



Improving Students' Mastery of Vocabulary Through Flip Book Approach

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Abstract

Many students find it hard to acquire and convey messages due to the lack of mastery in vocabulary. Since vocabulary plays a major role as the basic requirement to learning a language, its mastery became vital in learning English. On the other hand, lack of vocabulary impedes students' understanding in reading comprehension texts especially in second language classrooms. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to obtain information regarding the effectiveness of using flip book in increasing Year 3 pupils' mastery of vocabulary in English. This study investigated the use of flip book approach in helping the students to improve vocabulary through fun and meaningful learning. 15 participants were involved in the action research who were selected from a suburban school in Malaysia. Survey, written documents and field notes were used as the medium of data collection. The results showed significant positive changes in the performance of the students from time to time. Flip book approach was found to help the weak students who faced problems in understanding the meaning of the vocabulary taught in the classrooms. This study suggests that students need to enhance the mastery of the vocabulary in order to have a good grasp of the language including the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Keywords: Vocabulary mastery; Flip book; Comprehension texts; Action research.



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1. Introduction

Vocabulary building in English language is an ongoing process. The focus of investigation in this study is on the mastery of vocabulary in English language focusing on the theme of objects among a class of Year 3 pupils. When the students were given some simple instructions, they did not understand the teacher's instruction and seemed lost. Due to the lack of mastery of vocabulary, the students were not able to acquire messages in the lessons as vocabulary was the basic requirement to learn language. Vocabulary mastery was vital in learning English as it also impeded the pupils' understanding in reading the comprehension texts. This matter was also supported by [Chou \(2011\)](#), who argued that a limited vocabulary size, as well as lack of sufficient knowledge of word meanings often hinder learners from understanding the meaning of the text. Therefore, this action research was conducted to improve the students' mastery of vocabulary. The approach selected was by using the flip book in the classroom. [Pollard \(2005\)](#), clearly defines that resource area in the classroom can minimize unnecessary movement which could distract the pupils' attention in learning. Therefore, flip book became one of the solutions or resources in learning vocabulary.

The practice of using flip book was able to grab the pupils' attention. Flip books with the pictures were found to help to minimize unnecessary movement among the pupils during the lessons especially among the low achievers whose attention span was rather short. Hence, more time could be spent on learning activities for the pupils. This was important especially when it came to dealing with Year Three pupils who were considered young learners who liked to be easily distracted and liked to move around if not kept under control. Moreover, most of the classrooms, in Malaysian context, consisted of mix abilities pupils where the capacity of a teacher to attend to every pupil's need was quite impossible. Hence, using the flip book could direct the pupils' attention towards the lesson and the points that teachers needed to focus.

The teaching method important to focus as it was also found to be one of the factors that led to the lack of vocabulary acquisition among the pupils. Learners encountered a word numerous times in order to use it properly. Building vocabulary was an ongoing process and it was done step by step especially with the slow learners. The pupils were found to have limited basic knowledge in English. Moreover, as young learners, their exposure towards the language was still underprivileged. Meanwhile, the biggest obstacles encountered in teaching vocabulary were the limited time period allocated to teach vocabulary and the number of words students had to learn according to the

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syllabus. In addition, the pupils sometimes did not understand a word of a reading text where such words were not preplanned for teaching by the teachers. Sometimes, teachers had to deal with some spontaneous words quickly to avoid interference with the teaching and learning task. Hence, using flip book helped to minimize the need to encounter such words as the pictures helped students to grasp the content well.

The theory of scaffolding based on Wood *et al.* (1976), when children start to learn new concepts, they need help from teachers and other adults in the form of active support Wheeler (2014). They are dependent on their adult support, but as they become more independent in their thinking and acquire new skills and knowledge, the support can gradually fade. A powerful context for refining and extending vocabulary was the reading of literature-novel and poetry. According to Mallet (2005), if we want a motivated and enthusiastic young learner, we need to find ways of making language learning interesting and relevant. Therefore, in this study, the researchers planned a way so that language learning became more interesting and relevant where the content was more related to the pupils' own life and environment. Besides, different pupils needed different attention. Their personality which referred to individual differences in terms of characteristics in the patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviours were totally different from each other. Therefore, various ways were tailored for them in learning to suit their personality and competency.

2. Teaching Vocabulary in Primary Schools

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings (Diamond and Gutlohn, 2006). It usually grows and evolves with age, and serves as a useful and fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge. Although there are some research done on vocabulary, not many research were conducted on the issues of using the flip book approach. Asgari and Mustapha (2012), have highlighted five vocabulary learning strategies which were useful in the teaching and learning of English. Determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies and meta-cognitive strategies. They discovered that other strategies used by the subjects of this study to understand the meaning of the new words were by using flash card and words lists. The strategies mentioned were associated with interventions as the flipbook approach was closely related to the flash cards and word lists. Hence, flash cards and word lists were proven to be one of the strategies to be used in acquiring new vocabulary.

According to Thornbury (2002), it is important to know, how words are remembered and stored in students' minds and how long term memory is organized in order to be able to teach effectively. Therefore, the methods to teach the vocabulary became the main concern for the teachers. There are some teachers who preferred the use of picture clues and phonics, instead of guessing meaning from context, to learn vocabulary especially in the classrooms (Zuraina *et al.*, 2012). This was so since the primary school pupils were frequently guided to look at the pictures first whenever they came across a new book. The use of pictures in defining the words did not seem to bring significant encouragement to the pupils in learning new vocabulary. What is clear is that despite all the effort taken and practised, the English teachers especially those teaching in the primary school are still struggling to teach vocabulary meaningfully. Therefore, this action research was an important study to help teachers to teach vocabulary effectively to a certain extent.

2.1. Flipbook Approach in Teaching English Language

Digital skills have extended fast worldwide, and flipped teaching became an advanced teaching and learning method for higher education institutions (Steed, 2012). The flip book as a collection of combined pictures intended to be flipped over to give the illusion of movement and create an animated sequence from a simple small book without the help of machines. Flip book is a compilation of flashcards which is being stapled in the ladder form. Using flip book approach required the pupils to do preparation by themselves where they had to create their own flip book by drawing the meaning of the highlighted words. Pupils also had to list the words accordingly and correctly. The activity of drawing themselves helped to enhance their cognitive in memorizing the words and the meanings. This idea was also supported by Thornbury (2002) who advised learners to visualize a picture for a new word or to link an abstract word with some mental images. The images drawn by students themselves provided the best outcomes in students' mastery of the vocabulary learnt as it helped students' to own images that had the best influence on remembering Thornbury (2002).

Fadol *et al.* (2018), found that management students preferred flip mode rather than the traditional method. Besides, Khodareza and Komachali (2012) have studied the effect of using vocabulary flashcard on Iranian pre-university students' vocabulary knowledge. Based on their study, the result of using flash cards has improved their subjects' vocabulary acquisition. Apart from that, there was a research on word lists supported by Baleghizadeh and Ashoori (2011) which was largely used as one of the methods in teaching vocabulary. Thornbury (2002), also added that word list was largely used as a good strategy because it was very economical for students to learn vocabulary in a short period of time.

A research on teaching vocabulary using flashcards and word list by Sitompul (2013) investigated the teaching of 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, became more motivated to learn English and understood the vocabulary easily. On the other hand, students in the control group perceived that word list was a tedious component to master. Therefore, it was clear that, using visual aids, flash cards and word list could be a useful method in teaching and learning process on vocabulary acquisition.

2.2. Research Objectives

Following are the two research objectives of this study:

1. To use of flip book approach to develop Year 3 pupils' mastery of vocabulary.
2. To investigate the pupils' perceptions towards flip book approach in mastering vocabulary in English.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Participants

The participants who participated in this action research were from a primary school located in an urban area in Johor. The participants were the Year Three students. Out of these, 15 students were selected to be the participants in this study. The participants were from moderate families and had working parents. They were quite passive in the classroom. They worked by themselves ignoring the teachers and kept disturbing their peers. However, they were eager to learn English and preferred hands on activities rather than the traditional way. They participated well in activities involving movement and body gestures and more into hands on activities. They were eager to learn but the challenge was to find a method complying with their level of proficiency. Most of them encountered the issue of vocabulary acquisition and conveying messages. Therefore, by using this flip book technique, it was hoped to boost the pupils' interest in learning English as well as enriching their mastery of vocabulary.

3.2. Research Design/ Intervention

In this study, the spiral model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart was used throughout the process of action research. Although it might seem to be neat and organized, Kemmis and McTaggart claim that it is not a rigid structure and that "in reality the process is likely to be more fluid, open and responsive" (Koshy, 2005). There are four steps involved in

Step 1: Plan

The first element in this action research model was planning. At this point, the researchers faced an issue that might affect the pupils learning process. Once the issues were identified, the researchers planned an action that will be solution to the issue. According to Huang (2012), with the realities and constraints of our particular practices in mind, hypothesize what changes/interventions might bring an improvement and planned how to implement them. In planning, all factors regarding the correspondents were taken into account.

Step 2: Act

Coherent to the first phase, action phase came next to it. Action phase was about acting upon the plan or implement the plan that had carefully been planned in the planning phase. Huang (2012) emphasized that there were some required ethical clearance to safeguard confidentiality, ensure consent, minimize power relations, and so on must be obtained prior to the action phase, and then informed ethical consent must be obtained from those involved before carrying out the action. All these were done in the second step.

Step 3: Observe

According to Coats (2005), the third phase required the researchers to observe and record the responses to the action, noting any changes in the behavior of the students or asking them for feedback. The process of recording the responses and noting changes was a part of collecting data process. Triangulation method was used in the collecting data process for a more reliable result and responses where more than one method is used.

Step 4: Reflection

Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), and Stringer (2007), stated that the reality of the process may not be as neat or orderly as presented in the model. The phases naturally overlapped and opened in response to the dynamic nature of learning settings and events in the classroom. In this reflection phase, the researchers reflected and then revised the plan and action based on the process of previous phases. There might be factors that affect the intervention which produce undesired results.

3.3. Planning of Action/ Implementation

The researchers planned and executed the action research in six stages (Stage 1 to Stage 6). Varied activities were planned and related actions were taken to make sure that the implementation took place smoothly. Table 1 below shows the six activities and the actions planned and implemented according to the stages in detail.

Table-1. Flow chart of the action

STAGE	ACTIVITY	ACTION
1	<i>Diagnostic test</i>	<i>31 pupils of Year 3</i>
2	<i>Identification of correspondents</i>	<i>15 pupils</i>
3	<i>'Flip Me' activity</i>	<i>The correspondents were introduced to the flip book</i>
4	<i>Drilling on the words</i>	<i>The correspondents drill the listed words in the flip book</i>
5	<i>'Spot Me' activity</i>	<i>The correspondents identify the pictures in the flip book</i>
6	<i>'DIY' activity</i>	<i>The correspondents make their own flip book</i>

3.3.1. Diagnostic Test and Identification of the Correspondents

A diagnostic test was conducted to identify the problems of the students in the class. Most of them had problem in vocabulary acquisition. Most of them had very limited vocabulary. Therefore, a diagnostic test to identify the participants was vital. Based on the test, 15 pupils were selected as the participants. Having to know them and by asking their previous English teacher, it was obvious that they had problem in vocabulary acquisition. They did not know most of the words in English and not also did know how to pronounce it. They also could not express the meaning of the words. They agreed that English was not fun and difficult to learn. Therefore, this study was crucial to nurture confidence in them to learn English especially in an interesting manner. Therefore, some activities were carried out beginning with the Flip Me activity.

3.3.2. Flip Me' Activity

The activity was started by introducing the participants to the flip book. They were given the flip book to look, flip over and read the listed words. One of the reasons for this activity to be conducted was to ensure that the participants become familiar with the flip book. Besides, they would able to get some ideas on what they were going to learn.

3.3.3. Drilling Words

Drilling on the words activity was done by asking the participants to read the listed words repetitively with the teacher's guidance. They spelled the words, read it and explained the meaning of the words. As their proficiency level was quite low, some drilling was needed to be done with them (at least three times) for them to get familiar with it. Table 1 below shows the list of words used for drilling. Example of words used in the intervention were spoon, cup, fork, plate and tongs.

3.3.4. 'Spot Me' Activity

'Spot Me' activity required the participants to identify the pictures that they have found in the flip book. The pictures showed the meaning of the words. Ten picture cards were given to them in an envelope. Next, they had to identify the pictures that they have seen in the flip book. Once they had identified it, they had to paste them on the A4 paper.

3.3.5. 'Do It Yourself' Flip Book

The participants were given a set of flip book template each. They needed to fill in the flip book by writing the words that they have been exposed earlier and draw the picture to show the meaning of the words without referring to the sample.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

In this action research, three techniques were used to collect data throughout the process of intervention. First, observation was conducted and field notes were taken throughout all the classrooms activities. [Cresswell \(2014\)](#) defined observation as a process of gathering open-ended and firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site. In this action research, field notes were collected for each session of interventions in terms of the changes that occurred before, during and after the intervention sessions. The field notes contributed in making comparison towards the correspondents' change of behavior in learning.

The second method data collection was by using questionnaires. As the participants' levels could be categorized as slow learners, the questionnaire was designed in a simpler way which required the participants to circle either the smile smiley to show that they agreed with the statement or the sad smiley to show that they disagree with the statements. The questionnaire was distributed during the last intervention session to get their responses regarding the programme (process of intervention session) to study the effectiveness of using flip book.

Finally, document analysis was another technique used to collect data from the pupils' written work. The analysis was done through the diagnostic test and the task sheets given to them during the process of intervention. Comparison of each task sheets was done to note if there was any improvement or what improvement that they have achieved. Based on the three types of data collection techniques, the effectiveness of the flip book can be answered and the students' perceptions towards using flip books were obtained.

4. Data Analysis

As for this study, a mixed-method was used to analyze the data in order to find answers to the research questions of the study. Data from the written documents, observation and field notes as well as survey contributed to the accomplishment of this study.

4.1. Document Analysis

Analysis of document was made through the task sheets given throughout the process of intervention. The task sheets were given to each participant before the intervention (which was the diagnostic test), during the intervention and at the end of the intervention sessions. The analysis of the first task sheet showed that the selected participants were unable to complete the questions. 5 participants managed to get one out of five correct answers, while 10 participants managed to get two out of five correct answers. After the intervention, the task sheets were distributed to

each of them for the second time. The second analysis was made and the participants showed improvement in answering the given task sheets. Five (5) participants managed to answer three out of five correct answers and 10 participants were able to complete the given task correctly. Finally, the result of the analysis of the last task sheet given showed that all of the participants managed to answer all the questions correctly. Therefore, based on the analysis made, it was obvious that, using flip book approach in increasing participants' vocabulary acquisition could improve their performances in acquiring English vocabulary. This result helped to answer the second question of the study.

4.2. Observation

Field notes were taken while doing the observation. For each session, field notes were taken based on the participants' performances. Based on the observation and field notes, it was obvious that the participants show clear changes in their interest in learning the language. This was evident in their behavioral change and their participation in the activities especially when dealing with the flip book. During the first session, a few of them refused to participate in the activity. They would stay quiet and did not respond to the teacher's questions. They were quite passive in the classroom. However, during the second session, they came nearer to the teacher and other participants. They started to show interest by watching the other participants. Finally, all the participants developed their interest in learning and participated actively in the subsequent activities. This analysis helped to answer the second question of the study.

4.3. Survey

A survey was conducted at the beginning of the session and at the end of the intervention. The first survey was done in order to get their response about learning English. Some of the constructs were such as, 'Do you like English?', 'English is difficult.' and 'English is fun.' and many more. The purpose for conducting the survey was to get their views of learning English before executing the intervention. The constructs were designed to suit their level which was low level. Therefore, constructs were very simple with emoticons to choose. Most of the participants ticked on the sad smiley on most of the statements. This shows that they perceived English as a difficult subject. Apart from that, there were construct on vocabulary in the survey. Based on their responses, some of them disagreed that English was easy to understand. However, their views of English changed in the survey done at the end of the study. All of them agreed that they had acquired new vocabulary during the intervention session and English was fun to learn. In addition, one of the statements asked in the questionnaire was whether they enjoyed the activities of 'doing the flipbook by yourself' and the correspondents agreed with the statement. This analysis helped to answer the second question of the study where their perception of using flip book was positive and it seemed to help the correspondents learn English especially the vocabulary in a fun manner which they enjoyed very much.

5. Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, it was obvious that using flip book approach was suitable to enrich the vocabulary among the pupils especially for the slow learners. Due to the development of pupils in answering the task sheets given, it indicated that they were able to master the vocabulary. The task sheets were intended to assist the pupils in mastering the vocabulary progressively. In addition, some of the participants were even able to create their own flip books based on the sample shown without looking at the sample in the subsequent lessons. This showed their interest in using the flip book to learn. The pupils seemed to like using flip book mainly because flip book was designed to suit their proficiency level which was not too advanced for the slow learners. Using complicated choice of words in the flip book will lead to confusion of the meaning and pupils might lose interest in learning. Therefore, using simple words and familiar pictures to show the meaning of the selected vocabulary had helped the pupils to understand the vocabulary that were chosen to be taught during a stipulated lesson.

Realizing that the correspondents were in Year 3, they needed the scaffolding to master the all the vocabularies. Thus, using the flip book really helped them to enrich their vocabulary. The effectiveness of the flip book approach can be seen through their changes of behavior. Before developing the pupils' ability in language proficiency especially in vocabulary, teachers need to get their attention first. Although, the first session of the intervention did not give good effects the participants became familiar with the method where they were able to participate well in the activities. The various colours used for each flip paper in the flip book attracted their attention. This was supported by [Gaines and Curry \(2011\)](#), that colour was a powerful design element that produces profound psychological and physiological reactions. Therefore, the choices of colours did affect the pupils' mood in learning. So, flip book method was considered effective in helping pupils to enrich their vocabulary in certain topics. The survey results on the participants' response in using the flip book showed positive remarks. The results of the survey before and after the invention showed a vast difference. The participants chose more smile smiley than sad smiley in the post intervention survey which was vice versa in the beginning. This proved that the participants were satisfied and happy with the implemented intervention. The result proved that the activities done were meaningful to them parallel with KSSR curriculum which encourages fun and meaningful learning towards the betterment of the pupils. This action research was able to answer the research questions set in the earlier of the research.

Recommendation

The study investigated the using of flip book in improving pupils' acquisition of vocabulary. The intervention met the objectives and the questions designed early of the phase of implementation. However, there were some

elements which needed to be improved if chances were given to conduct the study for one more time. The first and foremost, the given time should be prolonged for the participants to explore more topic. The focus of vocabulary was an object comprising the vocabulary in the group of utensils which are spoon, fork, plate, knife and tongs. If there were more time given, the correspondents might be able to master other topics such as hobbies, transportation and other topic as well. Apart from the sample flip book, the compilation of flash cards with different colours were used, but the white papers were given to the participants during the activity of 'do it yourself'. This activity can be improved further if the mix colours of cards were given to them. The colour papers could attract their attention in the process of learning. Despite all the weaknesses, the correspondents showed improvement in their acquisition of vocabulary based on the data analysis.

There are some suggestions for further research in the field of teaching vocabulary using flip book. First, it is suggested for further study to conduct the study in the other contexts for instance in grammar, writing, reading comprehension, listening and speaking. Flip book can be utilized to be a great help for teachers to teach various topics for the pupils. Second, it is recommended to combine this approach with games, directly or indirectly using the kinesthetic approach. Young pupils love games so much and if the games are combined using the flip book, the pupils' interest in learning English can be increased and it will provide a fun environment with meaningful learning taking place. This would enhance the students' interest to learn, especially mastery of vocabulary.

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