



IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY USE IN SPEAKING THROUGHT CONTEXT-BASED DRAWING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This research aims to improve students' vocabulary use in speaking through context-based drawing activities. Many students at SMPN 3 Mare experience difficulties in understanding and using English vocabulary, especially nouns, verbs, and adjectives. This limitation hinders their ability to express ideas orally, understand teacher instructions, and participate confidently in classroom communication. Previous studies emphasize that speaking ability is strongly influenced by vocabulary mastery and that meaningful vocabulary learning must be contextualized to support real-life communication. Context-based drawing activities have been shown to increase students' engagement, creativity, and conceptual understanding by visualizing language in familiar contexts. Therefore, this study applies context-based drawing as a strategy to help students practice using vocabulary meaningfully while describing their drawings orally. Using a classroom action research design, data were collected through observations, speaking tests, and interviews. The results showed that the use of context-based drawing activities significantly improved students' recall, accuracy, and fluency in speaking. Students became more confident in constructing sentences and were better able to identify and use vocabulary according to its grammatical category. The results showed that context-based drawing activities were effective in creating a more engaging learning atmosphere and improving vocabulary use in speaking. This method can serve as an alternative learning strategy for English teachers to support active communication and meaningful vocabulary learning.

Keywords: vocabulary mastery, speaking skill, context-based drawing, English learning, junior high school.

Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is the activity of mastering or the ability to understand and use words in spoken and written language. Vocabulary mastery is very important because having more vocabulary makes communication and receiving information easier. Vocabulary can even be used as a measurement of a person's intelligence. Knowledge of vocabulary is defined as the variety of words that are used as a reference for language skills. This ability includes the ability to understand the meaning, nuances, and connotations of certain words and to use them appropriately so that they can convey the intended message. The ability of students to master synonyms, antonyms, and the meaning of terms is assessed. (Fitri, 2023).¹ Previous studies have highlighted that speaking ability contributes to students' confidence, global competence, and overall language proficiency. However, effective speaking cannot be achieved without adequate vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary serves as the linguistic foundation for constructing meaning, forming sentences, and conveying messages

¹ Tira Nur Fitria, "Using Word Search Puzzle in Improving Students' English Vocabulary: A Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of English in Academic and Professional Communication* 9, no. 2 (2023): 53–71, <https://doi.org/10.25047/jeapco.v9i2.3927>.

clearly. When students lack vocabulary, they have difficulty understanding instructions, expressing ideas, and actively participating in communication practices.

In the context of EFL Indonesia, vocabulary remains one of the most challenging components for junior high school students. Mastering foreign language vocabulary is one of the most difficult aspects of language acquisition. Lack of motivation and interest in learning, as well as difficulty in remembering new vocabulary, (Nurya et al 2023).¹ Observations conducted at SMPN 3 Mare revealed that many students experience serious limitations in understanding and using vocabulary in speaking activities. Students often memorize vocabulary lists without understanding their contextual meanings, making it difficult for them to apply the words in oral communication. They also have difficulty identifying basic word classes such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, making it difficult for them to construct sentences such as describing family members or daily activities. Limited exposure to English outside the classroom and a lack of engaging teaching strategies further contribute to students' poor performance in vocabulary usage. According to (Fitria, 2023), Many students are not interested in learning vocabulary seriously, and they often face problems when trying to understand and remember new words. At SMAN 1 Ambawang, Kubu Raya, Because of their limited English knowledge, most students have trouble understanding the meaning of the vocabulary in English. This condition makes it difficult for students to use vocabulary in sentences to express their ideas, convey explanations from teachers in English lessons, and understand the meaning of English vocabulary.²

To address this issue, innovative and meaningful learning strategies are needed. Recent research shows that contextual and visual-based approaches can significantly improve vocabulary learning by connecting words to real-life experiences and meaningful situations. One promising strategy is context-based drawing activities, which integrate drawing tasks with contextual language use. Through drawing, students visualize real-world situations and then describe their drawings orally. This process helps students internalize vocabulary, develop conceptual understanding, and improve speaking fluency. Experts argue that such activities increase motivation, stimulate creativity, and encourage deeper meaning processing.

Although there is evidence supporting contextual and visual learning, the use of context-based drawing activities in improving vocabulary use in speaking has not been widely explored, especially at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether context-based drawing activities can improve students' vocabulary use in speaking. By connecting linguistic input with students' real-life contexts and creative visual expressions, this method is expected to provide a more meaningful and effective learning experience. It is anticipated that the results of this investigation will make useful contributions for English teachers in choosing innovative strategies to improve vocabulary mastery and speaking performance in the classroom.

Research Method

In this research, the author conducted a pre-experimental study using a one-group pre-test post-test design. In this design, there is no control group and the students are given experimental instructions or treatments for a period of time. The pre-test, treatment and post. Before treating the students, the writer gives them a pretest in order to determine their basic vocabulary acquisition. Then the writer gives six times of treatment to help students figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar word that found in narrative text through guessing from context. The last, the writer give a post test to find out the effect of the treatment in increasing students' vocabulary. in this study the researcher use a research instrument in the

² Fitria, "Using Word Search Puzzle in Improving Students' English Vocabulary: A Systematic Literature Review."

form of a speaking test specifically designed to assess students' vocabulary use in the context of speaking, this test is in the form of a monologue that is adjusted to the context that has been studied by the students¹

Result

Data analysis of the students Pre-test and Post-test Scores

1. Pre-test

Pre-test is given before the researcher gave the treatment or teaching vocabulary use in speaking through context based drawing activities. The result of the pre-test shown in table below:

Table The Result of Students' Pre-Test

No.	Students' name	Score
1.	PS	57
2.	DA	73
3.	NAS	63
4.	TA	33
5.	ARA	73
6.	AK	76
7.	AD	70
8.	MAR	73
9.	AA	33
10.	AM	30
11.	MARU	50
12.	NI	70
13.	SB	53
14.	SR	60
15.	IS	70
16.	MF	17
17.	JAT	53
18.	SN	50
19.	RI	43
20.	SY	60

Table The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Pre-Test Score

No.	Score	Classification	Pre-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage
1.	85-100	Very Good	0	0%
2.	70-84	Good	7	35%
3.	55-69	Fair	4	20%
4.	40-54	Poor	5	25%
5.	0-39	Very Poor	4	20%
Total			20	100%

Based on the table above, it could be seen that the score of students' vocabulary test in the pre-test showed that from 20 students, 7 students (35%) in good category, 4 students (20%) in fair category, 5 students (25%) in poor category, and 4 students (20%) in very poor category.

2. Treatment

In the first meeting, the instruction focused on introducing vocabulary related to objects commonly found in students' surroundings. Students were asked to draw objects they frequently encountered, such as classroom items or objects from their home environment. After completing the drawings, the teacher enriched students' vocabulary by introducing word variations and relevant synonyms. Students then described their drawings orally using more than one lexical option, allowing their basic vocabulary range to begin to develop.

The second meeting was directed toward developing descriptive vocabulary for describing people, including physical appearance and personal characteristics. Through drawing familiar individuals, students were encouraged to use a wider range of vocabulary with the support of synonym lists and alternative expressions provided by the teacher. Speaking activities were conducted in pairs to give students opportunities to practice varied vocabulary use in a communicative context.

In the third meeting, the focus of instruction shifted to describing places. Students drew specific locations such as schools, parks, or markets and explained their drawings orally. The teacher emphasized the use of varied descriptive vocabulary, including adjectives and supporting phrases, to expand students' vocabulary range in describing environments and situations.

The fourth meeting focused on vocabulary related to daily activities and situations. Students drew particular activities and described them using various verbs and adverbial expressions. The teacher actively encouraged students to replace repetitive vocabulary with synonyms or alternative expressions, resulting in more varied and contextualized vocabulary use.

In the fifth meeting, students integrated all previously learned vocabulary through storytelling activities based on a sequence of drawings. This activity required students to combine different types of vocabulary within a coherent oral context. The teacher provided feedback on the diversity of vocabulary used and assisted students in improving inappropriate word choices.

The sixth meeting served as both an evaluation and reflection stage. Students presented their drawings orally, emphasizing the use of varied and contextually appropriate vocabulary. The assessment focused primarily on vocabulary range, including lexical variety, the use of synonyms, and the relevance of vocabulary to the speaking context. Through this series of instructional sessions, context-based drawing activities were expected to enhance students' ability to use vocabulary more extensively and effectively in speaking.³

3. Post test

Post-test is given after the researcher gave the treatment or teaching vocabulary use in speaking through context-based drawing activities. The result of the pre-test shown in table below:

³ Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, "Improving of EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency through Speaking Activities inside and Outside the Classroom: A Theoretical Review," *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal* 2, no. 2 (2017): 73–83.

Table The Result of Students' Post-test

No.	Students' name	Score
1.	PS	93
2.	DA	93
3.	NAS	93
4.	TA	83
5.	ARA	93
6.	AK	87
7.	AD	87
8.	MAR	90
9.	AA	83
10.	AM	83
11.	MARU	87
12.	NI	97
13.	SB	83
14.	SR	90
15.	IS	97
16.	MF	90
17.	JAT	90
18.	SN	83
19.	RI	90
20.	SY	90

Table The Frequency and Percentage of Stdudents' Post-Test Score

No.	Score	Classification	Pre-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage
1.	85-100	Very Good	13	65%
2.	70-84	Good	7	35%
3.	55-69	Fair	0	0%
4.	40-54	Poor	0	0%
5.	0-39	Very Poor	0	0%
Total			20	100%

Based on the table above, it could be seen that the score of students' vocabulary test in the post-test showed that from 20 students, 13 students (65%) in very good category, and 7 students (35%) in good category. Furthermore, based on the data above it shows that among the 20 students experienced an increase, where the score on the pre-test was on average below the KKM, while the results of the post-test of 20 students all experienced an increase and their scores were above the KKM. That is, student scores on the post-test are better than student scores on the pre-test. Descriptive statistics comparison of pre-test and post-test.

Table Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PRE-TEST	20	17	76	55.35	16.925
POST-TEST	20	77	97	87.95	5.772
Valid N (listwise)	20				

The table showed mean of post-test scores (87.95) was higher than pre-test scores (55.35). It explained that used speaking through context based activities students score better than previous score in pre-test, meanwhile pre-test standard deviation was 16.925 and post-test standard deviation was 5.772. So, we can be concluded that score increase after being taught by used speaking through context based activities.

Based on the quantitative data presented in the table, the results indicate a clear improvement in students' vocabulary use in speaking after the implementation of the instructional treatment. Out of 20 students, 13 students (65%) achieved a *very good* level of performance, while the remaining 7 students (35%) were categorized as *good* in the post-test. No students fell into the fair or poor categories, indicating an overall positive learning outcome. Furthermore, the comparison between pre-test and post-test results shows that all students experienced an increase in their vocabulary scores. The average pre-test score was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), whereas all students achieved scores above the KKM in the post-test. This result demonstrates that students' vocabulary use in speaking improved significantly following the treatment, confirming that the instructional intervention effectively enhanced students' vocabulary performance.

The quantitative findings indicate that the instructional treatment resulted in a significant improvement in students' vocabulary use in speaking. The post-test results show that all students achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), with 65% of the students categorized as *very good* and the remaining 35% categorized as *good*. This distribution suggests not only overall improvement but also a high level of vocabulary performance among the majority of students after the intervention.

The improvement from pre-test to post-test demonstrates that the learning activities effectively addressed students' initial limitations in vocabulary use. In the pre-test, students' average scores were below the KKM, indicating insufficient ability to apply vocabulary in speaking. After the implementation of the instructional treatment, students were able to use vocabulary more appropriately and variably in oral communication. This finding suggests that the instructional approach successfully facilitated the transition from limited vocabulary knowledge to more productive vocabulary use.

The increase in students' vocabulary performance can be attributed to the nature of the instructional treatment, which emphasized contextualized practice and active language use. By engaging students in speaking tasks that required them to apply vocabulary meaningfully, the learning process supported deeper vocabulary retention and more effective retrieval during speaking activities. As a result, students demonstrated improved ability to select relevant words and express ideas more clearly.

Furthermore, the fact that all students showed improvement indicates that the instructional intervention was effective across different proficiency levels. The absence of

students in the low or insufficient category in the post-test suggests that the learning activities provided adequate support and opportunities for all learners to develop their vocabulary use in speaking. This finding aligns with the view that vocabulary development is more effective when learners are exposed to repeated and meaningful use of words in communicative contexts.

Overall, the post-test results confirm that the instructional treatment had a positive impact on students' vocabulary use in speaking. The significant improvement observed supports the effectiveness of the applied teaching strategy and highlights its potential to enhance students' speaking performance. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that contextualized vocabulary instruction can be an effective approach to improving students' vocabulary use in speaking.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the instructional treatment implemented in the speaking class was effective in improving students' vocabulary use in speaking. The quantitative findings demonstrate a clear improvement in students' performance, as all students achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) in the post-test. The distribution of post-test results, with the majority of students categorized as *very good* and the rest as *good*, indicates that students were able to use vocabulary more appropriately and variably in oral communication.

The improvement observed from the pre-test to the post-test confirms that the learning activities successfully addressed students' initial limitations in vocabulary use. Prior to the intervention, students showed insufficient ability to apply vocabulary in speaking. After the instructional treatment, students demonstrated better vocabulary selection, clearer expression of ideas, and improved speaking performance. This finding suggests that the instructional approach facilitated a meaningful shift from limited vocabulary knowledge to more productive vocabulary use.

Furthermore, the consistent improvement among all students indicates that the instructional treatment was effective across different levels of proficiency. The absence of students in the low-performance category in the post-test suggests that the learning activities provided sufficient support and opportunities for all learners to develop their vocabulary use in speaking. This outcome highlights the importance of contextualized and communicative vocabulary practice in speaking instruction.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide strong evidence that contextualized vocabulary instruction is an effective approach to enhancing students' vocabulary use in speaking. Therefore, this approach is recommended for English language teachers as an alternative strategy to improve students' speaking performance, particularly in EFL contexts where vocabulary limitation remains a major challenge.

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