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Exploring Students' Perceptions of English that Trigger Psychological Problems in Paragraph Writing

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Address:

The English Education Department, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, the University of Jember

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Telpon/Fax: 0331-330738 / Contact phone: 08155930172

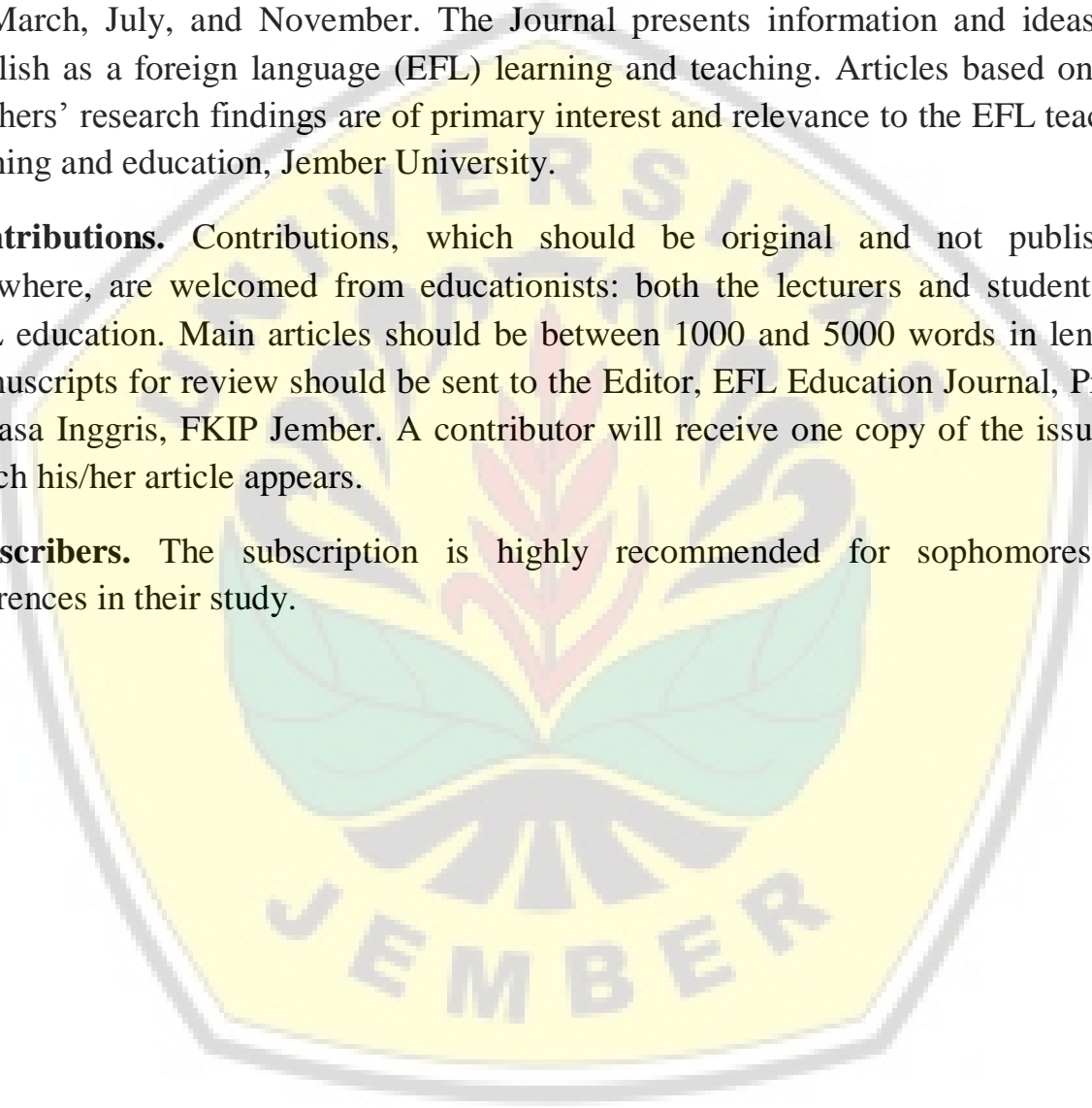
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**Using Picture Files to Enhance the Eighth Grade Students'
Vocabulary Achievement at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari
Junior High School**

Fuby Amelia Nibianjani, **Budi Setyono, Made Adi Andayani T**
FKIP, the University of Jember

Abstract: This research was conducted to solve the problems dealing with the students' vocabulary achievement. The design of this research was Classroom Action Research. The research subjects were chosen by using purposive method. The data of this research were taken from the students' vocabulary achievement test and the observation by using fieldnotes. The result of the students' vocabulary achievement test showed that there was an improvement of the percentage of the students who achieved ≥ 75 (the standard minimum score). It increased from 38.71% in the preliminary study to 80.65% in the first cycle. Moreover, the result of the observations also showed that the use of picture files in teaching and learning vocabulary could assist their mastery of vocabulary. Thus, the results of this research above proved that the use of picture files could enhance the students' vocabulary achievement.

Keywords: *Classroom Action Research, Picture Files, Vocabulary Achievement*

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the foundation to build languages which plays an important role in communication. It is a list of words that speakers of a language use (Hatch and Brown, 1995:1). Vocabulary is one of important aspects in teaching language because it links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing altogether. Without vocabulary we cannot communicate with others well in both oral and written English. In addition, McCarthy (1990:viii) also underlines the importance of vocabulary by saying "No matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sound of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful

way”, which meant the students should acquire an adequate numbers of words and should know how to use them accurately in order to communicate well in English. By mastering vocabulary, they will be able to express their ideas into spoken and written English, understand the other basic competences well, and the target language skills could be learned easily.

Based on the preliminary study done by the researcher at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember by interviewing the English teacher of the eighth grade students, it was found that the school used School Based Curriculum (*KTSP 2006*) as the curriculum and had 75 as the standard achievement score for English subject. The English teacher said that most of the eighth grade students got difficulties in learning all of English skills because of their weaknesses in mastering vocabulary. In listening lessons, they could not understand what was being listened clearly because they had never listened and understood the words used by the speakers. In speaking lessons, they could not express all the ideas in their minds because they had only few vocabularies so that their speeches were not as satisfying as they had thought. In reading lessons, most of the students often got difficulties while doing the exercises given because they could not comprehend the whole text as the result of their lack of vocabulary. Therefore, the students experienced difficulties in remembering the meaning of the words presented. They could not memorize the meanings well and the materials of the lesson which had been explained would be easier to be forgotten. If these conditions happened, teaching and learning process would not run effectively and made the students lack of vocabulary competence.

The problems faced by the students above needed to be solved to improve their vocabulary achievement. They also needed to be helped to learn vocabulary so that they could memorize the meanings easily. One of the teaching media which is

believed to help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery is picture files. The media belong to visual materials namely pictures which are collected and classified based on certain categories or themes (Karim and Hasbullah, 1986:4.1). It is one of interesting media that can encourage the students to learn vocabulary because they contain funny and colourful pictures. Picture files can be representatives of the real objects which provide illustrations and their clear definitions. According to Nelson (1979:46), visual materials like pictures are very effective for memory as they are various. In line with the idea, Armstrong (2000:79) also stated, if learners learn and memorize vocabulary items through visual materials, this way is more useful than the time when they learn vocabulary items without perception of visual materials and through only text. Moreover, Thornbury (2007:25) supported the idea by saying that visualized words are more memorable than words that do not immediately evoke pictures.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

2.1.1. Vocabulary in ELT (English Language Teaching)

Vocabulary is one of the essential components to be mastered. Some experts define the term of vocabulary as follows. According to Hornby (1995:131), vocabulary means a total number of words which make up a language. This idea is supported by Hatch and Brown (1995:1), by referring the term vocabulary to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use. Moreover, Hiebert and Kamil (2005:3) note vocabulary as the knowledge of meanings of words. From the definitions above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is a set of words the speakers of a language use to convey meanings, express their idea, feelings, and thoughts for their sake of successful communication.

Vocabulary is the foundation to build languages which plays a fundamental role in communication. McCarthy (1990:viii) underlines the importance of vocabulary in language learning by saying “No matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way”. Then, Harmer (2004:153) supported the idea by saying “If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and flesh”. From these statements, it can be conclude that without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use structures and functions that we may have learned and it will be hard to reach the goal for successful communication in learning a second language.

For language learners, the more they have an amount of vocabulary, the bigger the possibility to master all the language skills. Coady and Huckin (1997:5) argue that vocabulary is central and critical importance to typical language learner. It makes vocabulary itself become the basic element to master all of the skills because it is the smallest element of sentences. Without having an adequate vocabulary, a language learner will not be able to master the language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, Tarigan (1989:2) states that the quality of someone’s language skills depends on the quantity of vocabulary they have. Besides, it is the basic element to master all the language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, the students are required to have an adequate number of vocabularies for their success in learning the second language.

2.1.2. Picture Files as media for teaching English vocabularies

In this era where all things change very fast, teachers are challenged to be more creative and imaginative in thinking about and also preparing media for teaching.

Especially for English teachers, the existence of media in teaching and learning is quite important to make the lesson memorable and meaningful. Meanwhile, not all of the schools or institutions could apply all kinds of media such as power point, video and the other electronic media. There are lots of schools in Indonesia which still do not have adequate facilities to apply those media. That is why the teachers should be more creative and imaginative in creating suitable media for the students in their schools without relying on electronic media only.

Pictures are the easiest things that can be used as teaching media because they can be found everywhere. Wright (1989:116) states that picture can be a collection of pictures about the size of postcard, a number of pictures on a single sheet of paper, a wall picture with a lot of details, drawing on the board or OHP, and a board game. Many pictures can be collected and stacked on pieces of paper to make picture files. Picture files are kind of media that teachers can prepare and make easily by using pictures. According to Karim and Hasbullah (1986:4.1), picture files are the collection of pictures which are classified into some certain categories or themes. Karim and Hasbullah (1986:4.2) also say that these media are flexible, so it can be saved and used by the teachers again when they need them. These media are useful for teaching English for all skills, especially for vocabulary. Picture files are chosen as the media in teaching English vocabulary since they are colorful and attractive. These media are interesting so that they can make the students pay more attention to the lesson. Moreover, picture files are simple, inexpensive and of course easily made by the teachers.

To make picture files, there are some basic considerations to be thought by the teachers. Firstly, the pictures which are selected must be clear and large enough so that all of the students in the class can see the picture clearly. Secondly, the pictures which are collected to form picture files should not be ambiguous so the students

would not be confused while looking at them and grasping the meaning of each pictures. Furthermore, the pictures of individual objects should be as simple as possible and also have artistic value so that the students who look at them will be attracted and then motivated to join the lesson.

Yunus (1981:50) suggests that every teacher should develop the habit of cutting out any individual picture that he or she thinks may be useful in the classroom, such as from newspapers, magazines, catalogues, greeting cards, travel brochures, advertisements, old books, and even wrapping paper. Like what he said, teachers can find the pictures from those media to be classified into certain categories. Karim and Hasbullah (1986:4.8) state that picture files represent the real objects and provide illustrations that can help the students understanding the meaning of words easily. Nelson (1979:46) notes that visual materials like pictures are effective for memory as they are various. In line with the idea, Armstrong (2000:79) also states that if learners learn and memorize vocabulary items through visual materials, this way is more useful than the time when they learn vocabulary items without perception of visual materials and through only text. There are many advantages of using pictures in teaching and learning process especially in teaching vocabulary. Ur (1948:30) states that visual elements have an important function and help encourage them to focus on the subject in hand. Wright (1989:2) states that pictures can play a key role in motivating students contextualizing the language they are learning, giving them a reference and helping to discipline activity. Hill (1990:1) also reveals that “pictures bring images of reality into the unnatural world of classroom”, which means that pictures bring not only images of reality but can also function as a fun element in the class. Thus, pictures can make the students pay more attention to the materials given and motivate them in learning vocabulary.

However, pictures also have some disadvantages as media in teaching English vocabulary (Leny in Istifaiyah, 2014), they are: a) if the pictures are not unique, the students will not be interested in the lesson; b) small and unclear pictures may arouse problems, so the students may misunderstand about the pictures; c) it is quite difficult to look for pictures that are appropriate with the theme that will be taught.

Therefore, those disadvantages should be overcome by the teachers by doing these things. The first, the pictures which are collected should be unique (fun, colourful and interesting) to attract the students' attention during the teaching and learning process. Next, the size of the pictures should be made large enough in about 42 cm x 30 cm so that the entire class can see the pictures clearly. Finally, if it is difficult to find pictures which match with the theme, we can find them through internet with specified clues and print them out to make picture files.

2.2. Conceptual review on using picture files to improve vocabulary achievement

Picture files in this research are the collection of pictures which were classified into three themes, they are: a) house things and furniture; b) hobbies; and c) physical appearances, that can be used as media to represent the real objects that can be handled, seen, and manipulated by the students in vocabulary class. In this research, picture files were made in the form of book whose size about 42 cm x 30 cm so it would be clear enough to be seen by the entire class. These media consisted of vocabularies related to the theme of the lesson covering nouns for the first theme, verbs for the second theme, and adjectives for the third theme. For examples: couch, table, sofa, etc. for the nouns; cycling, drawing, fishing, etc. for the verbs; and flat, straight, pointed, etc. for the adjectives.

The students' vocabulary achievement in this research meant the level of the amount of vocabulary covering nouns, verbs, and adjectives that the students have mastered after joining English teaching and learning process focused on vocabulary by using picture files. The students' vocabulary achievement was indicated by the students' vocabulary achievement test scores in one cycle. Here, at least 75% of the students should get score ≥ 75 in the vocabulary achievement test given.

2.3. Review of previous studies

A study focusing on the use of picture files in teaching listening was conducted by Trisyana (2004) through a classroom action research. The result of the research indicated that the use of picture files in teaching listening can improve students' listening ability. Another action research was also conducted by Istifaiyah (2014), and the result shows that students can improve their vocabulary achievement by using picture files. This research also conducted a classroom action research with different research participants. Trisyana's research used the first year students of junior high school and Istifaiyah's research used the fourth grade students of elementary school as the research subjects.

3. The Study

3.1. Research design

Considering to the objective of the research, the appropriate research design for this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR) with cyclical model. Elliot (1991:69) defines action research as a study of social situation, with a view to improve or increase the quality of certain phenomena. In this research, the researcher wanted to improve the students' vocabulary achievement by using picture files. According to Lewin in Elliot (1991:70), there are four basic stages in doing classroom action

research in each cycle, namely (1) reconnaissance (fact finding / preliminary study), (2) planning the action, (3) implementation and (4) evaluation.

3.2. Research context

The research was conducted in the context of EFL (English as a foreign language) where the students learning the language did not use English to communicate with their friends, parents and even their teachers outside their classrooms. This research was conducted at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember. The school was chosen by using purposive method. Based on Frankel and Wallen' (2000:112) concept of purposive method in choosing the research area, in this research, SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember was chosen as the research area considering some reasons: a) based on the interview with English teacher, it was found that the eighth grade students still faced some difficulties in mastering vocabulary; b) the teacher never used picture files as the media in teaching English vocabulary

3.3. Research participants

The participants of this research were the eighth grade students in class VIII A in the 2016/2017 academic year. Moreover, this class had the lowest mean score for English lesson on the last daily examination, 71.09. Thus, their vocabulary achievement needed to be improved by using picture files. The criterion used to evaluate the success of the actions was: at least 75% of the students who took the vocabulary achievement test by using picture files reached the standard score of 75. The criterion used to evaluate the success of the actions was: at least 75% of the students who took the vocabulary achievement test by using picture files reached the standard score of 75.

3.4. Instructional procedure

Based on Lewin's model, this Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in cyclical model, in which each cycle covers four stages. The stages were reconnaissance, the planning of the action, the implementation of the action, and evaluation. The details would be explained in the following parts

Elliot (1991:70) states that, "reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact finding and should constantly occur in the spiral of activities, rather than occur only at the beginning". It meant that reconnaissance was not only used at the beginning of the action like fact finding and preliminary study, but also used to explain any failure to implement and effects. In this research, the researcher had conducted the preliminary study to obtain information about the students' problems in learning vocabulary.

The implementation of the action in the first cycle was done by the researcher who taught vocabulary by using picture files in presentation stage in Meeting 1, while the English teacher observed the behavior of the class during the action being implemented. Then, in Meeting 2, the English teacher took turn to teach vocabulary by using picture files and the researcher observed the teaching and learning process. For meeting 3, the researcher administered the vocabulary achievement test which was done in 40 minutes.

The result of the students' vocabulary test was discussed after the third meeting in Cycle I. The result of the students' vocabulary achievement test in this cycle had achieved the research evaluation criteria. From the result, the researcher decided that the action could be stopped and the next cycle or Cycle II was not necessary to be conducted. Then, the researcher drew a conclusion to answer the research problems. In this stage, the researcher conducted two kinds of evaluation. The first was process evaluation that was done during the teaching and learning process of

vocabulary by using picture files through observation. Then, the second one was product evaluation that was done through the vocabulary achievement test given to the students.

3.4. *Research data and analysis*

The data of this research were collected by observation and vocabulary achievement test. Observation was used to know the students' participation, behavior and interaction. Besides, fieldnotes were used as a tool to observe the students' activities in the vocabulary lessons and to prove the strengths of picture files as the media in teaching vocabulary that (1) pictures bring images of reality into the unnatural world of classroom, which means that pictures bring not only images of reality but can also function as a fun element in the class (Hill, 1990:1); (2) visual elements have an important function and help encourage them to focus on the subject in hand (Ur, 1948:30); (3) Picture files represent the real objects and provide illustrations that can help the students to understand the meaning of words easily (Karim and Hasbullah, 1986:4.8); (4) Visual materials like pictures are effective for memory as they are various (Nelson, 1979:46); (5) If learners learn and memorize vocabulary items through visual materials, this way is more useful than the time when they learn vocabulary items without perception of visual materials and through only text (Armstrong, 2000:79).

An achievement test was used in this research to know how successful individual students could achieve the goal of teaching and learning vocabulary by using picture files (Hughes, 2003:10). This test was done in the third meeting after the actions given. In this research, the test was constructed based on the school based Curriculum (*KTSP 2006*). The vocabularies measured were *nouns*, *verbs*, and *adjectives* related to the theme of the lesson. The test results were scored by different raters/scorers. The vocabulary test was multiple choice test with four

options and matching items. There would be 20 items for multiple choice format covering 7 items of nouns, 6 items of verbs, and 7 items of adjectives. For the second type of test, there would be 10 items for matching format covering 3 items of nouns, 4 items of verbs, and 3 items of adjectives. The total score of the test items was 100 if all items were correct. The detail of method in giving score was each correct item of multiple choices valued 3 points and each correct item of matching valued 4 points, while the wrong answers were scored 0. The time allocation for doing the test was 40 minutes. The result of the students' vocabulary achievement test was analyzed quantitatively (Ali, 1998: 189)

4. Research result and Discussion

In this research, the result of observation on the first meeting was gained from the process of teaching and learning process especially during the presentation of vocabulary through picture files and the process of doing the task 1, task 2, and task 3 which were given to the students. In task 1, most of the students could do the task correctly. The pictures given helped them in remembering the vocabularies had been taught. They could recall their memory and did most items in task 1 correctly. Next, in doing task 2, the pictures given in task 1 and their names could help them to understand the meaning of the things related to the theme. In relation to the use of the text itself, the pictures helped them in understanding the meanings of vocabularies used in the text, so they could answer the questions related to the content of the text in task 2 correctly. In task 3, the observation showed that almost all of the students could do the multiple choice task items well.

The action was considered to be successful if at least 75% students of the total number of the students who took the test could achieve the standard score of the school, 75. From the table above, it could be known that 25 students or 80.65% of

the total number of the students took the test achieved the standard score. Meanwhile, 6 students or 19.35% of the total number of the students took the test did not achieve the standard score. Since it was more than 75% students could achieve the standard score, it meant that the result of this classroom action research had achieved the target.

Based on the previous score in preliminary study, only 12 of 31 students or 38.71% students of class VIII A achieved the standard score of 75. While the other 19 students or 61.29% of them did not achieve the standard score. However, after the action was implemented and the vocabulary achievement test was administered, the percentage of the students who achieved the standard score became 80.65%. There were 25 of 31 students succeeded the test, while the other 6 students or 19.35% of them could not achieved the standard score. In other words, there was a significant improvement of the students' vocabulary achievement. It was from 38.71% to 80.65%. The percentage increased as much as 41.94%. More than double of the number of the students who succeeded the test in previous score could achieve the standard score of 75. From this result, it was clearly known that teaching vocabulary by using picture files could enhance the students' vocabulary achievement.

Dealing with the theories about the use of picture files, the result of the observations explained the process how the learning activities of teaching vocabulary by using picture files assisted the students in mastering vocabulary. This was relevant to the statement that said "Pictures bring not only images of reality but can also function as a fun element in the class" (Hill, 1990:1). The use of picture files could help them to focus on the vocabulary lesson. It was in line with the statement that said

“Visual elements have an important function to help the students to focus on the subject in hand” (Ur, 1948:30). Furthermore, picture files could help them understanding the word meanings better since the pictures represent the real object and provide illustrations (Karim and Hasbullah, 1986:4.8). Moreover, the use of picture files could help the students in memorizing the vocabulary. Thornbury (2007:25) stated that visualized words are more memorable than words that do not immediately evoke pictures. This is relevant to the statement that said “Visual materials like pictures are very effective for memory as they are various” by Nelson (1979:46) and “If learners learn and memorize vocabulary items through visual materials, this way is more useful than the time when they learn vocabulary items through only texts” by Armstrong (2000:79). Therefore, picture files could be used as the alternative media to improve the students’ vocabulary achievement because the learning activities by using these media could assist the students in mastering vocabulary.

5. Conclusion

The use of picture files could enhance the eighth grade students’ vocabulary achievement at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember in 2016/2017 academic year. The activities by using pictures files could assist the eighth grade students’ vocabulary mastery by giving some beneficial contributions at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember in 2016/2017 academic year.

Therefore, the English teachers are suggested to use picture files as an alternative media in teaching vocabulary to improve the students’ vocabulary achievement. Picture files are easily made and considered as an effective media which could help the students in memorizing the vocabulary. Next, the students are also suggested to

learn and enlarge their vocabulary through picture files since these media can be used for useful learning that can assist them to improve their vocabulary mastery. The future researchers who have the similar problems are suggested to use the results of this research as references to conduct a further research dealing with the use of picture files by using the same or different research design like experimental or descriptive research, with different language skills for different level of subjects and schools.

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