

## Exploring Flashcard as the Media in Teaching Vocabulary to EFL Young Learners

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### Abstract

This study aims to find out how the teacher's experience in teaching flashcards in the Young Student Class. The participant is an English teacher, in elementary school. Data were collected through interviews. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data shows that there is experience when teaching using flashcards, namely the impact of using flashcards in teaching and challenges or difficulties when teaching vocabulary using flashcards. The findings show that teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards helps teachers. Teaching vocabulary using flashcards is the right medium for young learners. It makes the teacher feel various feelings while doing it, and the participants feel happy and helped. This happened because at first young students were happy but also confused but in fact they became enjoy, happy, able to follow the lesson well, conducive, achieve learning goals and become interested in learning to use flashcards after getting used to it. So, in this study flashcards can help teachers to teach vocabulary to young learners. This study contributes that flashcards can help teachers when teaching, it can help teachers when teaching new vocabulary to students

**Keywords:** Flashcard, Media, teaching Vocabulary, EFL, Young Learners

## INTRODUCTION

English has several advantages when it has been taught since elementary school, three of which are the intensity of learning the second language since elementary school, and the preparation of English in junior high school. In Elementary school, young learners learn about four skills such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. And learn about three components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Vocabulary makes young learners understand the meaning of the language. Thus, vocabulary should be learned in teaching Elementary School. Hatch and Brown (1995) argue "Vocabulary is the foundation to build language, which plays a

fundamental role in communication”. It means that children and adults can express their thinking and understand basic competence.

The basic element supporting students’ skills is vocabulary. Coday and Huckin (1997) thought that vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learning. So vocabulary is the basics of language. By learning vocabulary, the young learners can add many new words. Considering the importance of vocabulary mastery in learning English, the teacher should find the appropriate technique and media to teach vocabulary to young learners, so the classroom will be more alive and the learners more enthusiastic to study English.

Vocabulary is central English language teaching. Without vocab young learners cannot understand the language. According to Clark (1993) in “Teaching Vocabulary”, words are the starting point without which young learners cannot talk about people, places and things, about actions, relations or states. Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together. Without understanding vocabulary first, young learners cannot say simple sentences. First, the teacher should consider the learner’s needs.

There are many mediums in teaching vocabulary, one of them is by using flashcards. Teaching vocabulary by using flashcards can make young learners excited and understand the English vocabulary. Instructional media such as flashcards also give a clear concept of information given. Flashcards can give variations in the teaching learning process. It is used according to the theme of the lesson. They are normally used by the teacher in oral work for cueing responses to questions or in more open communicative work for stimulating conversation, story-telling, etc. They are one of the teaching media that is very appropriate to young learners. As a medium, flashcards are a really handy resource to have and be useful because they are a great way to present, practice and recycle vocabulary. Flashcards can be a great way to introduce new vocabulary, so that young learners have a very clear understanding of the word or concept.

Allens (1983) pointed out that it is useful to provide the learner with words for “classroom language” just at the early stages of the course. She continues that it is important for the teacher to predict the words the young learners need to know talking about everyday life, people and things surrounding them. When such words are learnt, the new language can immediately be put to use”. When the teacher should teach in the classroom and has a point for the young learners. Young

learners should understand the object of the topic, the color of the topic, and how to pronounce the topic. For example: the topic is things at home, thus the teacher should prepare flashcards of the object from things at home, the color of the object is more interesting and when the teacher teaches in the classroom, the teacher should spell the word and mends of the pronunciation. The teacher has to use the media in teaching young learners such as pictures, video, computers, etc.

Teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career. Gains in teacher effectiveness associated with experience are steepest in teachers' initial years, but continue to be significant as teachers reach the second, and often third, decades of their careers. As teachers gain experience, their students not only learn more, as measured by standardized tests, they are also more likely to do better on other measures of success, such as school attendance. More-experienced teachers support greater student learning for their colleagues and their school, as well as for their own students.

Teaching vocabulary to young learners using appropriate instructional media is one of the keys. There are several types of instructional media that can be utilized in teaching English to young learners. Harmer (2007) states that there are several types of instructional media that can be used by teachers: the students themselves, realia, pictures, course book, boards, overhead projector, flipcharts, and computer based presentation technology.

Flashcard is a cardboard consisting of a word, a sentence, or a simple picture on it (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012). Flashcard is considered as a helpful strategy because of its benefits. Moreover, teachers can also use flashcards for drilling and presenting new words. Picture flashcards are pictures mounted or drawn on cards approximately 15 cm by 20 cm. They are normally used by the teacher in oral work for cueing responses to questions or in more open communicative work for stimulating conversation, story-telling, etc. The normal picture card has a picture on one side only. However, both sides can be used and the card can be folded or cut in various ways with particular teaching purposes in mind and the cards can also be propped on a shelf, for example, at the bottom of the chalkboard. The cards can also be pinned on a board, or stuck to a magnet board or to any smooth surface with adhesive plastic. The student can be asked to stand at the front of the class and to hold cards.

Children of different ages have different abilities and skills in learning. Young learners are students from the first year of formal school. In terms of age, young learners are between the age of approximately five to twelve. According to Piaget (1970) young learners are often more enthusiastic and lively as learners. The first fact that teachers should take into consideration is that young learners differ from older ones in the way they learn new languages. First, young learners learn better through play while adults are comfortable with abstract learning and are more analytical. Second, young learners get bored more easily. Generally, they lose interest after ten minutes or so. Young learners are also more egocentric and need individual attention. However, contrary to the common belief, young learners are not better than older ones in language learning. They may be better in imitating the exact pronunciation of their teachers, but they are generally less successful in learning abstract concepts.

The previous research was conducted by Wardani (2015), focused on investigating the effectiveness of using flashcards in the teaching vocabulary. In general, the study aims to describe the implementation of teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards and describe the strength and weakness of teaching vocabulary using flashcards. However, some weaknesses are that using flashcards requires a lot of money, the teacher has a lot of preparation for days before teaching-learning happens. It also requires the teacher to be creative. To fill the gap, this research will investigate the impact and challenge for a teacher in using flashcards to teach vocabulary to young learner in EFL classrooms.

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this present study is descriptive case study to obtain the data needed. Descriptive case study aims to present a detailed, contextualized picture of a particular phenomenon (Widodo, 2013). A case study would be chosen because it will focus to find out what is the teacher's experience in teaching flashcards in the Young Learners Classroom. The participants of this research are three teachers in Elementary School. The participants are female. She has been teaching English for three to four years in Elementary School. They frequently use flashcards as a medium in English Class. The researcher employed the semi-structured interview as a method of data collection. According to Yin (2003), the use of semi-structured interview has

a strength such; targeted-focused directly on the case study topic and insightful- provide perceived causal inferences. The data from the interview were to answer the research questions which focus on finding out the teacher's experience in teaching flashcards in the Young Learners Classroom. The data from the interview have been analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined it as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This chapter describes the findings and discussion of the flashcard utilization in teaching vocabulary to young learners. There are two big points to explore relate to this topic. The findings shows that when teaching the teacher have found that there is impact and challenge to use it in teaching vocabulary to young learners in EFL classroom.

### **The Impact of Using Flashcard in Teaching**

From the interview, the researcher found how most of the participants felt in teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards. The participants felt happy, comfortable and helpful in teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards. The following data illuminate the participant who felt happy in teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcard:

#### Excerpt 1

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“I'm very happy, very comfortable, like finding a soul mate.” (Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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“I feel very happy and helped, because young learners have a high curiosity. I mean when we give the material in the usual way such as writing on the blackboard or they see from the book the young learners' response is less enthusiastic. Only a few young learners will pay close attention. Therefore, the use of flashcards is needed, because it can attract their attention, and make it

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easier for them to add vocabulary.” (Third Participants, Semi-Structured Interview, 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, Author’s Translation)

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“It's like we met our partner, fell in love. Why do I say I'm in love because I've used several learning media and haven't found one that really helps me in teaching vocabulary.” (First Participants, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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Based on the data excerpts above can be concluded that participants are happy and comfortable teaching vocabulary to young learners. In teaching vocabulary media plays an important role in a teaching and learning process, the use of media is very needed to reach the purposes of teaching and learning. Brown (1977) defines media as the tools or the physical things used by a teacher to facilitate the instruction. The first participant said that with this media the participant felt it was very helpful. As long as the participant teaches vocabulary various media participant has used, flashcard is the most suitable media for teaching young learners. The third participant said that with this media young learners have a high curiosity. And using flashcard can attract their attention, and make it easier for them to add vocabulary.

The use of media would increase the probability that young learners would learn more and the knowledge would retain better in their mind. In this study the participant uses flashcards as a media to teach vocabulary to young learners. The participant feels happy and comfortable teaching after using flashcards. Then the Participant of this study stated that flashcards are the most appropriate media to teach vocabulary to young learners, because young learners feel happy and helpful to add a new vocab.

## Excerpt 2

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“There are, first the young learners become excited in learning, the second the young learners become interactive in learning, the third the young learners can increase their vocabulary. So that the learning objectives can be conveyed properly.” (First Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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“What I feel when teaching vocab using flashcards is that it is very helpful in increasing children's interest in English, making it easier for them to learn vocabulary, attracting their attention because sometimes when learning English it is sometimes difficult to focus.” (Second Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, Author’s Translation)

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“In my opinion, using flashcards is the most appropriate media, the most appropriate for adding new vocabulary to young learners.” (First Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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“Yes, as before, I have tried several learning media and these media are not suitable for grades 1 and 2 of elementary school. Then I tried to teach vocabulary using flashcards. It turned out to be very suitable, the young learners became interactive so that they could increase their vocabulary and could follow the lesson well” (Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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In learning vocabulary, young learners and adults have different perceptions because they have different characteristics. Young learners are more enthusiastic than adults. The differences between teaching English to young learners and adults lay on the linguistic, psychological and

social development of the learners, and that, as a result, we need to adjust the way we think about the language we teach and the classroom activities we use.” (Cameron, 2001). Before using flashcards participants used several media, such as video animation, word wall and smart guess. The learning media did not achieve the learning objectives because young learners became too active, did not concentrate and played around during class learning. In addition, the participant has tried several media and these learning media are not suitable for young learners. After using flashcards participants feel happy and helpful to teaching vocabulary because young learners can follow the lesson well, conducive, and achieve learning objectives. All participants said that flashcards are the right media to teach vocabulary to young learners. The participants feel happy and very helpful by using flashcards to teach young learners.

### **Challenges or Difficulties when Teaching Vocabulary Using Flashcards**

Another result supported the finding of challenges or difficulties when learning using flashcards. This focus allowed the participant to concentrate on the challenges in teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards. Vocabulary is a basic element of language. One has to have enough vocabulary to communicate with others. The English teaching process has many challenges or difficulties when teaching vocabulary to young learners.

Harmer (2007) stated that teachers of young learners need to spend time on how their students think and operate. They need to be able to pick upon their students’ current interests so they can use them to motivate the children. Therefore, it is a challenge for participants to think creatively in teaching vocabulary to find activities which provide a fun and enjoyable situation. It is agreed that if the students are learning in a fun and enjoyable situation, it will be easier for them to understand and catch the material. Concerning the use of alternative activities is needed, flashcard is one of the media that can be used in teaching vocabulary to young learners. The following data illuminate the participant who felt challenge in teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcard:



### Excerpt 1

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“Of course, it is not possible without difficulties and challenges. The first challenge is introducing flashcards to young learners, they have a very high curiosity. The second is time, which is when you have to teach in the last hour. They are no longer focused because the young learners are starting to lose their enthusiasm and want to go home.” (Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021, Author’s Translation)

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Based on the first excerpt, it was found that young learners have a very high curiosity, and get bored easily. So that participants must be able to make learning as interesting as possible. Young learners have no choice but to attend school. The lack of the choice means that class activities need to be fun, interesting and exciting as possible by setting up the interesting activities mentioned by Clark (1990).

### Excerpt 2

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“There are several, first I have to make my own flashcard. Because the flashcards sold are too small to be used in class. Second, because the young learners were enthusiastic and curious, the class became very crowded.” (Third Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, Author’s Translation)

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### Excerpt 3

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“Yes, the flashcards tend to be small, so too many young learners are a bit difficult...sometimes they ask a lot of questions and make noise in class. Using a single vocabulary flashcard can take a long time because you have to show it several times from different angles for young learners to see. For example, "bu teu katingali" "bu eta naon teu jelas". That's my problem when learning to use flashcards”. (Second Participant, Semi-Structured Interview, 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, Author’s Translation)

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Those statements show that flashcards tend to be too small and too used in class. So, the participants make their own flashcards to teach in the class. That way, the participants need time

and material to make their own flashcard. Some of the students always ask a lot of questions and make noise in class. They make it difficult for teachers to manage the classroom.

There are eight aspects of examining the young learners' skills to learning effectively. The aspects such as skill developments, evaluations, and assessments are explored through media rich content. Participation in this course will give you the opportunity to explore tools and activities that prepare young learners for lifelong learning. According to Pinter (2006) the characteristics of young learners are enjoying fantasy and imagination.

## **CONCLUSION**

The finding indicates that teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcards helps teachers. Teaching vocabulary using flashcards is an appropriate medium for young learners. Because the all participants have tried several media and these learning media are not suitable for young learners. Using flashcard makes the teacher feel various feelings while doing it and the participant feels happy and helpful. This happened because at first young learners were happy but also confused but in fact they became enjoy, happy, can follow the lesson well, conducive, achieve learning objectives and became interested in learning to use flashcards after getting used to it. So, in this study flashcards can help teachers to teach vocabulary for young learners.

This research has limited access to information related to the research because the researcher only has to carry out online interviews. Related to the findings, the researcher gives suggestions for further research. In this research, the researcher is only focused on the teacher's experience in teaching flashcards in the Young Learners Classroom. Further studies might investigate a different grade of students about flashcards in teaching vocabulary to young learners. For the future researchers that are interested in conducting the other research but still in the same scope, the researcher hopes that the other researchers could conduct the other strategies in teaching English vocabulary, reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills and listening skills

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