

A STUDY ON YOUNG LEARNERS' VOCABULARY MASTERY AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This research aims to analyze of the students' vocabulary mastery of the fourth grade students of SDN 15 Padang Sarai. The research design is descriptive qualitative method. The study sample is 32 students. The result of data analysis showed that vocabulary test can be conducted to young learners to assess students' vocabulary mastery. The conclusion to the classification of category is poor to very good which mean that vocabulary of the fourth grade of SDN 15 Padang Sarai is in good level for achievement in English lesson in mastering vocabulary. It is found that 41% students at good level, 37% at very good level, 16% is fair, and 6% at poor level. The author suggests that English teacher should have particular techniques to teach vocabulary for example the teacher can use the real object to show the meaning of the words, in order to make the students easier in mastering vocabulary and learning English subject.*

Keywords: *Vocabulary, Mastery, Elementary School*

A. Introduction

Vocabulary is an essential part in teaching-learning English as a foreign language. It is supported by Hatch and Brown (1995) that vocabulary is the foundation to build languages, which plays a fundamental role in communication. As a base component in learning language, vocabulary is obviously being one of keys in mastering the target language. Therefore, by mastering vocabulary, it might affect the mastery of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students who learn English as a foreign language might be difficult to mention the name of things in English, or to communicate by using English without mastering various numbers of English vocabulary items. Hornby (1995) states that vocabulary is the total number of the words with their meaning and rules for combining them to make up the language. Therefore, vocabulary is important to be mastered by students who learn English as foreign language.

Vocabulary is the most important thing in using language as a mean of communication. We can express our speech and thought with our English vocabularies as a part of English elements. Mujiono in Ernawati (2001) states that vocabulary in English as a foreign language is taught at school for the purpose of providing of the students language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Some general statement say that the technique of teaching reading comprehension and others (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) on vocabulary. For example: in reading comprehension, the students are able to understand the content of the passage if the students master the words in the passage. The students' vocabulary acquisition will support their learning of four language skills. According to Vallet in Anton (1996), vocabulary acquisition is an important aspect in the speaking skills. It means that if students have vocabulary understanding, they can get high speaking skills.

Quirk in Rahmat (2017) state that vocabulary is a list of words, usually in alphabetical order and with explanation of their meaning, less complete than dictionary. According to Crystal in Rahmat (2017), the vocabulary of a person is defined either as the set of all words that are understood by that person or the set of all words likely to be used by that person when contracting new sentence. Another linguist states that vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language (Ur, 1996: 60). From the definition of vocabulary above, the researcher will use one stated by Ur because it describes precisely the kind of vocabulary the writer is going deal with in this study. Thus, the vocabulary in this study means words a teacher teaches in the foreign language. It consists of a set words associated with a subject or area of activity, or used by an individual person. It is important for language learners to understand the vocabulary in order to be able to master the four language skills; listening speaking, reading, writing.

Therefore, Rahmat (2017) also state that vocabulary is important to students – it is more important than grammar for communication purposes, particularly in the early stages when students are motivated to learn the basic words they need to get by in the language. Wilkins in Thornbury (2002) summed up the importance of vocabulary learning. He stated that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is important for the learners to learn a language especially, the Elementary School students. Hopefully, by being introduced to a number of words, they will be able to express their thoughts or accept others'. In addition, they also have vocabulary knowledge when they are developing their four language skills. Learning a language is not an easy task. It needs a set of requirements. One of them is having adequate vocabulary. Vocabulary plays an important role in learning the four language skills. Nation in Jeff (cited in Rahmat, 2017) states that within the last few years, vocabulary has become viewed as an important aspect in second language learning, in fact, many believe just as important as the main skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nation in Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) states that vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge; knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, and language use and so on. Vocabulary mastery is closely related to the ability to read and speak language skills, vocabulary makes learners to expand their ideas easier (Irawan, 2022). Vocabulary becomes one of the crucial things need to be mastered by the learners in learning English as Foreign Language. In line with that, Pratama & Zainil (2020) also found that learners obstacle in communicating are vocabulary, pronunciation, and inadequate understanding of grammar. In line with that, it is found that obstacles faced by children in understanding English is because of lack of young learners' vocabulary mastery (Bimo & Dartani, 2021).

Mastery means the competency to comprehend and apply something learned. Hornby (1995) states that mastery is complete knowledge or great skills. Swan in Rahmat (2017) defines mastery as comprehensive knowledge. In line with the two experts, Quirk in Rahmat (2017) states that mastery is great skill or knowledge in a particular subject or activity. Based on the three definition above, it can be drawn some key words. They are skill and comprehensive. Skill can be improved through a lot of practice. A language skill is the same as any other skills. It takes a long time and needs a lot of practice mastery any kinds of skills. While comprehensive means complete or holistic. According to the discussion above, it can be contracted that vocabulary mastery is the competency to comprehend numerous words and apply them in students' real life meaningfully. It can be said that mastering vocabulary mastery is the gate to learning a language. The learners will be easy to learn a language if they have a sufficient vocabulary. Some researches about vocabulary focus mostly on technique and media for teaching vocabulary from basic level, in this case is young learner up to the highest level which is university students.

However, researches focusing on analyzing students' vocabulary mastery are rarely conducted by researchers, especially at young learners' level. For example, Afianti (2018) which investigates a study about junior high school students' vocabulary mastery entitled "*A Study on the Vocabulary Mastery of the Seventh Year Students of SMP Negeri 2 Susukan, Banjarnegara 2017/2018 Academic Year*" and found that the students' vocabulary mastery is good. Another research on vocabulary mastery was done by Rahmat (2017) entitled "*A Descriptive Study of Vocabulary Mastery at the Eight Grade of Mental Retardation Students of SMPLB YKAB Boyolali in the Academic Year 2015/2016*". This research focused on the way teacher teach vocabulary and the problems appear in teaching vocabulary mastery in SMPLB.

The current study examines the quality of young learners' vocabulary mastery. The classification are very good, good, fair and poor. This research focused on how learners performed their vocabulary mastery related to the noun which have already familiar with the students. This study is expected to give some contributions in analyzing young learners' vocabulary mastery that is still rarely done by researchers, especially in Indonesia. This study theoretically contributes to educational field, especially to vocabulary mastery study, by filling the gap in literature on young learners as EFL learners which is one of the primary areas of English language teaching study. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the accomplishment of this research will bring contribution in terms of getting better understanding toward

the notion of vocabulary mastery. Practically, for the teacher, they can realize that vocabulary mastery in EFL class is important, so that it can influence the teacher in choosing teaching strategy in classroom and they could help students maximally to have good vocabulary mastery, so that they can improve their performances. Ledy, et. al (2023) argue that every program for teaching a language must put a powerful prominence on supporting learners in building a greater vocabulary. Therefore, they also could have better vocabulary mastery in EFL classroom. By the results of this study, the author expect it can help all of English teachers to teach in interesting way, and it also makes teachers to be more creative in improving students' vocabulary achievement.

B. Research Method

The recent study belongs to a descriptive research with qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is chosen because the researcher wants to look at the natural things that happen in human being and the phenomena directly from field. In this research, the researcher observed the natural phenomena of young learners' vocabulary mastery in EFL classroom. According to Ary et.al (2010) descriptive study is a research that asks questions about the nature, incidence, or distribution of variables; it involves describing but not manipulating variables. This is relevant to this study because this study analyze students' vocabulary mastery in natural setting. However, quantitative calculation will still be used in a small degree just to show the number of the percentage of occurrences of each characteristic, support and justify the result of the descriptive analysis. The researcher could give her interpretation to the highest and lowest score of young learners' vocabulary mastery. Hence, it could help the researcher found the conclusion of the data completely. This research was conducted at SDN 15 Padang Sarai. The population of this research is 93 students of the fourth year students as shown at table 1.

Table 1. Number of students

No.	Class	Number of Students
1.	IV A	31
2.	IV B	32
3.	IV C	30
Total		93

The author use Cluster Random Sampling technique to select the samples at the current study. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) cluster random sampling is the process of selecting a sample in such a way that all individuals in the defined population have an equal and independent chance of selection for the sample." The researcher choose one class to be the sample which is IV B class which consists of 32 students. The data of this study are taken by using English vocabulary test. The test is writing vocabulary test. Researcher focusing on fruit words which has already learnt by the students. Researcher gave the pictures of fruits and ask the students to write the name of the fruits. In this research, the writer used tests as an instrument to collect the data. In collecting data, the researcher directly came in the classroom activities to administering vocabulary test. After collecting the data using a test, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative method to describe the students' mastery in English vocabulary the qualitative method includes the finds of research based on the percentage calculation average and other statistic quantitative research in value calculation on quantity. The data is the result of the test. The writer has steps of analyzing the data are as follows: 1) The writer makes the answer key of the question before correcting the students answer; 2) Checking and scoring the students' answer; 3) The students get ten score for a correct answer; 4) The data or the results of the test are arranged by the form of tabulation. From their score, we can know their abilities which can show us who have good or poor score. To know the quality of the students' vocabulary mastery score, the researcher classifies it into four levels of mastery, they are very good, good, fair, and poor.

C. Finding and Result

The author checks the students' answer and gives the score. It is done after doing the test. The data of the research are the scores of the vocabulary mastery of the fourth grade students of SDN 15 Padang

Sarai. After knowing the score, the researcher determines the average score by using the following formula:

$$M = \frac{X}{N}$$

Notes:

M: the average

X: the number of score

N: the number of student

The result of vocabulary test administered to Elementary School students shows that the respondents got various score that is from 40 to 100. The score is shown as follows:

Figure 1. The Students' Score of the Test

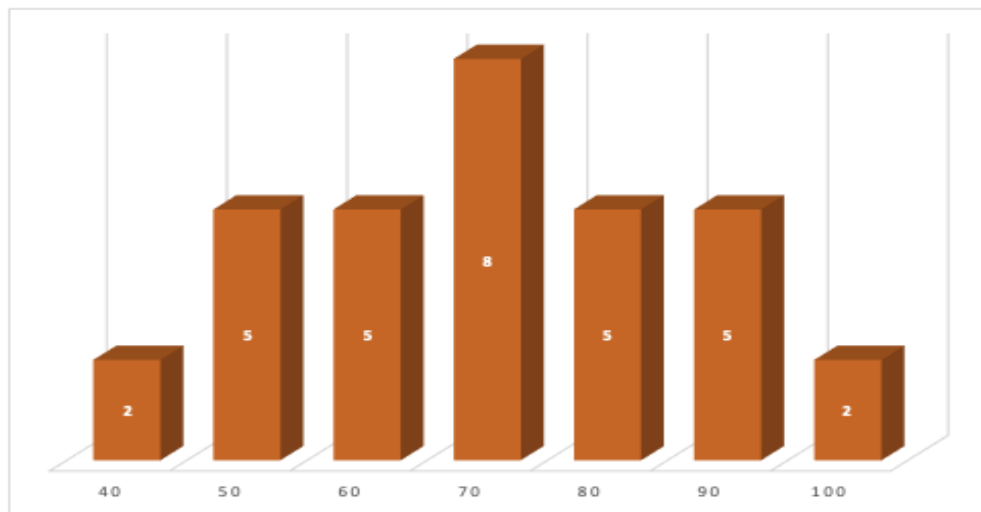


Figure 1 shows that mostly students got 70 on the vocabulary mastery test. It reveals that the lowest frequency is two and the highest is eight. From the figure above, it can be seen that the lowest frequency is at score 40 and 100. It also demonstrates that there are two students got the lowest score that is 40. It seems that the two students got the lowest score found difficulty in answering the questions related to fruit vocabulary. Then, it is followed by five students got 50 on score, five students got 60, five students got 80, five students got 90 and eight students got 70. Based on the formula used to looking for the mean, the average score is calculated as follow:

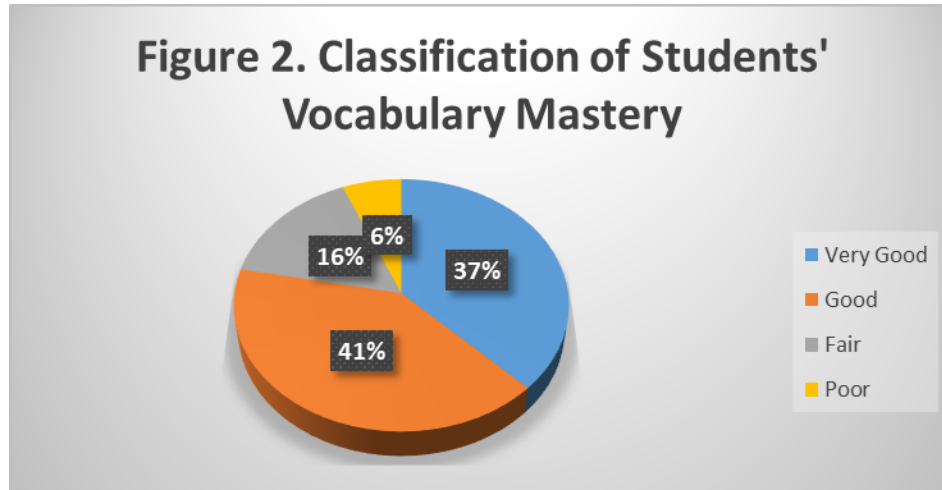
$$M = \frac{X}{N}$$
$$M = \frac{2240}{32} = 70$$

The researcher found that the highest score is 100, and the lowest score is 40. According to Sofyan (2021) that the classification of the students score is as follows:

- 80 – 100 = Very Good
- 60 – 79 = Good
- 50 – 59 = Fair
- 0 – 49 = Poor

Based on the classification above, researcher classify the students score on vocabulary test for young learners. The data is describe by the diagram below:

Figure 2. Classification of Students' Vocabulary Mastery



The researcher describes the students' score. The highest score frequency is 70 where there are 8 students achieve the score. Then, for score 50, 60 and 90 there 5 students for each score. It is followed by 5 students got 80. And the lowest frequency is 40 score and 100 where there are only 2 students got it both. After analyzed the score, the researcher found that there are 12 students who get excellent score, 13 students who get good score, 5 students who get fair score, 2 students who get poor score. The average score is 70. Therefore, the students who get good score have the most number, followed by very good, fair and poor. There are 19 students got upper the mean score and 13 got lower than the mean score. The researcher relates to the standard level above, the ability of the students in vocabulary mastery is in good level.

Nevertheless, it must be considered to the students that has lower score than the average score in teaching and learning process. According to Irawan (2022), it is also found that students with a low vocabulary knowledge show weak academic performance in different course related to language skills, linguistics, literature, and translation. In line with that, Fidyningrum, et. al (2021) states that young learners tend to be very easily bored and to generate enthusiastic atmosphere for learners in learning English by using several methods. The more creative and expressive the educators are, the more enthusiastic the learners in the learning process (Noviya, 2021). With attention to that, it is necessary for the teacher to determine the applicable method in teaching vocabulary to elementary school students. It is supported by Herdi, et. al (2022) that found a particular method in teaching vocabulary in academic fields might help students to elaborate idea is essential in strengthening students' vocabulary.

D. Conclusion

Based on the result of the data analysis, the writer comes to the conclusion of her research. The highest score is 100, the lowest score is 40 and the average score is 70. Therefore, the students who get the upper average score are 19 students and the students who get the lower score is 13 students. From the result, it indicates that the level of the students' vocabulary mastery of the fourth year students of SDN 15 Padang Sarai is good. After presenting the conclusion, the author propose some suggestions to be considered to improve the students' vocabulary mastery. The teacher should help the students who find difficulties and should be more creative in teaching English. The teacher should be more applicative in teaching vocabulary. The teacher should enrich the students' vocabulary by using appropriate and interactive teaching technique to learn new vocabulary. Furthermore, to the reader or other researcher, the author suggests to the other researcher to complete this research by conducting any other research on young learners' vocabulary mastery in other level.

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