

# The Teaching of English Vocabulary By Using Flashcards to Young Learners 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in Bali Primary School Tabanan

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## ABSTRACT

Flashcards have proven to be an effective tool in teaching vocabulary to young learners, capturing their attention and making the learning process engaging. The research design used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted by the teacher to improve the teaching and learning process. The study took place at Bali Primary School Tabanan, with 1st-grade students as the population. Two cycles, Pre and Post, were planned, including Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting phases. Pre-test to post-test cycle 1 showed a 28% increase in student scores, while post-test II resulted in an average score of 73.6, with 23 students passing. The first cycle showed improved student motivation and engagement with interesting learning activities and media. Some issues were low word-spelling mastery and pronunciation errors. In the second cycle, flashcards improved engagement and word-spelling and pronunciation skills. Interviews with students confirmed their positive response to the flashcard approach, supporting improved motivation. The research hypothesis was accepted, concluding that flashcards effectively improved students' vocabulary mastery. Flashcards helped students connect with words visually and physically. English teachers should identify student behavior and choose suitable techniques, and further research on flashcard usage for elementary students is suggested.

**Keywords:** teaching of English vocabulary, flashcards, young learners

## ABSTRAK

*Flashcard dibuktikan sebagai alat yang efektif untuk mengajar kosakata bahasa Inggris untuk anak – anak, yang dapat membuat proses belajar menjadi lebih menarik. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah Classroom Action Research (CAR), yang dilakukan oleh guru untuk meningkatkan kualitas proses pembelajaran. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Bali Primary School Tabanan dengan siswa kelas 1 sebagai populasinya. Dua gelombang, yaitu Pre dan Post Test dilakukan dengan mengandung fase Merencanakan, Aksi, Mengobservasi, dan Refleksi pada setiap gelombangnya. Pre-Test dan Post-Test gelombang 1 menunjukkan 28 peningkatan pada skor siswa, sedangkan pada Post Test II menghasilkan skor rata – rata sejumlah 73.6 dengan 23 siswa lolos dari skor minimum. Gelombang pertama menunjukkan peningkatan motivasi dan ketertarikan siswa dengan kegiatan pembelajaran dan media pembelajaran yang menarik dengan flashcard. Beberapa kendala seperti kemampuan mengeja yang lemah ditemukan. Pada gelombang kedua, flashcard meningkatkan kemampuan mengeja pada siswa dan ketertarikan dalam belajar. Wawancara kepada siswa juga telah dilakukan dengan respon yang positif terhadap penggunaan flashcard tersebut yang meningkatkan motivasi siswa. Hipotesis pada penelitian ini telah berhasil, dengan ditunjukkannya flashcards secara efektif meningkatkan kemampuan pada kosakata siswa. Flashcard membantu siswa untuk menghubungkan kata – kata secara visual dan secara nyata. Guru bahasa Inggris diharapkan untuk mengidentifikasi pola tingkah laku siswa dan memilih teknik pengajaran yang cocok, serta penelitian mengenai penggunaan flashcard untuk ranah sekolah dasar juga perlu diperdalam.*

**Kata kunci:** pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris, flashcard, pembelajar muda

## 1. Introduction

Brumfit (2001:35) states that English is spoken almost worldwide as an international language. In the global era, English plays a crucial role as a communication language in various aspects of life, such as trade, politics, science, and technology. Being an international language, English is vital for people to communicate with others from different linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, mastering vocabulary, grammar, and correct pronunciation is essential for effective communication.

In addition, Richards (2001:161) emphasizes that vocabulary is a vital aspect of learning a foreign language. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language, and it is taught from elementary school to university. Enriching vocabulary is crucial for better communication. This is also applied for teaching to young learners. According to Scoot and Yterberg (1990), children possess a remarkable ability to absorb language through enjoyable activities and play. When teachers use enjoyable activities, learning becomes memorable, and students become motivated to learn more. Three aspects are essential for effective learning in children: skill development, evaluations, and assessments, which are explored through media-rich content. Visual media is highly beneficial for young learners as it captures their attention and maintains their interest. Additionally, visual media hones analytical skills and helps students comprehend concepts through new examples.

For teaching the young learners, flashcards have proven to be an effective tool in teaching vocabulary, as they capture students' attention and make the learning process more engaging. This is showed by many researches done by Dina Merris and Maya Sari (2022: 719), Lelawati et al. (2018:95), and Clough and Nutbrown (2007:59). Flashcards are a cost-effective teaching media that utilizes pictures to convey the meaning of English words to students. They can be easily created by printing pictures on pieces of paper, making them a convenient resource that can be used whenever needed. Utilizing flashcards in teaching vocabulary allows students to understand the visual representation of objects and make educated guesses about their English meanings. Young learners, known for their active nature, find flashcards particularly engaging as they aid in comprehension. According to Schmitt (1997:212), new words can be learned through pictures and their meanings through definitions. Additionally, combining multiple senses can enhance the introduction of new words, while repetition aids in effective memorization (Gemgross and Puchta, 2009:15).

Based from those conditions, the researcher is interested in exploring the effectiveness of using flashcards in teaching vocabulary to elementary school students, particularly at Bali Primary School. The research aims to determine if flashcards can improve students' vocabulary mastery through experimental research design. Considering the importance of vocabulary mastery, this research aims to find an effective way of teaching English vocabulary to young learners, and flashcards offer a promising solution.

## 2. Methods

The research design used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is conducted by the teacher in the classroom to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process. CAR is a strategy for solving problems by observing real reactions and analyzing every influence from the situation (Sanjaya, 2009:26 in Lubis, 2017:19). The CAR model, as stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns, 1993:32), consists of four steps: planning (identifying the problems), acting (collecting data), observing (analyzing and interpreting data), and reflecting (developing an action).

The focus of this research is the implementation of the flashcards application as a teaching media in a vocabulary class. The research was conducted at Bali Primary School Tabanan, with the 1st-grade students as the population. Bali Primary School is part of Yayasan Santa Teresa Education and is located in Jalan Gatot Subroto 99x Tabanan. The decision to conduct the research at this school was made because the writer identified problems and weaknesses related to vocabulary mastery in English teaching and learning for young learners in the 1st-grade. The research was carried out from December 2022 to May 2023 after conducting initial observations. In this case, the population of the research is the 1st-grade students of Bali Primary School Tabanan. The total populations are 25 students consisting of 12 boys and 13 girls. In this case, the sample of the research is one class that consists of 25

students consisting of 12 boys and 13 girls. And all of the population become the research sample.

The data collection techniques used in this research include observation, interviews, questionnaires, and tests. Observation involves direct monitoring of the teaching and learning process in the classroom to understand students' engagement and competence. Questionnaires are distributed before and after the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) to gather students' feedback. Interviews are conducted to gain further insights into the research. Tests are administered as pre-tests and post-tests to assess students' scores and measure progress during the English learning process with the application of CAR.

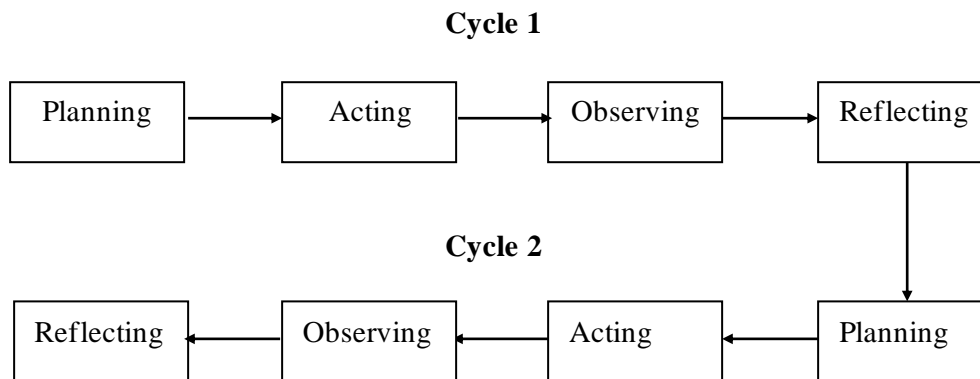
To collect the data, this study utilized different instruments. Two types of vocabulary tests were used: pre-test and post-test, both containing matching, translation, and sentence exercises. The pre-test was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the treatment, while the post-test measured students' progress after the Classroom Action Research (CAR) intervention. The data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data analysis was based on observations of students' activities and interviews with the teacher before and after CAR. For quantitative data, the researcher measured the questionnaire responses and analyzed the test scores in two cycles: pre-data and post-data. Observation and interviews were conducted using prepared blueprints, checklists, and questionnaires relevant to students' learning activities and CAR.

Table 1. The Scoring Criteria

No	Categories	Score
1	Grammar	1-5
2	Speaking	1-5
3	Pronunciation	1-5
4	Fluency	1-5
5	Comprehension	1-5
Total		25

In this Classroom Action Research, the researcher planned to conduct two cycles, namely Pre and Post cycle. The initial step involved observing the teaching-learning condition in the classroom when vocabulary was taught using conventional methods. After conducting the observation and tests, the researcher identified the problems faced by the students and designed a plan to address them. The first cycle involved planning activities, such as determining the schedule and time allotment, setting up teaching scenarios, preparing instruments for observation, and creating flashcards. During the action phase, the class was opened, new vocabulary was introduced, and flashcards were used as a visual aid. The post-test was given to assess the students' progress. The observation revealed positive responses from the students, and improvements were seen in the post-test results. In the second cycle, similar activities were conducted with the addition of extra exercises focused on vocabulary. The planning included the preparation of teaching scenarios, additional exercises, and flashcards for the second cycle. The action phase involved introducing new vocabulary, checking students' understanding, and using flashcards as visual aids. The second post-test and questionnaire were given to assess the effectiveness of the cycle. Throughout the research, data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and tests. The researcher reflected on the outcomes of each cycle to determine whether to continue with additional actions or stop if the criteria for success were met (KKM score of 70 for all students).

Figure 1. Action Research Cycle



### 3. Findings and Discussion

The research was conducted in April 2023, starting with observations and a pre-test to measure students' vocabulary. Cycle one comprised three meetings held on April 16, 23, and 30, 2023, each lasting 70 minutes. The lesson plan and students' worksheets were designed to align with the syllabus, covering topics like fruits, vegetables, and animals. Flashcards were utilized as the primary teaching media, and supporting materials were prepared for action.

Before using flashcards, a pre-test was conducted to compare students' learning outcomes before and after the method implementation. In the pre-test, students were presented with flashcard images and worksheets to answer. The minimum completeness criteria (MCC) were set at 70. The pre-test results indicated that 44% (11 students) met the MCC, while 56% (14 students) did not. The students' understanding of vocabulary appeared to be significantly lower. After analyzing the pre-test results, the researcher discussed with the English teacher at Bali Primary School Tabanan about conducting the post-test.

Table 2. The Result of the Pre-Test

Passing Grade	Total of the students	
	Passed	Failed
70	11 44%	15 60%

In the post-test cycle 1, the researcher executed three steps: action implementation, data analysis, and reflection. Two meetings were conducted with students during this cycle, and the test was administered at the end of the learning process. The actions were done such as action implementation and performing data analysis.

In the action implementation, the researcher explained the flashcard procedure to students, ensuring they understood the strategy. The topic about vocabulary material was given to the students, then tested the flashcards to discover new vocabulary. In the performing data analysis, it showed a total score of 1,770 out of 25 students, resulting in an average test score of 70.8. Vocabulary scores increased, with 18 students passing (scoring above 70) and 7 students failing. The pre-test to post-test cycle 1 saw an increase of approximately 28% in student scores.

Based on the cycle 1 test scores, corrective action was needed to further improve students' vocabulary understanding. While there was an improvement from the pre-test, some students still struggled with certain English vocabulary. Thus, the researcher proceeded to cycle II, aiming to enhance the vocabulary taught and discussed in the second cycle.

Table 3. The Result of the Post-Test 1 Cycle 1

Passing Grade	Total of the students	
	Passed	Failed
70	17 68%	8 32%

After identifying students' problems and gathering information about their vocabulary, the researcher decided to conduct a second cycle of action research, consisting of two meetings. In this cycle, more motivation and explanations about suitable vocabulary for the discussion topic were provided. The actions taken during the second cycle were explaining the flashcards material again, emphasizing the procedure. Students were given vocabulary topics related to fruits, animals, and objects, and engaging games were introduced to make the class more active and encourage memorization of new words. Thus, they showed enthusiasm and seriousness during the game, actively participating to find and write new words on the whiteboard, earning high scores and enjoying the activity.

Data analysis was performed and it showed that students' vocabulary mastery continued to improve, with more enthusiasm and seriousness in their learning. The test conditions were calm, and students responded well to the researcher's explanations. The post-test II results showed a total score of 1,840, with an average student score of 73.6. 23 students passed the test, scoring 70 or more, while 2 students did not reach the passing score. Regarding to this result, all students showed improvement in vocabulary related to the topic. The teaching and learning process applied was successful, and there is no need for a third cycle as the students' vocabulary mastery has significantly increased.

Table 4. The Result of the Post-Test 2 Cycle 2

Passing Grade	Total of the students	
	Passed	Failed
70	23 92%	2 8%

The data shows significant improvements in student scores from post-test I to post-test II cycle II. In post-test I, 68% scored 70 or higher, while in post-test II cycle II, 92% achieved the same score. The increase from post-test I to post-test II cycle II was around 20%, and from pre-test to post-test cycle I was approximately 28%. All students showed enhanced vocabulary related to the topic, indicating improved vocabulary mastery. The teaching and learning process was successful, and there is no need for a third cycle as the students' vocabulary mastery has significantly increased.

Table 5. The Finding Result

No	Kind of Test	Pre-test	Post-test (cycle 1)	Post-test (cycle 2)
1	Total Score	68,23	60	68,4
2	Mean Score	36,55	70,3	55,8
3	Increasing of the Students Mean Score	62,03	58,8	82,2

In the research planning phase, the class observation revealed an initially challenging teaching-learning environment. Students were unfocused, engaged in unrelated activities, and showed passive behavior towards the teacher's instructions. However, in the first cycle, students' enthusiasm and motivation increased as the teacher employed interesting learning activities and media. Some issues emerged, such as low word-spelling mastery and incorrect pronunciation of fruits and vegetables' names. Additionally, some students were less active during group tasks. In the second cycle, using flashcards in group tasks improved student engagement and word-spelling and pronunciation skills.

Towards the end of the second cycle, interviews with selected students indicated a positive response to this learning approach using flashcards, supporting their improved motivation. This finding aligns with previous theories by Haycraft (1978: 102), Cross (1991:

120), and Schmitt and McCarty (1997: 215) stating that flashcards can enhance students' motivation in learning English. Quantitative data (pre-test and post-test) confirmed that flashcards effectively improved students' vocabulary mastery, as evident from the increased scores. The research hypothesis was accepted.

#### 4. Conclusion

After conducting the research, it was found that the students' vocabulary mastery improved, as indicated by the test results. The existence of flashcards helped students become familiar with specific words through visual and physical experiences. The use of flashcards also increased students' attention, motivation, and achievement in vocabulary mastery, evident from the improved scores in both pre-test and post-test assessments. Also, the students' vocabulary mastery significantly improved after using flashcards in the teaching and learning process. Flashcards motivated students to actively participate in class discussions, resulting in a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment. It is suggested that English teachers need to identify students' behavior before presenting lessons to choose suitable techniques, and do more researches on flashcard usage for teaching vocabulary to elementary students.

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