

## Empowering special students: Attitudes towards english for communication using "I-Pick" methods

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to identify the attitude of students with special educational needs (MBPK) towards learning based on the *I-Pick* method in *English for Communication*. Pictorial Illustration (*I-Pick*) is an innovative teaching method used in this study to improve the level of English vocabulary proficiency of students with special educational needs (MBPK). This study uses the quantitative form of the survey method using questionnaires as an instrument of study. The data was analyzed on a descript if basis and the t-test test was used to strengthen the study data. Samples are intended to be used in this study. A total of six MBPK slow learner category who attended the KSSMPK Form 1 class at SMK Jalan Paya Besar were selected as respondents. The findings showed that MBPK's attitude in the implementation of *I-Pick-based* learning is positive with (mean=4). 02, S.D.= 0. 909). This proves that the *I-Pick* method has successfully increased MBPK's interest in learning *English for Communication* better. Finally, it can be concluded that a positive attitude towards *English for Communication* learning based on *I-Pick* managed to increase interest and improve English language ability among MBPK.

**Keywords:** Change, Attitude, Pupils with Special Education Needs, English for Communication, I-pick

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### INTRODUCTION

The emphasis of English as a second language is the main objective of the Ministry of Education Malaysia in producing a world-comparable skilled workforce. In fact, the Standard Curriculum of Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas (KSSMPK) introduced in 2017 also focuses on improving MBPK's ability to master the basic skills of reading, writing and communicating in English *through the English for Communication* curriculum.

The ability to communicate in English requires one to master vocabulary and thus understand the usefulness of the vocabulary in context. In this regard, MBPK is indeed facing problems in the aspect of language acquisition. A poor understanding of English vocabulary prevents MBPK from communicating well. The [Gorard and Siddiqui \(2018\)](#) study found that poor command and understanding of English vocabulary among MBPK caused them to have trouble mastering English well and even affected their ability to communicate and influence their academic achievement.

According to [Asrifan et al. \(2020\)](#), MBPK's attitude towards English subjects is the main cause of the failure of English proficiency. They have no interest in learning and mastering English

because for them English is a difficult, convoluted and dizzying language. They also did not see the importance of English which resulted in them not wanting to learn English.

In addition, *the wrong mind-set* and way of learning also affect the level of English proficiency among MBPK (Bai et al., 2021). This is because MBPK is not exposed to the method or technique of English proficiency which is interesting, easy and fun according to their level of ability (Ramdania et al., 2020). As a result, MBPK lost interest and they took the simple step of ignoring this language forever (Al Maskari et al., 2018).

The lack of dictionary skills is also one of the causes of poor command of English vocabulary among MBPK (Wilson et al. 2018). The emphasis on the use of dictionaries is being lost among school pupils especially MBPK. Some do not even know what a dictionary is. This situation caused MBPK to have a limited list of words (O'Connor et al., 2019).

Environmental influences also affect English proficiency among MBPK (Maruf et al., 2020). The absence of an environment that supports learning English has caused MBPK to drift into English proficiency. According to Maruf et al. (2020), the standard of education of parents and the lack of emphasis on the importance of learning English from family members also made it impossible for MBPK to master basic English language skills.

The lack or absence of English in everyday life has also made it difficult for MBPK to master English (Vaughn et al., 2019). Thus, the stigma of "Learning but Ineffective" English needs to be scraped from the minds of MBPK in order for them to master the basics of English well.

In addition, Smith and Loewen (2018) found that the motivational element is a very important factor in determining success or failure in learning a second language. According to Razali et al. (2018), motivation indirectly affects student's interest and tendency to master learning strategies. In addition, motivation will be the power of learning, goal setting and persistence in learning (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020).

The Namaziandost et al. (2019) study identified several key requirements that can help build students' motivation in English which are the need for stimulation of the environment, ideas, thoughts and feelings from others, knowledge requirements for achievement, the need to process and internalize the results of exploration, manipulation, activity, and stimulation to find solutions to problems and yearning systems and last but not least the need for increased EGI for oneself is recognized and accepted by others.

The conclusion can be concluded that the mastery of the English vocabulary of MBPK is closely related to self-esteem. Therefore, the motivational element is used as a driving agent so that MBPK does not continue to drift into their own incapacity mentality about English.

MBPK had trouble mastering English vocabulary because they did not understand and did not know how to use the dictionary to find the meaning of words. In fact, there is no interest in mastering simple communication in English and the *"mind-set"* of English subjects is difficult is also one of the reasons why this MBPK often fails the exam. The situation is aggravated when there is no strengthening of home teaching with parental guidance.

Even more disturbing, when the Standard Teaching of Special Education Secondary School (KSSMPK) was implemented in 2017. The Standard Curriculum of the Higher School of Special Education (*English for Communication*) requires students with special needs to master the basic communication skills. This curriculum is not only a burden on these students but also a challenge for teachers to find methods that can help them master English easily without stress.

Even during the teaching and facilitation process, MBPK is unable to give oral or written answers for simple English vocabulary. It is even more worrying that MBPK who follow the Form 1 KSSMPK cannot understand and answer simple questions in English. They consider English something difficult and inconvenient. They answer only illustrative or pictorial questions. This

constraint prompted me to look for an alternative teaching method based on pupils' interest in illustrations or photographs to attract them to English subjects.

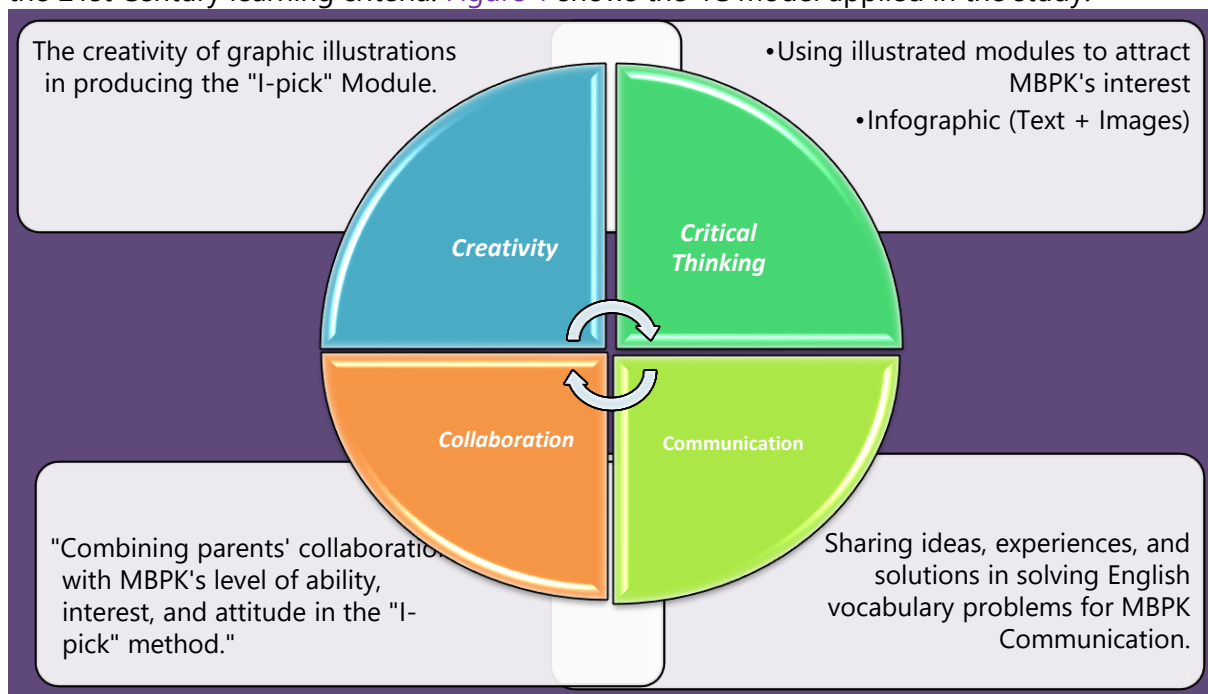
Therefore, an intervention module called "*I-Pick*" for MBPK who had difficulty mastering English vocabulary was carried out. The "*I-Pick*" approach is applied to attract interest and thus assist MBPK in mastering English vocabulary easily and fun indirectly.

The aim of this study was to find out the change of the MBPK (moderate functionality) to the *English for Communication (EFC)* Form 1 subjects after the use of the *I-Pick method* specifically, the objectives of this study are to identify changes in the attitude of MBPK that follow the *I-pick* learning method based on race and identify changes in the attitude of MBPK that follow the *I-pick* learning method based on the allocation of time to learn English at home.

### METHODS

This study is a quantitative study using questionnaires. It looks for solutions to teaching and facilitation problems in special education classes with learning problems. The sample was intended to be used in this study because only MBPK following KSSMPK was selected as a sample of this study. The sample of the study consisted of six MBPKs who followed the *English for Communication KSSMPK* Form 1 at SMK Jalan Paya Besar. The sample consists of a category of pupils with special educational needs with learning problems who can receive the teaching and learning that teachers deliver in the classroom in an orderly manner.

Researchers test the effectiveness of "*I-Pick*" each time the *English for Communication* class is conducted. The concept of 4C (*creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication*) is applied in the *English for Communication* teaching method so that this study method meets the 21st Century learning criteria. **Figure 1** shows the 4C model applied in the study.



**Figure 1.** Model 4C (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013)

The observation period is for an hour every week and is carried out for 3 months. This action study was conducted from March 15, 2022 to June 15, 2022. This study also involved the collaboration of parents, class teachers and MBPK who are able to guide MBPK (moderate functionality) in mastering vocabulary and easy communication in English. The reinforcements activities are designed so that the methods applied can help MBPK with this simple ability to

master the English vocabulary well without problems and can help them understand simple communication in English.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study shows some of the findings related to the demographics of the respondents, the level of attitude and interest of MBPK towards the "I-pick" method based on the "I-Pick" method implemented during the class *English for Communication*. Quantitative data are descriptively analyzed and inferential and reported using mean and standard deviation (SP). Table 1 shows value interpretation of the mean score used in this study.

**Table 1.** MBPK Attitude Mean Average Score Interpretation Scale

Mean Score Range	Level
1.00 - 2.34	Low
2.35 - 3.67	Simple
3.68 - 5.00	High

(Abdullah et al., 2020)

**Table 2.** Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender, Race dan Allocating Time to Learn English at Home

Demographics of Respondents		N	%
Gender	Men	2	33.3
	Female	4	66.7
Races	Malay	4	66.7
	India	2	33.3
Allocation of Review Time at Home	Less than 1 hour a week	3	50.0
	1-3 hours a week	2	33.3
	Over 3 hours a week	1	16.7

Table 2 discusses the demographic information of survey respondents. The findings showed that the female respondents were 4 (66.7%) compared to 2 (33.3%) male respondents. The findings also showed that the sample number consisted only of Malays (66.7%) and Indians (33.3%). In addition, the allocation of time to study English at home less than 1 hour per week showed a high percentage (50.0%), compared to the allocation of learning English 1-3 hours per week (33.3%) and over 3 hours per week (16.7%).

### MBPK's Changes to *English For Communication* Subjects With Use of *I-Pick* Method

Table 3 as a whole shows the high attitude of MBPK (mean=4.02) towards *English for Communication* learning based on the *I-Pick* method. English (mean=2.66), distribution to speak in English (mean=2.01) and efforts to speak English (mean=2.66) are still in the level simple after the *I-Pick* method is applied in pdpc. While MBPK showed a low attitude to English language skills and speaking training in English (mean=2.01). The study of Ujunwa et al. (2019) supports the findings of this study that interesting teaching methods can improve students' ability to master English well. In fact, the positive attitude towards English subjects is also influenced by MBPK's interest and determination to master this subject (Al Noursi, 2013).

**Table 3.** MBPK Attitude Level To *I-Pick* Method

Items	Min	S.P.	Interpretation
I like learning English.	4.18	0.806	High
I enjoy learning English.	4.14	0.767	High

Items	Min	S.P.	Interpretation
Learning English is important.	4.13	0.800	High
I was very focused on English while the teacher was teaching.	4.11	0.773	High
I need English in future jobs.	4.00	0.899	High
I spent as much time as possible learning English.	4.20	0.830	High
Learning English is beneficial.	4.21	0.819	High
I will use English in the future.	4.21	0.751	High
English is important to learn because of the international language.	4.21	0.760	High
I think English needs to communicate with people.	4.24	0.814	High
I think learning English is interesting.	4.28	0.825	High
I think learning English is fun.	4.29	0.803	High
I know how to learn English well.	4.38	0.804	High
I understand simple words in English.	4.38	0.820	High
I'm good at English.	2.01	1.371	Low
I think my knowledge of English is increasing every day.	2.66	1.272	Simple
I feel good to be able to speak English.	4.16	0.949	High
I always practice to speak in English.	2.01	1.371	Low
I believe I can learn English well.	4.31	0.863	High
I dare to speak in English.	2.66	1.272	Simple
I'm going to get the English tasks done.	4.76	0.867	High
I always ask questions with teachers during English classes.	4.75	0.832	High
I learned English with my skilled friend.	4.80	0.814	High
I'm trying to speak in English.	4.77	0.829	Simple
I like to learn English with the I-pick method	4.51	1.023	High
Overall Min	4.02	0.909	High

H<sub>0</sub> 1: No Difference in MBPK Attitude to EFC After Using I-Pick Based on Race

**Table 4.** T-Test – Difference in MBPK Attitude Change Against EFC After Using I-Pick Based on Race

Races	Number	Min	Standard Deviation	T value	Significant
Malay	4	77.81	7.22	-2.419	0.039
India	2	87.24	5.88		

Significant at level 0.05

Next, Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in the attitude of MBPK towards EFC after using I-Pick based on race (Malay & India) with values  $t = -2.419$  and  $sig. = 0.039$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The findings of this study concluded that there was a change in MBPK's attitude towards EFC after using I-Pick by race. Therefore, H<sub>01</sub> was successfully rejected. The Pyae and Scifleet (2018) study reinforces the findings of this study that racial cultures that practice English in everyday life influence changes in attitudes towards English proficiency as opposed to races that don't practice it.

H<sub>0</sub> 2: There is no difference in MBPK's attitude towards EFC after using i-Pick based on the time of review at home

**Table 5.** One-Way Anova-Differences in Attitude Change MBPK Against EFC After Using I-Pick Based on Revision Time di Home

		Total squared	DF	Mean squared	F	Sig
Review Time	Between groups	50.443	2	25.222	63.27	0.000
	In a group	46.641	117	0.399		
	Total	97.084	119			

Significant at level 0.05

Finally, Table 5 shows a significant difference in MBPK's attitude towards EFC after using *I-Pick* based on the review time at home with the value of  $F_{\text{review time}} = 63.27$  and  $\text{sig.} = 0.00$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The findings of this study summarized the change in MBPK attitude based on 3-time ranges of home review (less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, over 3 hours) were completely different. Therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected because there is a significant difference between the time of review at home and the change in MBPK's attitude towards EFC after using *I-Pick*. The findings of the (Fisher et al., 2015) study support the findings of this study that home review time affects the success of pdpc in school. This is due to the fact that the strengthening of learning monitored by parents at home helps MBPK to master the essence of the lesson well (Ahmad et al., 2019).

## Discussion

The findings showed that MBPK which followed EFC learning through *the I-Pick* method exhibited a *change* in positive or high attitudes towards learning English. The change in the positive attitude of students towards learning English is closely related to the methods of organizing and facilitation used by teachers in the classroom. A simple and interesting method affects the pupil's interest in English. The Zulfikar et al. (2019) study found that positive changes in students' attitudes towards English were influenced by four main factors, namely (1) students' interest in learning English; (2) the emotions or feelings of the pupil while following the learning of English; (3) the priority given to the pupil during the learning of English and (4) the pleasure of the pupil during the learning of English.

In general, past studies have made many comparisons to see differences in the attitudes of male and female pupils towards learning English (As Sabiq et al., 2021; Paradedewari & Mbato, 2018; Pirmoradian & Chalak, 2022). Different mental and physical development between males and females affects the English proficiency of these two gender groups. In this issue, Chan (2018) study proves that female pupils are more likely to learn English and practice learning than male pupils because they are more likely to learn English and practice learning than male pupils because they are more confident to use the English language and vocabulary well without shame. However, a study conducted by Ladas et al. (2015) found that there was no change in attitude between male and female MBPK in English as they experienced disruption in terms of acquisition. language from birth. In this regard, biological actors (different rates of maturity), neuropsychology (differences in cognitive strategies in completing tasks), and different cultural factors (social relationship of parents with sons and female) was found to influence the acquisition of Bahasa among MBPK (Rinaldi et al., 2023).

In addition, the racial actors also influenced the change in the attitude of MBPK towards English proficiency. The Flores and Rosa (2019) study found that I background of families who use English as the main language plays an important role in the formation of students' positive attitudes towards English even if they are not native speakers. The use of English as a daily routine in daily life makes the students more confident and courageous to speak or communicate in English. The Hashim and Yunus (2018) study proved that the daily routine of English usage and pdpc methods in schools are intertwined in shaping pupils' attitudes which is positive towards English proficiency.

Last but not least, the role of parents in ensuring that MBPK reviews the lessons delivered by teachers at home is crucial to shaping students' positive attitudes, interests and motivations towards the Language English. The allocation of time given to learn English affects the achievement and ability to understand and master the language well among MBPK. The Sumanti and Muljani (2021) study proves the commitment shown parents at home can help pupils master English well. This situation also helps to increase the self-efficacy of students through the Proximal Development Zone (ZPD).

## CONCLUSION

Overall, MBPK showed a positive attitude towards *English For Communication using I-Pick methods*. This *I-Pick* has helped MBPK with moderate functionality to better master the learning process of English. In addition, the results of the study found that factors of racial background and length of time to study at home influenced MBPK's attitude towards good English proficiency. Thus, it is concluded that the *I-Pick* approach has successfully formed a positive attitude towards *English for Communication* subjects.

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