

# PROBLEMS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MASTERING ENGLISH VOCABULARY (A STUDY AT THE 11<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 7 PINRANG, SOUTH SULAWESI)

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## ABSTRACT

English vocabulary is fundamental learning materials for students to learn English skills. Vocabulary is content of language. It is used to develop sentences or statements for written and spoken language. However, in senior high school 7 Pinrang, South Sulawesi, many students get difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. This study aims to describe students' problems in mastering English vocabulary. This study used descriptive quantitative method. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 133 students. Questionnaire consists of 20 item numbers of statement. It includes problems of word meaning, pronunciation and spelling, word formation, motivation, facilities, teaching method. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics that include mean score, frequency, and percentage and Likert scale. Category of students' problems was divided into very high (81%-100%), high (61%-80%), medium (41%-60%), low (21%-40%), and very low (0%-20%). The findings showed that students' problem in mastering vocabulary was categorized into high (69%). The detail problems in mastering English vocabulary were students' problems relate to (1) word meaning was high (78%), (2) pronunciation and spelling was high (72%), (3) word formation was high (75%), (4) motivation was high (68%), (5) facilities was high (61%), and (6) teaching method was high (62%). It can be concluded that students have high problems in mastering vocabulary and students get more problems in mastering English vocabulary relates to materials of vocabulary learning than to motivation, facilities, and method.

**Keywords:** Problems, Mastering, Vocabulary

## 1) INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the important materials in English subject. Vocabulary knowledge is divided into two, receptive vocabulary knowledge and productive vocabulary knowledge. Receptive vocabulary knowledge refers to the knowledge to understand a word when hearing and seeing and productive vocabulary knowledge refers to

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the knowledge to produce a word when writing or speaking (Zhou, 2010). Vocabulary supports students to learn four English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Qian & Lin (2019) stated that vocabulary knowledge has relationship to language proficiency. Vocabulary knowledge is better prediction of four macro language skills mastery. It is in line to research finding of Miralpeix & Muñoz (2018) that students' vocabulary size is closely linked to writing skill and moderately linked to reading, listening, and speaking skills. Moreover, Milton (2013) stated that large vocabulary is needed to develop four language skills.

Vocabulary knowledge is important sub skill for successful listening comprehension in EFL (Stæhr, 2009). According to Wang and Traffers-Daller (2017), vocabulary size has significant contribution to English listening comprehension skill and Astar et.al. (2021) stated that Vocabulary knowledge is significantly correlated to listening skill. Students with limited vocabulary have potential problems in learning listening comprehension. Limited vocabulary causes students get difficulties in identifying word meaning, then it makes students fail to understand whole meaning of passages (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Vocabulary knowledge has important role in developing students' English-speaking ability. It is stated that vocabulary mastery has significant correlation to students' speaking skill (Fonna, 2014; Baihaqi, 2017; Jambari et.al., 2021; Suyanto et.al., 2021). Moreover, Khan et. al. (2018) stated that the lack of vocabulary has influence on EFL students' performance in listening. The lack of vocabulary is one of major factors in students' inability to speaking English.

Students' vocabulary knowledge has correlation to reading comprehension (Hall et. al., 2014; Ibrahim et. al., 2016). Vocabulary mastery can be a measurement for reading skill. Vocabulary becomes one of indicators of reading comprehension. There are four components of vocabulary that affect reading comprehension. They are vocabulary size, word association knowledge, collocation knowledge, and morphological knowledge (Jun Zhang & Bin Annual, 2008; Ma & Lin, 2015). Vocabulary knowledge is strong predictor of reading comprehension (Brook et. al., 2021). In addition, Li and Kirby (2015) mention two dimensions of vocabulary knowledge that affect reading skill. They are breadth of vocabulary (the number of words known) and depth of vocabulary (the richness of word knowledge).

Vocabulary mastery also has a significant correlation to writing skill (Mahmudah, 2014; Hasan & Subekti, 2017). Vocabulary mastery helps students to develop their writing. Critical

thinking becomes important to develop students' writing. Students need to put their ideas and develop their ideas in form of good writing (Valentin et. al., 2018).

The role of vocabulary mastery in developing students' ability in four English macro skills makes this study important to be conducted. Even though, it is considered that vocabulary mastery is important to learn English skills, many students still got difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. Therefore, this study aims to describe students' problems in mastering English vocabulary.

## 2) METHODS

Research method is descriptive quantitative research. This method describes pictures, status, or characteristics of situation or phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). This research was conducted to describe the students' problems in mastering English vocabulary. The data was collected by giving questionnaire to 133 students of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students of senior high school 7 Pinrang, South Sulawesi. The questionnaire consists of 20 items related to problem of word meaning, pronunciation and spelling, word formation, motivation, facilities, and teaching method. The questionnaire used scale 1 to 4. 1 is never, 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, and 4 is always/often. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and Liker scale. Descriptive statistics includes frequency distribution and mean score. The scale of problems is as follow:

**Table 1. Category of Problems**

Percentage	Category
81% – 100%	Very high
61% – 80%	High
41% – 60%	Medium
21% – 40%	Low
0% – 20%	Very low

## 3) RESULTS

Findings administered data of students' problems in mastering English vocabulary. The data is as below:

**Table 2. Problems in Mastering English vocabulary**

No.	Items	Score	Classification
1.	Word meaning	78%	High
2.	Pronunciation or spelling	72%	High
3.	Word formation	75%	High
4.	Motivation	68%	High
5.	Facility	61%	High
6.	Teaching method	62%	High
	Mean score	69%	High

The table shows that students' problem in mastering English vocabulary is high. Students have high problems relate to all indicators of problems in mastering English vocabulary. However, the highest score problems in mastering English vocabulary are word meaning and the lowest score of problems is learning facility.

**Table 3. Frequency of Students**

No.	Items	Category									
		Very high		High		Medium		Low		Very low	
		F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
1	Word meaning	48	36	73	55	9	7	3	2	0	0
2	Pronunciation or spelling	41	31	57	43	35	26	0	0	0	0
3	Word formation	44	33	74	56	8	6	7	5	0	0
4	Motivation	31	23	57	43	41	31	4	3	0	0
5	Facility	11	8	60	45	35	26	28	21	0	0
6	Teaching method	17	13	67	50	19	14	31	23	0	0

Table above supports data in table 2 about students' problems in mastering English vocabulary. Table 3 showed that most of students have high problems in all indicators of students' problems in mastering English vocabulary. It is 57 to 74 students have high problems, 11 to 48 students have very high problems, 8 to 35 students have medium problems, 3 to 31 students have low problems and no student has very low problem in mastering English vocabulary.

#### 4) DISCUSSION

Related with previous studies conducted her research from her research are almost of the students have difficulties in pronouncing the words, how to write and spell, the different grammatical form of a word known as inflections was one of causes of students' difficulties in

learning vocabulary. In addition, the students found difficulties in choosing the appropriate meaning of the words (Rohmatillah, 2014). Reskiawan et al. (2020) found in her study she looked for any factors that made it problems for students to learn English vocabulary are different between written word and the pronouncing in English, rarely to interact using English, it is rarely to practice, the writing the word or sound-spelling mismatches, some word similar but different meaning, wrong pronunciations are often caused by a lack of similarity between sounds English and Indonesian. Rahman (2016) also said the students' problems in learning vocabulary are grammar, meaning and spelling.

Based on the research findings from the results of the questionnaire, the researcher found that there were several problems faced by secondary school students at SMAN 7 Pinrang. These findings indicate that when students learn English in class, they encounter some problems in building English vocabulary.

The problem they faced was the meaning of the English words (meaning of the word. Most of them said find it difficult to know the meaning of English vocabulary. On the other hand, most of them said find it difficult to master vocabulary because understanding of grammar is lacking due to lack of reading English texts. Another problem that makes students' problems in building English vocabulary is most of them said find it difficult to master English vocabulary because in the learning process there is no teaching about English vocabulary.

They find it difficult to say a few words because they have never heard those words and they do not use English in daily communication. They are finding it difficult to know the meaning of vocabulary. The results also showed that most students find it difficult to master English vocabulary because it is difficult to pronounce vocabulary and most students find it difficult to master English vocabulary because students are lazy to memorize English vocabulary.

One of the problematic issues of vocabulary is meaning. The students face the obstacle with the word meaning. Many words have multiple meaning. Wulandari (2020) said that in English there are several words that may have more than one meaning. These words may have opposite meanings (antonyms) and also have the same meaning (synonyms). In English also has the same word but different meanings depending on its use. For example, "book" means 'book: when a noun is made. On the other hand, "book" can be chosen "ordered" with verb

approval. This is one of the problems for them in learning English vocabulary. The student has the difficulties in the meaning if they can describe the words on the context. On the other hand, grammar in English is also one of the problems experienced by students. Grammatical information is tied into words, and learning words can take students along the way into grammar. This suggests that if we give a high priority to vocabulary, we are not thereby abandoning grammar.

The finding showed that when the students learning English lesson including all aspect (speaking, listening, reading and writing), they encountered some problems in mastering English vocabulary. The problem they faced is productive vocabulary (pronunciation). Most of them said that were worried about making mistake and lack of media such as less English books, no dictionary and they could not understand about words meaning, and grammar function.

## 5) CONCLUSION

The conclusion is students have high problems in mastering English vocabulary. The indicators of problems include word meaning, pronunciation or spelling, word formation, motivation, facility, and teaching method. The highest score of problem in mastering English vocabulary is in word meaning while the lowest score of problem is in learning facility. Students' problems in mastering English vocabulary are more in vocabulary materials than motivation, facilities, and methods.

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