Improving students' vocabulary mastery through picture cards

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Abstract: This study aims to improve the vocabulary mastery of VII grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Taniwel, West Seram, Mollucas, through the use of picture cards.This research was classroom action research. The research subjects were grade VII students of SMP Negeri 4 Taniwel, West Seram, Mollucas, consisting of 24 students. The techniques for collecting the data were observation and interview, whereas the instruments for collecting data were observation checklist, field notes, and test. The data analysis used the qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis was related to the result analysis of the observation, interview, field notes and the observation checklist, while the quantitative analysis was related to the analysis process of simple statistic from the students' test result. The result of the research indicates that the use of picture cards can improve the students' vocabulary mastery, as shown by the students' test result that improved in each cycle. The students' vocabulary mastery was said "improved" if their percentage of completeness overall achieved the indicator of success ≥85%. In the first cycle, the percentage of the students' completeness overall improved to 75% with the average score of 74.1, but did not achieved the indicator of success. Therefore, the cycle was repeated in the second cycle with some improvements. At the second cycle, the percentage of the students' completeness overall achieved the indicator of success 91.6% or ≥85%. It meant that the students' vocabulary mastery has improved in the second cycle, and the cycle was ended.

Keywords: picture cards, students' vocabulary improvement.

INTRODUCTION

English is the first foreign language that is taught formally in Indonesia, especially in the middle or in the junior high school level. Yulia (2014, p.8) states in secondary school, English is generally taught three times a week for 90 minutes per class. The teaching and learning of English need to be in accordance with the competency standard for secondary junior school. It functions as a means of forming students' ability in technology, science, art and culture, so that the students are able to form themselves for being skillful human beings. The teaching of English in junior high school level is intended to form students' communicative abilities in the language skills, namely reading, speaking, listening and writing.

In the end of their study at the junior high school, students are expected to develop communicative competence in the oral and written forms to achieve the functional literacy level, to have the awareness about the essence and the importance of English in order to increase competitive ability in the global society and to develop students' comprehension about the connection between language and culture.

For achieving the aims above, the teacher plays an important role in providing meaningful teaching and learning activity. Yet in one sense any role which the teacher adopts and which is designed to help students learn and to facilitate the students' progress in some way or others (Harmer, 2007, p.57). The teacher can apply variation of strategies and media, learning sources and adequate technology using the surrounding environment as a learning source, so that the learning situation and the classroom atmosphere become meaningful, fun, active and creative. Because, by maximizing the use of learning media and varying the teaching strategy, the students feel comfortable and easy in learning and in mastering English, so that the above aims can be achieved. In fact, students' mastering of English in teaching and learning process in this era at junior high school level is very different from the expectation.

It occurs because of some reasons which came from the teacher's side, students' side, and the facility or media from the school's side.

After the researcher did the preliminary research about the three sides above in grade VII of SMP Negeri 4 Taniwel, the researcher found that the students' insufficient in vocabulary mastery became the main problem. It happened due to when the teacher asked each student to find unfamiliar words in the text by using the dictionary. From the result of their work, the researcher found some words in most of the students' worksheet that should have been understood the meaning without using a dictionary. The words were small, hear, pocket, bean, and ear. It indicated that students lacked vocabulary. The researcher thought that the students could not learn properly any aspects of the language such as reading, listening, writing without having enough vocabulary. Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write" (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p.255). In addition, Hidayat & Nurhayati (2014), postulated that *penguasaan kosakata esensial sifatnya dalam penguasaan semua keterampilan berbahasa, baik reseptif* (listening and reading) *maupun produktif* (speaking and writing).

Besides that, the students also can not remember the words in the long-term memory. It occured because when the students were asked by the teacher to close their worksheet, and then the teacher asked them to write the meaning of the five words of small, hear, pocket, bean, and ear in Indonesian without using the dictionary. When the students has finished, the researcher found that most of the students could not define the meaning of the five words correctly. Vocabulary mastery in the long term-memory is very closely related to the comprehensibility input and the ability to recognize the meaning. Putri (2013, p.29), stated that vocabulary mastery is also very important for the acquisition process. Acquisition depends significantly on the comprehensible input. The comprehensibility is dependent directly on the ability to recognize the meaning of key elements in the utterance.

Learning word is not something that is done and finished yet (Cameron, 2001, p.74). To master vocabulary is to learn new words, meaning to increase vocabulary. The learning includes the pronunciation, the meaning, the spelling, the usage, and the part of speech of the words. She also adds that learning words is a cycle process of meeting new words and initial learning, followed by meeting those words repeatedly, each time extending knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in the foreign language. This means that every time learners meet those familiar words again, they in directly improve their knowledge about the words. Mastering vocabulary is one of the learners' needs in order to understand the language. In English teaching-learning process, mastering vocabulary well can help the students to understand the lesson. For junior high school students, they are expected to master at least the first 1,000 of high frequency words. In addition, according to Nation (2001, p.13) the high frequency words is very important because these words cover a very large proportion of the running words in both spoken and written texts. Furthermore, by mastering at least the high frequency words can help the students in understanding the target language.

In order to improve students' vocabulary mastery, the researcher used picture cards media. Picture cards are part of the flashcards. Picture cards are small and simple picture and words in the source language and target language on a piece of card or paper. Arsyad (2011, p.119) said that *media kartu bergambar merupakan kartu kecil yang berukuran 8 x 12 cm atau dapat disesuaikan dengan besar kecilnya kelas yang dihadapi yang terdiri dari gambar, teks, atau tanda simbol yang membantu siswa untuk mengingat pada sesuatu yang berhubungan dengan gambar tersebut*. Picture cards are suitable media in teaching and learning vocabulary, especially in improving students' vocabulary. Nadziroh (2010, p.10) picture cards are useful for the teaching of vocabulary and reading.

Picture cards are designed to encourage students to discuss what is shown in the picture, and then find the meaning of the word that appropriate with picture. Picture cards are also designed to encourage students to write and pronounce the word correctly. Picture cards are believed to be an efficient tool to express the meaning of a word. Using picture cards, in connection with the direct instruction, is very common at the beginning levels of English oral language acquisition. Students practice the basic vocabulary by acquiring, identifying, and reviewing the picture cards. By asking students to identify the picture cards or the items in the picture cards, teachers can measure which words are unfamiliar to the students (Rachman et al., 2020; Wu & Hsieh, 2008, p.6).

Therefore, considering the benefit of vocabulary mastery as a basic of the language. The reseacher was interested in conducting an action research for the VII grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Taniwel through the use of picture cards media.

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METHODS

This research is in an action research, As what Stringer (2007, p.8) said action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problem. It means that the classroom action research is the collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides teacher or other stake-holders in the school with the means to take systematic action to resolve the teaching and learning problems. Burns (2010, p.2) implied that the central idea of the action part of AR is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice.

According to Koshy (2005, p.3) the purpose of action research is to learn through action leading to personal or professional development. It is participatory in nature which led Kemmis and McTaggart in Koshy (2005, p.4) to describe it as participatory research. The researcher used the model of classroom action research from Kemmis & McTaggart in Koshy (2005, p.4) action research involves a spiral of self-reflective spiral of: planning a charge, acting and observing the process and consequences of the charge reflecting on these processes and consequences and then replanning, acting and observing, reflecting, and so on.

The action research was held twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday with duration of 120 minutes for the 1st meeting and 60 minutes for the 2nd meeting. This research was carried out in the first semester in the academic year of 2014/2015. It started from September 17th to October 1st, 2014. The researcher took the VII grade with 24 students as the research subjects. This class was chosen due to based on the preliminary study, the students in this class had the lowest ability than the other classes in learning English, especially in vocabulary mastery. In addition, a collaborator or English teacher. The collaborator helped the researcher in imple-menting every step of the research procedures. His responsibilities was observing, noting, and reflecting the action implementation together with the researcher.

The data in this research were collected through observation and interview. The observation was done by the observer or collaborator. During the observation, the observer took some notes about the students' activities in the field notes that consisted of students' attitudes and the students' responses toward the implementation of picture cards. In this research, the researcher used the interview to the students and the English teacher in preliminary study and the implementation of action.

The instruments that used in this research were observation checklist, field notes, and vocabulary test. The observation checklist was used to observe the students during the imple-mentation of picture cards. in this research, field notes were used to note any things that happen during the implementation of picture cards. The form of the vocabulary test in this research was a completion test. The test was given in the second meeting of each cycle. It was done to find out the students' improvement of vocabulary mastery.

This action research was analysed through qualitative data and quantitative data analysis. Techniques and instruments for collecting data to be analyzed in qualitative data analysis of this action research are observation checklist, field notes and interview. For analysing and interperting qualitative data, the researcher will use the model of Miles & Huberman in Koshy (2005, p.113) that consist of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

In the data reduction stage, data that had been collected were reduced, summarized, and then focused on things that were important. It was done to facilitate in displaying data and also in making the tentative conclusion. Data reduction were done continuously during the research process. Then, At the data display stage, data was displayed based on the narrative form from the field notes. It was done to facilitate the researcher in understanding the things that occured during the research process. Finaly, in the conclusion drawing/verification stage, The researcher held these conclusions lightly, maintaining scepticism until they were more explicit and grounded. Although final conclusions appeared only when the analysis was over, the action researcher also drew conclusions as the project progresses.

The quantitative data in this action research was students' vocabulary test. The form of the vocabulary test in this research was a completion test. The test was given in the second meeting of each cycle. It was done to find out the students' improvement of vocabulary mastery.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was held on August 26th and ended on September 29th 2017. Its objective was to improve students' vocabulary mastery at VII grade of SMP Negeri 4 Taniwel. The actions were in the end conducted in two cycles. Based on the result in both cycles, the research-er and the collaborator decided to discontinue the research as the objective were fulfilled. ≥85% students have achieved the test score ≥ *KKM* or 70. It meant that the research objective were fulfilled or the students' vocabulary mastery improved very well in second cycle.

The action implementation during the cycle I and cycle II were done thoroughly and planned in detail. In the 1st cycle, after the researcher implemented the picture cards, and conducted the test, there were some improvement that could be found. There were some students showed enthusiastic, excited, and happy to follow the activites, and also they can get the test score from 70 to 100, although some students were not, so that the situations affected to their vocabulary mastery improvement. In fact, the observation data showed that there were two problems in the actions process of picture cards implementation. It could be described as follow. Students did not participate in the implementation of the picture cards properly and Students' weaknesses to memorize the words in the long-term memory.

The first problem was related to the students' participation in the implementation of the picture cards. Based on the observation data, most of the students looked passive, shy and unenthusiactic to give their contribution in the action implementation of the picture cards. They were confused and not interested to find the meaning of the picture in the cards at the second step. They also looked confused to find the meaning the words in English at the third step. In the fifth, there were some students that could not pronounce the words clearly and properly. Only some outstanding students that involved actively in the action process.

The second problem was the students' weaknesses to memorize the words in the long-term memory. This problem came from the students' test result. There were six students that got the test score from 10 to 60. They can not reach the *KKM* with the score ≥70. It meant that their vocabulary mastery were not improved. Test scores from the sixth students affected the indicator of success. According to the requirements of the indicator of success, the students' vocabulary mastery have improved if the percentage of the students' completeness in overall was ≥85%, or there were ≥85% students who have reached the test score ≥ *KKM* or 70. In fact, in the first cycle, the students could not achieve the indicator of success, because the percentage was 75%, or there were 18 students or 75% from 24 students who have reached the test score ≥ *KKM* or 70. It could be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Students' test result in the first cycle

No.	Number of the students complete and incomplete	Scores	*P*	*X*
1.	18 students (complete)	70 – 100 (≥70)	75%	74.1
2.	6 students (incomplete)	10 – 60 (<70)		

Notes: *X* = Mean, *P* = Percentage of the students' completeness overall.

The explanation of the table above indicated that the students' vocabulary mastery has improved well the first cycle. However, according to the requirements of the indicator of success, the students' vocabulary mastery have improved if the percentage of the students' completeness in overall was ≥85%, or there were ≥85% students who have reached the test score ≥ *KKM* or 70. It meant that the students' vocabulary mastery in the first cycle have not improved, so that the researcher and collaborator decided to repeat the cycle with some revises, in order to solve the problems in the 1st cycle and to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

In order to overcome the problem in the first cycle, the researcher and the collaborator made some revises that could be implemented in the second cycle. For the first problem that related to the students' participation, the researcher and collaborator created the game and the small group. The small group consisted of four to five students. The game and the small group were formed to encourage the students be more active in expressing their idea with the other friend in the group work. With the small group, the students could manage the time properly. The outstanding students in each group could help the other students, if they were confused in conducting the activity. The researcher overcame the problem of the students' pronunciation by pronouncing the words softly and clearly. The researcher also asked the students one by one to pronounce the words. If they made a mistake in pronouncing the words, they had to repeat it. The researcher also give more attention and motivation for the students in each group to build their self-confidence.

The second problem was the students' weaknesses in memorizing the words in the long-term memory. The game that have been discussed in the first problem, namely guessing word meaning through picture, was the good way to make the students interested in remembering the words. The researcher also gave motivation in the form of a message when the students took the picture cards at home. The researcher said that If the students got the test score 100 in the test implementation in the second meeting of the action stage, the researcher would give a gift.

In the 2nd cycle, based on the observation result of the picture cards implementation, all of the steps in the picture cards media could be implemented properly and successfully. Every student liked these activites, they involved and participated more actively during the activity. The students also got the test score from 70 to 100. The implementation of the picture cards in the action stage of the second cycle could solve the problems in the implementation of the picture cards in the action stage of the first cycle. The problems in the first cycle covered the students' participation in the implementation of the picture cards, and the students' weaknesses to memorize the words in the long-term memory.

In solving the first problem about the students' participation, the researcher and collaborator created the small group and the game, namely guessing word meaning through picture. The small group that consisted of four to five students. The game and the small group were formed to encourage the students be more active in expressing their idea with the other friend in the group work. With the small group, the students could manage the time properly. The outstanding students in each group could help the other students, if they were confused in conducting the activity. The researcher also give more attention and motivation for the students in each group to build their self-confidence.

The changes above was successful to make the students be more active in the implementation of the picture cards in the action stage. The researcher and the collaborator found that the cooperation between the students in each group were very good. All of the students in each group seemed active, and serious in finding the meaning of the pictures, also the meaning and the part of speech of the words. They always disccued their idea to each other in the group. The students in each group looked excited in playing this game. When the researcher showed the picture, all of the students directly reacted to mention their group name as fast as possible, so that they were allowed to guess the picture that was showed by the researcher. The students could repeat the words that were pronounced by the researcher appropriately. The students were able to pronounce the words correctly, after they repeated to pronounce the words two times. It was due to the researcher pronounced each word softly and clearly.

For the second problem, the students' weaknesses to memorize the words in the long-term memory, the researcher planned to make a game in the picture cards implementation of the first meeting in the action stage, namely gueesing word meaning through picture. The researcher also gave motivation in the form of a gift if the students got the test score 100. The result of some changes above influenced the students' vocabulary mastery. The students were able to memorize the words in the long-term memory, so that they could answer the questions in the test implementation properly that automatically improved their vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from their test result. There were 22 students who have reached the *KKM*, with the test score from 70 to 100. On the contrary, two students have not reached the *KKM*, with the test score from 10 to 60. The students' average score was 84.5 which was at the very good level. Their percentage of completeness overall was 91.6%. The students test score above could be showed in the Table 2.

Table 2. Students' test result in the second cycle

No.	Number of the students complete and incomplete	Scores	*P*	*X*
1.	22 students (complete)	70 – 100 (≥70)	91.6%	84.5
2.	2 students (incomplete)	10 – 60 (<70)		

Notes: *X* = Mean, *P* = Percentage of the students' completeness overall.

Based on the students' improvement in the second cycle, compared to the indicator of success, the students have successfully achieved the indicator of success. Their percentage of completeness overall was 91.6%, on the other word there were 91.6% students or 22 students have reached the test score ≥ *KKM* or 70. It meant that the students' vocabulary mastery has improved.

Based on the result of the students' completeness to reach the *KKM* in the first cycle and the second cycle that detemined the students' vocabulary improvement, the researcher made the comparison of the students' completeness to achieve the *KKM* between the two cycle. The comparison could be seen in the Figure 1.
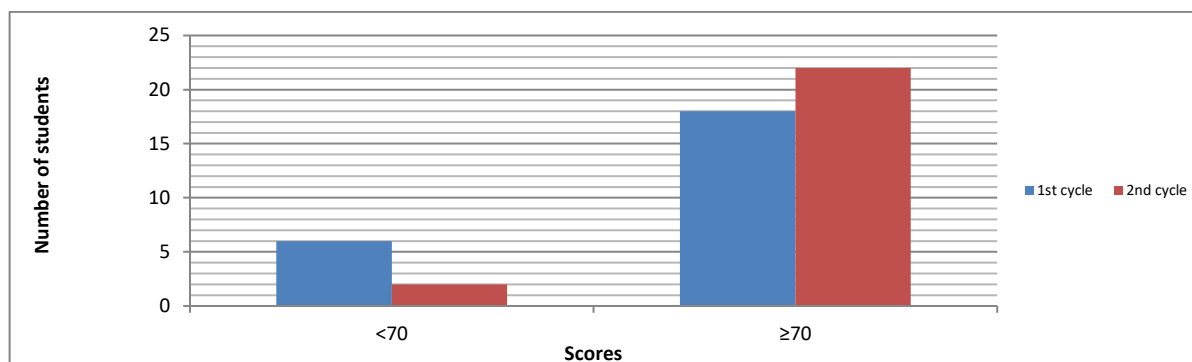
Figure 1. Graphic of the comparison of the students' completeness in the first cycle and the second cycle

The Figure 1 showed that in the first cycle there were 18 students that have reached *KKM*, with the test score ≥70, while the rest of seven students have not reached. The students' percentage of completeness overall have not achieved the indicator of success. So that, their vocabulary mastery in the first cycle have not been said improved. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the students' completeness that achieving the *KKM* improved to 22 students, with the percentage of completeness overall was 91.6%. Only two students who have not reached the KKM or not complete, with the test score <70. The students' percentage of completeness overall have achieved the indicator of success. It concluded that the students' vocabulary mastery have improved in the second cycle and the research was ended in this cycle.

Discussion

Based on the data of the research result above, the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery at VII grade of *SMP negeri 4 Taniwel*, west part of *Seram*, Mollucas through the implementation of picture cards media improved very well after the researcher implemented the picture cards in the 1st and the 2nd cycle. The picture cards implementation has given the answer to the research questions and aim of the research that the picture cards could improve students' vocabulary mastery. The improvement was not only at the students' vocabulary mastery or cognitive domain, but also at the students' participation in learning activity or affective domain. The following was the discussions of the students' improvement of the vocabulary mastery in the cycle I and the cycle II when implementing the picture cards.

In the preliminary research, the researcher found eight problems that influenced teaching and learning English. From the eight problems, the researcher decided to focus on one problem. It was the students' insufficient in vocabulary mastery. This problem appeared due to the researcher found some words that should have been understood the meaning without using a dictionary. The words were small, hear, pocket, bean, and ear. The researcher focused to the problem of students' vocabulary mastery because vocabulary is the basic part of the language. If the students do not have enough vocabulary, they can not speak, read and write properly.

From the explanation above, the reseacher decided to improve students' vocabulary mastery using picture cards. The implementation of the picture cards to improve students' vocabulary mastery was conducted in two cycles. The discussion of the two cycles could be seen below.

This phase discussed about the students' participation or the students' affective domain when the researcher applied the picture cards in the cycle I and the cycle II that influenced the students' vocabulary mastery. Based on the data observation of the picture cards implementation in the action process at the fisrt cycle, after the researcher applied the picture cards, most of the students looked passive, shy and unenthusiactic to give their contribution. They were confused and not interested to find the meaning of the picture in the cards at the second step. They also looked confused to find the meaning the words in English at the third step. In the fifth, there were some students that could not pronounce the words clearly and properly. Only some outstanding students that involved actively in the action process. The problems above occured because the students' lackness of self confidence in expressing their ideas. This problem influenced the students' vocabulary mastery. Although, there was an improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery in the first cycle, however the students' vocabulary mastery in the first cycle did not improved very well. Because the percentage of the students' completeness overall has not achieved the

indicator of success. In overcoming the problems in the first cycle in order to achieve the indicator of success, some changes was made by the researcher and the collaborator in the second cycle.

At the second cycle, after the researcher and collaborator made some revised in the stages of the picture card and implemented the picture cards in the action process, the cooperation between the students in each group were very good. All of the students in each group seemed active, and serious in finding the meaning of the pictures, also the meaning and the part of speech of the words. They always disccued their idea to each other in the group. The students in each group looked excited in playing this game. When the researcher showed the picture, all of the students directly reacted to mention their group name as fast as possible, so that they were allowed to guess the picture that was showed by the researcher. The students could repeat the words that were pronounced by the researcher appropriately. The students were able to pronounce the words correctly, after they repeated to pronounce the words two times. It was due to the researcher pronounced each word softly and clearly. The result of the picture cards implementation above showed the significant improvement of the students' participation from cycle I to Cycle II. Some changes that was made in the picture cards steps could overcome the problem in the first cycle. In other words, the changes in the picture cards steps was able to improve students' self confidence. The improvement also occured to the students' vocabulary mastery. Because the percentage of the students' completeness overall has achieved the indicator of success. Based on the students' improvement in the participation and the students' improvement in the vocabulary mastery, the researcher and collaborator decided to end the research in the second cycle.

CONCLUSIONS

In reference to the data analysis that was clearly explained in the research result and the discussion, the use of picture cards is believed to be effective to improve the students' vocabulary. Through the stages of the picture cards, the students became serious, attractive, enthusiastic in the learning process. They were not shy to express their ideas in front of the teacher and friends. In other words the picture cards can also increase the students' self-confidence. This situation motivated the students to memorize the words in the long-term memory, so that their vocabulary mastery could improve. It meant that the picture cards can improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

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