STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS: ENHANCING VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH VOCABULARY CARDS BANK PROJECT ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

This study investigated how students are stimulated to improve their vocabulary through the Vocabulary Card Bank project on Instagram and how they perceive it. The students were instructed to create their vocabulary cards weekly for one semester on Instagram. In this mixed-method study, the participants were first-year students in English Language Education Department at Universitas Internasional Batam. All data were collected using a questionnaire and interview. The findings showed that the majority of the students who participated in this study recognize the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project has many benefits as it can improve their vocabulary and write sentences in English. The vocabulary card posted on Instagram helped them find new English words other than textbooks and dictionaries. The results of this study are expected to motivate prospective English teachers and future researchers to apply other methods in teaching English.

Keywords: Vocabulary Cards Bank, Teaching Vocabulary, English Teaching, Instagram

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is an essential element of learning other languages. Words are a component of language because they represent objects, actions, and thoughts that humans cannot convey. The critical role of vocabulary in learning a second or foreign language has recently been recognized by many researchers in the field. As a result, teachers apply several strategies to help students learn vocabulary. It has been suggested by (Nation, 2013) says that teachers want to help their students understand vocabulary, instead of wasting time on single words, they should spend time on a technique that students can use to process words. Teaching technique is a useful way to teach new words. In particular, by becoming familiar with speech patterns of words and associating them with their meanings, teachers gradually communicate the meanings of words using context (Nation, 2013).

Vocabulary is defined as all of the words, word parts, and lexical phrases that people have acquired at any given point in time (Barcroft, 2016). It exists as a vast network in the human mind/brain. Barcroft (2016) said that within the network, every lexical item including a word, part of a word, or lexical phrase is linked to other lexical items in a way reflecting the statistical properties that specify the use of the vocabulary. It is also added that for an English language learner when it comes to vocabulary, the purpose is to acquire the vast network of implicit knowledge, and to do so, there is no way to pay attention to large amounts of input over a long period when trying to communicate in the target language Barcroft (2016).

For nearly a decade, vocabulary teaching in universities has favored a teacher-centered translation method and has not encouraged students to learn enough (Abdulrahman &

Basalama, 2019). As a result, the quality of vocabulary instruction is far from satisfactory, and they have problems in reading comprehension. English teachers have the responsibility to help students developing their vocabulary. The teachers shall give students the best chance to learn English as early as possible. The method used by teachers is expected to make English lessons more enjoyable when it comes to the real world. Many activities can be used to teach vocabulary through songs, games, cards, and more.

From many techniques used by the teacher, there are flashcards as an effective way to introduce vocabulary in English. Many researchers have found that flashcard learning helps English learners pick up words more effectively than word lists (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995). The use of this technique not only improves but also motivates learners to engage in learning activities (Lisa, 2019). With this technique, learners can enjoy exciting activities while developing their English. However, for English learners at the university level, flashcards cannot be simply given to the students. As an alternative strategy, it is possible to encourage them to make their flashcard as well as to learn vocabulary.

Brown (2014) perceived lexical elements as a boring word list for students to define and remember. Word forms are seen as having an important role in contextual and meaningful language. (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005) stated to use the language, individuals shall be proficient in vocabulary. To learn vocabulary, they need to know the meaning of the words and be able to use them in sentences. It leads to situations where vocabulary is considered as one of the biggest challenges when teaching English as a foreign language. When teaching vocabulary in a foreign language, teachers have a responsibility not only to give vocabulary to students to memorize but also to help students remember words in long-term memory using appropriate teaching strategies. Xiaotang (as cited in Bai, 2018), found that after training students, the type and frequency of the vocabulary learning strategy were higher than before and that the relationship between vocabulary concepts and behavior was stronger. However, the study found that the use of different vocabulary strategies was not significantly associated with changes in English vocabulary and performance.

Considering that it can be challenging for English Foreign Language (EFL) learners to communicate in English, there are varied strategies implemented to improve their vocabulary and boost their confidence in practicing English inside and outside the classroom. Harmer (2007) explains that teachers should view technology as a tool to help them apply the techniques and approaches they have chosen. One way to make vocabulary lessons more interesting and improve students' vocabulary is to use social media. A study conducted by Akhiar, Mydin, & Kasuma (2017) described college students' perceptions and attitudes about using Instagram when writing in English. The results showed the high level of positive perceptions and views students have about using Instagram to improve their writing skills, but their attitudes toward the technique were moderate. It is also suggested that language teachers implement outstanding social media platforms, like Instagram, to create an effective learning environment that can encourage students to learn English.

In this study, the researcher would like to demonstrate a method that English teachers can apply to teach vocabulary in the classroom. Learners' perceptions toward the technique will be explained as well as their overall comments. The implemented technique was vocabulary cards posted on Instagram weekly. The learners who were the participant of this study should create Vocabulary Card consisting of word, definition and its example in a sentence. This method also facilitated learners to develop their creativity when designing Vocabulary cards on Instagram.

It is expected that learners can grasp new words in English, not only those made by themselves but also words made by their friends, which later can help them in reading comprehension questions.

METHOD

To investigate the students' perceptions of the Vocabulary Card Bank project on Instagram, this research will employ a mixed-method design. It aims to illustrate and detail the implementation of the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project on students' vocabulary mastery. The mixed-method allows for a better understanding of research problems and questions than using one of the separate methods (Creswell, 2012). In providing data, this research emphasized quantitative as Molina-Azorin (2016) said that it is possible to have a focus on both quantitative and qualitative parts, qualitative more, or emphasize quantitative more. The decision is based on the research problem, practical constraints on data collection, or the need to understand certain data before displaying it to the next.

The participants of this study were the first-year students of the English Language Education Department at Universitas Internasional Batan in the academic year 2020/2021. 23 students participated in the Reading and Vocabulary course where the Vocabulary Card Bank Project was implemented. The students had to make an Instagram post every week consisting of a word, definition, and its example in a sentence. They were allowed to design the background for the posts as creatively as possible.

the word
the phonetic symbol
(word class & definition/synonym)

"The sentence that use the word"

Student ID (last 3 digits)

Figure 1. Vocabulary Card Format

To gather the data, the researcher used questionnaires, and interviews. In collecting data using a questionnaire, the responses are divided into 3 bigger categories, positive, neutral, and negative. 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' are categorized under positive responses, 'Neutral' is treated as neutral responses, and 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' are put under negative responses. Finally, the interview was done to ask students' further opinions related to the implementation of the vocabulary Card Bank project.

In conducting the study, the procedures that were used in conducting this research were (1) determining the participants of the research, (2) implementing the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project (3) distributing the questionnaire, (4) conducting the interview, (5) analyzing the data, and (6) drawing findings and conclusions from the data. Data analysis was illustrated by using numbers and explanations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results show that learning vocabulary using Vocabulary Cards Bank Project is fun and enjoyed by the students. The results were from the questionnaire distributed to the students and an interview. The instruments were used to examine students' perceptions toward the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project. There were 13 questions distributed to gather students' responses in this study related to the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project.

Table 1. The Effectiveness of Vocabulary Cards Bank Project to Improve English Vocabulary

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1.	I was able to learn vocabulary better when I made Vocabulary Bank on Instagram.	-	-	18.18%	27.73%	59.09%
2.	I was able to have a wider range of vocabulary knowledge using Vocabulary Bank.	-	-	13.64%	40.91%	45.45%
6.	Posting Vocabulary Bank on social media helped me remember my English vocabulary better.	-	4.55%	31.82%	27.27%	36.36%
7.	Making Vocabulary Bank helped me access new words in English, outside of using my textbooks/dictionary.	-	4.45%	4.45%	22.73%	68.18%

From the questions, it can be seen that the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project is considered helpful to strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge. There was a 59.09% percentage of students who thought that they were able to learn better when they made the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project. Additionally, 45.45% of the students strongly agreed that it enabled them to have a wider range of vocabulary knowledge. It also helped them remember English vocabulary better (36.36% strongly agree). Furthermore, the participants (68.18%) said that the project gave them access to new words in English other than textbooks/dictionaries.

Table 2. Practical Use of Vocabulary Cards Bank Project

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
4.	I can use the vocabulary bank to learn better since it provides me with more visual examples.	-	4.55%	13.64%	27.27%	54.55%

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
5.	Using Vocabulary Bank was more practical than reading a dictionary.	-	4.55%	13.64%	27.73%	59.09%
8.	I always tried to use newly learned words when making Vocabulary Bank.	-	4.55%	13.64%	27.73%	59.09%
9.	Using Vocabulary Bank enhanced my reading performance.	-	9.09%	13.64%	50.00%	27.27%

Not only vocabulary knowledge but there is also practical use of the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project in helping students learning English. 54.55% of the participants believed that they could learn better as the project provided words using visual examples, and they always tried to post newly learned words when doing the project. It can be seen from 59.09% of the students strongly agree with the statement. Furthermore, the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project boosted their reading performance which 50.00% said so.

Table 3. Students' Perception in Participating Vocabulary Cards Bank Project

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
3.	I enjoyed making Vocabulary Bank to learn English.	-	-	9.09%	31.82%	59.09%
10.	I worked efficiently on English vocabulary tasks in class	-	4.55%	45.45%	40.91%	9.09%
11.	By participating in Vocabulary Cards Bank Project, I am now able to face more challenging words in real life.	-	4.55%	18.18%	54.55%	22.73%
12.	I like learning English vocabulary by working on the project in class.	-	-	59.09	27.27%	13.64%

Students enjoy learning vocabulary through the project and like it as one of the ways to learn English a 59.09% strongly agree with the questionnaire results. The majority (45.45%), however, confirmed that they doubted whether they worked efficiently on the project or not. It, later, showed that the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project still needs improvement as 54.552% of the participants slightly agree with the statement that they can face more challenging words in their real life.
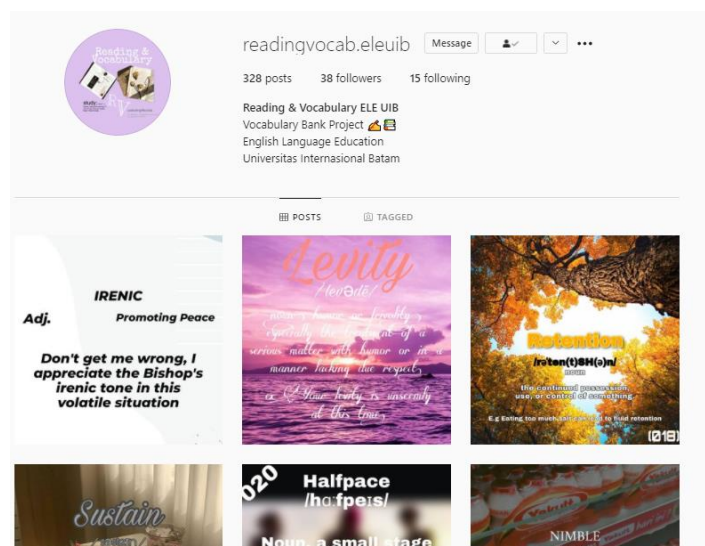
Figure 2. Vocabulary Cards Bank Project on Instagram

Figure 3. One of Student's Vocabulary Cards on Instagram

In addition to the questionnaire, an interview was conducted to support the results. It was found that students have good word meanings because Vocabulary Cards Bank Project is effective for memorizing the meaning of new words by providing meaningful pictures. The researchers asked the students how it affected their vocabulary. Their answers are:

"*Learning while designing the picture affects the development of my vocabulary knowledge. Because I could look up words as well as how the words used in sentences.*" - Student 1

"*Choosing a good picture is enjoyable. I sometimes got confused which picture should be posted from my mobile phone Gallery.*" – Student 2

"*Posting vocabulary pictures on Instagram is not only about being aesthetic, but we have learned reading and speaking skills by ourselves,*" - Student 3

"*I hope this project will always be done in the future. It worked for me. I could improve my vocabulary and learn some new words.*" - Student 4

Students' positive perceptions are drawn in many areas. Most students were interested in posting Vocabulary Cards Bank Project on Instagram to learn vocabulary. They said they found the new words in an entertaining way where the students were allowed to decide their design to post on Instagram. A few students even discussed what word they would post every week to avoid similar vocabulary. They mostly felt excited about choosing good pictures every week. Also, some said they would match the word with the background to make it more aesthetic.

The students explained some problems they faced when doing the project. They were unsure whether the word they tried to use for their project has been posted or not. As a result, they had to scroll on Instagram or ask their friends directly in the chatroom. One of them said that he had to remake and repost his project because he did not check the word already posted a few weeks before. Others, moreover, tended to forget to post the photo. They made the design way before the project's due, yet they could not post more than one post in a week.

The participants were also asked about the practical use of the project. The participants said they sometimes use the vocabulary they posted in writing or speaking class. The project enabled them to take an active part in understanding the meaning of words and hone their dictionary skills. They conclude that the project is effective to encourage them to find new vocabulary.

Discussion

From the questionnaire, the students showed high satisfaction with the project in improving their vocabulary. The researcher found that the students mostly perceived the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project in Reading & Vocabulary course leads to positive outcomes. This project also helps them when reading English texts. Learning new words using pictures made the students memorize fast and effectively. It was because the pictures can stimulate and provide information to students. The picture is advantageous to make them focus on what the words meant with a suitable picture as the background.

The interview showed enthusiasm, understanding, interests, motivations, and expectations of the students on the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project done in the Reading & Vocabulary course. All students were encouraged to learn new words to increase their vocabulary. Students not only learn synonyms but also use the words correctly in sentences. Almost all of them replied that they want the project to be implemented in the future and expect their juniors will learn the same thing in the future.

The results of this survey summarize the same ideas as the survey conducted by (Erarslan, 2019). The findings reveal that Instagram is the most commonly used social media platform among participants. The students loved to use it for English language learning. Therefore, learning English through social media like Instagram can be helpful and practical for the students and English teachers by allowing students to use the language while using the platform as part of their daily practice.

CONCLUSION

This study examined English Department students' perceptions of the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project in helping them learn English Vocabulary. From the results and discussions, students positively evaluated the project in their Reading & Vocabulary class. They said the project provides an endless supply of English vocabulary materials that will help them continue to practice their English skills, especially in enlarging their vocabulary and constructing sentences. They also chose their own words and design because they can post the project on Instagram as

one of the widely use social media. The students suggest that the Vocabulary Cards Bank Project will keep going in the future for their juniors. The Vocabulary Cards Bank Project is practical to learn English vocabulary because it makes them feel comfortable and motivated to study English outside the classroom.

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