



The Whole Brain Teaching for Students' Vocabulary Mastery Classroom Action Research at Junior High School

Fita Faridah^{*1}, Mukhtarul Anam¹², Riryng Fatmawaty²³, Lailiya Efrida Putri³⁴

*** fitafaridah@unisla.ac.id, mukhtarulanam@unisla.ac.id, riryngfatmawaty@unisla.ac.id**

¹²³⁴ Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Universitas Islam Lamongan, Lamongan, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Mastering vocabulary is a fundamental step in learning a foreign language. This study investigates the Whole Brain Teaching (WBT) is teaching method in improving vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students at SMPI Tanfirul Ghoyyi. The research problem addressed is: How does the Whole Brain Teaching method improve students' vocabulary mastery at the junior high school level? The objective of this study is to explore how the application of WBT can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles. The data were collected through vocabulary tests and observation checklists. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' performance, where the percentage of students who met the minimum score criteria increased from 41.17% in Cycle I to 82.35% in Cycle II. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the Whole Brain Teaching method effectively improves vocabulary mastery. The key teaching steps applied included Class-Yes, Five Classroom Rules, Teach-Okay, Scoreboard, Hands and Eyes, Switch, and Mirror. This study suggests that WBT can be a practical and engaging strategy to enhance vocabulary learning at the junior high school level, and it is recommended for future researchers to adopt or adapt this method as a reference in similar contexts.

Keywords: Whole Brain Teaching, Vocabulary Mastery, Classroom Action Research

INTRODUCTION

In today's educational landscape, language acquisition remains a crucial area of focus for educators, particularly in a globalized world where proficiency in a second or foreign language has become increasingly important. Among the various skills required for effective communication, vocabulary mastery is arguably the most fundamental. It serves as the foundation for listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Niemi, 2017). Vocabulary is not only critical in the early stages of language learning but also influences students' ability to comprehend and produce complex language structures later on (Snow, 2010). However, the growing challenge faced by students worldwide, particularly in Indonesia, is the lack of vocabulary retention and the inability to recall words in fluent speech or writing. Despite educational advances, many students in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia continue to struggle with vocabulary learning (Bachari, 2020). This highlights the pressing need for effective pedagogical methods that can address this challenge.

The importance of improving vocabulary retention is underscored by global trends indicating that language proficiency is linked to educational and professional success. For instance, in Indonesia, English proficiency is increasingly regarded as a key skill for career advancement and access to global opportunities (Yunus & Rizal, 2019). Yet, according to recent reports by the British Council (2021), Indonesia ranks low in global English proficiency tests. One of the primary reasons identified for this gap is insufficient vocabulary mastery among students. As such, vocabulary acquisition is not only an academic goal but also a necessity for bridging the gap between Indonesia's education system and the global workforce.



In response to the need for more effective vocabulary teaching strategies, educators have begun to explore various innovative teaching methods. Among these, the Whole Brain Teaching (WBT) method, developed by Chriss Biffle, has gained significant attention. This method integrates several brain-based learning strategies that engage students in interactive and dynamic learning processes, making the learning experience more memorable and effective (Biffle, 2013). While WBT has been applied in various contexts, its effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary mastery, particularly in middle school students, remains underexplored. The WBT method, known for its structured and engaging approach, may hold the key to solving the challenges of vocabulary retention and fluency.

The main issue underlying this research is the limited use of WBT in the specific context of vocabulary acquisition, especially at the eighth-grade level, where students typically face the most difficulty with memorizing and using new words effectively. Despite previous studies on WBT's effectiveness in other areas of language learning, such as speaking and grammar (Putra, 2021; Devana, 2020), there is still a lack of research focused on its impact on vocabulary mastery. This gap in research becomes more evident when considering the importance of vocabulary in the development of overall language proficiency.

Vocabulary learning is often approached in isolation from other language skills, leading to superficial memorization rather than long-term retention (Alqahtani, 2015). Furthermore, traditional methods of teaching vocabulary, such as rote memorization and isolated word lists, have proven to be less effective for long-term retention and practical application. This calls for a more holistic approach, such as the WBT method, which engages multiple cognitive processes and promotes active participation from students (Biffle, 2013). By involving students in physical movement, peer teaching, and interactive tasks, WBT offers a more engaging and dynamic way of reinforcing vocabulary acquisition.

Another challenge in the current educational context is the lack of alignment between teaching methods and the students' cognitive and emotional engagement. In traditional settings, students often experience disengagement or passivity, which can hinder their motivation and interest in learning new vocabulary (McKeown et al., 2014). The WBT method, however, is designed to address this issue by ensuring that students are active participants in their learning process. It incorporates elements of brain-based strategies that align with how the brain processes and retains information, making learning more effective and enjoyable (Biffle, 2013).

The need for this study is thus critical. By examining the impact of WBT on vocabulary mastery, this research seeks to fill an important gap in the existing literature and provide valuable insights into how this method can be used to improve students' vocabulary retention and fluency. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on how innovative teaching methods can be applied in middle school classrooms to foster more effective language learning.

The expected benefits of this research are twofold: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study will contribute to the understanding of how the Whole Brain Teaching method can be integrated into vocabulary instruction and the cognitive mechanisms it taps into for better retention and application of new words. Practically, the findings will provide educators with an evidence-based teaching strategy that they can use to enhance vocabulary learning in their classrooms. This can lead to improved language proficiency, increased student engagement, and ultimately, better academic outcomes in language acquisition.

The application of Whole Brain Teaching for vocabulary acquisition also holds promise for bridging the gap between theory and practice in language education. By creating an environment where students are actively involved in the learning process, this method could potentially transform the way vocabulary is taught in middle schools, leading to long-term improvements in language proficiency.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the Whole Brain Teaching method, with a specific focus on its principles and strategies that are directly applicable to vocabulary learning. The article will explore the theoretical background of WBT, the core principles that drive its effectiveness, and the specific strategies that can be employed to teach vocabulary more effectively. Additionally, it will examine how these strategies can be tailored to meet the needs of eighth-grade students, who often face significant challenges in vocabulary acquisition.

METHOD

Research design is the way how the writer collects and analyzes the data. Research design is a plan that determines how the data should be collected and analyzed. In this research, the writer using Classroom Action Research (CAR). Kemmis and Taggart (1988), stated that action research is a form of self-reflection research conducted by the writer to improve the quality of education itself. The CAR model used in this study was Kemmis and Taggart model. By using this model, an increase in understanding in making decisions can occur in writers in terms of education (Koshy 2010:5).

Population and Sample

The subjects of this study were students of SMPI Tanfirul Ghoyyi with a total of 60 students from grades VII - IX and the writer took research in grade VIII, totaling 17 active students. For this reason, the writer chose VIII grade, which is a middle class that has adapted well to the school environment, as well as their response is very good, so it will be easy for the writer to apply his methods in that class.

Research Instrument

The writer uses a qualitative data. Those are test (test I and test II), and systematic observation. The writer used students' test sheet to find out the students' unique talents in vocabulary mastery and the influence obtained will also determine students' abilities. Observation checklist aims to measure students' abilities both in terms of discipline and vocabulary skills which are formed into several types of checklist spaces, this is done to make it easier for writers to find out about students' habits, their basic abilities, and some of the causes of weaknesses that occur in students' vocabulary mastery skills.

Data Analysis

According to Mile and Huberman (1992) there are 3 types of analyzing the data.

Data reduction, it means from all the data collected, some of data which is accordance with the problem of the research and eliminate the useless data are taken or reduce.

1. *Display data*, it means the steps collects the important data and display them so that, the data can be read and understood easier.

2. *Drawing conclusions*, it means making conclusion based on the analysis of data presentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Priliminary Study

In the finding of preliminary study there are result of test, result the observation, reflecting and revise the research.

1). Result of the observation

Based on the observation the writer found many students have less vocabulary. It was known because they could not give some responses of the asking or question. The time for the writer entered the class found that just some students are in ready position to learning, another

of that the students just still in out with some reason like for go to the bath room or just want to have some rest.

The learning process was began, but the students still noisy and was not answer when the teacher asks them something about the lesson, just some students still keeps attention when the method was doing, if the vocabulary was drill, the students can't pronounced and spell although their name, an then in the last time just some students can finish tasks on time because they think that the task are very difficult for them, so much of them just gathered the task without full answer.

2). Reflecting

Reflection was carried out by the writer to evaluate the learning process that had occurred. And it shows that the results of the instrument and the method have not shown success so the writers apply the Whole Brain Teaching method in that class for the cycle I.

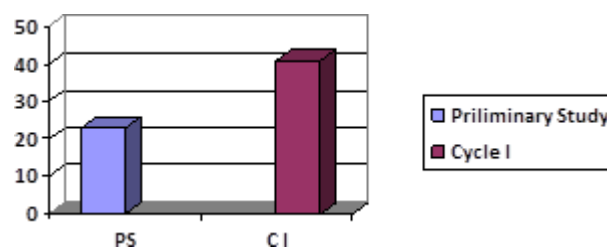
3). Revising

Based on the reflection results, the writer continued the research in cycle I, where in this case the writer only made changes to the learning method, namely initially only using the drill method to become Whole Brain Teaching so that the research results could reach the KKM score.

1. Cycle I

1). Result of Test

Table 1. Cycle I



From the data above it is shown that the result of the first test cycle is 41.17%, which means that it has not reached the KKM score that has been set, which is 70%. So, this research will be continued in cycle II.

2). Result of the Observation

the writers found that some students had started to want to change their bad habits, such as wanting to go to class when the teacher came, even though it did not show a significant difference, but had a gradual effect. Students who were initially silent when the teacher asked questions, they gradually began to want to learn and answer even if they could. The students also showed their enthusiasm when the Whole Brain Teaching method was started so that learning became fun, apart from these Reflection was carried out by the writer to evaluate the learning process that had occurred. And it shows that the results of the instrument and the method have not shown success so the writers apply the Whole Brain Teaching method in that class for the cycle I.

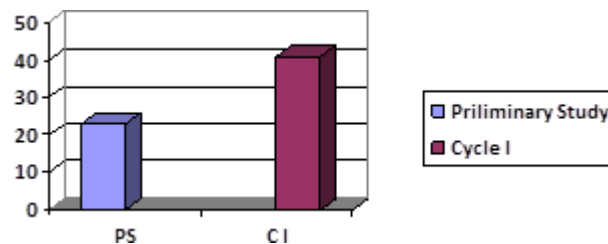
4). Revising

Based on the reflection results, the writer continued the research in cycle I, where in this case the writer only made changes to the learning method, namely initially only using the drill method to become Whole Brain Teaching so that the research results could reach the KKM score.

1. Cycle I

3). Result of Test

Table 1. Cycle I



From the data above it is shown that the result of the first test cycle is 41.17%, which means that it has not reached the KKM score that has been set, which is 70%. So, this research will be continued in cycle II.

4). Result of the Observation

the writers found that some students had started to want to change their bad habits, such as wanting to go to class when the teacher came, even though it did not show a significant difference, but had a gradual effect. Students who were initially silent when the teacher asked questions, they gradually began to want to learn and answer even if they could. The students also showed their enthusiasm when the Whole Brain Teaching method was started so that learning became fun, apart from these In this second cycle, the writer has corrected some of the deficiencies in the previous cycle and designed a different theme title, namely about "Biography" which is different from cycle I "The Classroom" this is done by the writer on the grounds that it is easier for students to understand by focusing on fewer text vocabulary than cycle I, so they can understand in terms of pronunciation and spells, and they also can memorize vocabulary smoothly and work on questions with the correct grammar rules so that the research can be completed with results that reach 70% KKM and the results obtained from cycle II are 82.35%, then the research has been stopped.

1). Reflecting

Based on the results of the data obtained from cycle II, it is shown that the Whole Brain Teaching method can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The scores of students' test results and their activeness have shown many changes according to the criteria set by the writer. Thus, the writers stopped the research process.

Discussion

1. Priliminary Study

From the data research finding, it was explained that the students' ability in mastering vocabulary was still very minimal, because all students (17 students) had not reached the predetermined score.

2. Cycle I

The students have shown changes even though only 7 out of 17 students have achieved the KKM score, this happens because the writer has carried out the evaluation process and made Whole Brain Teaching a learning method. Devana (2020) argues that in the process of teaching using this method, teachers are expected to be able to package material in an interesting way because it involves 3 principles, namely, visual, verbal and kinesthetic. The results of the application are evidenced by the increase in student scores during the first test enjoy the excitement when the Whole Brain Teaching method is carried out without showing boredom because this method process like game so the class became a positive classroom (Lestari & Yulia, 2018). So that, the process of memorizing vocabulary runs smoothly

accompanied by proper pronunciation and spelling skills.

3. Cycle II

In this step, students show significant changes at each meeting, and the result is that all students are able to achieve KKM scores. Kuliahana (2020) argues that the Whole Brain Teaching method is said to be successful when students are able to achieve the targets set by the teacher without feeling burdened. And this was proven by the enthusiastic response of the students at each meeting which resulted in their success in working on the questions on test II.

CONCLUSION

The writer concluded that the Whole Brain Teaching method could be one way to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The steps to improve students' vocabulary mastery were: class-yes (to set students' attention to focus on learning), Five class rooms (the rules of the class), teach okay (students start to repeat teacher gesture to their friend), score board (satisfactory scores), hands and eyes (review result of scoreboard), and switch (students teach their classmates) and mirror (student explain like teachers' explain). The result after implemented Whole Brain Teaching for the cycle I 41,17%, and cycle II 82,35%. From that the writer concluded that this method could improve students' vocabulary mastery at seven grade of Tanfirul Ghoyyi Junior High School.

SUGGESTION

After conducting the research, the writer would like to offer some suggestions the Whole Brain Teaching can be used to improve students' vocabulary mastery, because it will be easier way to student memorize vocabulary fluently with good pronunciation, spelling and grammar. It also will make the students feel enjoy in English teaching learning process especially in the classroom, because this method uses a game. The teacher also will be able to make the teaching learning process in the classroom more attractive and alive, and for future research could also explore the specific aspects of WBT that contribute most to vocabulary acquisition. For example, it would be valuable to isolate the impact of peer teaching, gestures, and other components of WBT to determine which elements are most effective in vocabulary learning.

REFERENCES

- Afzal, N. (2019). A study on vocabulary- learning problems encountered by BA English majors at the university level of education. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume*, 10.
- Alakrash, HM, Razak, NA, & Bustan, ES (2020) The Effectiveness of Using the Telegram Application in Teaching Vocabulary: A Quasai Experimental Study. *Multicultural Education.*, 6 (1).
- Alqahtani, M. (2015). The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to teach it. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 3(3), 21-34.
<https://doi.org/10.20472/TE.2015.3.3.002>
- Anam, M., & Hidayanti, A. (2021). The Use of Semantic Mapping to Improve The Students' Vocabulary in Seventh Grade Students of SMP NU Sabilunnaja Babat. *EDULIA: English Education, Linguistic and Art Journal*, 2(1)
- Bachari, H. (2020). The role of vocabulary acquisition in improving language proficiency: A case study. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 8(2), 102-113.



- Biffle, C. (2013). *Whole brain teaching for busy teachers: 10 minute techniques that improve student learning*. Whole Brain Teaching.
- British Council. (2021). *English proficiency index 2021: Global report*. British Council.
- Chris Biffle, Whole Brain Teaching for Challenging Kids (USA: Whole Brain Teaching LCC, 2013).
- Devana, D. (2020). The use of Whole Brain Teaching method in improving students' speaking ability. *Journal of Language and Education*, 4(1), 56-65.
- Devana, T. (2020). The Use of the Whole Brain Teaching Method in Improving Students' Speaking Ability. *ABADI (Jurnal Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris)* , 11 (2).
- Dian, N. I. (2021). Improving Cognitive Ability of Early Children Using The Whole Brain Teaching Method in Paud
- Dick, B. (2006). Literatur penelitian tindakan 2004-2006: Tema dan tren. *Penelitian tindakan* , 4 (4), 439-458.
- Efforts to Improve Mastery of English Vocabulary Through the Use of Picture Card Media. *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Education STKIP Kusuma Negara II*, 72–78.
- Emyus, A. Z., Degeng, I., Setyosari, P., & Ulfa, S. (2020). The influence of whole brain teaching (WBT) to the motoric and linguistic skills of preschoolers. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(4), 799-814.
- Faridah, F. (2022). The Influence of Students' Level Ability of Reading Comprehension on The Students' Translation Ability. *Jurnal PTK dan Pendidikan*, 8(1)
- Faridah, F., & Nawafilah, Q. (2019). Implementation of Critical Reading Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills of Informatics Engineering Students. *Lintang Songo: Journal of Education*, 2 (2), 65-71.
- Kuliahana, A. (2020). Teaching present progressive tense through whole brain method to the eight grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Palu. *Datokarama English Education Journal*, 1(2).
- Lestari, N., & Yulia, Y. (2018). The use of crossword puzzles to improve the vocabulary mastery of grade V SD N Golo students. *Jellt (Jurnal Bahasa Inggris Dan Pengajaran Bahasa)* , 2 (2), 71-80.
- Mahmudah, L., & Izzah, L. (2019). Students' understanding of the simple past tense through the VOA Learning English YouTube Channel. *English Focus (ELIF)* , 1 (2), 89-94.

- McKeown, M. G., Beck, I. L., Omanson, R. C., & Pople, M. T. (2014). The contribution of vocabulary knowledge to the comprehension of text. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(1), 28-55.
- Muhassin, M., Auliya Ansar, F., Putri, P. P., Raden, N., Lampung, I., & Id, M. A. (2018).
- Niemi, H. (2017). The role of vocabulary in second language acquisition. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 5-21.
- Phonological Intereference of Madurese towards English at the Eleventh Students of SMA AL Hikam Bangkalan East Java (Vol. 11, Issue 2). Nurhalimah, Romdanih, & Nurhasanah. (2020).
- Putra, D. (2021). The effect of Whole Brain Teaching method on the students' simple present tense mastery at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 5 Takengon. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(3), 45-57.
- Putra, D. A. (2021). The Effect of Whole Brain Teaching Method on The Students' Simple Present Tense Mastery at the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 5 Takengon (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara).
- Sabillyrosyad Totoharjo Village, Bakauheni District, Lampung Selatan (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Raden Intan Lampung).
- Sari, S. N., & Aminatun, D. (2021). STUDENTS' perception on the use of English movies to improve vocabulary mastery. *Journal of English language teaching and learning*, 2(1), 16-22.
- Sigalingging, N. H. (2019). The Use Of Whole Brain Teaching Method To Improve The Students' writing Skill On Descriptive Text.
- Snow, C. E. (2010). Academic language and the challenge of reading for learning about science. *Science*, 328(5977), 450-452.
- Utami, S., Anam, M., & Fatmawaty, R. (2022). Developing Mystery Box in Teaching Narrative Text for Speaking Class at Junior High School. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP*, 9(2), 194-204.
- Yatmikasari, I., Hidayati, R. N., & Sulaeman, D. (2023). English Phonological Interference by Indonesian Speakers in a MoFA's Media Briefing. *Jurnal Bahasa Inggris Terapan*, 9(1), 1-10.
- Yunus, M. M., & Rizal, M. (2019). The role of English language in career advancement in Indonesia. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 6(2), 130-140