

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN VOCABULARY MASTERY: A
SURVEY STUDY AT SECOND GRADE STUDENTS' OF SMPN 19 MATARAM IN
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/ 2016**



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RATIFICATION

A journal entitled “An Analysis of Students Difficulties in Vocabulary Mastery: A Survey Study at Second Grade Students of SMPN 19 Mataram in Academic Year 2015/2016” by Firman Rahman (E1D111043) accepted by the board of advisors on August 2016.

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**An Analysis of Students' Difficulties In Vocabulary Mastery: A Survey Study At
Second Grade Students of SMPN 19 Mataram In Academic Year 2015/2016**

ABSTRACT

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

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This research entitled “*An Analysis of Students’ Difficulties in Vocabulary Mastery: A Survey Study at Second Grade Students of SMPN 19 Mataram in Academic Year 2015/2016*” aims to find out the kinds and factors of students’ difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The participants of this study were the second grade students of SMPN 19 Mataram. There were 35 students selected by using purposive random sampling. The data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative method. In collecting the data, two kinds of instruments were used: test and questionnaire. The finding showed that the students still faced the problems or difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The kinds of difficulties faced by students in vocabulary mastery were (a) most of students have difficulties in grammar, (b) how to understand the meaning of words, (c) how to spell and (d) other difficulties such as identifying noun-adjective vocabulary and making translation. There were some factors that caused students difficulties in vocabulary mastery (a) the students’ interest in learning vocabulary, (b) students’ ability in remembering new words, (c) difficult in identifying past tense form, and (d) difficult in pronunciation.

Key Words: *Vocabulary, Students’ Difficulties, Learning Difficulties.*

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Jurnal ini berjudul “*Sebuah analisa tentang kesulitan siswa dalam menguasai kosakata: Sebuah penelitian pada siswa kelas dua SMPN 19 Mataram tahun ajaran 2015/2016*” bertujuan untuk menemukan macam-macam dan faktor-faktor dari kesulitan siswa dalam menguasai kosakata. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada siswa kelas dua di SMPN 19 Mataram. Ada 35 siswa dipilih dengan menggunakan purposive random sampling. Data dianalisa menggunakan metode descriptive qualitative. Dalam pengumpulan data, ada dua instrumen yang digunakan: tes dan kuisisioner. Penemuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa-siswa masih menghadapi masalah-masalah atau kesulitan-kesulitan dalam menguasai kosakata. Macam-macam kesulitan yang dihadapi siswa-siswa adalah (a) kebanyakan siswa mendapat kesulitan dalam grammar, (b) cara mengartikan kata-kata, (c) cara pengejaan dan, (d) kesulitan-kesulitan lainnya seperti mengidentifikasi kosakata dalam bentuk noun-adjective. Ada beberapa faktor yang menyebabkan siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam menguasai kosakata adalah (a) ketertarikan siswa dalam mempelajari kosakata, (b) kemampuan siswa dalam menghafal kosakata baru, (c) kesulitan dalam mengidentifikasi kata dalam bentuk past tense, dan (d) kesulitan dalam pengucapan.

Kata Kunci: Kosakata, kesulitan-kesulitan siswa, mempelajari kesulitan-kesulitan.

1. INTRODUCTION.

Vocabulary mastery is the most important one to make easy in learning those language skills. Vocabulary is one of language elements which needs to be mastered. If students master vocabulary, they can easily improve the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cahyono&Widiati, 2008). However, teachers must be creative in teaching vocabulary to make their students easy in recalling or remembering foreign words. We realize the importance of vocabulary learning, but it does not mean that other components can be ignored such as phonology, grammar, syntax, etc. even though the students have mastered English vocabulary well, it does not guarantee for them to use English language perfectly, because their vocabularies are just the basic for learning English.

Generally, vocabulary is taught by remembering the new words by looking at the meaning of them in a bilingual dictionary (Ivone, 2005). Teachers usually ask their students to translate the new words into their native language and memorize them. This traditional way is applied in most schools. In Indonesia, that way of learning vocabulary is still used. There two major problems of using this manner in teaching vocabulary. As Ivone (2005:4) found that the first limitation of the dictionary method is that both two languages are rarely correlated each other. For instance, the word 'rice' has various kinds of meaning because there are many kinds of rice in Indonesia. The second problem is that in acquiring the target language, translation may slow the process down. When students are given texts in target language, they need to translate it into their native language first. It will spend more time and more process in accessing the target language.

In fact, many students do not like to study vocabulary because of their interest and the classroom situation. According to Huyen, *et al* (in Susanti, 2008), students think that vocabulary is a merely a list of words with meaning in their native language without real context practice and they may share the same experience of looking up words in a bilingual dictionary to find their meanings or definition when they encounter new words and also because of the boring and passive classroom situation.

There are some difficulties of students in mastering vocabulary. The first is forgetting words easily. Remembering English words as a foreign language is not easy, it is depends on the learners' retention. There are several factors that make English vocabulary became difficult to be remembered and forgetting easily such as difficulties in pronunciation, spelling, idiomatic, and overlap meaning. The second is students' interest. Many students doesn't give their attention when teachers explain the materials because of learning process would be boring then students doesn't give their feedback. Third, teaching material. In teaching vocabulary, it is also needed the appropriate materials. Teaching material is very important in learning process. The appropriate materials make the students interested in studying and the bad materials will make students bored.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing students' difficulties in Vocabulary mastery and factors may contribute to those difficulties. The subject of this study is second grade students of SMPN 19 Mataram.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hornby (1987), vocabulary is total number of words in which by combining them will make up language, or range of word known used by a person then the word arranged in alphabetical order and defined or otherwise identified as in a dictionary or glossary. So, person's ability in using language depends on their vocabulary mastery and how many vocabularies that they know. Some of agreements come from people who agree with the explanation:

- Vocabulary is improving words (Dahlan, in Kartasasmita, 2011)
- Vocabulary is words collection (Arsyad, in Kartasasmita, 2011)

It is concluded that from the definition above when we are talking about language, we have to talk about vocabulary. It means that language cannot be separated from the vocabulary. However, vocabulary mastery becomes one of the important aspects to utter the statement or to understand reading or listening something (Widja, In Nurhidayati, 2009). It is clear that there is no language without vocabulary. Mastering vocabulary is possible for students to have good speaking or writing in the learning process.

The writer would like to present the kind of vocabulary mastery stated by (Stepherd, 1967 in Gazlianty, 2011). He states two kinds of vocabulary mastery:

- a. Active mastery is vocabulary mastery in speech production. The students are active to produce the words or sentences and be able to communicate the words with other one. It includes of speaking and writing.

- b. Passive mastery is vocabulary mastery that only transfers the words or sentences as the students hear or watch, so they can express something. It includes the mastery of reading and listening.

English is a foreign language. To teach it in a satisfactory manner good teacher of English is required. It must also be remembered that all the good teachers cannot teach English in good manner at all stage. In order words to teach at different levels a teacher need to have good skills and competencies as teacher (Patel, 2008). Beside the teachers must have good skills and competencies, the teachers have some roles in class. Teacher as an instructor to widening the role to include teacher as facilitator, teacher as audience, teacher as model, and teacher as co participant (Wray, 1995).

However, teachers must have good strategies in teaching process to give clear explanation. Especially in teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessity to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Hulstjin, cited in Azizah, 2009). Allen in Azizah (2009) suggested a process of teaching vocabulary for lower intermediate language level which can be applied for junior high school students;

- Teacher chooses an area or category of vocabulary that they want to work in.
- Teacher asks each student to think of word in the chosen area of vocabulary.
- Teacher asks writes some words on a piece of paper and gives it to the teacher to be checked and kept.
- Teacher checks student's works and distributes them to the students. Each student has a piece of paper in the table.

- Match student's paper with the correct answer: make sure no one gets their in work.
- Student matches the word they have been dealt on the blackboard with its definitions.

Mastering vocabulary refers to the purpose of teaching vocabulary itself in the implementation of the learners' ability performed. It means the learners are capable with the acquisition of vocabulary. Yule (2010) defines mastery as "an individualized and diagnostic approach to teaching in which students proceed with studying and testing at their rate in order to achieve a prescribed level of success". Lexical errors can be found in the form of spelling error, suffix error or the wrong word altogether. The words *beginning* and *shell* are the examples of spelling errors, while suffix error can be identified in the word such as *peopleless*. In the case of wrong word choice, the words *hope*, *watching* and *inhaling* can be included as this type of error when they are chosen to be in the position of the right words. However, there are two types of errors in general – form-related and meaning-related errors. In form-related errors, several kinds of errors are included. One type of mistake found is spelling mistakes. This mistake occurs when the word produced contains a wrong choice of letter, such as in the word *ticher* for *teacher* and *skhool* for *school*. The meaning-related errors, however, appears when the learners are confused by some words which is similar and related in meaning. The example of this error is the sentence *I hope I will not get good grade* for *I expect I will not get good grade*. (Thornbury, 2002).

In addition, the main source of students' difficulties would be recognition: too many words are also the source of difficulties in learning English. In teaching and learning experiences, it is impossible to be able to speak, read, translate, and write in English well without the mastery of a lot of words. So to increase the ability to speak,

to read, to write, to translate and so forth in English well, it is necessary to master a large number of words. Furthermore the students must use and practice them continuously and systematically.

3. RESEARCH METHOD.

1. Research Design

This research belongs to a descriptive qualitative study that attempts to describe factual condition of both the research subject and object under investigation a descriptive qualitative method is commonly used to describe phenomenon that occurs in the natural setting.

2. Data Collection Procedure

This study aimed at analyzing students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery and looking at the factors that contribute to those difficulties. Based on the previous explanation, this study was used vocabulary test and questionnaire to collect the data.

a. Vocabulary Comprehension Test

This test used to make an objective judgment whether the subject met, exceeded, or failed the required objectives. In this study, written test used to know the difficulties in vocabulary mastery.

Two kinds of vocabulary test given to the students, such as multiple choice and match the words. For the questions consist of 40 questions. It divided into 2 parts, 25 questions for multiple choice and 15 questions for match the words. Time allocated for the test is 45 minutes. This test aimed to

know students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The detail of content of Vocabulary test is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Content of Vocabulary test

Category	Number of Questions
Grammar	1, 2, 15, 18 and 20
Meaning	4, 19, 21, 22 and 24
Spelling (Part II)	11 – 15

b. Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of written-series questions for gathering information from respondents. The questions used for this study were open-ended and close-ended questions. Open-ended question allow respondents to respond on their own word. By using this instrument, it is possible to uncover data that related to students' learning difficulties. The survey in this study consisted of 15 closed-ended and open-ended questions assessing students' demographic status, prior language learning and the learning difficulties they experienced. This questionnaire was analyzed by descriptive analysis to support findings from other sources of data. The questionnaire presented in Indonesian language so that respondents could quickly fill out the response in 30 minutes.

3. Data Analysis

To collecting the data, qualitative descriptive method was used in this research. There were some steps applied to analyzing the data:

a. Identifying students' difficulties

The first step is to identify students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery by analyzing students' answer sheets then analyzed students' false answer. The score for each number was 2,5. If all answers are correct, the score $40 \times 2.5 = 100$ points. There are five qualification categories of students' ability as follows in Table 1.

Table 2. Qualification Categories of Students' Ability in Mastering Vocabulary

No.	Range	Category
1.	81-100	Very Good
2.	70-79	Good
3.	56-69	Fair
4.	46-55	Poor
5.	0-45	Very Poor

Buku Model PenilaianKelas KBK (BSNP) 2007

Second, calculate the students' mean score by $M = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$

M = Mean

$\sum Fx$ = Total Score

N = Total Respondent

Then, analyze the common difficulties by identifying the false answer from each part of questions.

b. **Classifying Students' Difficulties**

After identifying the students' difficulties, it was classified into two types based on their mistakes. If the students got wrong on first part questions this meant that the students face difficulties on knowing the meaning of words. When the students answered the second part questions wrongly, it means that they had difficulties on classifying and translate the words.

4. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purposes of this research are:

- a. To identify what kinds of difficulties in vocabulary mastery.
- b. To find out factors may contribute to those difficulties.

5. RESULTS

The first is researcher provided the data of students' ability in vocabulary mastery based on vocabulary comprehension test and the results divided into five categories: very good, good, fair, poor and very poor.

From explanation above, here are the common difficulties on Vocabulary test:

a. **Grammar.**

In the research vocabulary test, the questions which contain grammar identification are questions number 1, 2, 15, 18 and 20. The result shows that there were 22 students (80%) who gave incorrect answer in question number 20 related to singular and plural form. According to Shepherd, 1967 in

Gazlianty (2011) explains one of the criteria of vocabulary mastery that the students are able to use them in appropriate grammatical form. Meanwhile, in question 18 there were 8 students (22.8%) who gave incorrect answer related to type of verb followed by modal. In question number 15 there were 13 students (37%) who have difficulties in giving their answers related to identify type of verbs used in simple present tense. There were 5 students (14.2%) who have troubles in answering question number 2 related to verb identification in simple past tense. The last question about grammar is question number 1. 5 students (14.2%) were troubled in this question, where this question asks students to decide the type of verb used in present continuous tense.

b. Meaning

There are five questions which contain this type of mistake. They are questions number 4, 19, 21, 22 and 24. Most of the students (23 students = 65.71%) who gave incorrect answer in question number 19 related to meaning in deciding a noun for a simple present sentence. For question number 22, there were 9 students (25.7%) who have trouble in answering the question that related to deciding verbs to acquire correct meaning. 17% of the students (6 students) fail to give their correct answer in question number 24 related to analyze the noun to produce the proper meaning. In question number 4, there were 6 students (17%) who fail in answering the question related to identifying noun for appropriate meaning. The question number 21 is about identifying noun for appropriate meaning. There were 5 students (14.2%) who gave incorrect answer.

c. Spelling

In part II, there are five questions which contain this type of mistakes. They are questions number 11 to 15. It was found that there were no mistakes made by the students. The students seemed to understand and give the exact answers to this kind of test.

d. Other Difficulties

There were other types of features being examined in this research. They were vocabulary and translation. The vocabulary test consists of 2 types – noun and adjective vocabulary. There were 11 questions concerning the noun vocabulary items. It was found that there were 22 students (62.8%) who were unable to provide correct answer for the question number 23, 22 students (62.8%) for question number 14, 11 students (31.4%) for question number 8, 10 students (28.5%) for question number 17, 10 students (28.5%) for question number 3, 9 students (25.7%) for question number 13, 9 students (25.7%) for question number 10, 6 students (17%) for question number 6, 5 students (14.2%) for question number 25, 4 students (11.4%) for question number 11, and 3 students (8.5%) for question number 12. Meanwhile, in relation to adjective vocabulary, it was found that there were 17 students (48.5%) who gave incorrect answer for question number 5, 6 students (17%) for question number 9, 5 students (14.2%) for question number 16, and for question number 7 there were no mistakes made at all.

To conclude all, there really are errors made by the students which can be categorized into three features. They are grammar, meaning, and spelling. In

term of grammar, the main problem is about verbs identification. The students are not able to identify singular and plural forms, verbs after modal, and present, progressive and past verbs. In the matter of meaning, the students' main problem is about deciding noun and verbs to produce appropriate meaning, while in spelling, there are no errors made. There are also other features examined in this study. They are vocabulary and translation. In vocabulary matter, most of the students produce many errors in deciding the correct vocabulary. They still do not quite understand which word belongs to noun and adjective category. In translation matter, the students' only problem is not being able to correctly translate the sentences into another language.

Open-ended Questions

Question no. 1: Do you have a problem in translating new words? If it

Yes or No, explain why?

For this question, most students at VIIIA class answer “Yes” and one of their reasons is “because they have limited vocabulary”. It means that they have a problem in translating new words because they did not understand the meaning of words and any words which they never seen before. But some of them said “No” and one of their reasons comes from a student, “because I usually read a dictionary”.

Question no. 2: Do you have a problem in pronouncing new words? If

it Yes or No, explain why?

For the question above, some of respondents said that “we got a problem in pronouncing new words”. Similar to Thornbury (2002) proposes one of some factors that make some words more difficult that words that are difficult to pronounce are more difficult to learn. So that make students are not be able to speak English well.

6. CONCLUSION.

This section states all of the research results in general. The results are about the students’ difficulties in vocabulary mastery and factors contributing to them. For further explanation, below are the summary of it.

a. After the research has been conducted, there are several types of errors found which are made by the students. The errors generally correspond to the three categories – grammar, meaning and spelling. There are also other features which are examined in this research. To clear things up, here are some details regarding the matter. Approximately:

- 12.5% of the students fail to provide correct answer regarding grammar matter
- 12.5% of the students are unable to provide good answer in the matter of meaning
- 12.5% of the students cannot give proper answers in the matter of spelling, and
- 62.5% of the students make errors in the matters of deciding vocabulary (37.5%) and making good translation (25%).

Meanwhile, the common problem was students' interest in learning vocabulary because they did not use the facilities in library. 71.4% of them were seldom to visit the library. The next problem was students' ability in remembering new words. While, 48.6% of them said that they got a problem dealing with ability in remembering new words after the end of the class. Then, they mentioned that unfamiliar words make them difficult to translate and understand the meaning of words.

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