group also concerned two aspects, such as: students' interest before and after treatment and students' responses toward word list. There are five of ten students said that English was difficult so that they did not like learning vocabulary. After treatment, seven of ten students answered that they were still uninterested in learning vocabulary. They also said that word list was a tedious strategy. It caused they became uninterested to pay attention to teacher's explanation.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the teaching vocabulary using flashcards and word list as strategies in the experimental and control group. The results showed that students' vocabulary mastery improved after they were taught by using flashcards and wordlist. The students in experimental group admitted that they could memorize the words easily, be more motivated to learn English and understand vocabulary easily. On the other hand, students in the control group perceived that word list was a tedious strategy.

There are some suggestions for further research in the field of teaching vocabulary using flashcards and word list. Firstly, it is suggested for further study to conduct the study in the other contexts, such as: in reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar teaching. Secondly, it is recommended that teacher can present interesting pictures on the flashcards to lead teacher's performance better. Thirdly, if teacher uses word list as a strategy to teach vocabulary, she or he may create fun learning process, such as playing games. Overall, it is recommended to use flashcards as a strategy to teach vocabulary to young learners.

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