

# USING PICTURE THERAPY CARDS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' VOCABULARIES OF AUTIST CLASS AT SD AGAPE WONOSOBO

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## Abstract

English was an international language, so it was not only for common children who had to learn English but children with autism also had to learn English. Learning English did not only involve the structure and vocabulary of the language but also learning to communicate in it. The research aimed to determine the improvement in English vocabulary skills of autistic students by using Picture Therapy Cards as a learning technique in the classroom. The qualitative research followed the type of Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted at SD AGAPE Wonosobo. In this study, the sample used was an autism class of 8 students. The research followed the Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart model, involving the following procedures: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out in two cycles, and data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, observations, and tests. The results of this research showed that: (1) The application of Picture Therapy Cards during learning improved the English vocabulary skills of students with autism. (2) There was a difference in the improvement of vocabulary skills of autistic students before and after using Picture Therapy Cards. This was proven by the increase in the class average score on the final exam produced by autistic students. The class average score in cycle I before taking action on the pre-test was 49.1. The class average cycle II score after the action was 75. The increase in the class average score during the pre-test and post-test was 52,74%. In conclusion, the use of Picture Therapy Cards improved English vocabulary skills in classes of autistic students.

**Keywords:** learning media, picture therapy card, vocabulary, children with autism.

## Introduction

In learning at school, teachers and students often experience various problems, especially in dealing with children with special needs/autism. Teachers can address these problems in various ways, namely through discussions in class or by conducting questions and answers between the teacher and students. Creative teachers always take new approaches to solving a problem, and choose variations or new methods that suit class conditions, especially when entering a class of children with special needs/autism. Children with special needs have different abilities in the learning process they obtain, so it requires unique guidance and protection when dealing with special needs children. Physically, children with special needs are no different from children in general. In general, if you look closely, it turns out that their communication and language skills are different from those of children.

Autistic children have limitations and difficulties in language, especially English vocabulary. Language is important in students' intellectual, social, and emotional development. Therefore, to optimize education at school, language teaching is an important area of teaching for autistic children. Language teaching is a means of developing aspects in the field of science. The role and function of language is as a means

of conveying meaning, a communication tool, and a tool for fostering language development.

Language is an essential communication tool, so it must be taught to children early. The process of language acquisition and its experiences are unique and different for each individual. In language there are two parties involved: the sender and the receiver. In a conversation or conversation, the parties take turns performing their functions.

English is an international language, so it's not only normal for children who have to learn English, but children with autism also have to learn English. Learning English does not only involve the structure and vocabulary of the language but also learning to communicate in it. Most children with autism feel difficult and lazy when learning English. So, the lack of English language skills of children with autism can be considered high.

Broad language skills in Indonesian language studies are also divided into four things. Language skills in the curriculum cover four aspects, namely; listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills (Ibda, 2020).

Speaking skills are one of the four aspects frequently carried out after listening. Speaking skills are one of the determinants in the development of knowledge possessed by each individual. Speaking is verbal language, not only speaking but also expressing and conveying thoughts and feelings orally and openly. Autistic children experience barriers related to language ability. Not only that, autistic children have limitations in expressing themselves. This can be seen from the mastery, understanding, and pronunciation of vocabulary possessed by autistic children, which is less than that of typically developing children of the same age.

Based on field practice experience conducted at AGAPE Elementary School, it was found that several autistic children experience difficulties in language skills. One of the problems faced by these children is their limitations in vocabulary recognition they struggle to pronounce vocabulary correctly. Additionally, autistic children often experience explosive emotions when they feel bored.

To improve the ability of vocabulary, particularly English vocabulary, in children, the use of visual aids is crucial to facilitate their learning process. Picture card media, in the form of visual media, is deemed suitable for autistic children, who often engage in visual thinking during learning activities. Currently, there are numerous emerging tools aimed at developing the speaking skills of children with autism. However, researcher exploring the implementation of picture card media to foster the learning and vocabulary training of children with autism.

Apart from choosing this media according to the child's visual potential, it is also considered practical because it is easy and interesting. Through the media of picture cards, it is hoped that it can provide a variety of learning so that children receive material easily, either in the form of notifying changes in the shape of symbols, or signs, or writing into meaningful sound forms with a tool in the form of picture cards with a letter shape and arrangement written underneath.

An image is a visual medium that can only be seen. This picture card media is a media for reading pictures and using cards to introduce vocabulary. Using these cards is very helpful for autistic children in improving vocabulary skills because autistic children learn visual thinking. Therefore, researcher use of picture therapy cards can improve English comprehension skills in classes of autistic students.

Because autistic students often feel bored in learning, using picture card media provides a relaxed and informal learning situation free from tension and anxiety.

Students are involved in providing feedback and decisions. This step will familiarize students to more easily express ideas and ideas and strengthen students' imagination. This picture card media game requires students to be more careful in matching the pictures correctly, not only memorizing the pronunciation but also knowing and understanding the pictures in question. The use of picture cards is modified according to the abilities of autistic children and aims so that students do not feel bored when learning takes place. Based on the problems above, the researcher intends to conduct research with the title "Using Picture Therapy Cards to Improve Students' Vocabularies of Autist Class at SD Agape Wonosobo".

## **Literary Review**

### ***Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)***

As mentioned above, children with autism or ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) have physical characteristics that can be said to be the same as ordinary children in general. This disorder can inhibit, slow down, or interfere with signals from the eyes or other sensory organs. Autism is a disorder that begins and is experienced in childhood. Autism is a situation where a child does whatever he wants, thinks, and behaves. Children with this disorder are described in various terms such as typical children, symbiotic psychotic children, childhood schizophrenia, and several other terms. Because this disorder has nothing to do with psychotic disorders in adults, the term "psychosis" tends to be dropped and replaced with pervasive developmental disorders (Safaria, 2021).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ASD is not a disorder related to intellectual aspects. Autist children are children with complex developmental delays in carrying out social and emotional interactions that occur during life. Children with autism can still learn but need the help of teachers or parents to provide focus, such as providing a learning media that children like (Syaputri & Afriza, 2022). So, it can be assumed that autism is a disorder that children have throughout their lives. Still, the help of other people to provide focus is significant for children with autism. There are three main symptoms of children with autism, namely social interaction, communication, and behavior disorders. According to Granida the characteristics of autistic children are as follows:

1. Experiencing language barriers.
2. Difficulty recognizing and responding to emotions with social cues.
3. Rigidity and poor expression of feelings.
4. Lack of feelings and empathy.
5. Often behaves out of control and explosively.
6. Overall experience problems in behavior
7. Lack of understanding of his existence.
8. Limitations in self-expression.
9. Behaves monotonously and has difficulty adapting to the environment (Ariani & Karyati, 2023).

The prominent feature of autistic children is the existence of stimulus-response barriers. There are several obstacles in children with autism, namely.

1. Problems in understanding the environment
2. Unusual sound response
3. Difficulty understanding speech

4. Autistic children seem not to realize that speech has meaning, cannot follow verbal instructions, hear warnings, or understand when they are scolded
5. Difficulty having a conversation
6. Weak in pronunciation and voice control (Nurfadhillah et al., 2021).

Based on the explanation that has been given above, it can be concluded that children with autism have developmental disorders that occur in the central nervous system which are found in several children.

### ***Picture Therapy Cards***

It is a media designed by researcher to help convey material in the form of cards containing images. This media is in the form of picture cards that are shown by researcher in the class. These picture therapy cards can be in the form of a roll of paper, some are in the form of a long piece of paper that can be folded, and some are in the form of a small piece of paper measuring 10 x 10 cm which contains a picture and the name of the picture. The use of this media can help students to focus attention on the material being presented.

This therapy card can be used to help students who have special needs to learn new words/increase their vocabulary, especially understanding English, as well as develop students' cognitive abilities, and improve communication skills. These cards are used in combination with therapy techniques, to help children with special needs overcome their challenges.

This picture therapy card has the following advantages; (1) Cheap, this card uses paper as a raw material so it is relatively cheap, (2) easy to use, (3) it can clarify things that are difficult to reach, (4) easy to obtain, (5) can help in overcoming observation limitations, (5) can overcome space and time limitations. From the description above, it can be concluded that the use of picture therapy cards has various advantages, such as making teaching and learning activities easier in the classroom.

### **Picture Therapy Cards for Children with Autism**

In teaching and learning activities in the classroom, learning media is something that can be used as an intermediary in the ongoing learning process. This is closely related to the image therapy cards shown to students, especially autistic students. The main purpose of using this media is to increase vocabulary, especially English for autistic children. Autistic children have deficiencies in thinking, so researcher apply the media "Picture Therapy Cards" to treat the brains of autistic children so that they can easily absorb the vocabulary they have learned. The following is the media used by the researcher:



Picture therapy cards are an effective tool for increasing English vocabulary in students with autism. This card is used to improve language skills, speaking, eye contact, and sentence construction in children with autism. Apart from that, this card is used to improve students' skills in identification, such as identifying body parts, animals, and others. The use of this card has been proven to increase vocabulary mastery in students who have special needs. Therefore, the use of picture therapy cards can be a useful strategy for increasing English vocabulary in children with autism.

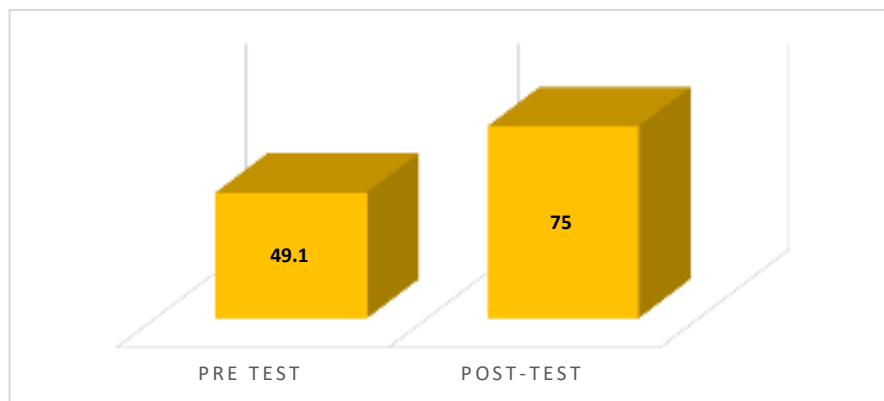
### Methods

The research used a qualitative approach with a CAR (Classroom Action Research) approach. Classroom action research was research to help someone practically overcome problems faced in emergencies and help achieve social science goals by working together within a mutually agreed ethical framework (Suprayitno, 2020). This model was a form of self-reflective inquiry (introspection) carried out by teachers to improve teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Class Action Research (CAR) is a process that involves several interconnected actions.

This model was developed by Stephen Kemmis and Robin Mc Taggart in 1988. They used four components of action research: planning, action, observation, and reflection, which were interrelated between the first and the next steps (Sukardi, 2022).

### Findings and Discussions

#### 1. Findings



In the first cycle of preliminary research, the average student test class score was 49,1. This test was before implementing the use of "Picture Therapy Cards". According to the score criteria explained, this figure was said to be poor and does not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) for autistic students. In other words, there were only 3 students who met the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM), and the others were below 60. Regarding the reactions of autistic students when given assignments, the students paid attention to the instructions given by the researcher, but when they could not understand the meaning of the word they answered with what they knew, some gave up and felt bored and then played on their own. Therefore, the researcher continued in the second cycle.

After reflecting on the actions in cycle I, the researcher made a re-planning as a revision of the actions that had been carried out in cycle I. The re-planning stage was not much different from the stage of cycle I. The researcher revised the activities in class that could make them feel bored and that they would be better in this second cycle. In the post-test or research in the second cycle, after the action was carried out, the class average score was 75. This figure shows the student's improvement score. In this second cycle, there was only 1 student who got a bad score, the score that student got was only 50, and 7 other students got a score of 70 and some were even almost perfect. In the post-test in the second cycle, the majority of students with autism met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). Therefore, Class Action Research (CAR) was said to be successful and the cycle stops.

## 2. Discussions

This research was conducted to determine the increase in the English vocabulary of autistic class students at SD AGAPE Wonosobo by using "Picture Therapy Cards." Class Action Research (CAR) was the approach used by the researcher, and "Picture Therapy Cards" was the medium that had been employed by the researcher to study the English vocabulary of autistic students. The researcher applied this media only to one autism class at SD AGAPE WONOSOBO.

The increase in vocabulary skills of autistic students by using picture therapy cards could be observed in the results of the pre-test and post-test carried out by the researcher in cycles I and II. The researcher collected data through interviews, questionnaires, observations, and tests, and then the results were analyzed and calculated by the researcher.

The data were collected to determine whether there was an influence experienced by autistic students when learning vocabulary using picture therapy card media. The researcher found several impacts from using this media, such as students feeling happier and more comfortable in class. Moreover, students also remembered the new vocabulary they had learned more easily.

This research also took data using tests to help measure the increase in English vocabulary in autistic students. The researcher found different results before applying the picture therapy cards and after implementing them. To find out the difference, the researcher implemented the media through two cycles. The Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) for autistic students were 60 (sixty).

Before the researcher took action, on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the researcher had conducted an initial questionnaire to determine the reactions of autistic students to English lessons. It was concluded that only 37,50% of students thought English was fun, 25% thought English was easy, and 25% liked English. This could be seen from the students' reactions during the pre-test. Most students had difficulty working on

questions, and most students were not enthusiastic when they didn't understand a sentence. They answered according to what they knew; some gave up, felt bored, and played. During the pre-test, the autistic class that had studied vocabulary before using picture therapy card media obtained a class average score of 49,1, and there were only 3 students who had met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*), while 5 other students had not passed. According to the score criteria explained, this figure was said to be poor and does not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) for autistic students.

Because the results of the average score for the autism class in the first cycle did not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*), the researcher retook action in the second cycle with almost the same learning, only adding games when learning took place. In this cycle, the researcher began to carry out learning using picture therapy card media. On Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023, the researcher conducted a post-test and then continued to instruct them to fill out the questionnaire paper that the researcher had distributed the first time the researcher entered their class. The learning outcomes of autistic class students in the second cycle were higher than in the first cycle with an average class score of 75, with the number of students who did not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) only one student with a score of 50. Not only that, the results of the questionnaire in the second cycle increased. 75% of autistic students thought that English was fun, then 62,50% of students thought that English was easy, and only 12,50% of students didn't like English class. At that stage, the researcher observed the changes experienced by students. In this cycle, students increasingly concentrated and felt comfortable so they followed what had been instructed by the researcher. The students were so enthusiastic when learning took place. In this cycle, the researcher used his voice louder than in cycle I. The researcher carried out his work very well when playing his role as a teacher in class by using "Picture Therapy Cards" which were modified in various ways so that students did not feel bored in class, such as games that had been explained previously.

During the learning process, the researcher approached the autistic students' desks while checking their work. Students were very enthusiastic about their work because they understood the instructions given by the researcher. This automatically got positive feedback from students in expressing their opinions.

Based on the results of the data above, the English vocabulary skills of autistic students increased. An improvement of 52,74% in the average score of autistic students after taking action. In other words, the use of picture therapy cards in autism classes as a learning strategy could help autistic students improve their English vocabulary at AGAPE Wonosobo Elementary School. Based on the description above, it can be concluded that picture therapy cards helped in learning to add vocabulary to autistic students, especially in English. The benefits of this media were numerous, especially in making it easier for teachers to deliver material in class, and more importantly, it created a pleasant classroom atmosphere so that students were comfortable in the classroom while learning took place.

## Conclusion

The researcher is trying to use "Picture Therapy Cards" media to help autistic students increase their English vocabulary. By applying this strategy, the researcher hopes autistic students can identify various elements, such as recognizing body parts and others. Based on the statement, the researcher is interested in conducting the research

titled: "Using Picture Therapy Cards to Improve Students' Vocabulary at SD AGAPE WONOSOSOBO".

The pre-test results given to the autistic class at SD AGAPE Wonosobo showed scores that were far from the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) target for autistic children. The average score obtained for pre-test the autism class was 49,1, while the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) for autistic children was 60 (sixty). In the first cycle, only 3 students had met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*), and 5 students had scored below, with some even obtaining a score of 20. In that cycle, most of them lacked enthusiasm, and when they did not understand a sentence, they answered with whatever they knew. Some had given up and felt bored, then played alone. Because the average score for the autism class had not reached the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) standard, the researcher continued to the next cycle until reaching the target Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) standard.

In the second cycle, students experienced improvement, as evidenced by an increase in the class average score to 75. In that cycle, only 1 student had received a score below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM*) standard. The results of this research showed that: (1) The application of Picture Therapy Cards during learning improved the English vocabulary skills of students with autism. (2) There was a difference in the improvement of vocabulary skills of autistic students before and after using Picture Therapy Cards. Therefore, it could be concluded that the use of picture therapy cards was highly effective for teachers in the classroom and was a learning strategy that could assist autistic students in enhancing their English vocabulary. This was evident from the increase in the class average score, which amounted to 52,74% after the intervention.

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