

THE USE OF PICTURE SERIES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY AT SMA WAHYU MAKASSAR

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Abstract: This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the Picture Series method in improving vocabulary mastery of first-grade students at SMA Wahyu Makassar. The research employed a pre-experimental design, utilizing pre-tests and post-tests. The sample comprised 30 randomly selected first-grade students. The findings indicated the implementation of the Picture Series method significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery, with post-test scores showing an average increase from a range of 50 to 63, rising to a range of 85 to 95. Statistical analysis showed a mean difference of 34.00 between pre-test and post-test scores, with a standard deviation of 3.70, a t-value of -50.395, and a p-value of less than 0.001. These results indicated the implementation of the Picture Series method indicated a significant change in student classification, shifting from "Poor" to "Good" and "Very Good." This evidence suggests that the Picture Series method is an effective method in improving vocabulary mastery of first-grade students at SMA Wahyu Makassar.

Keywords: Picture Series, vocabulary mastery, English learning

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Republic Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Chapter 1, Article 1, education is defined as a deliberate and structured effort to create a conducive learning environment and process. Its goal is to empower students to actively develop their potential, encompassing spiritual and religious strength, self-discipline, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills essential for personal growth, as well as for the benefit of society, the nation, and the state (Siswoyo, 2008).

In today's globalized world, learning a second language has become increasingly important due to the essential role language plays in communication. Finocchiaro (1964:19) emphasizes that both national and international interactions, along with advancements in science, highlight the necessity of knowing a second language. Recognizing this, the Indonesian government has designated English as the foreign language taught in schools, making it a compulsory subject in both junior and senior high schools.

English is also a core component of national exams at these educational levels. Vocabulary plays a critical role in supporting students' mastery of language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Limited vocabulary knowledge can hinder students' abilities across these domains: they may struggle to understand spoken conversations, effectively communicate ideas, comprehend written texts, or express thoughts in writing. As one of the key components of English language proficiency, vocabulary is crucial for effective communication, as words are fundamental to interaction. Students encounter

new vocabulary while studying reading, pronunciation, structure, and dialogue in language learning resources, where vocabulary often accompanies each learning unit.

Picture stories, as a type of visual instructional material, can be utilized to enhance motivation and foster positive attitudes towards English learning. Tang Li Shing (1981) suggests that pictures have a powerful appeal for children, creating suspense and interest—both essential for effective language teaching. Teachers can utilize a variety of visual resources from magazines, articles, and other sources to make language activities interactive and engaging. Pictures allow students to practice language in a real context, helping them communicate ideas more effectively.

The use of pictures is often more effective and memorable than words alone, as visual images are typically easier to retain. Pictures can also represent real-life scenarios, even those beyond students' direct experiences. As Vernon, S. Gerlach, and Donald P. Elly (1971) explain, "a picture may indeed be worth a thousand words." Visuals expose learners to people, places, and events that lie outside their immediate environment, as well as historical scenes or imagined future scenarios.

Based on this discussion, it is evident that a robust vocabulary is essential for students to comprehend English texts effectively. Richar and Roger (1987) emphasize that vocabulary is crucial for mastering all language skills, and students with limited vocabulary knowledge often struggle to develop other language skills. A well-developed vocabulary facilitates progress in speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Burton, 1982). Despite its importance, vocabulary has frequently been overlooked in language teaching (Burton, 1982). Vocabulary mastery is essential in learning a foreign language and should not be neglected (Linda, 1990). Students with an extensive vocabulary find language learning less challenging, emphasizing the need for effective teaching strategies to engage students in learning English vocabulary.

After conducting a preliminary observation at SMA Wahyu Makassar, it was noted that students face challenges in mastering English vocabulary. The primary issue is that students lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge, partly due to their being in the first semester of the 10th grade, where foundational vocabulary skills are still developing. The current teaching method, which emphasizes word translation, is outdated and ineffective, leading students to rely heavily on dictionaries, which reduces their engagement and enthusiasm for learning. In SMA Wahyu Makassar, limited vocabulary mastery among students presents challenges in the learning process. Many students struggle with understanding and using English vocabulary required for effective communication, impacting their ability to comprehend lesson material, participate in discussions, and express ideas clearly. The researchers are interested in conducting a study on the use of picture series in improving students' english vocabulary mastery at SMA Wahyu Makassar.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Vocabulary

Various experts have offered concept of vocabulary, emphasizing its importance in language acquisition. Lehr (2004) describes vocabulary as the knowledge of word meanings and their usage across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Hornby (1974) identifies vocabulary as the totality of words known by an individual, including their meanings, and a list of words with definitions and translations. Richards and Renandya (2002) assert that vocabulary is fundamental to all language skills, providing the foundation for effective communication in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

According to Various experts have provided different concepts of vocabulary. Lehr (2004: 1) describes vocabulary as encompassing word meanings and word knowledge used across listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both oral and written forms, and in both productive and receptive capacities. Next, Hornby (1974:959) offers three distinct definitions of vocabulary: the totality of words with combined rules, the range of words known to an individual, and a list of words including their definitions, translations, and equivalent terms. Last, Nunan (2003:130-132) defines vocabulary in three aspects: individual words, word families, and core meanings. These concepts highlight the central role of vocabulary in language learning, making it a critical component for achieving proficiency in both productive and receptive language skills.

2.2. The Concept of Picture series

Picture series are an effective educational tool that uses two-dimensional images like photographs, sketches, and maps to support vocabulary learning. They are widely used for their accessibility and ability to engage students, especially young learners. As visual instructional aids, they help boost motivation and make learning more interactive, capturing students' interest and enhancing vocabulary retention (Celce-Murcia & Hill, 1991; McCarten, 2007). By incorporating these visual aids, teachers can create an engaging learning experience that fosters positive attitudes and better language comprehension.

Pictures serve as valuable tools in teaching, helping students visualize vocabulary and grammatical concepts and making the learning process more dynamic. They extend students' thinking beyond immediate surroundings by connecting visual aids with mental concepts. Different types of pictures used in teaching include wall charts, large wall pictures depicting events, sequence pictures that tell stories, flashcards, word flashcards, picture flashcards showing objects or actions, and work cards that incorporate images like magazine cutouts, drawings, maps, and diagrams. These various picture types allow teachers to create engaging, imaginative learning experiences that go beyond traditional classroom methods. This study uses picture series as a primary instructional tool.

2.3. Teaching English Vocabulary

Vocabulary acquisition is essential for second language learners, as it enables effective communication in speaking and writing. Teachers should integrate a

broad range of vocabulary into their instructional materials and manage the classroom in an engaging way to support successful vocabulary acquisition. Several teaching techniques can be applied to enhance vocabulary learning. Sukirah Sutarjothere (in Amilin, 2019) identifies five methods: creative vocabulary teaching, using context clues, translation, guessing meanings, and teaching derivation (explaining word categories and sentence roles). The researcher of this study applied picture series as a technique for vocabulary instruction, emphasizing meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. Adrian Doff (1998) also suggests additional techniques, such as pronouncing the word, repeating it, translating, using drawings, providing examples, and posing questions. Visual methods like pictures and examples are particularly effective in enhancing comprehension. The choice of vocabulary teaching techniques depends on the teacher's judgment, aiming to keep students engaged and improve their learning experience.

3. METHODS

This study employed a pre-experimental research design, incorporating both pre-tests and post-tests (Sugiyono, 2015). The primary aim was to assess the effectiveness of using Picture Series as a method for enhancing vocabulary mastery among first-grade students at SMA Wahyu Makassar. The data collected through pretest and posttest scores from 30 participants.

4. RESULTS

The study assessed the vocabulary mastery of first-grade students at SMA Wahyu Makassar using a pre-experimental design with pre-tests and post-tests (Sugiyono, 2015). The pre-test scores ranged from 50 to 63, with a mean score of 55.7, indicating poor vocabulary mastery. In contrast, post-test scores ranged from 84 to 97, yielding a mean score of 90.9, demonstrating significant improvement. All 30 students were classified as "Poor" in the pre-test, with no higher classifications. The post-test results showed that 18 students were classified as "Good" and 12 as "Very Good," highlighting a significant shift from the pre-test.

The paired samples t-test revealed a mean difference of -34.00 ($p < .001$), confirming the effectiveness of Picture Series in improving vocabulary mastery. The study supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that Picture Series significantly enhance vocabulary skills. Overall, the findings underscore the potential of Picture Series as an effective teaching strategy, engaging students and improving their vocabulary mastery.

5. DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Picture Series method in vocabulary learning at SMA Wahyu Makassar demonstrated significant advantages in enhancing students' English vocabulary mastery. Defined by Gerlach (1971) as two-dimensional visual representations, pictures—including photographs, sketches, and charts—were effectively utilized in various instructional contexts.

Celce-Murcia and Hill (1991) noted that such visual aids enhance motivation and foster positive attitudes toward learning, while McCarten (2007) emphasized their role in diverse teaching settings.

Pictures not only engage students but also facilitate comprehension and retention by presenting common experiences visually. Their low cost, accessibility, and ability to correct misunderstandings make them valuable educational tools (Gerlach, 1971). The data from pre-tests and post-tests indicated a remarkable improvement in vocabulary mastery: students transitioned from poor to higher classifications, with significant score increases. The paired samples t-test showed a mean difference of -34.00 ($p < .001$), confirming that the enhancement in vocabulary scores was attributable to the Picture Series intervention. Overall, the findings highlight the effectiveness of Picture Series in improving vocabulary mastery among first-grade students at SMA Wahyu Makassar, supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis.

6. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Picture Series significantly enhanced the English vocabulary mastery of students at SMA Wahyu Makassar. This improvement was reflected in a substantial increase in post-test scores, with an average gain of 34 points, rising from a baseline mean of 55.7 to 90.9. The paired samples t-test confirmed the statistical significance of these results, yielding a t-value of -50.395 and a significance level of less than 0.001, indicating that the improvement was attributable to the use of Picture Series. Initially, all 30 participants were classified as "Poor" in the pre-test; post-test results showed that 60% achieved "Good" and 40% attained "Very Good" classifications. These findings underscore the effectiveness of Picture Series in improving vocabulary mastery among students.

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