IMPROVING EIGHTH GRADERS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE-VARK-BASED FLASHCARDS

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Abstract

Mastering vocabulary will help students in expressing their ideas or understanding others in an EFL context. However, it turns out that students have difficulty learning English due to a lack of vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the selection and the use of appropriate media were needed to help students achieve the learning objectives. In this study, the VARK questionnaire was distributed to students to see their learning styles. The results were that most of them are Read/Write type of learners. Considering that fact, students learning style VARK-based flashcards were implemented as a medium in this Classroom Action Research. This study aims to find out how flashcards can improve vocabulary mastery in class VIII C students of one state Junior High School in Teluk Keramat, Kalimantan. This study applied Classroom Action Research with 2 cycles with 33 student participants. The data analysis technique used mixed-method research; qualitative and quantitative. The instrument used questionnaires, interviews, observation checklists, and tests. The results indicated that students gained improvement after learning by using flashcards media. It was found that the average score of students in the pre-test was 34.9, post-test cycle I was 54.2, and post-test cycle II was 72.5. This proved that students' vocabulary mastery by using students' learning style VARK-based flashcards was improved. Further, it could be concluded that students learning style VARK-based flashcards gave a positive impact on the use of learning media in a Junior High School in Teluk Keramat to improve their vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: Classroom Action Research, flashcards, vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, generally English has several skills to learn. According to Husain (2015) define language has four skills which are as follows Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) is divided into two parts, there are speaking and writing as productive skills and also listening and reading as receptive skills. Besides that, English also has several components or elements that are also important to master in order to improve the four skills, namely grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Thornbury (2002) stated that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. It means that mastering vocabulary is very important in the learning process of mastering the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Mastering vocabulary can also be said to be the foundation in the process of learning English as Gardner (2013) said that the foundation of language and language learning is vocabulary and as such, knowledge of how to facilitate learners' vocabulary growth is an indispensable teaching skill and curricular component. Based on preliminary research that was conducted by the researcher when doing *Program Praktek Lapangan* (PPL), and the result of interviews with teachers who teach English in VIII C class of one state Junior High School in Teluk Keramat. The researcher found that the students' vocabulary mastery was very low and that made it difficult for students to understand English lessons. They lack motivation in learning English because they assume that learning English was difficult because of a lack of vocabulary. They had difficulty understanding the learning material because they did not understand the meaning of much of the vocabulary in the textbook because they had a lack of vocabulary. The students even had difficulty answering the questions in the textbook because they did not know the meaning of the instructions and questions given, so they always asked the teacher for meaning.

Vocabulary was one of the English elements that were important in learning English. Therefore, students need to master vocabulary to help students to express ideas and understand learning. Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning (Salawazo et al., 2020). The more people master vocabulary the more they can speak, write, read, and listen as they want. Hence it was important to master vocabulary to improve the skills of learning English. The researcher made a media to improve the students' vocabulary mastery using flashcards on the students' learning style. Jaleel and Thomas (2019) stated that learning style refers to the concept that individuals differ in regard to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them. In this research, the researcher used a VARK questionnaire to determine the learning style of students. Peyman, et al. (2014) further stated that visual, aural, reading and writing, and kinesthetic (VARK) is one of the instruments which can be used to determine learning styles. Based on the syllabus, the goal was about writing skills, and combined with the result of the VARK questionnaire was read/write. Therefore, the researcher used the learning style-VARK-based flashcard to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Media is a communication tool in order to get the learning process more effectively (Harmer & Rohimajaya, 2018). Media plays an important role in the teaching and learning process because using media makes it easier for the teacher to deliver the material in the process of teaching and learning. One of the media that effectively is used to improve a student's ability, especially vocabulary, is flashcards. Komachali and Khodareza (2012) said that the flash card use approach is an effective training and learning method for teachers and students and also flashcards can be used to effectively help teachers teach, students learn and comprehend vocabulary. According to Sinaga (2020) flash cards are cards on which words and/ or pictures are printed and drawn. They should be big enough to be seen clearly by every student in the class. He also says that

flash cards can be used for consolidating vocabulary, practicing structure and word order, or a variety of games. with their work or profession. For this reason, the learning style-VARK-based flashcards was used as a medium to improve students' vocabulary mastery in learning English. Accordingly, the problems formulated from this research was How is the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery by implementing students' learning style VARK-based flashcards?

METHODS

This study used mixed-method research by applying qualitative and quantitative data analysis. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), mixed methods research is a research design (or methodology) in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry. While Regnaul et al. (2018) define Mixed-Method Research as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry. Quantitative data was in the form of a test that was used to determine the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery. The qualitative data was in the form of questionnaire, interview, and observation checklist. The questionnaire was used to find out the students' opinion about the learning process by using the learning style-VARK-based flashcards. The interview was used to get information about the benefits and obstacles of the implementation of the learning style-VARK-based flashcards. And the observation checklist was used to observe the activity of the students and teacher during the process of learning by using the learning style-VARK-based flashcards. This research was used in classroom action research that applied the Kemmis and McTaggart model. There were four stages in one cycle. The four stages were planning, action, observation, and reflection. As cited in Khasinah (2013), action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change. There are four steps that are used in this research: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection.
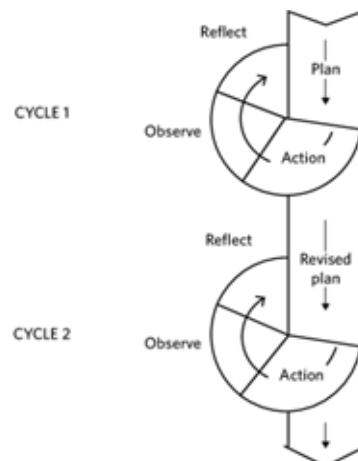

Figure 1. Steps of an Action Research Designed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010)

This research was conducted in the VIII C class of one state Junior High School in Teluk Keramat as the participant of this research. The class consisted of 33 students; 17 male students, and 16 female students. The researcher chose this class because the students' vocabulary mastery was still less and vocabulary mastery in VIII C class was lowest when compared to the four other classes that the researchers taught.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this result, the researcher would present the results before and after conducting the research. The researcher conducted this research to improve students' vocabulary mastery through students' learning style-VARK-based flashcards in VIII C class of one state Junior High School in Teluk Keramat, Kalimantan. This research was conducted in 2 cycles which had four steps in each cycle.

In July-August 2021 the researcher conducted PPL which is a program provided by the university for field practice to schools in order to give students an idea of the actual field conditions. In PPL program, students would be placed in their hometown because at that time it was still in a state of the Covid-19 pandemic where students were returned to their hometowns and continued to undergo the learning process through the online method. During PPL, the researcher experienced two learning methods, namely two weeks online and two weeks offline. For the two weeks of online learning, the researcher did not see any problems faced by the students in learning English. However, the problems were found during two weeks of offline learning when the researcher explained the material by using English as the introductory language but the students looked confused and did not understand the words.

After observing and confirming with the teacher who taught in class VIII C, the researcher found that the students had poor vocabulary so they had difficulty understanding the material that the teacher explained. The researcher also gave a pre-test to ensure the truth of the problems experienced by the students of class VIII C.

Table 1. The Result of Students' Vocabulary Mastery Pretest

Total Score	Average	The Lowest Score	The Highest Score
559	34.9	22.5	47.5

At this stage, the researcher found that the condition of the 7th graders was lack of vocabulary, this is evidenced by the results of the lowest score of 22,5 and the highest score was 47,5 with a total average of 34,9. This is the focus of researchers to make improvements by making media that can be used to help students master vocabulary in learning English.

In August 2022 the researcher started by giving the VARK questionnaire to students in order to analyze the learning styles used by students in learning. The results of the VARK questionnaire show that most of them have a read or write style. Next, the researchers began to design a media by collecting some references such as syllabus and material collected the vocabulary based on the material and then designed the media that is learning style-VARK-based flashcards.

Cycle I
Planning
The first stage of Classroom Action Research was planning, the researchers prepare everything that is used for purposes in the learning process. The researcher used a learning style-VARK-based flashcard to teach vocabulary. The topic studied at the meeting was about invitations. The researcher will give flashcards to students who have been divided into 6 groups, then the researcher explains the material and introduces flashcards as learning media. Then the researcher also used the "repeat after me" method during the lesson. After that, the researcher explained the instructions to assist students in working on the posttest questions to ensure students had understood the material well.

Action

The second stage of Class Action Research was Action, the researcher came to the class to teach the VIII C class. The researcher started the lesson by giving learning style-VARK-based flashcards to the students, the students were divided into six groups, and each group consisted of 5-6 people. Before explaining the material the researcher started the class by introducing the flashcards, the researcher was mentioned in the vocabulary and the students were asked to repeat what the researcher said. After that, the researcher started explaining the material. At first, the students were very enthusiastic about starting learning, but after some time learning, some of the students in each group started to get engrossed in their chatter and paid less attention to the teacher. The teacher tried to resolve the problem by asking the students who were chatting. Learning became effective again after the teacher gave that treatment, but it did not last long because the students repeated the problem.

Observation

The third stage of Classroom Action Research was observation, in this stage, the teacher of class VIII C and the researcher came to the class. The researcher as a teacher and the teacher as the collaborator that observed by filling out the observation checklist. This observation checklist is carried out to re-observe whether the treatment carried out by the researcher is in accordance with the research objectives.

Reflection

The last stage of Classroom Action Research was the reflection, the process of learning and what the researcher planned to run well. However, the learning process still had some problems, there were some students that still played and chatted with their group and did not pay attention to the teacher. The problem affected students' understanding of the learning process, therefore the implementation of using learning style-VARK-based flashcards in cycle one had not been the maximum result. This observation checklist is carried out to re-observe whether the treatment carried out by the researcher is in accordance with the research objectives.

Cycle II
Planning

A learning style-VARK-based flashcards would be used in this cycle two with another topic. The topic for cycle two was greeting cards. To help students focus more on the learning process, the teacher decided to reduce the number of members in the group in order to minimize the problems that occurred in the first cycle. The first thing the teacher did at that time was to divide the groups, each group containing 2-3 members. Then the teacher gave the flashcards to the students and started explaining the material.

Action

The researcher as the teacher in the class started the class, before starting to deliver the material the teacher greeted the students, checked the attendance list of students, and discussed the previous material before moving on to the new material. and then the teacher gives some questions related to the material at the meeting to check whether the students are ready to start class. The teacher gave flashcards to the students, and the teacher read the flashcards loudly, and asked the students to repeat what the teacher said. For the main activity, the teacher gave some explanation that related to the topic "Greeting Card", the teacher explained the expression and also gave some examples of greeting cards.

Observation

In this phase, after cycle two was conducted, the students became more focused and enthusiastic about a new topic of the material. The students paid attention during the learning process, which supported the students in understanding the material. The observation result concluded that the implementation of learning style-VARK-based flashcards was successful in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Reflection

The last phase was reflection. The teacher used a learning style-VARK-based flashcards as a medium to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The result of post-test two was higher than the result of post-test one. In cycle two, the students are more focused, active, and also confident in their understanding. The implementation of using the learning style-VARK-based flashcards in cycle two got the maximum result, the total score was 2320 with an average was 72,5. The results of CAR data were conducted in two cycles by using the learning style-VARK-based flashcards to improve students' vocabulary mastery, from the observation it was found that the students were more focused, enthusiastic, and also paid attention to the teacher's explanation. The students showed improvement in their vocabulary mastery. They are able to easily remember new vocabulary and are also able to understand well the material presented by the teacher.

Table 2. The Result of Students' Vocabulary Mastery Posttest I

Total Score	Average	The Lowest Score	The Highest Score
1790	54,2	30	85

Based on the result of post-test I, the total score was 1790 with an average of 54,2 The result found that after using the learning style-VARK-based flashcards as a medium in learning English has increased from the score before using flashcards. But this is still not maximal where students who got the lowest score was 30 and the highest score was 85.

Table 3. The Result of Students' Vocabulary Mastery Posttest II

Total Score	Average	The Lowest Score	The Highest Score
2320	72,5	70	95

After conducting cycle II, the researcher found the maximum results where the total score of the students was 2320 with an average was 72,5, the students increased their learning outcomes by getting 70 as the lowest score and 95 as the highest score. The students were focused and paid attention to the teachers' explanations so they got the maximum score in this cycle.
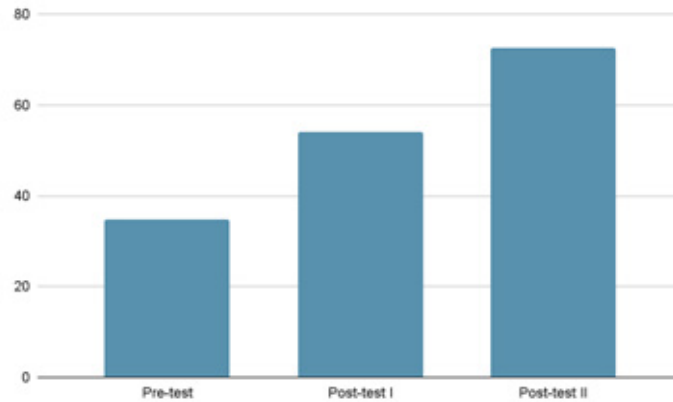
Figure 2. The Mean Score of Pre-test and Post-test

The result of the chart showed that using learning style-VARK-based flashcards has proven to be used as a medium for teaching vocabulary mastery in learning English. After the implementation of learning style-VARK-based flashcards, the average score of pre-tests, post-test I, and post-test II students has increased. Before using flashcards as a medium for learning, the average score of students was 34,9. That means that students lack vocabulary. The statement was relevant to Taufik et al. (2019) that a Re-test or pretest can be used at the beginning of the lesson to build a knowledge base related to the subject and then at the end of the lesson to see that less knowledge can be added. Pre-tests can also be used as a way to assess the depth of understanding needed. After implementing the media in cycle one the average score was 54,2 and after doing the post-test in cycle two it was seen that the result of the average score was 72,5 And the students got a maximum score. It means that the student has improved their vocabulary and understood the material after using the media.

The implementation of the learning style-VARK-based flashcards in mastering vocabulary had a good response. From the questionnaire that had been shared the number of respondents who answered was 30 students of 33 students. In this questionnaire, there was the implementation of the learning style-VARK-based flashcards in mastering vocabulary, while the part of the questionnaire consisted of 13 questions. The result from the questionnaire found the percentage of students who chose (SA = 37%, A = 43%, D = 20%) about mastering vocabulary could help students to express their own ideas or understand others. Furthermore, the second statement was that mastering vocabulary could help students to be able to speak, write, read, and listen in a particular language. It could be seen (SA = 40%, A = 40%, D = 20%). As said in a student's interview, by giving the vocabulary and examples of how to pronounce the sound, the student can be familiar with the vocabulary. Then (SA = 30%, A = 57%, D = 13%) of students agreed that being given the strategy to master vocabulary could help students reach their potential in learning English. This was accurate to the theories mentioned in Rohmatillah (2017) that without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them. In contrast (SA= 60%, A = 40%) the percentage of the statement, chosen (SA = 47%, A = 37%, D = 16%) that when the teacher put the vocabulary in explaining context could help students to understand the meaning of vocabulary. Furthermore, (SA = 37%, A = 53%, D = 10%) from the percentage most students agreed that when the teacher provided the vocabulary flashcard with the meaning could help students to understand the meaning of the

vocabulary. Showed (SA = 33%, A = 40%, D = 23%) almost all of the students agreed that using flashcards in mastering vocabulary could make students more confident. This was accurate to the theory from Salehi & Torki, (2020) said that vocabulary is necessary for communication and in expressing meaning through productive and receptive skills. Without extensive knowledge of vocabulary and strategies for learning new words, learners may feel disappointed and lose their confidence. Next, the percentage of students (SA = 40%, A = 50%, D = 10%) who agreed that using flashcards in mastering vocabulary is more effective than word lists. Furthermore, about 40% strongly agree and 50% agree that using flashcards could help students to illustrate the meaning of vocabulary. As mentioned in a student's interview, giving a picture in the flashcard made the student illustrate a picture and easier to remember vocabulary. Next, (SA = 57%, A = 33%, D = 10) from the percentage most students strongly agreed that the size of flashcards was big enough to be seen clearly by everyone. Furthermore, the majority of students chose 53% strongly agreed, 43% agreed, and 3% disagreed that using flashcards could help students more easily to remember vocabulary. Furthermore, the percentage of students who chose (SA = 43%, A = 40, D = 17%) about using flashcards can motivate students in learning English. This statement was supported by Nugroho et al. (2017) who said that flashcards have many advantages when used in the teaching-learning process. Flashcards have great power in motivating and stimulating students. Next, the percentage of students who chose (SA = 50%, A = 47%, D = 3) using flashcards was motivating and eye-catching.

Furthermore, from the results of the checklist observations made during the research, I gave better in the second cycle compared to the first cycle. Based on the observation on cycle one there were still many activities that did not go well, such as there were some students who were not ready to join the class, and there were students who were not concerned and still had conversations during the learning process. Whereas cycle two showed that all activities were carried out well. The researcher saw that the actions in this cycle made students more focused and enthusiastic during the learning process. This means that students' activity in cycle two is higher than in cycle one.

This research conducted interviews with several students to find out their opinions and perspectives based on the implementation of learning style-VARK-based flashcards during the learning process. This interview was conducted at the school after taking action on October 25, 2022. From the result of the interview, it was found that they enjoyed learning English using learning style-VARK-based flashcards. They were easier to remember vocabulary and understand the material. One of the students said, "When I learn English using flashcards I feel happy and motivated when learning English". From the interview results, their opinion about the implementation had positive responses.

CONCLUSION

The students thought that learning English was a terrible thing and difficult to understand because they did not understand much about the vocabulary. By using students' learning style-VARK-based flashcards, the students become more motivated, focused, and also easy to understand English lessons, not only that this media also makes students more confident and easier to remember the vocabulary given. This research is a Classroom Action Research conducted in two cycles to prove that using students' learning style-VARK-based flashcards could improve students' vocabulary mastery. This increase can be observed from the results of the average score of the pre-test conducted before the implementation of the learning style-VARK-based

flashcards from 33 students was 34.9, the average score of the post-test I was 54,2, and the results after the implementation was carried out in the post-test II was 72.5. From these results, it could be concluded that the students' learning style-VARK-based flashcards could be used as an alternative medium to improve students' vocabulary mastery in learning English.

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