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THE ASSOCIATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
IN INDONESIA

# The 62nd TEFLIN International Conference 2015

Denpasar, 14th - 16th September 2015

# PROCEEDINGS

*Teaching and Assessing L2 Learners in the 21st Century*

BOOK 1

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND CULTURE
IN COLLABORATION WITH
POST GRADUATE STUDY PROGRAM UDAYANA UNIVERSITY

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# FOREWORD

These proceedings are a collection of papers presented at the 62nd TEFLIN International Conference held in conjunction with the celebration of the 53rd *Dies Natalis* of Udayana University held in Sanur Paradise Hotel from 14th through 16th September 2015. The theme of this year's conference is *Teaching and Assessing L2 Learners in the 21st Century*. The papers were selected out of 503 papers presented covering issues of English-language teaching from the perspectives of (1) Language Policy and Planning in Assessment, (2) Quality Assurance in ELT, (3) 21st Century Language and Communication skills, (4) Assessment in Character Education, (5) Rotes of ICT in Teaching and Assessing L2 Learners, (6) English for Young Learners, (7) Innovations in Teaching and Assessing, (8) Best Practices in L2 Teaching and Research, (9) School-based Assessments, (10) English for Specific Purposes, (11) Standardized Tests of English Proficiency (e.g. KLTS, TOEFL), (12) English for General Purposes, (13) The National Examinations and their Impact on L2 Learning, (14) Translation in Language Teaching, (15) Teacher's Professional Development, and (16) Literature-Based in Language Teaching.

We would like to express our sincere thankfulness to those who presented their papers at the conference. We also wish to thank the students at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Udayana University who have assisted us with the typesetting for the format of the proceedings. More importantly, we express our gratitude to the board of reviewers who have worked hard in reviewing the submitted papers selected for the proceedings.

Denpasar, September 2015

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# UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS' SIZE OF RECEPTIVE ENGLISH

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***Abstract***

*Vocabulary learning often becomes a constraint when learning a second language (Meara, 1982), and yet many English language learners have failed to learn the required amount of vocabulary stated by the National curriculum (Quinn, 1968; Nation, 1974; Nurweni & Read, 1999). No data to date has reported university EFL learners' vocabulary size in West Nusa Tenggara. This study tries to measure the first semester students' receptive vocabulary size of English words after learning the subject for at least six years in high school. Using vocabulary level tests designed by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (in Nation, 1990), this study tested 95 university students registered in English language program and found the result that is not far different from results reported from other places in Indonesia. Considering that high school graduates are expected to master 4000 words, including 1500 words in Junior High School (National Curriculum of 1974 and 1984), the levels of students' receptive vocabulary size of 2000 words (53,19%) and 3000 words (48,62%) are unlikely to meet this expectation. Although that is the case, the students show high receptive knowledge of academic vocabulary (54,52%). Estimation of the students' receptive size shows that there is an improvement of L2 learners' vocabulary knowledge as compared to the previous studies' findings.*

***Keywords: Receptive vocabulary, size, EFL Learners***

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning often becomes a constraint when learning a second language (Meara, 1982). Not only because vocabulary knowledge is central in learning a language, but also because vocabulary learning is unlikely to be the main concern in many language classrooms. In Indonesia, many ESL learners have been reported failed to master the required number of vocabulary that is targeted by the national curriculum. Based on the 1975 and 1984 curriculum, students are expected to learn 4000 words in senior high school, which includes the 1500 learned in Junior high school. As a result, school graduates should minimally acquire 4000–5000 English words by the time they entering university.

Unfortunately, several studies conducted in some different places in the country have documented unsatisfied results on this issue. A study carried out by Quinn (1968) at


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a university-level institution in Salatiga, Central Java, found that on average the students had mastered less than 1000 of the most frequent English words in a translation test of General Service List (West, 1953) after six years of study in high school (junior and senior high school). Another study performed by Nation (1974) to diagnose the Indonesian students' reading problems, estimated that students' average recognition vocabulary was about 600 words. It was discovered that many basic vocabulary items such as pronouns, days of the week, numbers and high-frequency verbs were not known. More recently, study conducted by Nurweni and Read (1999) on Indonesian first year university students at University of Lampung estimated that their average vocabulary size was 1226 words, far from the prescribed target in the national curriculum. Through the use of a pre-test edited by Nation (1984), they found that students knew only 30% of subtechnical vocabulary that frequently occurred in academic texts. In addition, their English vocabulary is still estimated to be below 4000 words, an amount that they need to have been acquired in senior high school level.

Based on the results of these previous studies, it can be argued that Many Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are still have isuue regarding their acquisition of English words. In fact, most of them in general are still suffered with insufficient knowledge of English vocabulary. Yet, having sufficient amount of vocabulary is imperative for second language learning, especially due to the fact that the knowledge of vocabulary is known to be central in the development of language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). In reading for example, having adequate vocabulary knowledge is one of the main element needed to comprehend reading text. Nation (1990) maintains that English language learners need to have at least 3000 of the most frequent productive vocabulary in order to be able to cope with reading materials at university level. According to Laufer (1992), it is estimated that knowing an amount of approximately 5000 words is the same as having the knowledge of about 95% of the most frequent words appeared in reading text. Sutarsyah et. al (1994) also come up with the same estimation, where English language learners need to know around 4000 to 5000 words in order to understand Economic text book written in English.

Especially at tertiary level of education, Indonesian students are expected to be able to cope with an abundant amount of English written material. Most of the literature such as books and scientific materials are written in English (Nababan (1991). It is estimated that more than half of the literature in university libraries in Indonesia are written in English. In a survey conducted at the Hasanuddin University Library, Coleman (1988) discovered that more than 80% of the books were written in English. In line with this, if we look at the Curriculum for English Departments of Teacher Training Faculties (Depdikbud-Departemen of Education and Culture, 1991), it was found that of the 119 suggested references, only one is written in Indonesian, two are in both Indonesian and English, and the rest were all in English. Although the proportion of English language texts may not be so high for other subjects, Indonesian students should have adequate English vocabulary to support their reading in order to be able to undertake their studies successfully.

Therefore, more studies in this area are still crucial to be implemented. Besides, it is also important to mention the need for having sufficient knowledge of English words considering that the knowledge of vocabulary can .No data to date has reported university EFL learners' vocabulary size in West Nusa Tenggara. This study tries to measure the first semester students' receptive vocabulary size of English words after learning the subject for at least six years in high school. Using vocabulary level tests designed by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (in Nation, 1990), this study can estimate the success of high school graduates in achieving the amount of vocabulary targeted by the national

curriculum in Indonesia, while at the same time estimating the students' size of receptive and academic vocabulary in order to deal with the academic reading load at tertiary education level.

## 2 METHOD

This study used Vocabulary Size Test B designed by Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham (in Nation, 1990). The test consists of five different level of Vocabulary size test of 2000 words, 3000 words, 5000 words, 10.000 words, and Academic vocabulary. The original test divided into two part of Receptive Vocabulary Test and Productive Vocabulary Test. However, this study focuses only on Receptive Vocabulary, as the objective of the study is to measure students' size of English receptive vocabulary.

95 first semester university students (English program) got involved in this study, representing approximately 180 of the population of the first semesters in 2011/2012. The samples come from two classes of English program regular morning class, and 2 classes of English program regular afternoon class. All respondents are Indonesian EFL learners, who have learnt English for at least 6 years in Junior High School and Senior High School as part of the core subject in the school curriculum. They were given receptive vocabulary level Test of 2000 words, 3000 words, 5000 words, 10.000 words, and Academic vocabulary designed by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (in Nation 1990). The researcher allocated a certain amount of time to respond on the tests and guided the students in responding the questionnaire.

The researchers co-assisted the students in responding on the test to avoid misunderstanding on the test item and make sure that they understand the way the test should be responded. The respondents might leave blank the test item that they could not answered, as this would not reduce their scores. Students were given 1 (one) score for correct answer of each level test. Because the students were tested on five different level of Test (2000, 3000, 5000, 10.000, and Academic Vocabulary), there are five final calculations for each level of test. These scores are then changed into percentages and are considered as the total size of the students' vocabulary size. Finally, the percentages of the subjects' receptive vocabulary knowledge are estimated into numbers in order to find out the approximate amount of receptive English word known by university students.

## 3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By using Vocabulary Size Test B designed by Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham (in Nation, 1990), this study found that the students know approximately only some of the words from the test list. For every word level test, none of the student know all of the words from any of the test level. The students' size of receptive English words is estimated to be 53.19% for the 2000 word category, 43.62% for the 3000 word category, 27.28% for the 5000 word category, and decreasing to 7.99% for the 10.000 word category. A comparison of the test result shows that the students know the 2000 word list the most than the word list from the 3000, 5000, or 10000 categories. It can be seen that, the total percentage of every test level is decreasing as the test level goes up. However, their receptive size of Academic Vocabulary is quite high, for about 54.52% of the words from the list. It can be said that the students' size of academic English vocabulary is the highest compared to all of the categories (see Table 1).

Considering that there is two groups of university beginners take parts in this research, the data from Table 2 shows different measurement of receptive English words known by these two groups of students. It is recorded that, the students from the morning

regular classes know words from the 2000 category for about 58.8%, which is 11.3% higher than the amount of words receptively known by the students in the afternoon regular classes. The difference in percentages is also found in other word level categories of 3000, 5000, and 10000-word list. Students from the morning regular classes know more receptive English words than those come from the afternoon regular classes.

Quantitative analysis of the tests reveals that less than 50% of the students' receptive English knowledge at almost every test level but 2000 words and academic words. Table 3 shows the estimation of the total words known by the participants. It could be estimated that the students receptive vocabulary test of the 2000 words is around 53.19% (1064 words), of the 3000 words is around 43.62% (1309 words), of the 5000 words is around 27.28%, (1364 words) of the 10000 words is around 7.99% (799 words), and of the academic vocabulary is around 54.52%. Students show pretty high receptive knowledge of academic vocabulary, where those registered in the morning regular classes showed higher knowledge at every vocabulary level test than those registered in the afternoon regular classes. This proves that academic words are given more attention in language class, and that English language learning at High School levels are more oriented on academic words.

***Table 1 Percentages of Students' Receptive Vocabulary Size***

| **Vocabulary Level Test** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|
| 2,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **53,19%** |
| 3,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **43,62%** |
| 5,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **27,28%** |
| 1,0000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **7,99%** |
| ACADEMIC VOC. (36) | **54,52%** |

***Table 2. Receptive vocabulary knowledge of regular morning and afternoon classes***

| **Vocabulary Level Test** | **Regular morning (x)** | **Regular afternoon (y)** | **x-y** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **%** | **%** | **%** |
| 2,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **58.8** | **47.5** | **11,3** |
| 3,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **47.3** | **39.9** | **7,45** |
| 5,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **32.1** | **22.3** | **9,81** |
| 10,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **9.43** | **6.52** | **2,91** |
| ACADEMIC VOC. (36) | **60.7** | **48.2** | **12,5** |

***Table 3 Estimation of Students' Receptive Vocabulary Size***

| **Vocabulary Level Test** | **%** | **Total words estimated** |
|---|---|---|
| 2,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **53.19%** | **1064** |
| 3,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **43.62%** | **1309** |
| 5,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **27.28%** | **1364** |
| 10,000 WORD LEVEL (30) | **7.99%** | **799** |

### 3.1 Estimation of high school graduates' receptive vocabulary size

The data found that first semester university students, who have just finished high school, are estimated to have less than 60% receptive knowledge of the first 2000 English words. On the other words, the students know more than a half of the words in the first 2000 word list. The students' receptive vocabulary knowledge for other levels are even much lesser than this number. All of the students' receptive word knowledge on the 3000, 5000, or even 10000-word level are estimated below 50%. In addition, none of the participants reported to know all of the word from any of the word level list, not even the first 2000 word list (see Table 1 and 2).

The data from this study, however, show students' lack of vocabulary knowledge as expected by the National Curriculum. In fact, the students' acquisition of English receptive vocabulary is still lower than the amount expected by the National curriculum. The national curriculum expects that high school graduates in Indonesia have known around 4000 words when they graduate from high school. In this study, however, after six years of study in Junior and Senior High Schools, it is estimated that first semester university students know less than 50% of the words the 3000 word category. Even for the 2000 words, that was expected to be fully acquired in Junior High School, students were estimated to know only 59.6 % of them, showing many words still unknown by the target learners.

This finding also provides evidence for the lack of Indonesian EFL learners' English vocabulary knowledge, as have been documented in several earlier studies (Quinn, 1968; Nation, 1974; Nurweni & Read, 1999) in some different places across the nation. In diagnosing students reading problem in a university in Salatiga (Central Java), Quinn (1968) found an average of students' English words of less than 1000 words after approximately 6 years of study in junior and senior high school. Subjects in the present study also come from quite similar group of first semester university students, who have also learned English for about six years in high schools. When subjects in Quinn's (1968) were reported to approximately know less that 1000 words, subjects in this study are estimated to know 1064 of the 2000 receptive words. Findings from the two studies are not far different, due to the fact that Quinn's (1068) study used translation test, a test that might also cover productive vocabulary knowledge. Ironically, after more than 40 years, high school graduates still cannot reach the curriculum target, and yet very little improvement of English word knowledge is documented by looking at findings from the two studies.

More recent studies on first year university students in Lampung by Nurweni and Read (1999) come up with final estimation of 1226 English words known by the students enrolled in the Faculty of Agriculture. Although this number is also far from the targeted number of 4000 words for high school graduates, first semester university students in study were reported to know words than first semester university students from the present study. Yet, productive vocabulary knowledge was also involved in Nurweni and Read's (1999). Observing the results found from the three studies, Quinn (1968), Nurweni and Read (1999), and the present study, it can be argued that high school graduates are failed to reach the vocabulary size targeted by the national curriculum, and the failure is still high. Although few difference in number are found, there are not significant and therefore cannot be seen as a major improvement. This is a big issue dealing with English foreign language learning in Indonesian education that needs to work out.

Another information needs to be noted here, is that respondents in this study were sampled from two different regular classes (two classes from the morning regular, and two classes from the afternoon regular). Finding reveals that students from different

group outperformed those from the other. Students from morning regular classes are estimated to have more size of receptive English words than students from the afternoon classes. The highest difference of percentage is found in the size of their first 2000 words. Although the amount of differences are not as high as the 2000 word's, different percentages are observed in every word level test (3000, 5000, and 10000-word). Knowing the fact that subjects in this study enrolled in English department to specifically learn English as a foreign language in a university in West Nusa Tenggara, it is necessary to consider that different finding may be found in different contexts, in different areas in Indonesia.

Comparison to the previous findings however, shows that Indonesian EFL learners learn slightly higher number of receptive vocabulary knowledge from time to time. Although the increase is still below the expectation, this proves an improvement of the quality of vocabulary learning in Indonesian schools. Therefore, more attention towards English vocabulary learning and research are still needed in the future.

### 3.2 Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge of Academic Words

This result is quite different on the students' receptive knowledge of academic vocabulary. From the 36 words from the academic vocabulary list, the students are documented to averagely know more than 50% of the total words. The fact that tertiary students know approximately more that 50% of the receptive knowledge of academic words may academically benefit them to access more learning resources written in English. It is estimated that more than half of the scientific materials available for tertiary education in Indonesia university libraries are written in English (Nababan, 1991). A survey at Hasanuddin University (Coleman, 1988) found more that 80% of book collections were written in English. Besides, looking at the curriculum for the English Language Program at the teaching faculty (Depdikbud, 1991), it was found that of the 119 suggested referrences, there is only one written in Bahasa Indonesia. Although this may not be the case for other major of studies, academic vocabulary knowledge certainly helps students to access more reading materials.

In terms of the ability for the students to comprehend reading materials, Nation (1990) maintains that English language learners need to have at least 3000 of the most frequent productive vocabulary in order to be able to cope with reading materials at tertiary level. In line with this, the current study does not focus on productive vocabulary, but on receptive vocabulary. Nevertheless, the size of receptive English words known by tertiary EFL learners in this study is found to be around 1064 of the first 2000 English words. This number is less than a half of the amount of vocabulary size needed for reading comprehension suggested by Nation (1990). Therefore, this finding informs that by knowing the amount of English words, university EFL learners in this study will have problem in comprehending reading materials at university level. Yet, students in this study are those enrolled in English language program, a program where most of the learning resources are written in English. This is an issue that needs to be considered by language practitioners as well as educators at tertiary level in general and at English department program in particular.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the students receptive size of English vocabulary is still estimated to be below the targetted number set by the national curriculum. Although students' receptive vocabulary knowledge in general is still far lower than the expected number, this study finds that the students knowledge of academic

vocabulary is quite high, even higher that the estimation for the receptive knowledge of the 3000 words. Comparison with the findings from previous studies documented throughout Indonesia, shows very little increase on the amount of vocabulary knowledge of high school graduates from time to time. In addition, due to the fact that many reading resources at university level are mostly written in Englis, the learners' size of receptive vocabulary is still inadequate to help them comprehending English reading texts at this level of education. These findings shows that there is still limitation on the learning of English vocabulary in Indonesia, and that more attention toward English word learning is imperative to improve the resultt of English vocabulary learning in Indonesia.

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