Teaching Vocabulary Mastery through Word Wall Media (An Experimental Study at MTs DDI)

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the effectiveness of using Word Wall media in improving vocabulary mastery of grade eight students of MTs DDI Lonja Sigi, Central Sulawesi. This is a quasi-experimental research design, involving 33 students selected through total population sampling technique. To collect the data, paper-and-pencil method with tests (pretest and posttest) was used. Result indicated that there was a significant difference between students' vocabulary mastery before and after the intervention. With $\rho=0.05$ and df=31, it was found that the $t_{counted}$ value of 9.21 is higher than the $t_{critical}$ value of 1.696. This means, the research hypothesis is accepted. In other words, using Word Wall media can improve vocabulary mastery of grade eight students of MTs DDI Lonja Sigi.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Mastery, Word Wall.*

Introduction

Vocabulary is the main language component that needs to master when learning a language. Without vocabulary no one can speak or understand the language being learned. In other words, when students do not have a large vocabulary or are poor at it, they cannot communicate with great precision. Putri (2019) claims that vocabulary is basic to English language learning because without having sufficient vocabulary, the learners have difficulties in understanding others' mean or expressing their ideas. Thus, vocabulary is the first element the English language learners should learn in order to master the four English language skills and other components.

Junior high school students always deal with vocabulary when learning English. It is the first component to be introduced in language learning to support further teaching and learning processes (Blasco, 2015). Teaching vocabulary at junior high school is always combined with macro skills, which is called language proficiency (Mustafa, 2019; Vela & Rushidi, 2016; Nemati & Maleki, 2014). It is taught in context which may or not be related to the students' environment. The purpose is to facilitate students learning, giving them more access to vocabulary acquisition so that they may have a wider vocabulary for language skills development.

However, learning English vocabulary can be very challenging. Nunan (2015) argues that one of the learner's challenges in learning English is that many English words can perform multiple functions. Take the word 'fast', for instance. It can function as four different parts of speech – noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. Another challenge relates to the differences between the spoken and written from. For example, the word 'minute' is pronounced ['mɪnɪt] for noun and verb and [maɪˈnjuːt] for adjective. In addition, there are so many words to learn as the students need to master the four language skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Besides, the success of students' vocabulary mastery is influenced by some factors such as interlexical, intra-lexical, memory, motivation, learning environment, vocabulary teaching strategies, etc. Therefore, teaching vocabulary at schools should be done as creative and innovative as possible so that the students can get better learning outcomes. Creativity in teaching English vocabulary not only can improve the level of lesson engagement and interest, but also enlarge students' collection of learning in this case vocabulary size, knowledge and usage (Pamungkas, 2021; Minasyan & Minasyan, 2016; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In short, teaching vocabulary needs much innovation and creativity of the teacher.

One of the strategies that supports creativity and innovation in learning vocabulary is through Word Wall media as pointed out by Ariffansyah (2018) that Word Wall is an array of words designed to be an interactive tool for students or others to learning vocabulary. Word Walls were initially developed by Cunningham in 1978 for quick writing and word recognition instruction. The idea behind the word wall was that children would become more skilled at vocabulary and spelling which would result in improved writing. The original picture of a word wall showed the words in alphabetical order. However, the words were not placed under alphabet cards or separated by beginning letters.

Word wall is effective media applying in teaching vocabulary for students. It is because the working principle of Word Wall media, that is a systematically organized collection of words displayed in large letters on a wall or other large display place in the classroom. The words can be added gradually. The word wall should be accessible; therefore, it is put on the wall where students can easily see them from a distance. It is a teaching tool or reaching aid used to enhance literacy by displaying a collection of common vocabulary/sight words (Sartika, 2017; Dennis, 2013) with different text sizes and page layouts and many character letters to build the students' vocabulary achievement.

Word Wall has some benefits in vocabulary teaching. It is an ongoing, organized display of key words that provides visual reference for students throughout a unit of study or a term. As part of education media Word Wall, it provides opportunities for multiple exposures to lexical items and promotes active learners' involvement, a key to effective learning in general. Furthermore, using Word Wall in vocabulary teaching provides learners with reference support, promotes their independence and serves as a visual map to help them build phonics and spelling skills (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2012; Anuthama, 2010; Siregar et al., 2020). In addition, the word wall activities enliven vocabulary learning.

There are some advantages of using Word Wall media in teaching vocabulary. The advantages of using Word Wall media cover providing permanent capital for high frequency words; helping students see patterns and relationships in words; supporting to the teaching of necessary general principals about words; making a spread of word wall by the teacher's own word; thus, building phonic and spelling skills and providing reference support for children during reading and writing activities; providing a visual for students that help them to remember words, serving as an important tool for helping students learn to read, and fostering student independence. Yet, the implementation of Word Wall media is sometimes viewed as busy work as it requires time to develop and equipment to reproduce. Imagination and creativity needed to produce good word wall (Solikah, 2017; Nurhamidah, 2012); therefore, it is necessary to master basic word wall techniques. For example, use dark background to make the words stand out. Organize high frequency words in alphabetical order. Use different colors to add another reference point for students like synonym, antonym, etc. (Cleaver, 2018). Teacher and students should work together to determine which words should go on the

word wall. Teach three to five words every week. Incorporate the words on the wall into other activities such as word games, word practice, writing activities, etc.

With all the qualities of the Word Wall media, this study intends to determine its impact on vocabulary mastery of grade eight students at MTs DDI Lonja Sigi, who are reported to have been poor in vocabulary mastery. When the teacher spoke English in classroom, the students did not understand what the teacher was saying. They frequently consulted dictionary when taking on tasks from the teacher resulting in they spending more time in all in-classroom activities. This makes teaching and learning process less effective (Fadilah, 2022). The question that then naturally arises is can the implementation of Word Wall media improve vocabulary mastery of grade eights students of MTs DDI Lonja Sigi?

Method

This research employed one of the quasi-experimental designs, called the non-equivalent control group design. There were two classes involved in this research, they were control class and experimental class. Both classes were given pre-test and post-test. The control class was taught using traditional method, while the experimental class was taught using Word Wall media.

The population of this research was 33 grade eight students of MTs DDI Lonja Sigi, Central Sulawesi. The sample is a part of population with the same characteristics. It is selected through a specific technique called research sampling. Since grade eight students comprised of two classes, while the researcher used quasi-experimental with two groups, the samples were selected through total population sampling. It means, entire population was the sample of the research. Paper-and-pencil method was used to collect data with pretest and posttest as the research instrument. There were three types of tests provided to students. They were multiple- choice, fill the blank and matching test. Each type of test consisted of 10 items; therefore, the total of test was 30. Each correct answer got one point. Thus, total score of the test was 30. The results of both tests were compared to determine the effect of treatment on students' vocabulary mastery.

Result

The students' individual scores obtained from the pre-test were analyzed statistically and it was found that the mean score of the experimental class was 34.51, while the control class was 37.29. After the students of the experimental class got intervention using Word Wall media, their group mean score increased by 69.80 on the posttest, while the control group also increased by 48.54. This means,

the difference in means on the posttest was 21.26, which was categorized "high", and the difference between the two standard deviations was 24.04, as shown below.

Table 1. The result of pretest and posttest of experimental and control group
(Descriptive statistics)

Group	N	Variable	Mean score	Std. Dev.
Experimental	17	Pretest	34.51	5.79
		Posttest	69.80	
Control	16	Pretest	37.29	7.04
		Posttest	48.54	

By applying t-test formula with a significance level (ρ-value) of 0.05 and degree of freedom (df) 31, it was found that the $t_{counted}$ value was 9.21. Because the t_{table} value of 31 for one-tailed was 1.696, which is lower than the $t_{counted}$ value of 9.21, the implementation of Word Wall media is said to be effective in improving vocabulary mastery of the sampled students. The following table summarizes the differential test results (test t).

Table 2. Differential test t (Inferential statistics)

df (N-2)	31
MD	24.04
$t_{counted}$	9.21
t_{table} (one-tailed)	1.696

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to experiment if using Word Wall media can improve vocabulary mastery of grade eight students of MTs DDI Lonja Sigi. Result of data analysis demonstrated that the students' vocabulary mastery of the experimental class improved significantly after taught using Word Wall media. Statistically, the $t_{counted}$ value was 9.21, which is much greater than the t_{table} value of 1.696. This means, using Word Wall media can improve vocabulary mastery of the assigned students.

Using Word Wall media can effectively improve students' vocabulary mastery because it allows the students to "create unconscious learning" (Ismiyati & Saputri, 2020, p.129). When displaying the sight words on the word wall, the students get the opportunity to see and read the words at any time – before, during, and after the study hours. As a result, they effectively learn the words without being fully aware of the process. In other words, constant visual cues of the word wall help the students to solidify the memorization of the words displayed.

The finding also supports the previous research. A study by (DeBaun, 2017) reported that using Word Wall media enables the students to retain vocabulary meaning 75% of the time. Another study by Sipayung (2018) showed that using Word Wall strategy in teaching vocabulary can increase students' vocabulary performance. In addition, a study by Solikah (2017) revealed that the implementation of Word Wall media is effective to improve students' vocabulary mastery. It means, applying the word wall in English class helps the students to memorize the words and meanings, which eventually improves both the students' vocabulary mastery and language skills.

Yet, this study has a limitation in the tools used. Solikah (2017) argues that preparation of smart word wall can be a long process because not only does it involve the choosing of the appropriate materials and colors, but also teacher's imaginations and skills. For this reason, further researchers may use the copy of flashcards which are pasted on the cardboard so that the students can make associations with the images and letters. The images are quite effective but not for the printed words. Small size of the printed words in the flashcards can make the students unable to refer to the word wall while working on vocabulary learning activities.

Regardless of limitation, findings of this study have an important implication for future research in English language teaching. While this current study focuses on statistical data to determine the effectiveness of the Word Wall media in teaching vocabulary mastery, the future research can be done through classroom action research whose findings can clarify and verify the concepts and the findings of this study as well as the long-term impacts of its use on the students' vocabulary acquisition. A qualitative study like library research can also be done so that researchers and readers possibly find detailed information about the Word Wall media, how to design and use the Word Wall media in teaching English vocabulary.

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