



AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is an essential building block of language and as such it makes sense to be able to measure learners' knowledge of it. The objectives of the research is to know what are the difficulties faced by students in learning vocabulary and what are the factors that cause students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. The objective of this research was to investigate and described the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. The research conducted in SMP Pesona Dywantara Distrik Bogor. The number of participants who selected by the writer are 10 eighth grade students of SMP Pesona Dywantara using purposive sampling. This research has two research questions, those are: (1) What are the difficulties faced by students in learning vocabulary? (2) What are the factors that cause students' difficulties in learning vocabulary? The research design used in this research was descriptive qualitative because this research results the descriptive data in the form of written or picture data from the subjects of the research being observed. Based on the data analysis, the researcher found three difficulties faced by students. Those are; Spelling and pronunciation, words meaning and using words appropriately. Furthermore, the difficulties can be caused by many factors. They were afraid making mistake in producing certain word, never practice the vocabulary in daily communication or written practices and just studied the material in class and they did not learn at home.

Keywords: *Students, Difficulties, Vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

English is international language which is used by many people in the world. Therefore, mastery of English is increasingly important in this era. There are some skills and language components in English (Andriani & Vera, 2019:170). Skills of English are speaking, reading, writing and listening.



Meanwhile, Language components of English are vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling. Between skills and language components are supported each other, they cannot be separated each other.

Vocabulary contain in oral form such as those used in listening and speaking or the can come in print form such as those words that we recognize and use in reading and writing (Alizadeh, 2016:22). It can conclude that without learning the vocabulary especially in the second or foreign language, of course will hard to communicate well in spoken or written form. Vocabulary is the entire words that make up a language. Before someone studies about the English skill, he should learn about vocabulary as the first step (Gushendra, 2017:53). As we know, students read the words in reading, they speak words in speaking, then listen words in listening, and use words in writing. In addition, Wilkins in Thornbury as cited in Sahar stated that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (Wilkins in Thornbury in Bakhsh, 2016:122).

In conclusion, learning vocabulary seems to be one of the easiest things about learning a foreign language, but it is one of the hardest things to do. Because, learning vocabulary is not only learn about the meaning of word. Moreover, vocabulary is one of important component for students because they cannot speak English well if they have limited vocabulary (Reskiawan, *et al.*, 2020:35). The more words students can master, the more it will affect their success in learning a language. Because, students will be better to showing their abilities if they have more vocabularies.

Vocabulary is very vital in learning a foreign language. In Junior High level it is very important to continue introduce English, especially Vocabulary. But, in learning vocabulary is not easy for students in Indonesia where English is a foreign language and not used in daily communication. So, it was made the vocabulary learning process more difficult. Like the writer experienced in Internship 3 at Elementary School last year. Learning English, especially vocabulary is still quite difficult for the students. The difficulties of course became a problem in learning process. Rohmatillah in his research stated, in line with learning English vocabulary, English vocabulary is different from Indonesian viewed from form, including pronunciation and spelling, meaning and the word use (Rohmatillah, 2017:70).

We need vocabulary when we learning a new language. It means that in learning a new language we cannot separate vocabulary. Vocabulary can be defined in some ways. There are some terms about vocabulary based on expert theories. According to Gushendra, vocabulary is the entire words that make up a language. Before someone studies about the English skill, he should learn about vocabulary as the first step (Gushendra, 2017: 53). Meanwhile, Richards and Renandya stated vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency provides much the basis for learners in all English skills. In listening, the students listen words, in speaking, they speak words,

in reading, they read words, and in writing, they use words (Rahmadhani, 2015:2).

Based on the explanation above, the writer assumes it is important to know what the difficulties and factors causing students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. Because, the writer assumed this research can help teachers find the problem to find out the solution. Thus, in this research, the writer wants to analyze students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. So, the writer chooses the title *An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary*.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research the writer used qualitative research as research design. The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis (Queirós, *et al.*, 2017:370). Qualitative research seeks to understand the ways people experience events, places, and processes differently as part of a fluid reality, a reality constructed through multiple interpretations and filtered through multiple frames of reference and systems of meaning making (Mc Guirk & O'Neill, 2016:10). Therefore, the writer used qualitative research as research design to present a deeper information. In this qualitative research, the writer used test item, interview and questionnaire as instrument. The writer distributed test item and questionnaire to some students in eighth grade junior high school as the participants and interview students to dig deeper information about students' difficulties in vocabulary.

The subject in this research chose the students in eighth grade of SMP Pesona Dywantara. In this research the writer used a non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling is often associated with case study research design and qualitative research (Taherdoost, 2016:22). There are four types of non-probability sampling, such as quota sampling, snowball sampling, judgmental/purposive sampling and Convenience sampling (Taherdoost, 2016:20).

A research instrument is a tool used to obtain, measure, and analyze data from subjects around the research topic. In conducting the study, the writer needs the instrument to get the data to be analyzed. In this research the writer used three instruments to answer the research questions namely test item, questionnaire and interview.

Data Collecting Technique Kvale *et al.* as cited in Aldhaen defined that Interviews in collecting data as a directed dialogue between interviewee and interviewer on a particular subject under investigation by considering interviewees' opinions and experiences. This method can be used through personal interviews and, if possible, through telephone interviews. In a personal interview, the interviewer reads the questions to the respondent in a face-to-face setting and records the answers. In telephone interview, the

writer recorded the participants comments to questions on instruments over the telephone. This interview allows respondents to let them express in their own ways and pace and the writer got deeper information about students' difficulties in learning vocabulary.

Data analysis is the process that used to answer your research questions. Miles, Huberman & Saldana as cited in Hiratsuka stated that today qualitative data analysis seems to remain a somewhat mysterious and elusive process for newcomers to the field (Hiratsuka, 2018:2). The data analysis in this study included several steps or stages; coding, data reduction, data display, and making conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here the writer discusses about an analysis of students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. In this research, the writer used qualitative method to get the data from 10 eight grade students in SMP Pesona Dywantara Leuwisadeng Bogor. This research was conducted in August 2021. The writer started the first step to conducted research, on July, 31st 2021 the writer came to SMP Pesona Dywantara to meet headmaster to ask permission from the headmaster. Then the writer also talked and discussed with English teacher about the schedule to conducted the research. On August 14th, the writer started to do research with helped by the English teacher. The writer did the research by sharing test item, questionnaire, also conducted interview to investigate students' difficulties in learning vocabulary.

The writer chose 10 participants to conducted this research. Hendryadi stated, in a qualitative research is actually have no minimal limitation or stipulation for total of the sample because qualitative method need more explanation and description of the research. In the other hand, today situation not going well causes by COVID-19, so we could not make a crowd large group. To get the data, the writer asked the teachers' help to give instruction to the students to fill out the instrument of test item. After that, the writer did the research to investigate about students' difficulties in learning vocabulary.

A. Interpretation of Data

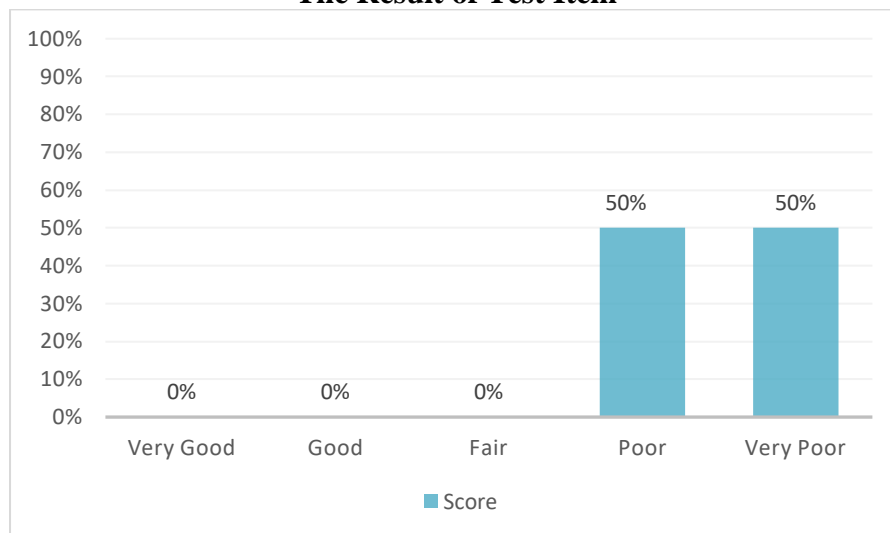
1. The Result of Test Item

Data that presented here is data from test item that were spreading to 10 eight grade students in SMP Pesona Dywantara about students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. This Item test consists of 25 questions in the form of multiple choices addopted from Pena Dewi Indarti (Indarti, 2014). The instrument of test item can be seen in Appendix 8. First, the writer described the result of test item based on the criteria of test item score. Then the writer counted the percentage of test item that described below.

Table 4.1
Data Description of Test Item Score

No.	Respondents	Score
1.	AS	16
2.	DV	48
3.	W	56
4.	DT	52
5.	RD	28
6.	FPS	28
7.	SN	52
8.	YA	48
9.	R	28
10.	SAD	44

Figure 4.1
The Result of Test Item



From the result of data above, the writer found that from 10 eighth grade participants at SMP Pesona Dywantara, there were 5 participants (50%) were categorized as poor, and 5 participants (50%) were categorized as very poor. Based on the result of the test item, it was found that from 10 participants the minimum score is 16 and maximum score is 56, and the mean is 40. In conclusion, the results of this test item indicate that the participants' vocabulary skills are still low. Reflecting on the test item results, this research was conducted to find out the problems and difficulties experienced by participants, so that their vocabulary skills were so low.

2. The Result of Questionnaire

Data that presented here is data from a questionnaire that were spreading to 10 eighth grade students in SMP Pesona Dywantara about students' difficulties in learning vocabulary adopted from Bimas Reskiawan. The questionnaire contains 8 questions that have answered by participants. Below are the result of the questionnaire.

Table 4.4
Result Data of the Questionnaire

No.	Questions	Answer		Total
		Yes	No	
1.	Do you have difficulty in learning English vocabulary?	9	1	10
2.	Is your difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by differences between the written word and the pronunciation?	7	3	10
3.	Is your difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of synonyms?	7	3	10
4.	Is your difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of antonyms?	5	5	10
5.	Is your difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by some words are similar in form but different in meaning?	8	2	10
6.	Is your difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by you are afraid of making mistake in producing certain word?	6	4	10
7.	Do you practice the vocabulary in your daily communication or written practices?	1	9	10
8.	Do you forget easily the vocabulary you had learned?	5	5	10

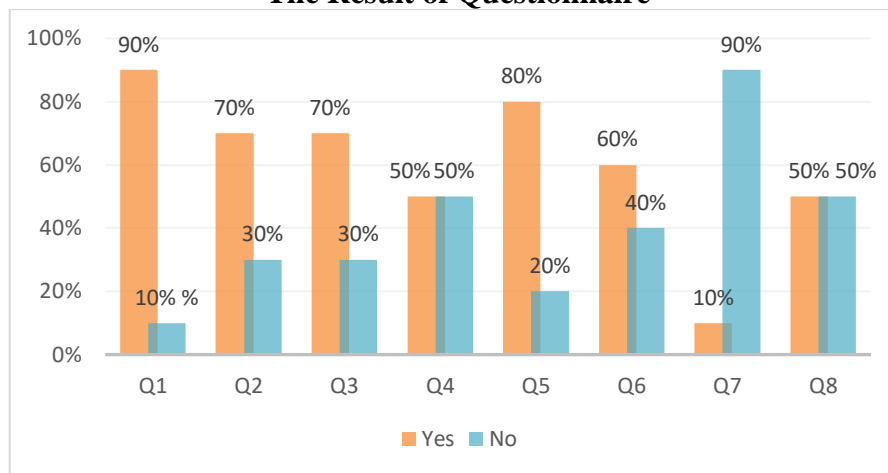
(Reskiawan, 2020: 39 – 40).

The collected data from the questionnaire were served by using :

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

The purpose of data processing above is to give a detail explanation. In order to make it easier in analyzing data from the questionnaire, below are the percentage data from the questionnaire and the detail explanation of the table.

Figure 4.2
The Result of Questionnaire



The figure above showed the percentage of the answer frequency by the participants. Based on the result of questionnaire of number 1, it described that that most of participants (90%) have difficulty in learning English vocabulary and some small part of participants stated no (10%). Thus it can be concluded if they have difficulty in learning English vocabulary. In result number 2, it shows more than half portion of participants (70%) stated they have difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by differences between the written word and the pronunciation and there were (30%) participants that stated no. So it can be concluded they have difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by differences between the written word and the pronunciation.

Meanwhile, result number 3 indicates more than half portion of participants (70%) stated that their difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of synonyms and there were (30%) participants stated no. Thus it can be concluded their difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of synonyms. Then, result number 4 indicates that a half of participants (50%) stated their difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of antonyms and also a half of participants stated no (50%). Thus it can be concluded that a half of participants stated yes that their difficulty in learning vocabulary related to terms of antonyms meanwhile a half of participants stated no about it. Furthermore, result number 5 shows most of participants (80%) had difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by some words are similar in form but different in meaning and some small part of students stated no (20%). Thus it can be concluded they have difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by some words are similar in form but different in meaning. However, result number 6 shows more than half portion of participants (60%) stated their difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by they are afraid of making mistake in producing certain word. But there

were also a half of participants (40%) stated no. Thus it can be concluded more than a half participants difficulty in learning vocabulary caused by they are afraid of making mistake in producing certain word. The next in result number 7, it indicates most of participants (90%) did not practice the vocabulary in their daily communication or written practices and some small part of participants stated yes (10%). Thus it can be concluded if they did not practice the vocabulary in their daily communication or written practices. The last in result number 8, it indicates that a half of participants (50%) stated they forget easily the vocabulary had learned and also a half of participants stated no (50%). Thus it can be concluded that a half of participants stated yes that they forget easily the vocabulary had learned meanwhile a half of students stated no about it.

In conclusion, the majority of participants said it was difficult to learning vocabulary. Then the writer divided the difficulties and factors cause difficulties in learning vocabulary into three parts. Pronunciation and spelling, word meaning and students' behavior. They felt difficult because the differences between the written word and the pronunciation (70%). They felt difficult because the words are similar in form but different in meaning (80%). In word meaning, most on average all participants (70 %) felt difficult in synonym and (50%) in antonym. Meanwhile, the cause factors are they afraid making mistake in producing certain word (50%) and never practice the vocabulary in daily communication or written practices (90%).

B. Discussions

This is the results and research findings related to the discussion of students' difficulties in learning vocabulary". The results of the study were obtained based on test item, questionnaires and interview. On the other hand, the results and findings also to answer the research questions in this study.

1. What are the difficulties faced by students in learning vocabulary?

a. Pronunciation and Spelling

The first difficulties faced by students in learning vocabulary are pronunciation and spelling. This idea was supported by the result of test item, questionnaire and interview. Based on result of questionnaire, they felt difficult because the differences between the written word and the pronunciation (70%). And They felt difficult because the words are similar in form but different in meaning (80%). It is line with the result of interview from P6, she stated "It is difficult, because many words are pronounced and spelled differently". Then, from P5 she stated "Yes, it is also difficult".

According to Thornbury as cited in Sumarnov, potentially difficult words will typically be those that contain sounds that are unfamiliar to some groups of learners (Surmanov&Azimov, 2020:147). To have a good vocabulary someone should have a good pronunciation

of the word. This is evidence with the data conducted in this research. The participants found difficulties caused spelling and pronunciation of Bahasa and English are different and sounds unfamiliar.

b. Word Meaning

The second difficulties faced by students in learning vocabulary are pronunciation and spelling. This idea was supported by the result of test item, questionnaire and interview. Based on result of questionnaire, factor cause word meaning in difficulties vocabulary because they are difficult in terms of synonym (70 %) and felt difficult in antonym (50%). It is line with the result of interview from P4, she stated "It is difficult, because there are many meanings of the vocabulary that I don not know". The other responses also stated from P7, she stated "Quite difficult if the vocabulary is unfamiliar".

According to Thornbury as cited in Sumarnov, when two words overlap in meaning, learners are likely to confuse them. Words with multiple meanings can also be troublesome for learners (Surmanov&Azimov, 2020:148). This theory related to the de data result, almost all participants confused with meaning in English. In Indonesia English is foreign language. So, many meaning or structure words that they do not know. The way how to solve this problem is do not stop continue to enriching our vocabulary skills.

2. What are the factors that cause students' difficulties in learning vocabulary?

a. They afraid of making mistake in producing certain word

b. Rarely practice the vocabulary in daily communication or written practices

The factors that cause students' difficulties in learning vocabulary are based on students' behavior. This idea was supported by the result of test item, questionnaire and interview. Based on result of questionnaire, they afraid making mistake in producing certain word (50%). And never practice the vocabulary in daily communication or written practices (90%). It is line with the result of interview from P7, she stated "Because English vocabulary is unfamiliar and not really interested in English and rarely to practiced". Then from P8, she stated "Because I do not learn English vocabulary at home".

Edriz as cited in Bimas Reskiawan stated the factor cause difficulties vocabulary mastery is little speaking and writing that make students forget words quickly. In a word, students cannot learn words well, because they had some bad habits in studied vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out the difficulties in learning vocabulary. Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that there are some difficulties faced participants in learning vocabulary

at eighth grade SMP Pesona Dywantara. The research design of this study was Descriptive Qualitative research. There were three instruments that used in this study, such as test item, questionnaire and interview. Based on the data from instruments, the result shows that the students had difficulties in learning vocabulary. However, majority of the students have the same difficulties.

The difficulties that they faced such as, in the aspect of spelling and pronunciation there were differences between the written word and the pronunciation. Other than that, in the aspect of meaning they felt difficult because the words are similar in form but different in meaning and they were difficult in terms of synonym and antonym. Meanwhile, the writer also concluded factors that cause students' difficulties in learning vocabulary related to the aspect of students' behavior. The students afraid making mistake in producing certain word, never practice the vocabulary in daily communication or written practices and just study the material in class and they do not learn at home.

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