

Developing EFL Vocabulary Through Flashcards at Secondary Level in District Sahiwal, Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper attempts to enhance EFL vocabulary through flashcards at the secondary level in District Sahiwal. This research aims to show how flashcards help students to enhance their EFL vocabulary at the secondary level. For this purpose, classroom action research is used as a research methodology that includes planning, acting, observation, and reflection. It is quantitative research. Data has been collected from 10 students at a government school in Sahiwal that consists of one pre-test and two post-tests as series 1 and series 2. The mean score is applied to analyze data. From the findings, the mean result of the pre-test is 24.8 which consists of the traditional method. After applying flashcards, the result of post-test series 1 is 33.9, and series 2 is 43.9. The results conclude that by using flashcards learners took more interest in language learning. The result of post-test series 2 is higher than series 1 and the pretest. It shows that flashcards help learners to improve their EFL vocabulary.

Keywords

Flashcards, EFL Vocabulary, Learners, Language, Developing.

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Introduction:

English is now taught in every country from elementary school through college. It is the universal language. English is the common language used to communicate with people all around the world. As they are aware that English is a foreign language, students utilize it to communicate with people all over the world. The EFL vocabulary is the primary building block of the English language.

Learners and Teachers can improve their English by using correct and adequate vocabulary. Prozesky (2000) says, Learning is the process by which we learn informally by using

our day-by-day experience: these informal experiences change our thinking and acting process. This is because both are essential for learners to accept new knowledge. The learning process cannot better develop without teaching. Moreover, learners cannot develop their ability in new language knowledge without learning.

Vocabulary is a crucial aspect of a language that helps learners to learn a foreign language as claimed by Hatch and Brown (1995:1). Vocabulary is a set of words with meanings that enable us to verbally convey our thoughts and emotions. So, one of the most essential aspects of learning English is vocabulary. Due to improper vocabulary development techniques, learners are having trouble to enhancing their EFL vocabulary. There are various methods for developing EFL vocabulary such as card games, pictures, word games, and stick figures. The Researchers have a new technique for developing EFL vocabulary by using flashcards. Flashcards enable learners in memorizing information for long-term memory and acquiring their vocabulary.

A flashcard is a collection of cards that is used for studying written objects or things. Flashcard is a small piece of paper that is usually used as an educational tool, Flashcards help learners to increase the collection and concentration method for studying new EFL vocabulary in English, According to Cross (1991). At the Secondary level, flashcards help learners effectively to improve their vocabulary. The objective of this study is to use flashcards to enhance the EFL vocabulary of secondary learners in District Sahiwal.

Statement of Problem:

Poor vocabulary is one of the major problems that non-native speakers face while communicating either listening or speaking, as vocabulary is the main component of a language. Learning English vocabulary is a challenging task for EFL learners.

Research Questions:

- How can Flashcards prove to be helpful for improving vocabulary of EFL learners?
- How do Flashcards help learners in more effective acquisition of language?

Literature Review:

The most crucial skill in language acquisition is vocabulary. Learners can learn their vocabulary more accurately by using flashcards. Linguists and Educationists conclude that learners can learn more by using flashcards than the other methods of improving vocabulary. This method has a deep impact on all learners who follow this method for improving vocabulary permanently in a short time duration.

Mastery of vocabulary of a second language is an ambitious goal according to the nation. Khiyabani, Ghonsooly & Ghabanchi (2014) have researched teaching vocabulary through multimedia. The purpose of this research is to find out whether multimedia proves to be helpful in improving vocabulary or not. The participant has been categorized into two different groups; the experimental group and the other is control group each with 28 members. The Experimental group has been provided with the treatment and according to the findings, the use of multimedia proves to be helpful in improving vocabulary as an experimental group has shown improvements in vocabulary.

According to Aslan (2011), in addition to being very enjoyable, flashcards are also very effective as well. So, he has researched teaching vocabulary by using flashcards. In his research, he has discussed the effectiveness of flashcards in the acquisition of the English language. This research has been done on the students of primary schools in Konya, Turkey. A total of 20 students have participated in this research of which 11 are male and 9 are female. According to the findings, it has been concluded that flashcards are helpful for the effective acquisition of the English language.

Komachali & Khodareza (2012), investigated the effects of flashcards on vocabulary mastery in an Iranian university. Two groups have been taken to carry out the research; an experimental group and a control group, each group with 25 members in it. While control group is not been provided with the treatment through flashcards and the experimental group has been provided with the treatment. By comparing the posttest mean scores it has been concluded that flashcard vocabulary can improve as the mean scores of experimental groups increase.

Sitompul (2013), says that because of the benefits of flashcards they are shown as very obliging. He has also done research work on teaching vocabulary through flashcards and wordlist. This research has been carried out on fifty grades. Control group and the other is experimental group have been taken for this experimental research. The experimental group received the treatment however treatment is not been provided to the control group. According to the findings, the vocabulary mastery of the experimental group increased.

Wardani (2015), says that students need to have a vast vocabulary to communicate well. So, in order to improve vocabulary, he has done research work on improving vocabulary mastery through the strategy of word mapping. The research has been carried out in the accounting department at State vocational school. This is class action research. This research is comprised of two cycles of four meetings. The total number of students who have participated in this work is

34. Pre-test and the post-tests have been conducted and according to the findings, the world map strategy proves to be useful in improving the vocabulary.

Aulia (2016), says that students' capability in English vocabulary is low because they do not get the meanings of words and find it difficult. So, to overcome this problem he has researched improving students' vocabulary mastery through flashcards. This research has been done in seventh grade. It is classroom action research. And 30 students are participants in this research. Two cycles have been carried out in his research. Findings show that flashcards prove to be helpful for the development of students' vocabulary.

Vocabulary development can help students in their study of English, according to Hidayat (2016). He has done research work to improve the vocabulary by using word games. This research has been carried out at students of 7th grade in junior high school. A total of 38 students has participated in this research

including 28 male and 10 females. Qualitative means have been used in the research in order to collect data. The collected data before the treatment shows the poor vocabulary of the students. After application of the treatment as the usage of games motivate the students so much that, the findings show that word game proves to be very helpful in improving vocabulary.

Fahmiati (2016), says that the use of word games as a medium to teach vocabulary has expected to motivate students in the learning process. Fahmiati has investigated the effectiveness of using word games in improving vocabulary mastery. This work has been carried out in the fifth grade of Tarbiyatul Islamiyah Islamic Elementary school. The results of the research work show an improvement in the results of pre and post-test. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that word games are effective in improving the vocabulary mastery of EFL and ESL learners.

Saputri and mardila (2017), have researched to investigate whether using flashcards proves to be effective in increasing students' vocabulary mastery or not. This research has been done on students in kindergarten and it is class action research. The pre and post-test have been carried out. On the basis of the findings of the research, it has been concluded that flashcards prove to be helpful in increasing vocabulary as the null hypothesis has been rejected because the significance level is been above 0.05.

Farida, Isrina & Apsari (2019), have done research work to enhance the EFL vocabulary mastery of the learners through flashcards. This work has been done on the students of 7th grade of MTs Nurul Islam. For data collection, 30 learners are the participants of this work. This work has been done in two cycles. And the score is given to the students on various aspects like meaning spelling and use of words. After getting findings, it has been concluded that flashcards prove to help improve vocabulary.

Research Methodology:

This research is conducted at a secondary-level government school in District Sahiwal. Ten students from the tenth grade have been selected for this research because they are already familiar with English vocabulary and grammar. At this level, learners also can construct sentences and interpret texts. The Researchers are used the classroom Action Research method in this research.

According to Ferrance (2000), action research is a reflective technique that has been applied to the investigation and discussion of "research." Action research is the collaborative process between coworkers for identifying and resolving day-to-day issues that arise in classes or schools. The Researchers collect qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data shows the learner's skill in learning vocabulary with the help of two tests, that is the pretest and the posttest. Learners' marks were analyzed by searching the obtained marks in the pretest, post-test₁, and post- test 2. The purpose of using the mean score for every test is to find out the learner's effectiveness in understanding EFL vocabulary. The test results are the explanation that Flashcard is helpful for learning EFL vocabulary.

The following formula has been provided by Ngadiso (2013:5-7; quoted in Parmawati, A, & Yugafiati, 2017) for finding the mean score and calculating the average for both the pre-test and post-test:

In this formula,

M=Mean score

$\sum x =$ Total score N=Total student

This method is advantageous if all the learners gave a positive response of the experiment. If they gave a negative response and the score of post-tests is less than the pre-test, then the method is unsuccessful.

Theoretical framework:

The theoretical framework is the building block pattern that demonstrates the whole structure of any research paper. It also provides the main idea to the learner and interprets the whole data.

Atmaja, A.S.K.& Sonia, G., (2020) have done a research paper on improving vocabulary skills. They have written about flashcards to improve EFL vocabulary skills in the seventh class of junior high school learners in Katapang. Their research paper is most similar to this research paper and also gave many concepts and ideas which are helpful to this research paper. According to them, flashcards are a crucial tool for learning vocabulary and serve as authentic content to aid the learning of second languages. The core of both language learning and language coaching is EFL vocabulary. Recent studies have focused a lot of attention on language learners' grammar issues. For instance, grammar issues are typically a concern in communication.

Data Collection:

Data collection is a technique that has been used for the collection of data by conducting pre-test and post-tests. In this research, data has been collected from 10 students. One pre-test and two series of posttests have been conducted. The data collection of these tests is given in the table below:

Table 1: Data collection of pre-test and post-tests (series 1,2)

| Sr. no | Students | Pretest score | Posttest score (series 1) | Posttest score (Series 2) | Gain Score |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Student 1 | 26 | 34 | 42 | 16 |
| 2. | Student 2 | 28 | 36 | 45 | 17 |
| 3. | Student 3 | 18 | 28 | 39 | 21 |
| 4. | Student 4 | 31 | 40 | 48 | 17 |
| 5. | Student 5 | 27 | 35 | 47 | 20 |
| 6. | Student 6 | 18 | 27 | 36 | 18 |
| 7. | Student 7 | 21 | 29 | 39 | 18 |
| 8. | Student 8 | 24 | 35 | 48 | 24 |
| 9. | Student 9 | 30 | 39 | 48 | 18 |
| 10. | Student 10 | 25 | 36 | 47 | 22 |
| Total score | | 248 | 339 | 439 | 191 |
| Minimum Score | | 18 | 27 | 36 | 16 |
| Maximum Score | | 31 | 40 | 48 | 24 |
| Mean Score | | 24.8 | 33.9 | 43.9 | 19.1 |

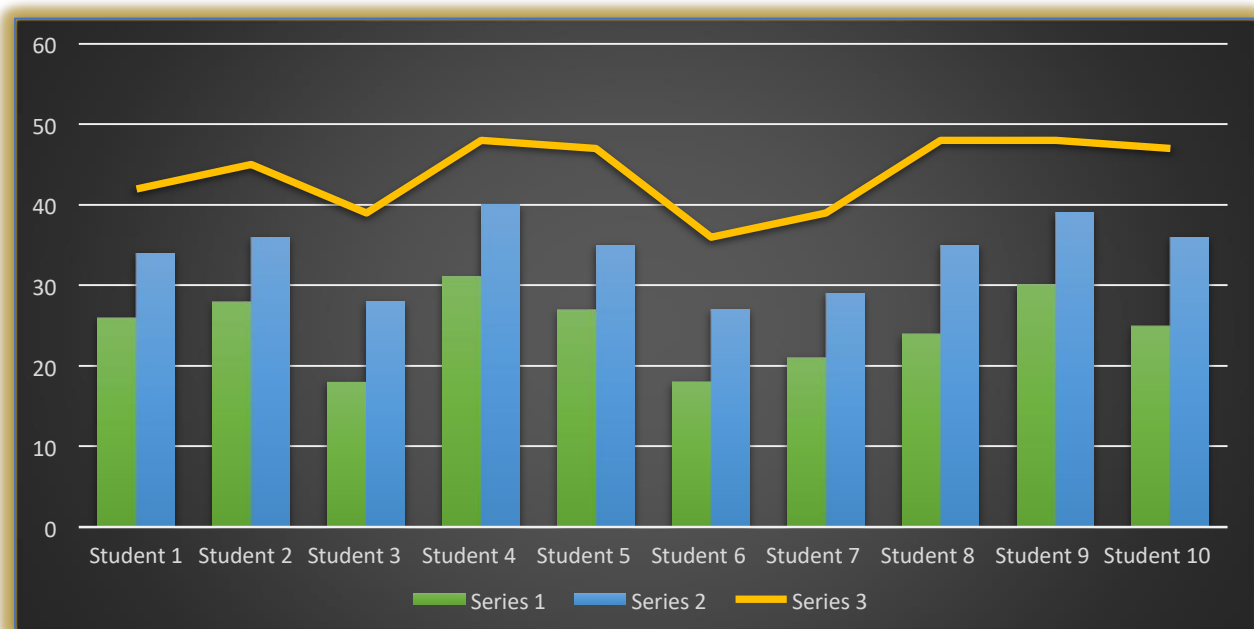
Scores of pre and the post-tests (series 1, series 2) for improving EFL vocabulary:

This table shows the results of the pre-test and the post-tests. The pre-test shows the capability of learners before applying the Flashcard. The researchers selected 10 students for the experiment and takes a test of 50 scores in the pre-test and both series of post-tests. The researchers conduct a test of 50 marks in the pre-test until the post-test. In the pretest, student 4 obtained 31 scores out of 50 and other students have minimum scores than student 4. The researchers applied the flashcards to them for 20 days. After the pretest, the researchers conduct the posttest, where student 9 gets a maximum score of 39/50. The researchers decided to take another post-test. where the post-test (series 1) was used as a pre-test. In the post-test (series 2), students become more active, and 3 students, students 4,8,9 got 48 marks out of 50. Post-tests are greater than the pre-test. This improvement clearly shows the use of flashcards for EFL learners in the Sahiwal District becomes helpful for them to improve their EFL vocabulary.

Data Analysis:

After data collection, the second step is to analyze these data. Data analysis is the procedure that recalls the data, contracts the data in a meaningful way, and systemized the data. The data analysis is maybe descriptive and prospective analysis. In this way, data collection of pre-test and post-tests have been analyzed in data analysis. The data collection after using the flashcards shows the achievements of learners. The data analysis of the pre-test and post-test series (1,2) is given below:

Graph: Analysis of pretest and post-test (series 1) and the post-test (series 2)



This chart shows the improvement in learners` EFL vocabulary skills through the use of flashcards. In this chart, the green color shows the capability of learners before applying the flashcards. The green color shows the scores of the pre-test and blue color shows the result of the post-test in (series 1) after applying the flashcard, and the yellow color shows the post-test (series 2). The average score of post-test series 2 is greater than the post-test series 1 and pre-test. After the observation, (pre-test), the researchers apply flashcards to them and apply the four steps of classroom action research. After

conducting the post-test in series 1, the researchers have found some improvements and also some problems. The researchers apply the post-test series 2. After 20 days, the average score of post-test series 2 is greater than the others. This chart shows the improvement after applying the flashcards to learners to enhance their EFL vocabulary. After applying the flashcards, all learners gave positive improvement in their vocabulary skills. Now, these learners are able to identify the words and make accurate sentences easily. Three students out of ten get 48/50 marks in the posttest (series 2) and the remaining students also have good average marks. It clearly indicates that by flashcards, learners can improve their EFL vocabulary skills in a very short time.

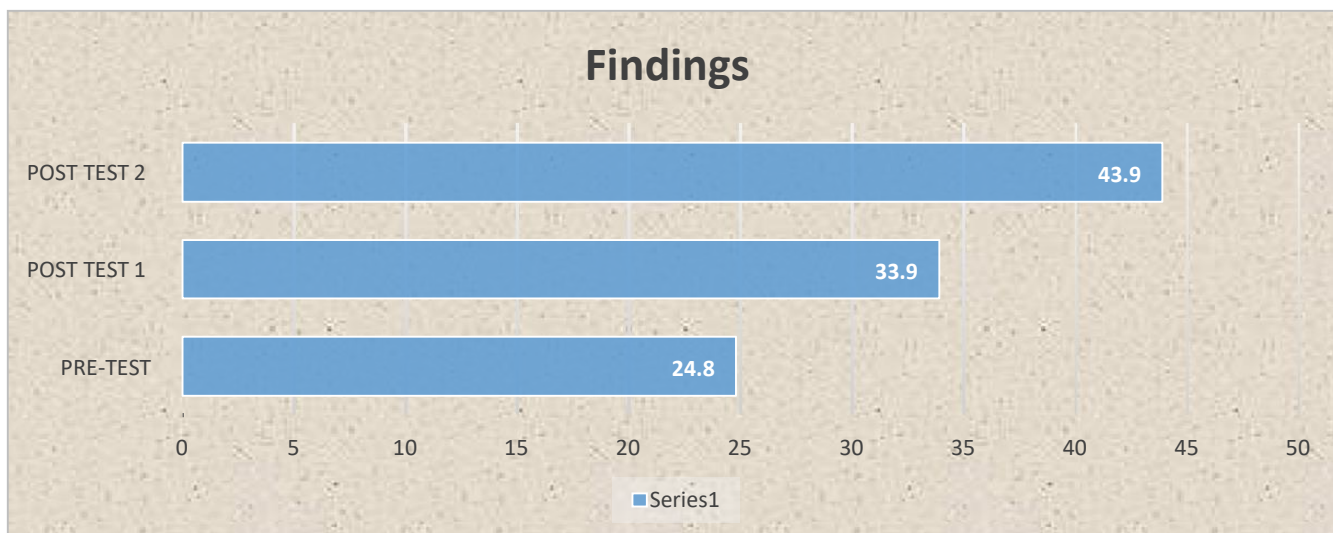
Findings:

After analyze the findings, the researchers have come to the conclusion that employing flashcards in class instruction enables students to quickly advance their EFL vocabulary skills. This research shows that learners who are extremely weak in their vocabulary skills, also in the English language, can improve their vocabulary by using flashcards in their study. Results of the Pre-test, and post-tests (series 1,2) show the improvements in learners’ vocabulary mastery. These improvements are shown in the table below:

| Types of tests | Pretest | Posttest (series1) | Posttest (series 2) |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Total | 248 | 339 | 439 |
| Mean Score | 24.8 | 33.9 | 43.9 |
| Increase Mean score | - | 9.1 | 19.1 |

This table shows the results of the finding of observation and test, pre-test until post-tests. Before the experimental test, the mean of the pre-test is 24.8. The mean score of post- tests 1 is 33.9 and post-test 2 is 43.9 which is greater than the pre-test. This achievement encourages learners to learn more and more. By implementing flashcards on learners, their vocabulary increases and they also store it in their long-term memory.

Chart: Finding results of pre-test, post-test 1, post-test 2



This chart shows the mean score of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. In the pre-test, the researchers used the traditional method without flashcards. Most learners are not enthusiastic and not active during the pre-test. The Mean score of the pretest is 24.8. After the pretest, the researchers apply flashcards to them for 20 days, and learners become active and take interest in this study. The mean score of a post-test(series1) is 33.9 which is greater than the pre-test. After series 1, the researchers find some improvements in learners and also find some problems. Then researchers take the post-test 2. The mean score of the post-test (series 2) is higher than the pretest and post- test 1. Finally, the researchers concluded that on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data that consist of pre-tests and post-tests, flashcards are very helpful for improving learners' EFL vocabulary skills. Therefore, the method of applying flashcards became successful in this research.

Significance of Research:

This research is very profitable for those learners, who want to improve their EFL vocabulary in a short time and store their vocabulary permanently in their minds. There are numerous methods for improving EFL vocabulary, one of them being flashcards. Flashcards help to improve learners' vocabulary. By using flashcards students can memorize things easily and save them for their long-term memory. Flashcards are a very interesting and attractive way for learning, learners can take their self-test of vocabulary by using them. A flashcard is a simple and small paper piece that can be used on both sides. Learners can use flashcards for grammatical structure, review vocabulary, and practice words. Haycraft (1978:102) and Cross (1991:120) say Flashcards have many advantages for improving vocabulary skills, such as:1) A flashcard is very helpful and eye-catching.2) Learners can take flashcards everywhere even in their pockets or school bag. 3)Flashcards have a reasonable price and it is a less expensive technique. Flashcards are also helpful for teachers and the teaching process.

For students, learners can develop their EFL vocabulary by using Flashcards. Learners have difficulty in understanding of language because of their low vocabulary. They often consider the English language tough because of a lack of experience. So, they cannot produce interest in this language. But when learners use flashcards, they can understand EFL vocabulary. They take interest in the English language because Flashcards are very attractive and interesting techniques for improving vocabulary. They do not feel bored by using this technique and take more interest in understanding vocabulary. So, flashcards are a very effective way for learners to learn vocabulary.

For Teachers, flashcards help teachers for improving students' vocabulary and their understanding of learning English easily. The teacher can improve students' understanding and learning of vocabulary with this new technique. The teacher advises learners to learn vocabulary by using flashcards. The teacher used this method in the class. Instructors are able to employ flashcards to illustrate concepts with cards and images. EFL vocabulary is the basic component of language learning. It is the main object of many studies.

The following Diagram shows the uses of flashcards in several ways:

| <u>Front side</u> | <u>Back Side</u> | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <u>Prefix:</u> | <u>Meaning:</u> | <u>Examples:</u> |
| <u>re-</u> | again | rewrite |
| <u>un-</u> | not | unkind |
| <u>pre-</u> | before | premade |

This diagram shows that flashcards are a very fruitful tool for improving EFL vocabulary. Learners can write the main heading or definition of the text on the front side of the flashcard, and write the meaning and examples of definition on the back side of the flashcard. Flashcard is an enjoyable source for learning EFL vocabulary for learners.

Conclusion:

This research is to explain, how the flashcards help to improve the EFL vocabulary at the secondary level students in District Sahiwal. Regarding this study above with the data analysis, data collection, and finding results, it clearly shows that by using Flashcards, now learners are able to enhance their vocabulary skills, and they store this vocabulary in long-term memory. Ultimately, the researchers succeeded in this study and gained positive responses. The advantages that are expected from this study are given as 1) to provide extra information to the other education researchers dealing with vocabulary. 2) to provide extra knowledge to learners to search for the most benefit able method to develop their EFL vocabulary at the secondary level. 3) to provide additional knowledge to teachers and learners about the qualities and effectiveness of flashcard to develop learners EFL vocabulary.

This research shows the importance of flashcards for improving vocabulary skills. Learners feel difficulties in their vocabulary and the English language. It clearly shows in the mean score of the pre-test, which is 24.8 when the researchers do not apply Flashcards to them. After applying flashcards to them for 20 days, their achievement increases from 24.8 to 33.9. Then researchers apply series 2 to them, and now their achievements are 43.9. So, the conclusion is that flashcards are a very helpful method for learners to improve their vocabulary skills.

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