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The Influence of Content and Paralinguistic Cues in Enhancing Vocabulary Learning across Different Themes in Young Learners

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Article information	
Abstract	Vocabulary constitutes a fundamental element of language and is typically introduced at the early stages of language learning. Therefore, an individual's success in learning a new language is highly dependent on their vocabulary. To this end, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of two vocabulary teaching methods, content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues, in enhancing vocabulary learning among young learners. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, which includes analyzing students' scores by using a paired-samples t-test and classroom observations, to determine the impact of two teaching methods. This research was conducted in one elementary school in Malang district, Indonesia. Participants were 35 students from the lower grades. The findings indicated that both paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues and content-related verbal and nonverbal cues contributed positively to students' vocabulary learning. However, the paralinguistic cues proved to be more advantageous. Supported by the higher scores in the analysis, students exposed to paralinguistic cues showed greater engagement and stronger vocabulary acquisition compared to those taught with content-related cues. Furthermore, vocabulary theme contributed to learning difficulty, with themes that were similar to students' daily experiences, such as professions, being easier to remember than more technical or abstract themes, such as physical appearance. This study emphasizes the significance of using a variety of teaching methods that use both verbal and nonverbal cues in order to maximize vocabulary learning.
Keywords	nonverbal cues, content cues, paralinguistic cues, themes, vocabulary learning,
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1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the main factor in language learning and is usually introduced at the initial stage of language learning (Triyogo & Syaprizal, 2019). This statement is in line with Teng et al. (2024) and Saleh and Althaqafi (2022, as cited in Aziz et al., 2024), who stated that vocabulary is the foundation for learning a new language, which allows students to understand and express ideas effectively. Vocabulary mastery supports students in written and oral communication, reading comprehension, academic and non-academic achievement, and social interaction. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, students may have difficulty in understanding texts or conveying their thoughts clearly (Rizky Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020, as cited in Dewi et al., 2023).

One possible factor that can influence fluency and maximize the vocabulary learning process is the learning method used. The learning method used by teachers to convey vocabulary to students is crucial. Research has shown that methods combining verbal and nonverbal cues can support students' vocabulary comprehension. One example is Al-Seghayer's (2001) study, which found that students retained new vocabulary better with the help of contextual visual cues and images. Similar findings were presented by Peter (2019), who found that target words followed by images were more easily grasped by students than those presented without images. Furthermore, Mayer (2021) also stated that integrating verbal explanations with visual representations can improve vocabulary learning. Furthermore, Montero-Perez et al. (2018) and Batty (2020) also stated that integrating multimodal cues into vocabulary learning will increase the positive impact on students. These studies highlight the importance of exploring how different types of verbal and nonverbal cues, particularly content-related and paralinguistic-related cues, can support vocabulary learning.

Traditional learning methods often rely on the teacher’s explanation, which typically only uses lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and exercises. These methods do not support optimal vocabulary learning and lack student interactivity and creativity. Johnson (2002) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that the use of paralinguistic cues can help students connect vocabulary by relating it to real-life situations. It can help enrich their understanding and support vocabulary learning. Further research from Ramezanali et al. (2021), Yoshii and Flaitz (2002), and Teng (2023a) found that the use of multimodal learning that utilizes verbal and nonverbal cues, such as images, videos, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body gestures, can provide additional information for students and make it easier for students to understand vocabulary.

A previous study by Zhang and Zhang (2024) emphasized the effectiveness of associating verbal cues with nonverbal cues related to content and paralinguistic cues. For example, content-related verbal and nonverbal cues, such as pictures or videos illustrating vocabulary, provide students with immediate visual references that strengthen memory. On the other hand, paralinguistic cues, including gestures, tone, and facial expressions, add emotional or relational meaning, facilitating students in forming memorable associations with vocabulary. The findings of this study suggest that both types of cues are valuable in aiding vocabulary learning, especially in helping foreign language learners develop more demanding productive vocabulary knowledge, although there is limited exploration into their relative effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary learning in young learners, especially in different thematic categories vocabulary.

From the research above, this study addresses this gap by investigating the influence of content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues on vocabulary learning in young learners across two specific themes: professions and physical appearance (nouns and adjectives). These themes were selected to represent two contrasting types of vocabulary, one associated with roles and societal functions, and the other with physical appearance and individual characteristics. By comparing the learning rates across these themes, the study aims to determine the effectiveness of the two methods used and which vocabulary themes students find easier to remember. Through this research, the researcher aims to answer these questions:

1. What is the influence of content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues in improving students' vocabulary learning?
2. Which vocabulary theme is more easily remembered by students after being taught with content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues?

This research is beneficial for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how verbal and nonverbal cues can be adapted as instructional methods tailored to educators' needs to support vocabulary learning across different themes.

2. Literature Review

English language instruction in elementary school plays a crucial role in helping students develop effective communication skills. For the learning process to be optimal, mastery of various aspects of the language, particularly vocabulary, serves as the primary foundation for understanding and conveying material accurately. This section provides relevant literature to illustrate some of the most important aspects of English vocabulary learning. This focus includes: the importance of vocabulary in the English language, the use of teaching methods that combine verbal and nonverbal strategies, and the influence of themes in vocabulary learning. As the foundation of language proficiency, vocabulary plays a crucial role in supporting students' reading, writing, and speaking skills. Therefore, the following subsections will discuss in detail the importance of vocabulary in English language learning.

2.1 The Importance of Vocabulary Learning in English Learning

Learning vocabulary allows students to retain and recall new vocabulary and is crucial for developing language skills. Schmitt (2010) and Nation (2013) suggest that strategies such as spaced repetition, memory practice, and multimodal learning can improve vocabulary retention. Relevant, repetitive explanations that are combined with productive vocabulary use strengthen vocabulary learning from short-term to long-term memory.

Vocabulary refers to a person's or group's repertoire of words and their meanings, used for speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Ghalebi et al., 2021; Wero et al., 2021). Developing vocabulary can help young learners become more skilled language users. Liu and Chen (2021) noted that the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in elementary schools helps students develop their vocabulary and makes it easier for them to communicate more confidently. Therefore, appropriate vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in improving comprehensive language proficiency. When students can master and use learned vocabulary repeatedly and regularly, they will become more fluent in interacting and grasping deeper

meanings (Milton, 2009). A study by Schmitt (2010) showed that consistent use of vocabulary in learning or communicating strengthens the learning process. In summary, a teaching method that emphasizes the practice of repeated use of vocabulary is needed so that vocabulary can be stored in long-term memory.

2.2. Teaching Methods with Verbal and Nonverbal Cues

Teaching vocabulary frequently involves several strategies to enhance students' comprehension in the learning process. Rawat (2016) stated that there are two types of communication, namely verbal and nonverbal communication, both of which play an important role in delivering meaning. In classroom interactions, teachers typically convey learning to students using verbal and nonverbal cues. Verbal cues refer to spoken and written language, while nonverbal cues include the use of images, videos, body language, facial expressions, and vocal intonation. These cues are often used simultaneously by teachers in conveying learning material to students.

There are two types of nonverbal cues that can be valuable for vocabulary learning: content and paralinguistic cues. Content-related nonverbal cues, such as the use of images or videos related to the meaning of target words, can aid student comprehension (Pellicer-Sánchez et al., 2020). Paralinguistic-related nonverbal cues, such as the use of facial expressions and gestures that explain target words, can also enhance students' vocabulary comprehension (Batty, 2020; Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005). It can be said that both types of cues provide complementary context that reinforces learning, making new words easier for students to understand and absorb.

2.2.1 The Use of Content-Related Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Teaching Vocabulary

The use of visual aids such as pictures, flashcards, and videos in vocabulary teaching has been proven effective in strengthening comprehension and learning of new vocabulary. It is supported by Mayer (2009), who stated that in addition to providing verbal information (spoken or written words), multimedia is multimodal in nature, which includes nonverbal information in the form of static images, dynamic movies, or videos. According to research by Warren et al. (2018), visual aids that are directly related to vocabulary help young learners associate words with clear meanings, thus strengthening their memory. Montero-Perez et al. (2018) stated that utilizing videos with subtitles can support the improvement of comprehension and retention of word meanings by foreign language students. These findings indicate that the use of images that provide context and illustrate meaning can help students remember vocabulary that has been taught. According to Teng (2023b), contextualized images and videos can develop and improve vocabulary retention both productively and receptively. Baharuddin et al. (2022) highly recommend learning vocabulary using images because it can help students develop their ability to remember the names of the objects they see in the books.

2.2.2 The Use of Paralinguistic-Related Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Teaching Vocabulary

Another type of verbal and nonverbal cue is paralinguistic cues, which utilize body language. Arndt and Woore (2018) stated that speaking and using body language can improve students' ability to remember vocabulary. Changes in body language contribute to better understanding and comprehension of meaning. Another finding comes from Batty (2020), who

stated that a teacher's body language, including facial expressions, vocal intonation, and gestures, can provide additional context that can strengthen vocabulary retention. Additionally, Mayer (2021) and Paivio (1991) found that the combination of information obtained through verbal and nonverbal cues helps students understand word meanings by connecting them emotionally. This additional information helps students strengthen vocabulary retention. In other words, these paralinguistic cues help students understand the context in which vocabulary is used in real life.

2.3 The Influence of Themes in Vocabulary Learning

The topic or classification of vocabulary affects students' ability to memorize words, especially vocabulary related to themes they are already familiar with. Themes chosen and the use of the theme-based technique can successfully improve students' vocabulary mastery (Rachamadani, 2022). For example, vocabulary related to food and daily activities is more easily remembered by students because these themes are related to their lives (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Scientific or economic concepts, on the other hand, tend to be more difficult for young learners to remember because they are less familiar or relevant to their daily lives. Research also shows that students more easily remember vocabulary that matches their interests (Schmitt, 2010). For example, students interested in animals tend to understand and remember animal-related vocabulary more quickly than students interested in other themes. According to Cancino (2023), participants learnt and retained significantly more vocabulary when reading interesting content. This shows that interest in the content can influence the extent to which students can absorb and remember information, especially in the context of vocabulary learning.

3. Methodology

The objective of this study is to determine the influence of content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues on vocabulary learning in young learners across different themes, and also, which vocabulary themes are more easily remembered by young learners. To achieve these objectives, the researcher used a mixed-methods approach and employed a quasi-experimental design with a within-subjects approach, specifically a pre-test and post-test. The group design involved one group (single classroom) that completed the pretest, treatment, and posttest. The posttest scores were analyzed using SPSS to examine students' vocabulary learning, and classroom observations were also used to support the findings.

3.1 Participants

The quasi-experimental design involved 35 students, especially in lower grades, at one elementary school in Malang, Indonesia, with a balanced gender distribution of 18 males and 17 females, aged between 8 and 9 years old. All participants were native speakers of Indonesian, with English learned as a foreign language at school. None of the students reported having formal English instruction outside the school curriculum. Based on their English class performance in the previous semester, all participants were considered beginner-level learners. Their English proficiency level was estimated according to the national elementary school curriculum for grade levels, with limited vocabulary knowledge before the intervention. The research was conducted in the middle of the first semester, after the mid-term exams. Since the study employed a quasi-experimental design with a within-subjects approach, all participants

experienced both conditions: content-related verbal and nonverbal cues (using visual aids such as pictures) and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues (utilizing body language, facial expressions, and vocal intonation). For each treatment, instruction was delivered over two teaching sessions, each lasting 70 minutes, conducted in a single classroom. Each participant provided informed consent to participate in the research. Their low proficiency level ensured that the treatment's effect on vocabulary learning could be clearly observed.

3.2 Research Instruments

This study used a quasi-experimental within-subjects design to evaluate the effects of the two teaching methods on students' vocabulary learning related to the themes of professions and physical appearance. The instruments used to collect data on students' vocabulary learning after the two teaching methods (content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues) are described below.

3.2.1 Pre-Test and Post-Test

The primary tool for measuring vocabulary mastery was a written test with multiple-choice questions, word-to-picture matching, and other question types. For the pre-test, the researcher used a diagnostic test, which measured students' initial vocabulary skills relevant to the themes of professions and physical appearance, so that the results could serve as a reference in designing subsequent learning processes. Sample vocabulary items included:

Professions: teacher, doctor, firefighter, pilot

Physical appearance: tall, short, fat

The post-tests aimed to measure students' vocabulary mastery after the interventions. After treatment A (content-related verbal and nonverbal cues) and treatment B (paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues), students completed a post-test consisting of multiple-choice, word-to-picture matching, and follow-up questions. The vocabulary items were different for each post-test, but the format, number and difficulty were equivalent.

For reliability, this study used Cronbach's Alpha. The test score was 0.969, which means that the level of reliability was very high and good; in other words, the items used were suitable to be used as an instrument to test students' vocabulary retention. The researchers then sought assistance from an English expert lecturer to check and evaluate the validity of the items. Subsequently, revisions were made, after which the validity was confirmed using the same procedure.

3.2.2. Classroom Observation

An additional instrument used by the researcher was classroom observation. The goal was to determine student interactions and attitudes during vocabulary learning. The role of the researcher here was as a teacher delivering the material and also as an observer who was monitoring the classroom activity. This instrument was used to determine student interactions and attitudes during vocabulary learning. An English language expert lecturer validated the aspects used. The criteria used were: student participation, vocabulary understanding, students' interest or enthusiasm, students' responses or reactions, connecting words with meaning, difficulties or challenges, students' attention, and students' initiative in using new vocabulary.

3.3 Data Collection

During the data collection process, the researcher collected data through several structured and organized methods to ensure the validity of the information and align with the research objectives. This study involved one classroom of 35 students. Before the application of both treatments, all students took a pre-test in the first week to measure their initial understanding of vocabulary on the themes of professions and physical appearance. The pre-test consisted of questions where students were given English vocabulary items and asked to write the meanings they knew, leaving blank those they did not know. In the second week, students received Treatment A, which included content-related verbal and nonverbal cues. This treatment was conducted for 70 minutes in a single session. Immediately after the session, students took the first post-test, which consisted of multiple-choice and picture-word-matching questions and follow-up questions, to assess vocabulary learning in both themes (Professions and Physical Appearance).

A two-week break followed (weeks 3 and 4), during which students did not receive any teaching on the themes of professions or physical appearance. This break was intended to reduce the carry-over effect from Treatment A before applying the second treatment. In the fifth week, students received Treatment B, which included paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues. This treatment was also conducted for 70 minutes in a single session. Immediately after the session, students took the second post-test, using the same format as the first post-test, to evaluate vocabulary learning across both themes. The vocabulary items in Treatment B were different from those in Treatment A but equivalent in difficulty and number.

During both treatments, the researcher conducted classroom observations as an additional instrument. Observations were made to ensure that both treatments were implemented as planned and to record students' responses to each treatment. Observational notes included students' participation, engagement, and reactions to both treatments. All test scores were recorded and stored in a secure database for further analysis. These data were used to answer the research questions regarding the differences in the two teaching methods and the vocabulary themes that were easier for students to remember.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this study, the researchers used a quasi-experimental, within-subjects design to determine the effects of two learning approaches on improving students' vocabulary retention related to the themes of profession and physical appearance. Data from the pretest and posttest were processed and analyzed to answer or address the research questions: (1) the influence of Treatment A (content-related verbal and nonverbal cues) and Treatment B (paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues), and (2) which vocabulary theme was easier for students to remember. Analysis was carried out in three main stages:

1) The researchers used a paired-sample t-test on the post-test scores of both treatments to compare the influence of Treatment A and Treatment B. This test was used to examine the average difference in student learning outcomes between the two treatments. The researchers also analyzed the results of the average, mean, and standard deviation to assess overall student achievement.

2) The researchers calculated the average student scores obtained after the treatment. Then, the researchers employed SPSS to conduct a statistical analysis using a paired-samples t-test to determine the difference in average student scores between the two themes used. This

analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two themes taught.

3) The researchers analyzed the results of the classroom observations. The criteria used for the observations were validated by experts. The data obtained were analyzed to determine student attitudes and performance during the implementation of the two treatments. This interpretation complemented the quantitative analysis results, providing a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of vocabulary learning taking place in the classroom.

In short, during the data analysis stage, the researcher used SPSS to obtain significant results and to conduct descriptive analyses of classroom observation data as additional data. Mixed methods were used to ensure the aspects required by the researcher's requirement.

4. Findings

The findings presented here include the results of statistical analysis using paired-samples t-test on post-test scores for both treatments A and B and vocabulary theme scores, as well as additional data from classroom observations. The goal was to comprehensively examine how the two learning methods (content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues) influenced students' vocabulary retention and how the two vocabulary themes (theme and physical appearance) influenced students' ease of recalling new vocabulary. Observations of classroom activities also offered light on the dynamics of student engagement and their interactions with learning materials while both treatments were being implemented.

4.1 Comparison of Content-Related Verbal and Nonverbal Cues and Paralinguistic-Related Verbal and Nonverbal Cues

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	35	26.29	5.233
Posttest: content-related verbal and nonverbal cues	35	81.43	14.997
Posttest: paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues	35	86.11	13.813
Valid N (listwise)	35		

The descriptive statistics show that post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores in both treatments. Treatment B (paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues) produced higher average vocabulary scores than treatment A.

Table 2

Paired-Samples t-Test for Content-Related Verbal and Nonverbal Cues

Pair	*M*	*SD*	SE Mean	95% CI of the difference	*t*	*df*	*p*
1	-1.371	3.414	.577	[-2.544, -0.199]	-2.377	34	.023

Note: Pair 1 = content-related verbal and nonverbal cues-paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues. Negative mean difference indicates higher scores for the paralinguistic cues.

Table 2 shows the results of the paired-samples t-test analysis. The mean difference between the two methods was -1.371 (t = -2.377, p = 0.023). The negative mean difference results from subtracting treatment B scores from treatment A scores (A–B), indicating that treatment B scores were higher than those of treatment A. The data show that students achieved slightly higher average vocabulary scores when learning with treatment B compared to treatment A.

4.2 Comparison of Two Different Vocabulary Themes

Table 3

Paired-Samples t-Test for Two Different Vocabulary Themes

Pair	*M*	*SD*	SE Mean	95% CI of the difference	*t*	*df*	*p*
1	3.486	9.528	1.611	[0.213, 6.759]	2.164	34	.038

Note: Pair 1 = Profession-Physical appearance

Table 3 shows the paired-samples t-test comparing vocabulary scores between the profession and physical appearance themes. The mean difference was 3.486 (t = 2.164, df = 34, p = .038), indicating that students scored slightly higher on the profession theme. These results suggest that students tended to retain vocabulary related to the profession theme better than the physical appearance theme, possibly because the profession theme was more familiar or easier to relate to in their daily lives.

4.3 Classroom Observation

The criteria used by the researcher during the classroom observations were developed by the researcher herself and validated by two English language experts. During the classroom observations, students demonstrated positive results in the two treatments taught: content-related verbal and nonverbal cues (treatment A) and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues (treatment B). In treatment B, students appeared more active and engaged than in treatment A. In terms of vocabulary comprehension, both treatments showed equally positive results. Students were equally enthusiastic about both treatments A and B, which shows that both treatments attracted their interest in learning new vocabulary.

Student reactions and responses showed differences between the two treatments. In treatment B, students showed positive reactions, such as laughing and smiling more, when vocabulary was presented by using treatment B, especially on the topic of physical appearance. When vocabulary was presented, students immediately scrambled to raise their hands to guess what vocabulary the teacher was presenting.

When applying treatment A, the researcher found that there was a student who was not familiar with words that were contained in the profession theme, such as the word “architect”; the student immediately asked “Miss, what is architect?” and “Miss, what does an architect do?”. Meanwhile, in the physical appearance themes, several students were confused by the term "dark skin"; they immediately asked why it was not black, as they knew the English word for the Indonesian "hitam" was black. Here, the researcher needed to provide students with explanations about the use of "dark" and "black." Likewise, in the implementation of treatment B, there were some students who did not understand the word “technician”. They immediately asked, "Miss, what is technician?" This is where the teacher's role was crucial, as she needed to provide more detailed explanations of these terms.

In terms of student attention span, the results were positive across both treatments. From the beginning of each lesson, students appeared to follow and focus on the vocabulary being taught. They appeared to enjoy the lesson and were engaged, even though they often laughed whenever new vocabulary was taught. Paralinguistic cues appeared to produce slightly more interaction and engagement than content cues, although overall, both approaches supported vocabulary comprehension.

Regarding student interaction, the two implementations showed different results in their classroom interaction patterns. In treatment A, some students interacted with their desk mates to understand the new vocabulary taught. They would ask their desk mates or those who were sitting nearby to confirm their understanding. This action demonstrated mutual support and cooperation. Meanwhile, for treatment B, they appeared more active and involved by using language and imitating body language and facial expressions taught by the teacher or researcher, and discussing vocabulary other friends did not understand. The results of this observation showed that paralinguistic cues appear to encourage students to be actively involved in class and support their understanding of new vocabulary.

Observations showed that both paralinguistic cues and content cues can improve vocabulary comprehension, and students demonstrated more active and responsive outcomes when taught using paralinguistic cues. Challenging students with slightly more challenging vocabulary can provide educators with greater insight into areas requiring more attention and more focused instruction.

5. Discussion

This study analyzed the effects of two treatments or teaching methods in teaching vocabulary to young learners: content-related verbal and nonverbal cues (treatment A) and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues (treatment B). This study also analyzed which of these two vocabulary themes were more easily remembered by students. Treatment B showed higher average scores than treatment A. Statistical analysis and observation showed that paralinguistic cues such as voice intonation, facial expressions, and gestures or body language can increase students' interaction, activity, and engagement in the process of learning new vocabulary compared to content cues. In addition, findings regarding vocabulary themes showed that vocabulary themes that are familiar and related to everyday life tend to be easier for students to remember compared to more abstract vocabulary.

5.1 The Influence of Teaching Methods on Students’ Vocabulary Learning

The paired-sample t-test analysis revealed a significant difference between content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues,

addressing Research Question 1. Both treatments contributed to improve vocabulary retention among young learners. Paralinguistic cues produced a slightly higher average score (M = 86.11) than content cues (M = 81.43). This finding indicates that paralinguistic cues were more influential in supporting new vocabulary learning for young learners, even though both treatments A and B showed a supportive effect on new vocabulary learning.

Zhang and Zhang (2024) found that content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues were beneficial for less demanding words (e.g., more familiar and simpler words), and they also suggested that paralinguistic cues helped learners recall meaning more easily. This finding aligns with the current study, which found that paralinguistic cues provide more contextual understanding through vocal intonation, facial expressions, and gesture or body language, which can facilitate meaning formation.

This research finding also aligns with the multimodal learning approach proposed by Mayer (2009), who stated that integrating verbal and nonverbal cues can enhance information acquisition and processing. Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) and Batty (2020) stated that adding tangible semantic and contextual support through the application of paralinguistic cues can improve and boost vocabulary retention and it can also make vocabulary more memorable and accessible.

Observational data were used as supplementary or supporting data for the statistical findings. The use of paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues showed positive results: students were more engaged and active, and responded more effectively than when using content-related verbal and nonverbal cues. This method increased enthusiasm and created a more colorful and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. However, in terms of student enthusiasm and attention, both methods had a positive influence on new vocabulary learning.

The researchers also identified several challenges in both themes (profession and physical appearance). In the profession theme, several words, such as "technician" and "architect," required additional explanation from the teacher. In the physical appearance theme, the researchers found that some students were confused about the use of the words "black" and "dark." These findings suggest that although paralinguistic cues and content cues are beneficial in improving vocabulary retention, some vocabulary still requires additional instruction. Attention spans in each treatment showed stability, and some students were able to use use the new vocabulary they had acquired in informal contexts, such as joking with their friends using the new vocabulary. The findings show that both treatments not only supported vocabulary understanding but also encouraged students to actively use the vocabulary they learned.

In conclusion, this study found that the use of content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues both had positive impacts and improved students' vocabulary comprehension. Paralinguistic cues increased student activity and engagement in class through the teacher's body language, facial expressions, and intonation, while content cues provided tangible visuals. However, statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between the use of paralinguistic cues and content cues, indicating that paralinguistic cues had a greater effect on students' vocabulary learning.

5.2 Vocabulary Themes and the Impact on Learning

The second research question asked about which vocabulary theme, between professions and physical appearance, was more easily remembered by students. The results of the paired sample t-test showed a significant difference, where the profession theme obtained

M = 12 in treatment A and M = 11.69 in treatment B. In contrast, the physical appearance theme obtained M = 10.86 in treatment A and M = 11.91 in treatment B, with a p value of .038, which indicates a significant difference between the profession theme and the physical appearance theme.

This difference can be explained by several factors. For example, the theme of professions is more frequently encountered by students in their daily lives. Young learners often aspire to be pilots, police officers, doctors, and so on. Therefore, vocabulary related to professions was easier for them to remember than vocabulary related to physical appearance. Furthermore, this vocabulary theme may be directly related to the professions of their parents, siblings, grandparents, or other family members. As a result, students can connect this vocabulary to their knowledge and experience. This finding is supported by Rachmadani et al. (2022), who stated that appropriate theme-based vocabulary teaching can increase students' enthusiasm and interest in learning new vocabulary, and maintain and improve vocabulary mastery. In line with these findings, Cancio (2023) found that students significantly retained more vocabulary when the topic interested them. Therefore, the professions theme tended to be more memorable to students.

Conversely, vocabulary themes such as physical appearance, which is more abstract than professions, tend to require more understanding and explanation for students. For example, with the words "dark" and "black," students were confused and asked, "Why is it dark in English, why not black?" This indicates that they encounter the word "black" more frequently in English than "dark". This is where the role of a teacher is needed to provide additional explanations about how these two terms are used and what the differences are by using content cues. Another vocabulary term that they may not have understood because they had not encountered it before was the word “technician”. Here the teacher provided an explanation and a more detailed description of this word using the help of paralinguistic methods, demonstrating in more detail what people who work in technical departments usually do. As there were still some students who did not understand, the researcher immediately gave examples of someone who worked in a workshop or garage and someone who worked at a state electricity company.

This study found that the two teaching methods used had a positive effect on new vocabulary learning among young learners, particularly on topics related to character education, self-awareness, and the world around them. However, paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues tended to be more interactive and engaging. Furthermore, content-related verbal and nonverbal cues presented tangible visuals that aided students' vocabulary comprehension. These findings also highlight that vocabulary themes related to familiar words were easier for students to memorize than those abstract or less familiar vocabulary themes. Overall, this finding emphasizes that integrating verbal and nonverbal cues can increase student vocabulary comprehension and learning.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides insight how verbal and nonverbal cues play a role in vocabulary learning, there were several limitations. This study was not conducted in all elementary schools in Malang, but only in one school, so it cannot be generalized broadly. Second, the investigation focused solely on two vocabulary themes, professions and physical appearance, thus excluding other possible themes that might present different levels of difficulty. Third, the duration of the intervention in this study was relatively short, so the results

obtained only reflect the short-term impact of these cue-based teaching methods on students' vocabulary retention.

Future research is recommended to examine the combined use of content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues to explore their potential synergistic effects on vocabulary learning. In addition, it would be valuable to measure long-term vocabulary retention through delayed post-tests in order to better understand the durability of learning outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated how content-related verbal and nonverbal cues and paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues can enhance vocabulary learning in young learners. The findings indicate that both teaching methods have a positive effect on students' vocabulary learning, but paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues were shown to be slightly more helpful in terms of vocabulary and meaning recall. In the course of implementing paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues, the class was more interactive and students were more engaged during the learning process. Furthermore, familiar themes also influenced students' ease of vocabulary recall. Specifically, this study found that themes such as professions, which introduce various jobs and foster aspirations in students, tended to be easier for students to understand and memorize than slightly more abstract vocabulary, such as physical appearance. Overall, this study found that new vocabulary was learnt more effectively and students responded more positively when verbal and non-verbal cues were into instruction. This encouraged student enthusiasm and engagement in the classroom.

Some implications that can be drawn from this study are:

1) Paralinguistic-related verbal and nonverbal cues can help students improve and develop their vocabulary recall and memorization. These cues can be used by educators, particularly at the elementary school level, to help students easily understand and memorize new vocabulary. Student interaction and engagement in the classroom during learning can make learning more enjoyable and increase their enthusiasm.

2) The choice of vocabulary theme can influence how quickly students understand and remember the vocabulary presented. For example, vocabulary related to professions is frequently encountered by students in everyday life. However, vocabulary with multiple meanings requires consideration of comprehensive learning methods. The use of images, videos, facial expressions, voice intonation, and body gestures can help students understand more complex vocabulary.

3) The employment of a combination of content and paralinguistic cues can keep students engaged during the learning process, as seen by the observation results, which revealed significant student interest in both methods. Using proper content signals for more technical vocabulary and paralinguistic cues for vocabulary that requires contextual nuances can produce the best outcomes in vocabulary learning. Thus, a range of teaching methods can create a dynamic, interesting, and engaging learning environment for students, which is important for developing their vocabulary holistically.

8. About The Author

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10. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that AI tools including ChatGPT were used to assist with language editing, grammar checking, and checking the structure of writing. All content, data interpretation, and conclusions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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