

## A STUDY ON THE VOCABULARY MASTERY OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

Cut Mawar Helmanda<sup>1)</sup>, Putri Dini Meutia<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup>Program Studi Pendidikan B. Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh, Indonesia

<sup>2)</sup>Program Studi Pendidikan B. Inggris Universitas Abulyatama, Aceh, Indonesia

Email: bungahelmanda@yahoo.com

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk melihat tingkat penguasaan kosa kata dan strategi mengingat yang digunakan oleh para mahasiswa program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh. Sampel adalah para mahasiswa semester I yang dipilih secara acak. Tes dan angket adalah instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah kebanyakan dari mahasiswa tersebut berada pada tingkatan penguasaan kosa kata yang sedang. Lebih lanjut, dalam mengingat kosa kata tersebut, kesemua mahasiswa melakukan pengelompokan sebagai teknik mengingat kosa kata. Para mahasiswa tersebut juga terus berupaya untuk menghafal kata secara berkesinambungan, meminta bantuan dari pengajar bahasa, teman-teman dan menggunakan kamus sebagai usaha untuk meningkatkan jumlah penguasaan kata.

**Kata Kunci:** Tes Kosa Kata, Strategi Mengingat, Penguasaan Kosa Kata.

**Abstract:** This investigation was directed to comprehend the degree or level of vocabulary mastery and the retention technique utilized by students of the English Department at Muhammadiyah Aceh University. The sample, the I semester students, was chosen by utilizing irregular inspecting strategy or common called as random sampling. Test and questionnaire were the instruments used in this study. The investigation's outcome showed that most students are at the mid-frequency of word family level authority or mastery. In addition, all the students did grouping as memory technique in memorizing the vocabulary. The students also keep doing the word memorization continuously, asking for help from the language instructor, friends, and using the dictionary as the effort to increase their vocabulary size mastery.

**Keywords:** Test of Vocabulary, Memorizing Strategy, Vocabulary Mastery

### A. INTRODUCTION

English has been accepted as the dominant language in every aspect of contact with other people. According to Kral (1994), language is a media to communicate in social life. Many persons strive to understand and master it because of the value of English as a foreign language. It is essential to learn vocabulary to help the mastery of English. Vocabulary is a core component of learning English. According to Hatch and Brown (1995) that vocabulary refers to a collection of terms or set of words that can be used by a person who speaks of a language for a particular or specific language.

The mastery of English vocabulary is about the student's ability to learn vocabulary. Henry and Pograntz (2006), stated that the person who master a language needs to be able to grasp both speaking and writing of the set of words and its phonological system. This implies that the student who is studying English must understand or get to know the meaning of the words.

In studying, at educational institution, if the students want to be effective in their academic years, it means that they must be able to use and practice a lot of English vocabulary. Further more, Olmos (2009) from Notion, divides the category of vocabulary level, they are: high- frequency, academic, technical and low-frequency.

Nation and Beglar (2007), said that there are common 14.000 word families in English vocabulary size. The word size test consists of 140 items (ten from each 1000 word level). Furthermore, Nation thought that over 80 percent of even an academic text would usually account for the first 2,000 words. Finally, while the first 2,000 words might not be sufficient for much of the text to be understood, they are definitely necessary. Students at university level should cover or learn the first two thousand words level to cope the English skills.

Based on the explanation mentioned above, the writers were interested to carry out a research to get the information related to the study on the vocabulary mastery of English Department students of Muhammadiyah Aceh University, with two points to be investigated, they are: 1) What level of vocabulary mastery is covered by English Department students of Muhammadiyah Aceh University? And 2) What strategy and effort used by English Department of Muhammadiyah Aceh University students to develop their vocabulary size?

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Definition of Vocabulary**

The importance of vocabulary plays a highlight role in language learning as one of the core components of language. If the language learners find the fun technique, they will eager to go on to the next level activities. Therefore, creating a fun situation for English learners will enable learners to learn vocabulary.

Vocabulary is about words, which is used to communicate. We must understand the meaning of foreign language by mastering the words. Huckin (1983) said that keep doing the receptive skills of English, namely reading and listening as often as possible is

the great way to expand one's vocabulary. The more someone trains his or her reading and listening ability, the more size of vocabulary he or she gets. It means, increasing the size of one's vocabulary, often referred to as vocabulary enrichment, which is commonly considered to be an important part of learning a language and developing one's language skills.

Furthermore, vocabulary is the most essential and tough component to be acquired by language learners, especially the foreign language learners. The study of a significant number of researches shows that vocabulary plays important role as the basic component to be mastered, hence, the learners can develop their English skills later. The language learners face the obstacles in mastering language skills without the mastery of words, and sometimes learners consider that the vocabulary mastery must be the root or basic problem. Therefore, the language instructor should give some help to the students to build the knowledge of word meaning and enable them to increase the level of word mastery and also use the word in daily life to keep memorizing it.

There are some definitions of mastery. Guskey and Eric (2014) defines mastery from Oxford dictionary that mastery is the capacity of comprehensive knowledge or skill in a particular subject or specific topic or activity. Mastery of vocabulary is often an important part of English. The significance mentioned by Nunan of mastering vocabulary (1999), it is a major issue in the learning of a second language is the growth of a great size of vocabulary possession.

Vocabulary is a fundamental component for language learners to be mastered while keep practicing the four language skills, beside the use of proper grammar. In short, we may infer from the above description that vocabulary mastery is the ability of a collection of words that build up a language that used by someone. Mastery of vocabulary is one part of mastering English as either a second language or foreign language at any education levels.

## **2. The Strategy of Memorizing Vocabulary**

Teaching methods, also referred to as teaching strategies, are techniques used by teachers to deliver course content in ways that keep students interested and exercise distinct skill sets. According to unit subject, grade level, class size, and classroom resources, a teacher can choose various teaching strategies. It is important to know

about techniques for teaching. Schmitt and McCharty (1997) cited in Sener (2015) divide the taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies into four groups, namely:

1) Discovery Strategies

At this point, by guessing from structural knowledge of the language, when learners do not know the words, they must discover their meaning.

2) Social Strategies

The social technique of telling someone who knows is a second way to explore new words. Teachers are also in this role and may be asked to assist in a number of ways: providing the translation of L1, giving a synonym, meaning and paraphrase.

3) Memory Strategies

Most memory techniques include comparing the word to be remembered, using some sort of imagery or grouping, with some previous awareness of learners. In this step, the techniques used are images, related words, unrelated words, grouping, etc.

4) Cognitive Strategies

In this taxonomy, language strategies are similar to memory strategies, but they are not directly based on deceptive mental retrieval, including sorting, classifying, comparing, forecasting, repeating and using mechanical means to study vocabulary.

Moreover, Oxford (1990) in Nemati (2009) defined that there are memorizing strategies: grouping, choosing acronyms and utilizing imagery. These strategies allow learners to get material and use it to communicate. Grouping means classifying language material into a coherent context. In order to get better in remembering them, the use of acronyms is a kind of contextualization of new words. Using imagery is called the placement of new language knowledge in memory to ideas by means of visual sight. In short, these techniques are designed to make learners be the active participants in the learning process so that they can master the knowledge of vocabulary.

### 3. Level of Vocabulary Mastery

As indicated by Nation (2006), there are three size levels of vocabulary mastery: high size frequency; cover 10.000 words, mid size frequency; 3000-9000 words and low size frequency; 1000-2000 words. Nation thought that in excess of 80% of even a

scholastic content would ordinarily represent the initial level of 2000 words. It is hard to envision that students at college level are required to talk or peruse smoothly in English without the first 2000 words or second 1000 level words. Notwithstanding, while the initial 2,000 words probably will not be sufficient for the vast majority of the content of the text to be perceived by the students, they are definitely significant. Therefore, a number of the terms in a text need to be understood by the students.

**Table 1.** Level of Vocabulary

Level	word
High frequency	10.000
Mid frequency	3000-9000
Low frequency	1000-2000

Furthermore, there is also a vocabulary test to calculate the scale or level of frequency, as described above. The first reason to measure the students' vocabulary mastery is to see how close the learner is to having adequate vocabulary to be able to perform such activities, such as reading a book, watching a movie, and listening to everyday communication. The second reason for calculating vocabulary frequency is to be able to map learners' vocabulary growth.

Here are the example of the questions to be asked in vocabulary test of Nation and Beglar (2007), in which ten questions represent every 1.000 word family level:

*1. First 1.000 level*

See: They saw it

- a. cut
- b. waited for
- c. looked at
- d. started

*2. Second 1.000 level*

Stone: he sat on a stone

- a. hard thing
- b. kind of chair
- c. soft thing on the floor
- d. a part of tree

*3. Third 1.000*

Pave: it was paved

- a. Prevented from going through
- b. Divided
- c. Given gold edged
- d. Covered with a hard surface

### C. RESEARCH DESIGN

The method of this study is descriptive quantitative research. According to Arikunto (2006), he noted that quantitative analysis data often answer numbers and everything that can be calculated. The writers conducted a descriptive quantitative research at Muhammadiyah Aceh University. The sample of this study was 11 students of English department at Islamic Studies Faculty of Muhammadiyah Aceh University. The sample is a small community that is observed and all members of any well-identified class of people are defined as a population, occurrences or topics (Arikunto, 2006). To select the sample, this study used random sampling technique in which the samples chosen without any specific purpose or criteria.

The writers used two instruments in order to get the results, they are vocabulary size test and questionnaire. First, the writer presented the vocabulary test to students. This examination is intended to estimate the basic comprehension of common word meanings by the examinees, and, specifically, the degree to which they understand the common meanings of words (taken from Nation and Beglar (2007)).

Second instrument is questionnaire. The questionnaire is to see the way of students in enriching vocabulary mastery. In Nemati described three sub-strategies of vocabulary learning strategies, grouping, making acronym and using imagery.

Firstly, the writer evaluated the student's vocabulary test when analyzing the results. A learner's total score needs to be considered to the standard test level by Nation and Beglar (2007), in which every ten items represent 1.000 word family level. If a test taker got every item correct, then it is believed that the student knows the English families of the most common terms. After evaluating the students' works, the writers assessed them to see which level of students' vocabulary mastery. The second, the writers assessed the outcome of the questionnaire. The percentage is used in the study of the outcome about students' vocabulary learning strategy and also the analysis of their effort to increase the vocabulary size.

#### D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the test showed that most of the students can answer the test items. From 11 students, two students are in high-frequency level and the rest 9 students are in mid-frequency level of word mastery. Hence, the writers concluded that most of the students who studied at English Department (semester I students), are in mid-frequency level of word family mastery.

The outcome of the questionnaire showed that most of the students did grouping of words as the memorization strategy. The students keep grouping the words based on the classification of the word, therefore it helps them to memorize vocabulary. Furthermore, the students always do some basic efforts to increase their vocabulary size, they are: keep doing the word memorization continuously, asking for help from the language instructor, friends, and using the dictionary.

#### E. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the writers concluded that the majority of first-semester English Department students at Muhammadiyah Aceh University were achievers at the mid-frequency of word family level, in which two students achieved high frequency level, and no one of the test taker was shown to be in low frequency word level. Moreover, the students did the vocabulary learning techniques in memorizing vocabulary, it is: grouping the words. Moreover, the sample consistently do some essential attempt to build their vocabulary size, they are continue doing the word remembrance continuously, requesting help from the language educator, companions, and utilizing the word reference.

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