

Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery through the Use of Authentic Material

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve students' vocabulary mastery through the use of authentic materials in the form of poster advertisements. The research was conducted at class VII B of SMPN 1 Mataram in the academic year 2025/2026. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) consisting of two cycles, each including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The subjects of the study were 44 students of class VII B. The instruments used in this research were vocabulary tests and observation checklists. Quantitative data were obtained from students' pre-test and post-test scores, while qualitative data were collected through classroom observations focusing on teacher activities during the teaching and learning process. The findings showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. In Cycle 1, the mean score increased from the pre-test to the post-test, reaching a mean score of 69.64, with only 17 students (38.6%) achieving scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. After revising the teaching material by integrating poster advertisements in Cycle 2, the mean score increased to 89.45, and 42 students (95.4%) achieved scores above the KKM. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the use of authentic materials, particularly poster advertisements, effectively improved students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, authentic materials are recommended as an alternative teaching material to enhance vocabulary learning in junior high school students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Difficulties in learning English vocabulary did not only come from internal factors of students, but are also influenced by external aspects such as learning materials, teaching media, and inadequate school facilities. Materials that are not contextual or less relevant to students' daily lives can reduce their interest and understanding of new vocabulary. Ryan et al. (2023) found that inappropriate materials, combined with limited access to supporting tools like dictionaries, can make it difficult for students to grasp word meanings and pronunciation. Similarly, using monotonous media like only blackboards or textbooks may reduce student engagement. Salwa and Bahri (2023) reported that the lack of audio-visual media limits students' ability to understand and pronounce words correctly in various contexts. Inadequate school facilities—such as the absence of comfortable classrooms or technological tools—also obstruct the vocabulary learning process. As noted by Sabata and Lagontang (2022), limited infrastructure makes it harder for teachers to teach vocabulary effectively, impacting students' understanding. Therefore, improving the relevance of materials, diversifying media, and enhancing school facilities are essential steps to support meaningful and engaging vocabulary learning.

After further analysis, the main cause of this problem was not lie in the learning media, learning methods, or school facilities, but in the materials used. The materials

presented were still in authentic and were not represent the use of English in real-life contexts. In fact, students really need materials that were relevant and close to everyday life so that they could be more easily understand the meaning and use of vocabulary functionally. The used of authentic materials has been shown to increase student motivation and engagement because the materials reflect real situations that they will face outside the classroom (Gilakjani, 2020; Wulandari & Drajadi, 2021).

As a result of these problems, students have difficulty understanding English texts or constructing contextually correct sentences. This has a direct impact on low students' learning outcomes, including the grades they got in daily tests and end-of-semester assessments. Many students have not been able to achieve the KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal) for English subjects, which is caused by limited vocabulary mastery. In fact, the teaching media used by teachers already supports it, such as visuals in the form of interesting images and videos (Miftah, 2021; Sari & Permana, 2022). In addition, the method applied is also appropriate, namely discovery learning, which has been proven effective in building student activity and curiosity (Utami & Fitriani, 2020; Putra & Lestari, 2023). Learning facilities at SMPN 1 Mataram are also very adequate. Therefore, to overcome the problem of low KKM achievement, innovation is needed in teaching materials, especially by implementing authentic materials that are more contextual and interesting for students.

One of the effective strategies to overcome students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary is the use of authentic materials. These materials, which include real-world texts such as articles, menus, advertisements, videos, and songs, expose learners to vocabulary in meaningful and contextual situations. Authentic materials allow students to see how words are used in everyday communication, which helps deepen understanding and retention. According to Nurlia (2023), the use of authentic reading materials significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery, as learners were more engaged and better able to recall and use new words in appropriate contexts. Similarly, Marpaung and Situmeang (2023) found that students who were taught vocabulary using authentic materials combined with multimedia showed higher motivation and better vocabulary outcomes, with over 80% of students responding positively to the approach. These findings suggest that integrating authentic materials into vocabulary instruction can make learning more relevant, interactive, and effective, especially for junior high school students who often struggle to connect textbook vocabulary with real-life usage.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve students' vocabulary mastery and enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process. The research design followed the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, consisting of two cycles with four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to make immediate improvements in the classroom through reflective practices.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Mataram in the academic year 2025/2026, involving 44 students of class VII B with varying levels of reading proficiency, categorized as high, medium, and low. The instruments used in this research included an observation checklist to monitor students' participation and classroom interaction, vocabulary tests (pre-test and post-test) consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions to measure students' vocabulary improvement, and documentation in the form of photographs to support the data.

The research procedure was carried out in cycles. In the planning stage, the researcher identified classroom problems, prepared lesson plans using authentic materials, and designed research instruments. In the acting stage, the planned strategies were implemented

collaboratively with the English teacher. In the observing stage, the researcher recorded students' engagement and responses during the teaching and learning process. In the reflecting stage, the results were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the action and to decide whether the next cycle was needed.

Data were collected through classroom observations, vocabulary test results, and documentation. The data analysis used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's steps, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, quantitative data were analyzed by comparing pre-test and post-test scores using percentage criteria based on Sudjana (2005), supported by SPSS 27 for Windows to measure students' improvement in vocabulary mastery.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the research results and provides a comprehensive discussion. Results can be presented in the form of images, graphs, tables, and other forms, making them easier for readers to understand [2, 5]. The discussion can be divided into several subchapters.

3.1. Research Results

This study was conducted in August–September 2025 involving 44 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Mataram through two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). The findings reveal that the use of authentic materials in the form of poster advertisement images significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery, as supported by both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using SPSS 27.

The initial condition, as shown in the pre-test 1, indicated that students' vocabulary mastery was relatively low, with a mean score of 63.41, a minimum score of 36, and a maximum score of 76. Only 12 students (27%) achieved the minimum mastery criterion (≥ 75). This suggests that most students had limited vocabulary knowledge and low engagement in learning.

After the implementation of Cycle 1, the post-test 1 results showed a moderate improvement. The mean score increased to 69.64, with scores ranging from 52 to 80. The number of students who passed the criterion rose to 17 students (38%). However, SPSS descriptive analysis still indicated that the overall performance remained below the expected standard, and classroom observation confirmed that students' participation and motivation were still relatively low.

In Cycle 2, improvements were made in the teaching strategy by using more engaging and visually appealing poster advertisement images. The pre-test 2 results showed a significant increase, with a mean score of 78.55, a minimum score of 52, and a maximum score of 100. A total of 29 students (65%) met the mastery criterion. This indicates that students' vocabulary knowledge had improved even before the second intervention was fully implemented.

The most significant improvement was observed in the post-test 2 results. The mean score increased substantially to 89.45, with scores ranging from 72 to 100. A total of 42 students (95%) successfully achieved the minimum mastery criterion. Based on SPSS paired-sample analysis (pre-test and post-test comparison), the results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the use of authentic materials had a strong positive effect on students' learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the overall comparison of mean scores across all tests (63.41 → 69.64 → 78.55 → 89.45) demonstrates a consistent upward trend. The percentage of students achieving the mastery criterion also increased significantly from 27% in pre-test 1 to

95% in post-test 2. This improvement was also supported by observation data, which showed that students became more active, engaged, and motivated during the learning process when authentic materials were used.

In conclusion, the SPSS analysis and classroom observations confirm that the implementation of authentic materials in the form of poster advertisement images effectively improves students' vocabulary mastery. The significant increase in mean scores and mastery percentage indicates that this strategy is highly effective in enhancing both students' achievement and engagement in learning English vocabulary.

3.2. Discussion

This study examined the effectiveness of using authentic materials, particularly poster advertisement images, in improving students' vocabulary mastery through two cycles of Classroom Action Research. The findings indicate that the initial implementation in Cycle 1 did not achieve the expected results, as most students were still passive, less motivated, and unable to reach the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75, with only 17 students passing. This suggests that although the materials were contextual, the lack of engaging visual elements limited students' interest and vocabulary acquisition.

After reflection, improvements were made in Cycle 2 by integrating more attractive and meaningful visual posters. This modification significantly enhanced students' engagement, participation, and motivation during the learning process. As a result, students' performance improved substantially, with 42 students successfully achieving the KKM. These findings confirm that visual-based authentic materials help students connect vocabulary with real-life contexts, making learning more meaningful and effective.

The results are in line with previous theories and studies. Peacock (1997) and Jeremy Harmer (2007) emphasize that authentic materials increase learners' motivation by presenting real-life language use. Similarly, Alqahtani (2021) highlights the importance of visual aids in enhancing vocabulary retention, while Sari and Rahmawati (2022) argue that visual materials improve students' cognitive engagement. Furthermore, this study supports previous findings by Nurlia (2023) and Marpaung & Situmeang (2023), which demonstrate the effectiveness of authentic materials in vocabulary learning.

In conclusion, the use of poster-based authentic materials proved to be effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery, as reflected in the significant increase in mean scores, the percentage of students achieving the KKM, and students' active participation in the classroom. These findings suggest that integrating visually engaging authentic materials is a practical and effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary learning.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted in class VII B of SMPN 1 Mataram, it can be concluded that the use of authentic materials was effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery. This improvement was indicated by the increase in students' scores from the pre-test to the post-test in each cycle, as well as the improvement in the percentage of students who achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM).

In cycle 1, the students' vocabulary mastery had not yet met the success criteria, as some students were still adapting to the use of authentic materials. However, after revising the teaching strategy and improving the learning activities in cycle 2, a significant improvement was achieved. Most students showed better understanding of vocabulary,

including meaning, spelling, and usage in context, and the percentage of students who achieved the KKM reached the excellent category based on Sudjana's (2005) classification.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of authentic materials, particularly poster advertisements, successfully improved students' vocabulary mastery in class VII B of SMPN 1 Mataram, and the research objective was achieved in cycle 2.

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