

**THE EFFECT OF WREAPC (WORD  
RECOGNITION-ACTION-PICTURE-  
CONTEXTUALISATION) INSTRUCTIONAL  
PROTOCOL ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION  
AMONG ESL MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL  
LEARNERS**



**ZACHARY FAROUK CHAI**

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH  
2022**

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2022**

**UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**

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**JUDUL : THE EFFECT OF WREAPC (WORD RECOGNITION-ACTION-PICTURE-CONTEXTUALISATION) INSTRUCTIONAL PROTOCOL ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AMONG ESL MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS**

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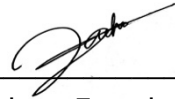
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Penyelia Utama

Tarikh : 29 Mac 2022

## DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that I have stated the source of each extraction, summary and reference in this study. This thesis is the result of my own work with the exception of quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, the sources of which have been duly acknowledged.

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AMONG ESL MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL  
LEARNERS  
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Zachary Farouk Chai

05 January 2022

## ABSTRACT

Teaching vocabulary is significant to provide learners who learn English as a Second Language (ESL) with sufficient word knowledge to be proficient users of language skills. This research particularly explored the effect of an intervention called WReAPC (Word Recognition-Action-Picture-Contextualisation) Instructional Protocol to improve Malaysian Year 5 primary school learners' vocabulary acquisition. It is a teaching method that integrates techniques and strategies of teaching vocabulary to ESL learners. Generally, this research aimed to investigate the effects of the intervention (WreAPC Instructional Protocol) and how it helps the learners in vocabulary acquisition. To achieve the objectives of this study, a total of 60 research participants who were at low to intermediate level of proficiency were selected from one primary school in Semporna, Sabah and were divided into experimental and control groups. The intervention module was utilised with the experimental group for eight weeks and the control group was taught using the existing vocabulary teaching method. The quantitative data collection from the pre-test and post-test was conducted and qualitative data collection from the teachers' observation and semi-structured interview was analysed. A paired-samples t-test was used to measure significant differences among the quantitative data. The research findings revealed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. In contrast, a thematic analysis was used to identify themes from the teachers' observation and semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data via semi-structured interview showed how the intervention had improved the learners' vocabulary acquisition based on the themes of effectiveness, constructive learning, active participation and practicality. Next, the qualitative data via observation revealed the intervention process that improved vocabulary acquisition based on themes; intervention planning, control, assessment and active learning. Thus, WReAPC successfully improved the Year 5 ESL Learners vocabulary acquisition. This study contributed to the ESL learners' vocabulary acquisition based on word recognition skills, action, picture and contextualisation elements that imperatively impacted their vocabulary acquisition. It was also recommended to implement WReAPC Instructional Protocol for ESL primary school in teaching vocabulary.

**Keywords:** English as a Second Language, (Word Recognition-Action-Picture Contextualisation) Instructional Protocol, vocabulary acquisition

## **ABSTRAK**

### **KESAN WREAPC (PENGECAMAN PERKATAAN-PERBUATAN-GAMBAR-KONTEKSTUAL) PROTOKOL PENGAJARAN KEPADA PEMEROLEHAN KOSA KATA DALAM KALANGAN MURID-MURID ESL SEKOLAH RENDAH DI MALAYSIA**

*Pemerolehan kosa kata ialah signifikan untuk menyediakan pengetahuan kosa kata kepada murid-murid yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris Sebagai Bahasa Kedua untuk menjadikan mereka pengguna mahir dalam kemahiran bahasa. Kajian ini mengkaji kesan satu intervensi yang bernama WReAPC (Pengecaman Perkataan-Perbuatan-Gambar-Kontekstual) Protokol Pengajaran (WReAPC Instructional Protocol) untuk meningkatkan murid-murid Tahun 5 di Malaysia untuk pemerolehan kosa kata menggunakan kajian kuasi-eksperimen. Ia merupakan satu kaedah pengajaran yang mengintegrasikan teknik dan strategi pengajaran kosa kata kepada murid-murid ESL. Secara amnya, kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk menyasat kesan penggunaan intervensi dan bagaimana intervensi tersebut membantu murid-murid dalam mempelajari kosa kata. Untuk mencapai objektif-objektif kajian ini, sejumlah 60 peserta kajian yang berada pada tahap rendah hingga sederhana dalam Bahasa Inggeris telah dipilih dari salah sebuah sekolah rendah di Semporna, Sabah dan mereka telah dibahagikan kepada kumpulan eksperimen dan kumpulan kawalan. Pengumpulan data kuantitatif daripada ujian pra dan ujian pos telah dijalankan dan pengumpulan data kualitatif daripada pemerhatian guru dan soal jawab semi struktur telah dianalisis. Sampel Berpasangan Ujian-T (Paired Samples T-Test) telah digunakan untuk mengukur perbezaan signifikan diantara data kuantitatif. Dapatan kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan eksperimen lebih menonjol dengan lebih signifikan berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Sementara itu, analisis tema telah digunakan untuk mengenal pasti tema-tema daripada pemerhatian guru dan temubual semi struktur. Data kualitatif daripada soal jawab semi-struktur menunjukkan bagaimana intervensi yang digunakan telah meningkatkan pemerolehan kosa kata murid-murid berdasarkan tema keberkesanan, pembelajaran konstruktif, pembelajaran aktif dan praktikaliti. Seterusnya, data kualitatif daripada pemerhatian menunjukkan proses intervensi yang telah meningkatkan pemerolehan kosa kata daripada tema-tema; perancangan intervensi, kawalan, pentaksiran dan pembelajaran aktif. Oleh itu, WReAPC Instructional Protocol telah berjaya dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran kosa kata murid-murid Tahun 5 yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Kajian ini memberi sumbangan kepada pengajaran kosa kata berdasarkan penggunaan pengecaman perkataan, perbuatan, gambar dan elemen kontekstual yang memberi impak kepada pengajaran kosa kata. Adalah disarankan bahawa WReAPC Instructional Protocol boleh digunakan khususnya untuk pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris kepada murid-murid yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di sekolah rendah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua, (Pengecaman Huruf-Perbuatan-Gambar-Kontekstual) Protokol Pengajaran, pemerolehan kosa kata*



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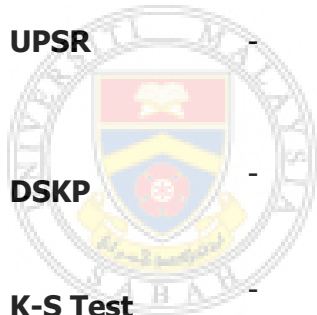
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>WReAPC</b>	-	Word Recognition-Action-Picture-Contextualisation
<b>ESL</b>	-	Second Language Learner
<b>ELT</b>	-	English Language Teaching
<b>L2</b>	-	Second Language
<b>KSSR</b>	-	<i>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah</i> – Primary School Standard Curriculum
<b>PPSR</b>	-	<i>Pelaporan Pentaksiran Sekolah Rendah</i> – Assessment for Primary Education
<b>UPSR</b>	-	<i>Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah</i> – Primary School Achievement Test
<b>DSKP</b>	-	<i>Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran</i> – Standard Document of Curriculum and Assessment
<b>K-S Test</b>	-	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

As English language teachers, it is the biggest concern to develop learners' ability in the use of the language specially to help them to communicate effectively in a wide range of environments (Suriati Sulaiman et al., 2017). In referring to this, to achieve the goals and objectives of the Malaysian English language curriculum for primary school, teachers are encouraged to innovate teaching and learning strategies to cope with the problems of learners having difficulty in mastering the language items and language skills. Thus, this thesis particularly explores the use of an intervention called WReAPC (Word Recognition-Action-Picture-Contextualisation) Instructional Protocol to enhance learners' vocabulary acquisition. In doing so, this chapter outlines the background information of the research, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study and definitions of key terminologies.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

It may be well be noted that every learner must have the capacity to understand and comprehend English as stated in the second shift of the Malaysian National Educational Blueprint, which seeks to transform the education system in order to ensure that every child is qualified in Bahasa Malaysia and English (Ministry of Education, 2013). Hence, since English is now one of the most important academic and professional resources, the need to learn English is essential for most learners. In general, the major components of English language are listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and language arts. In order to be skilled and proficient in

these components, English vocabulary must be mastered. During the teaching of the English language in the ESL Malaysian classrooms, vocabulary teaching is compulsory. When it comes to teaching and learning English language, vocabulary is an integral part of learning language skills. For example, in reading skills, without adequate knowledge of vocabulary, it would be hard to learn the language and use the knowledge in daily life. Vocabulary should be presented, clarified, included in all sorts of language learning activities learned by learners. Mastering vocabulary would be beneficial for learners in learning English, especially in reading and writing skills.

In a real situation of interactions in English, a message may still be understood if the grammar is inaccurate, someone may still be able to communicate if her or his pronunciation is not perfect, but misunderstandings may occur and communication may become difficult if vocabulary is weak. Rahimi and Allahyari (2019) quoted McCarthy (1990:8) who says: "No matter how well the learner learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way". This quote shows that the mastery of English vocabulary is imperative to enable learners to practice the language either in writing or in speaking with the view to making use of it meaningfully and purposefully.

Based on Diamond and Gutlohn (2006:1), vocabulary is defined as "knowledge of words and their meanings". This is to say that without establishing a strong vocabulary knowledge, comprehension and use of a language cannot be achieved by L2 learners. The learners should therefore be able to recognise words and also know their meanings. When a learner is efficiently able to recognise and use a word in different contexts, to speak, to write, to pronounce a word well, he or she has the knowledge of the meaning of that word. Hence vocabulary functions as a foundation that could not exist without language. Vocabulary teaching is one of the most important components of a language class. The main factor for this is the fact that it is a tool that has meaning that helps learners understand and communicate the essence of what counts in the learning of a language. There has been an increasing emphasis on vocabulary teaching recently, partly as a result of the development of new approaches to language teaching that are much more 'word-centred' (Thornbury, 2002).

In Malaysian education system, alignment of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR is a vital aspect in the Malaysia Education Blueprint with the primary aim to boost the level of language education to international standards (Hazita Azman, 2016). For Malaysian Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR), learners are required to master English vocabulary throughout their school years. It is included in the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP) for primary schools; "students should learn how to use vocabulary in their various forms as this allows pupils to acquire a myriad of words by the end of their primary schooling" (Ministry of Education, 2012:48). That notion is reinforced by McKeown (2002:6) who says that vocabulary knowledge is the core of language comprehension and use. Based on this argument, an individual's comprehension of a language depends on how many words are known in that language. In addition, learners need to have sufficient and adequate knowledge of the word to understand what they can hear or read from any material. This means that learners can comprehend messages only if they understand the meanings of most of the words used.

In Malaysian ESL classrooms, a large proportion of vocabulary is taught as part of reading, writing or listening and speaking lessons by ESL teachers (Tan & Goh, 2017). ESL classroom involves language learners who have dominant roles in acquiring English language because of its importance for daily communication and a teacher is an initiator and facilitator in the teaching and learning process. In the course of a lesson, learners may encounter new vocabulary, and teachers will have to choose the correct vocabulary that is necessary for understanding the tasks set out in the lesson plan (Geyser, 2006). Based on Brooks (2020), the pre-teaching of new vocabulary commonly takes place at the 'Presentation' stage to ensure that the following tasks, with minimal interruption, are carried out and that learners will understand what is specified in the learning objectives. Having said this, it is essential to know that vocabulary can be taught on its own and not just merely as an add-on to a skills lesson in an ESL classroom.

As teachers who have a responsibility as teaching practitioners, especially in the globalised era of education reform, ESL teachers in particular have to prepare themselves with updated teaching and learning methods or techniques to improve

educational skills and efficiency and also to address the challenges faced in the classroom context. This is in line with the problems in the 21st century. The word “21st- century skills” is commonly used to explain certain significant competencies and elements such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, teamwork, digital literacy, which advocates believe schools need to teach to help learners succeed in today’s world (Rich, 2010). As language educators, teachers must therefore have the capability to identify the problems faced by learners and to plan strategies to solve these problems creatively and innovatively.

Reflecting on the essence of children’s learning of new words demonstrates the strong relationship between vocabulary and comprehension, and draws attention to the value of vocabulary instruction in the literacy programme. Generally, a great deal of research has been done on vocabulary, and a lot of literature is written in the field. According to Nielsen (2017), introducing and having learners practice vocabulary using a variety of vocabulary learning strategies and techniques are effective ways to ensure that independent vocabulary teaching is more effective in the future. Vocabulary has attracted a lot of researchers lately, and it is therefore the intention of this study to provide readers with insight into the process of improving English vocabulary through an innovation called WReAPC (Word Recognition-Action-Picture-Contextualisation) Instructional Protocol. This innovation was based on related vocabulary teaching theories and techniques.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Generally, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 developed by the Malaysian government, attempts to transform and improve the education system and this transformation is particularly vital to meet the current and future standards both locally and globally (Ishak & Mohammad, 2018). Among the 11 shifts in the Malaysian National Education Blueprint, Shift 2 aims to ensure that each child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English (Ministry of Education, 2013). The strategies outlined in Shift 2 include the ‘upskilling’ of English language teachers and the expansion of opportunities for greater exposure to English through language lessons (Ministry of Education, 2013). This shows that the general purpose of the

Primary English Curriculum is to provide learners with basic language skills and, ultimately, to enable primary school learners to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. Throughout the years of primary school education, Malaysian primary school learners are required to learn basic vocabulary that includes items such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions and others. Vocabulary knowledge is considered as one of the crucial aspects for the learners to master for them to excel in summative and formative assessments. As a result, vocabulary plays a predominant role for learners to construct good sentences and speak in English language.

Since the Malaysian education system has been adapting the changes in curriculum to the same degree as the international standard, teachers have to be creative in creating activities to make learners learn enthusiastically. However, many other factors affect learners' vocabulary development such as family environment, unwillingness to learn and lacking of exposure (Nor et al. 2018). As a result, poor vocabulary acquisition may hinder the progress of many primary school learners in other language components. For example, vocabulary acquisition makes a significant contribution to the achievement in the subjects of school curricula as well as in formal and informal speech, writing, listening and reading. This is because there is a common-sense relationship between vocabulary and understanding in which messages consist of ideas and ideas are expressed in words (Van Ruler, 2018).

Misbah et al., (2017) pointed out the fact that Malaysian primary school learners have limited range of English vocabulary and this causes them to face difficulties in acquiring the four language skills as well as the language items or functions in the English language curriculum such grammar items and vocabulary listed. This implies that learning some of the vocabulary listed in the Malaysian Primary School English language curriculum is challenging for ESL learners because they do not have the ability to use vocabulary in a wide range of environments. They need to learn the vocabulary before understanding its meaning first and then only the learners can contextualise the words as well as using them correctly. One of the existing problems in the vocabulary acquisition among Malaysian primary school learners is they do not understand the meaning of certain vocabulary found in

English textbooks or other side materials such as passages, stories, poems and posters that are used by English language teachers (Kinsella et al., 2014).

Ni et al. (2021) stated that primary school learners often feel demotivated in acquiring English vocabulary and this causes problems such as unable to remember spelling and meanings of words. The aim to master the words as listed in the English language curriculum could not be achieved due to this issue. Yunus et al. (2020) asserted that pupils' achievement in acquiring vocabulary was highly linked to the use of mother-tongue language as well as limited vocabulary exposure. This can be associated with the limited English vocabulary exposure at school as the pupils must adhere to the school period. Hence, this had indirectly affected the learning of English vocabulary in a primary school ESL classroom, especially in remembering the spelling of the vocabulary.

Based on the researcher's experience in teaching English language to Year 5 primary school learners in one of the schools in Semporna, Sabah. Most of the learners said that there were many unknown words found in their reading passages in English language subject. Hence, it was difficult for them to read and understand the content of the passages. In other words, the pupils could not understand new words appearing in sentences or passages (Akpinar et al., 2015). As a result of not knowing the meanings of the words learned, they started to make noises by asking one another. They even did not want to answer questions related to the passage. Whenever the learners were asked about unknown words found in sentences or text, they always got help from friends, and or asked their teachers. This shows that vocabulary acquisition is one of the prominent obstacles in understanding the content of reading texts which is due to insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Hence, one of the learning standards in the Year 5 Standard Curriculum and Assessment which is "pupils should acquire a substantial number of words and know how to use these words in different contexts" could not be achieved throughout the process of teaching and learning (MOE, 2014). Next, according to Alahmadi and Anouschka (2020), notwithstanding the importance of having adequate vocabulary knowledge in second language acquisition, most language learners think learning vocabulary is the most challenging area and thus they tend to ignore lessons related to vocabulary knowledge.

In the previous national examination for primary school which was Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), English language assessment was divided into two components; Writing Paper and Comprehension Paper. Both papers focused on learners' ability in language skills such as reading and writing and their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Based on the analysis of UPSR in 2018, 45.5% out of the overall candidates scored below 50% in Comprehension Paper and 61.63% scored below the marks of 50% in Writing Paper (Ministry of Education 2019). Most candidates are still poor in terms of using the English language skills and this is due to many language areas such as grammar and vocabulary (Radzuan Rashid et al., 2017). Ministry of Education (2019) also added that the answers given by UPSR candidates showed a lack of a strong level of vocabulary among them in which they had limited word knowledge and the vocabulary was not appropriately used in answering the questions. This shows that the most obvious weaknesses of the learners lay in the area of grammar, particularly in the aspects of syntax, and their vocabulary knowledge especially in writing component which mainly caused by the fact that their daily environment and experiences do not encourage the use of language in the effort of acquiring sufficient language skills (Nor Hashimah et al.: 112, 2008). Limited vocabulary knowledge is indeed one of the contributing factors to the low performance of the candidates in the selected school based on their examination results explained earlier. Besides, "there is an interrelation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension having two major directions of effect – the effect of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension and the effect of reading comprehension on vocabulary knowledge or growth" (Nation, 2001: 13). Next, insufficient vocabulary knowledge often has greater influence on clarity and fluency of spoken and written language than lack of grammatical knowledge or poor pronunciation (Hedge, 2000).

Based on the midterm Year 5 learners' examination results which was conducted in May, 2018, English language had been seen as a difficult subject to be acquired by the learners (see Appendix M). The table below shows an overall achievement of English language for two classes of year 5 learners at SK Bugaya, Semporna, Sabah.