

Teacher's Barriers in Using Flashcards as Interactive Media in Teaching English Vocabulary

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Abstract: Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in English language acquisition as it supports the development of language skills. Vocabulary mastery can be developed by optimizing the use of interactive media such as flashcards which offer an effective and engaging activity in teaching vocabulary, especially for young learners. This study was carried out to explore the barriers faced by an English teacher in using interactive flashcards in an elementary school in Ciamis and how the teacher overcomes the barriers found. This study used a qualitative case study and was taken through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews as research instruments. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the classroom observation and interviews. The research participants involved in this study were a second grade English teacher. The findings revealed three main challenges: (1) students' limited reading and writing skills; (2) difficulty in time management due to varying student response times and lack of time management features in the flashcard application; and (3) different levels of vocabulary mastery among students, which affected the overall effectiveness of teaching. To overcome these challenges, the teacher implemented various adaptive strategies such as verbal repetition, adjusted time allocation, and differentiated teaching based on the needs of each student. This study highlights the importance of teacher adaptability to ensure the effective use of interactive media in teaching vocabulary.

Keywords: *teachers' barriers, flashcards media, interactive media, teaching vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays an important role in English language acquisition because it is the basis for developing other language skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Deni & Fahriany, 2020). In the context of elementary school learning, vocabulary mastery is crucial to

help students express ideas, understand texts, and interact actively in the learning process. To support this, teachers need to create a fun and interactive learning atmosphere through the use of interesting media.

The vocabulary learning process will be more effective if the teacher is able to present an interesting and participatory learning atmosphere. One way to achieve this is by using interactive media that allows students to interact directly with learning materials (Putra, L. D., & Pratama, 2023 Aulia et al., 2024). Interactive media in the context of English language learning includes various visual and digital tools, such as videos, educational games, animations, and one of them is flashcards. These media are designed not only to convey information, but also to stimulate students' active engagement, improve concentration, and enhance their memory of new vocabulary. One of the effective media is flashcards, which are visual media in the form of cards that display certain images, words, or symbols. Flashcards have been widely used in vocabulary learning due to their ease of use and ability to attract students' attention. Some previous studies have shown that the consistent use of flashcards can significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery, both in terms of memory and understanding of word meaning (Mahdi Mutar, 2024).

Putri et al., (2024) in their study have found that the use of flashcards in elementary schools helps students remember and understand new vocabulary better than conventional methods. In fact, the pre-test and post-test results showed a significant increase in students' vocabulary mastery scores. Other research by Saputri & Prasetyarini, (2024) also showed that students felt more interested and motivated in learning vocabulary using flashcards because they are visual and fun.

However, despite its many advantages, the application of interactive media such as flashcards in classroom learning does not always run smoothly. Many teachers face various challenges in integrating this media into the learning process. These barriers can come from internal factors of the teacher themselves or from the institutional environment in which they teach. For example, time constraints are often the main reason why teachers have difficulty using interactive media. Teachers feel that limited teaching time makes it difficult for them to prepare and implement interactive media-based learning optimally (Hazna, 2020).

In addition, teachers' skills in operating technological devices and digital media are also inhibiting factors. Some teachers, especially those who are older or not yet familiar with technology, find it difficult to design and use digital interactive media such as electronic flashcards. Lack of professional training and minimal supporting facilities in schools also exacerbate this situation (Nugroho et al., 2021) and (Herawati, 2023). The study stated that not all educational institutions provide representative online learning platforms or provide ongoing technology training to their teachers.

Salam et al., (2023) also revealed that many teachers feel burdened by administrative demands, limited time, and lack of support from schools, making them reluctant to explore or develop interactive media such as flashcards. Some teachers also feel less confident due to limited knowledge about how to design media that suits students' characteristics and abilities. Not only that, factors from students are also a separate barrier. Some students at the elementary school level do not yet know the letters or cannot write well, so they have difficulty following vocabulary learning activities using media such as flashcards (Wulandari & Apriyanti, 2021). This limitation requires teachers to adjust learning materials and strategies more individually, which of course requires more time and energy.

Several previous studies have highlighted the benefits of using flashcards in vocabulary learning, such as improving students' memory, strengthening the relationship between word form

and meaning, and creating a more enjoyable learning atmosphere (Le & Luong, 2023) & (Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). However, most of these studies focus more on the effectiveness of their use rather than on the barriers or challenges of their implementation. Very few studies have specifically examined the barriers experienced by teachers when implementing this media, especially in the context of elementary schools in certain areas such as Ciamis Regency.

Firdausi, (2024), for example, did examine teachers' perceptions of the use of flashcards as an ice-breaking activity in speaking learning, but did not specifically discuss the practical challenges faced by teachers in the field. Likewise, Yunita, (2023), who emphasized more on the strategy of implementing flashcards in early childhood education. In fact, understanding the real barriers faced by teachers can be an important foundation in formulating more applicable and contextual solutions.

Given the importance of the teacher's role in creating meaningful learning, a study is needed that not only highlights the effectiveness of the media, but also the barriers in its implementation. This is important so that the use of interactive media such as flashcards can really be optimized in supporting the success of vocabulary learning in elementary schools.

Based on this background, this study aims to identify the barriers faced by teachers in using flashcards as interactive media to teach English vocabulary in elementary schools in Ciamis Regency, as well as to explore the strategies used by teachers in overcoming these barriers. This study is expected to provide scientific contributions by filling the gaps in previous studies, as well as providing practical recommendations for teachers and policy makers in efforts to improve the quality of English learning through interactive media.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, as explained by Creswell, (2017), to explore in depth the barriers faced by teachers in using interactive media in the form of flashcards in English vocabulary learning. This study was conducted in one of the public elementary schools in Ciamis Regency, Indonesia. This location was chosen because the school is in the development stage in utilizing digital media for English learning, making it a relevant place to observe the challenges of using interactive media contextually.

Participants in this study consisted of one English teacher who had professional certification and teaching experience at the elementary school level. The participant selection technique used purposive sampling, to ensure that the selected teachers had competencies and experiences relevant to the research topic. The main instruments used in data collection were observation sheets in the form of field notes and semi-structured interview guidelines. Observation sheets were used to systematically record interactions between teachers and students, the use of interactive media, and student responses during the learning process. Meanwhile, interview guidelines were prepared to explore teachers' experiences, understandings, and strategies in dealing with barriers in using interactive flashcards.

The data collection procedure was carried out through two methods, namely observation and interviews. Observations were carried out during two meetings with a non-participatory method, where the researcher was not directly involved in the learning activities. During the observation process, the researcher recorded various findings related to the implementation of learning, technical barriers, and student responses to the use of interactive media. This method allows researchers to capture natural classroom interactions without disrupting the teaching and

learning process, thereby increasing the objectivity and validity of the data (Angrosino, 2007). In the preparation stage, the researcher also asked for formal permission from the school and teachers to conduct observations in accordance with the principles of research ethics.

Interviews were conducted in stages, starting from the planning stage (preparing objectives and a list of interview questions), implementation (arranging a schedule and obtaining permission from teachers), to the closing and clarification stage. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, then transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy. The semi-structured format was chosen because it provides flexibility in digging deeper into information, while maintaining focus on the main topics of the study, such as teaching experiences, barriers to media use, and teacher strategies in overcoming them.

The collected data were analysed qualitatively using the thematic analysis approach according to Braun and Clarke, (2006). Observation data were classified into several themes, such as teaching strategies, student engagement, and barriers to media use. Meanwhile, interview data were analysed through the process of transcription, coding, theme identification, and thematic analysis to find certain patterns in teacher experiences. The thematic results obtained were synthesized to build a comprehensive narrative that is in accordance with the research objectives.

To maintain the integrity of the research, this study also applies the principles of research ethics. The identities of the participants were kept confidential, and the researcher avoided any form of coercion or pressure on the participants. Consent to participate was obtained from the school and teachers, and all data were collected and used responsibly in accordance with research ethics guidelines (Zou & Xu, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher classifies the findings of this study into two main aspects. First, the findings from the first research question that discusses what barriers teachers face when using flashcards as interactive media to teach vocabulary in elementary schools in Ciamis; and how teachers overcome barriers in implementing flashcards as interactive media in vocabulary learning. The results of the research questions will be described in the following discussion:

The Teacher Barriers in Using Flashcards as Interactive Media

This section presents the results of the first research question. Based on the results of observations at two meetings (April 15 and May 8, 2025), the classroom observation data were classified into three barriers experienced by teachers during learning using flashcards. The classifications are reading and writing barriers, time management difficulties, mixed-level vocabulary knowledge. Thematic analysis of classroom observation data was used to find out the answer to the first research question.

First, limited reading and writing skills are one of the most dominant barriers found during observation. In the process of copying vocabulary or matching words with images displayed through flashcards, some students seem to have difficulty spelling and reading simple words in English. In fact, some students need teacher assistance to read and understand certain words such as "carpenter" or "firefighter". This shows that students' basic literacy skills are still uneven, making it difficult for them to understand the material presented through visual media.

This condition requires teachers to provide individual attention and guidance, especially to students who are not yet able to read independently. This imbalance makes the learning process ineffective and requires teachers to find alternative strategies that can adjust to students' abilities in the field.

Second, the barrier of time management is also a significant barrier in the implementation of interactive media-based learning. Because the use of flashcards is done individually in the form of quizzes and picture matching, teachers must give each student the opportunity to answer one by one. This causes the duration of the activity to be longer than the planned time, especially because the speed of each student in understanding and responding to questions varies greatly. In the activity of matching pictures with vocabulary, even though the time has been extended from two to ten minutes, there are still many students who have not completed their tasks. This shows that interactive and interesting media still requires a careful time management strategy so that all students can follow the learning without feeling rushed or left behind. Without effective time management, learning cannot cover all the material that has been designed by the teacher.

Third, another barrier is the difference in vocabulary mastery levels between students. In one class, it was found that students' abilities in understanding and remembering vocabulary varied greatly. Some students were able to answer the teacher's questions quickly and accurately, while others were silent or had difficulty recalling previously taught vocabulary. In the oral test session, this difference was clearly visible when some students were able to mention vocabulary such as "brother" and "sister" fluently, while other students took a long time to answer or even did not answer at all. This gap makes the learning process uneven and forces teachers to take a differentiation approach, namely providing different treatment according to the abilities of each student. Teachers must provide repetition, verbal guidance, or special assistance so that slow students can still catch up and understand the material being taught. Without an adaptive approach, students with low ability levels will continue to lag behind and find it difficult to develop in their mastery of English vocabulary.

Teachers' Way to Overcome the Barriers in Implementation Flashcards as Interactive Media

Based on the results of interviews with English teachers in elementary schools conducted on May 8, 2025, it was found that although in the process of using interactive media such as flashcards teachers face several barriers, teachers show good adaptability through the application of various strategies to overcome these barriers. The strategies used aim to keep the learning process running effectively and in accordance to the learning objectives, despite the diverse conditions of the students.

The first strategy the teacher applied was to help students with limited reading skills. In implementing learning using flashcards, teachers realize that not all students are able to read English words fluently. Therefore, the teacher mostly uses the auditory approach, which is by mentioning the vocabulary verbally, then inviting students to repeat together. This technique is done repeatedly so that students can remember the words even though they do not fully understand the writing. In this way, students who are not fluent readers can still be actively involved in vocabulary learning activities. This approach shows the teacher's flexibility in teaching methods, which is very important to accommodate students' diverse learning needs.

The second strategy is to overcome time management constraints during learning activities using interactive media. The teacher explained that the flashcard application used does

not provide an automatic time setting feature, so the teacher has to design the time division for each session by herself. To overcome this, teachers prepare materials and questions that are divided into several groups according to the difficulty level of the vocabulary and the number of students. For example, simple vocabulary is given one minute to work on, while complex vocabulary is given two minutes. This strategy also takes into account the ability of each student so that there is no imbalance in the learning process. With good planning, teachers can optimize time effectively, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to understand the material without feeling rushed or left behind.

The third strategy implemented by the teacher is to overcome differences in vocabulary mastery levels between students. The teacher recognizes that not all students have the same speed and ability to memorize. Therefore, the teacher applies a differentiation strategy in learning. Students who are fast in memorizing will be tested earlier, while students who need more time will be guided more intensively and personally. The teacher also provides individual and group repetition sessions, both verbally and using visual flashcards. In this session, students are invited to memorize together in front of the class or directly with the teacher until the students are truly able to remember the words taught. This strategy shows the teacher's efforts in creating an inclusive and adaptive learning environment, where each student gets attention and guidance according to their individual needs. With this strategy, the learning process becomes more meaningful and effective, and can enhance students' confidence in participating in English learning activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the barrier's teachers face in implementing interactive flashcards for vocabulary learning in primary schools, as well as the strategies used to overcome these barriers. The first finding shows that one of the main barriers is students' limited reading and writing skills. This is a significant challenge because the use of visual media such as flashcards relies heavily on students' basic literacy skills. Some students still have difficulty in spelling and copying the vocabulary given. Wulandari & Apriyanti, (2021) research also found that students' limitations in writing and spelling were one of the inhibiting factors in using flashcards in learning. This is reinforced by Nation, (2001) opinion, which states that vocabulary mastery is the main foundation in language acquisition because it is the key to expressing ideas, understanding meaning, and writing and pronouncing words in the target language. Therefore, teachers need to provide alternative approaches such as the use of verbal assistance and repetition to help students who do not have adequate reading skills.

The second barrier found in this study was the issue of time management when implementing learning activities using flashcards. The interactive feature of this media can indeed improve student engagement, but it takes quite a long time due to differences in response speed between students. Teachers are needed to be able to manage time efficiently so that all students can follow the learning evenly. This finding is in line with Wulandari and Apriyanti, (2021) research, which states that the use of flashcards can indeed create a fun learning atmosphere, but time management is a challenge, especially if the digital media used does not have a timer feature. Therefore, careful time planning is needed so that learning activities continue to run effectively.

Furthermore, the third finding relates to differences in vocabulary mastery levels between students. In the implementation of learning, it was found that some students could easily remember and mention the vocabulary taught, but others still had difficulty. This condition

requires teachers to apply differentiated learning strategies. This approach is in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory explained by Barrs (2021), which states that each student has different potential abilities and requires appropriate support or scaffolding. In addition, according to Khamitova et al. (2019), teachers can use flashcards that are grouped according to certain categories, such as colours, animals, or food, to adjust to different levels of student mastery. Thus, teaching can be adjusted so that all students can understand the material meaningfully.

To overcome these barriers, the teachers interviewed in this study implemented various adaptive strategies. For students who have difficulty reading, teachers use an auditory approach, namely by mentioning vocabulary verbally and inviting students to repeat it together. This strategy is in line with Dakhi and Fitria, (2019) opinion that the combination of visual and auditory input can improve vocabulary recall, especially for early childhood students. In terms of time management, the teacher divides the material into groups and manages the duration manually according to the difficulty level of the vocabulary and the number of students. This approach is in line with the opinion of Bazarova et al. (2024) who emphasized that effective vocabulary learning strategies should be adapted to cognitive capacity and classroom conditions. In addition, the implementation of repeated exercises individually and in groups is an important strategy to deal with differences in vocabulary mastery abilities between students. This finding shows that the successful use of flashcards does not only depend on the media, but also on the teacher's ability to adjust the learning strategy to the real conditions in the classroom and the needs of each student.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the barriers faced by teachers in using interactive flashcard media for teaching English vocabulary in elementary schools and the strategies to overcome them. The results show that there are three main barriers faced by teachers, namely students' reading and writing difficulties, time management challenges during the learning process, and differences in vocabulary acquisition levels among students. These barriers reflect the difficulties in implementing digital interactive media in a classroom with diverse student characteristics.

However, teachers showed good pedagogical adaptability by implementing various strategies, such as an auditory approach to address students who have reading and writing difficulties, student grouping techniques for time efficiency, and differentiation strategies to adjust teaching to each student's vocabulary abilities. These findings contribute to the development of literature related to the importance of multimodal approaches and differentiated instruction in vocabulary learning. In addition, the results of this study also emphasize the importance of the role of teachers as facilitators who are able to adjust learning strategies to the conditions and needs of students in the field, especially in the context of using digital media.

This study advances the field of English language education by providing empirical evidence from a real classroom context that the effectiveness of interactive media such as flashcards is highly dependent on teacher responsiveness, student engagement, and tailored teaching strategies. For wider implementation, it is recommended that teachers adopt a collaborative and inclusive approach that takes into account the individual needs of students. The implementation of technology must be accompanied by mature pedagogical reflection so that it is not only visually appealing, but also cognitively and communicatively meaningful for students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to not only master the technical aspects of media use, but also understand the pedagogical principles underlying its implementation.

In addition, the results of this study also provide practical implications for the development of teacher training programs, especially in the field of educational technology. Training is needed that is not only technical, but also touches on pedagogical aspects and learning differentiation so that teachers are able to design adaptive learning to student diversity. Educational policy makers are also expected to consider support for adequate infrastructure and resources, so that the implementation of interactive media in elementary schools can run optimally.

Further research is recommended to explore more deeply other factors that influence the effectiveness of flashcard use, such as students' learning motivation, learning styles, and cultural context. Increasing the number of participants and using mixed methods (e.g., in-depth interviews and surveys) can also provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' and students' experiences in using flashcards. Thus, further research can make a greater contribution to developing effective and evidence-based vocabulary teaching practices, as well as broadening the horizons of how digital media can be optimally utilized in elementary education.

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