

## ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS DIFFICULTIES IN MASTERING ENGLISH VOCABULARY AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery and the factors that caused students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary. This research employed a qualitative approach using phenomenology design. The data were gathered by observation, interview, and document review. Data technique and data source triangulation were used to validate the collated data. The result of this research revealed that several students had difficulties in vocabulary mastery. This study showed that: first, the difficulties encountered by students were that the students had difficulties in translating words or sentences in English into Indonesian and vice versa. Students also experienced difficulties in understanding the meaning of words, pronunciation, misspelling, and remembering or memorizing English vocabulary. Secondly, some factors that caused students difficulties in vocabulary mastery. Students were reluctant to open dictionaries and less interested in learning English. This condition became a hindrance for them to practice English regularly. The other issues were external factors such as inadequate facilities and the negative influence of friends that in the end have made it difficult to learn English especially, vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary, Difficulties, students*

## INTRODUCTION

Learning is an interaction activity between teachers and students Gustianto, R., Cangara, H., & Rahman, A. (2022) Student-content interaction is a process of intellectual interaction with material that produces changes in students' self, knowledge, students' perspectives, or the cognitive structure of students' minds. This can be in the form of interaction with subjects through videos or textbooks. Xie, Y., Huang, Y., Luo, W., Bai, Y., Qiu, Y., & Ouyang, Z. (2023) The interaction between teachers and students is vital for promoting teaching quality. Online learning spaces have various features that can support teacher-student interaction in online learning contexts. Nisa, L. K., & Abduh, M. (2022). The learning process is often dominated by the teacher. To provoke interaction between teachers and students' teachers should apply good learning, with variations in the use of speech acts, to increase student activity during the teaching and learning process. Olbata, Y., Fatmawati, R., & Ndun, L. (2022) The teaching and learning process in the classroom needs good communication between students and teachers. To make good communication in the classroom, the teacher is considered a crucial factor in creating communication. Noralievna, K. S. (2022). Interaction between teacher and students' increases the effectiveness of the lesson, the student learns a new lesson through independent action, reflection, and discussion, the student in the lesson independently of the set goal actively tries to find answers in small groups, that is, thinks, evaluates, writes, speaks and listens, and most importantly, actively participates. In this study, a preliminary model was developed by analyzing the principles underlying the interaction between teachers and students and the support features of online learning spaces Learning objectives said to be successful include: 1) students can understand the material well, 2) students' get maximum marks in learning. The explanation is in line with the thinking of learning objectives according to Sewagen, A.A. (2020) Learning objectives are also called educational or specific objectives. Learning objectives are statements that describe what a student should be able to do at the end of a lesson. In educational settings, the assessment activities are based on the objectives stated. Objectives are logically and closely linked to assessment since one critical role of assessment is to determine how well students' have learned the intended learning objectives. In general, objectives give direction to education. Krishnan, I. A., Ching, H. S., Ramalingam, S., Maruthai, E., Kandasamy, P., De Mello, G., ... & Ling, W. W. (2020). Learning of language occurs in many forms and fashions and self-study is one of the most common and significant means of learning a language. who states that the operational formula for learning success is that learning is said to be successful if followed by the following characteristics: 1) the ability to

absorb the teaching material being taught achieves achievement high, both individually and in groups, 2) behavior outlined in the objectives special teaching has been achieved by students both individually and in groups.

Learning in elementary schools in the 2013 curriculum contains content learning local English. English is a must for international learning studied by all students to prepare for the future and broaden their horizons and knowledge of foreign languages. English in elementary school is content learning local in the 2013 curriculum (Budiman et al, 2020). This means English study materials are additional subjects that must be included according to the potential and resources the power that exists in the school itself. Therefore, English is one of the subjects the important thing is taught in elementary school. Putra, Rizal Wahid Permana (2021) The long run of this condition can trigger students' fear when dealing with English. This condition can't be taken for granted if English teachers put high expectations towards better English mastery for Indonesian learners. So that elementary school graduates can master it Good English will give students as much space as possible to become part of the global community.

Cross-cultural framework, English is used as a language International is unique because every nation has a dialect and pronunciation which is also different, English subject competency is where students are skilled in communicating well orally and in writing using a variety of languages appropriate. Ali, H. H. H. (2022) This is so because English is not only the language of education, or of medicine, nor is it the language of particular people or time. English has become the medium of almost all branches of human knowledge, and during our times to say the least, the language of the age. In learning English there are four the skills that students must master are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Ali, H. H. H. (2022). Speaking is another productive skill of English language. It is as equally important as the writing skill, and perhaps more important. Just like writing as it represents the accumulation of knowledge and background of the remaining skills combined, speaking skill would also stand for the same, plus being the indispensable bridge of understanding and valuable communication. Azizah, U., Wisudaningsih, E. T., & Hamdani, B. (2022). Without language, humans cannot communicate our knowledge of each other. And language has four basic skills namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Without an effective and proficient speaking skill, communication and understanding would be lacking, and the alternative would most possibly and in most cases be misunderstanding and confusion.

Four skills that students must master in learning English It's not easy, because every student has different abilities understand and accept English learning material, various difficulties arise faced by students and teachers. These difficulties require the completion time is quite long, it cannot be completed simultaneously. Difficulty Learning is a disorder experienced by individuals and groups the person concerned has difficulty carrying out effective learning activities. Ali, H. H. H. (2022). Other difficulties would arise from the fact that teaching English as a second language entailed the use and practice of the language in a wide range of activities. As a second language, English learners were supposed to speak in English not only during class and through class activities. Kholili, A. (2022). Students in Indonesia have difficulty understanding English reading, mainly due to lack of practice, lack of vocabulary they have, and lack of knowledge about strategies for understanding English reading text. Machfudi, M. I. (2022). This is to show that the vocabulary is a foundation in learning English and is very important in learning a language. Difficulty is a symptom that appears in students which is characterized by poor learning outcomes decreased or below the norms set by the school. Students who experience learning difficulties are lower than their classmates. Students who Obtaining a score below the minimum completeness criteria can be said to be experiencing difficulties learning.

Difficulties that are often encountered in the process of learning English at school The basis is mastery of vocabulary. Low ability of students in mastering vocabulary becomes a problem that must be resolved well, considering that ability. Vocabulary mastery is very necessary in learning English. Ability that students have becomes the main basis for students to achieve success, however, the problem with teaching staff is that they always misinterpret things the word ability in a context that is not broad Mutmainah, I., & Ferdiyanto, F. (2023). English application as an English learning media has a significant impact on students' skill vocabulary acquisition. Lei, Y., & Reynolds, B. L. (2022). When learning English as a second language, acquiring vocabulary is "more important than mastering other language skills," such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing Yudha, H. T., & Mandasari, B. (2021) Learning vocabulary in English is not easy, especially for students in vocational high school. In addition, they have special characteristics that are very different from adults. With emphasis on these different characteristics, it can be concluded that teachers who teach vocational learners have a challenging task to be able to motivate them in the learning process. Hamdani, B., & Deviana, A. M. (2021). For the students' it can contribute the way to understand the lesson (vocabulary) taught by English teacher more

easily, increasing the ability of the students' communication and the students' motivation. Komalasari, D. A. (2022). Vocabulary is an important part in mastering a foreign language, therefore language learning as the meaning of words is very often emphasized, both in books and in class. Therefore, before the students learn the English language, they should Mastering vocabulary as a first step.

Ramadhaniyanti (2018: 41). Says etymologically in the English dictionary In Indonesia, the word mastery comes from the word domination which is a noun. But in the legal dictionary there is only the term dominium which is synonymous with 'ownership namely 'in its original sense, single and indivisible, absolute and exclusive' Vocabulary is a combination of vocabulary that is often used as a tool communication to convey messages or information to other people.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with English teachers on January 11 2024 at SDN Kamalkuning Probolinggo Regency there was a problem, namely students' difficulties in learning English, especially in vocabulary mastery. Many people complain that English is difficult, there is a lot of vocabulary that must be memorized and some people think they are also learning the language overseas exchange requires quite a long time and process. Because of that with the existence these problems, researchers are interested in analyzing various difficulties that students face during the English learning process, with title "Analysis of students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary at elementary school students " Objectives of this research 1) describe the factors that cause difficulties in mastering English vocabulary among students class VI at SDN Kamalkuning Probolinggo Regency, 2) describe solutions to difficulties mastery of English vocabulary in class VI students at SDN Kamalkuning Regency Probolinggo. The purpose of this research is 1) to describe the factors that cause mastery difficulties English vocabulary for class VI students at SDN Kamalkuning, Probolinggo Regency, 2) describe solutions to difficulties in mastering English vocabulary in class VI students in Kamalkuning Elementary School, Probolinggo Regency.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative research method. According to Creswell, J. W. (2020). Qualitative research begins with the assumptions of a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Meanwhile Bogdan and Biklen (2005) assigned that qualitative researchers try to interact with their subjects in a natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner. This study has chosen a qualitative research approach since the natural setting was possible to explain the effort to gain the meaning of individual activity done by the students or participants of this research.

This research used a phenomenology approach to learn from the experiences of the English teacher and the students. In a phenomenology study, the attempt to understand the meaning of events has been the concern of researchers Bogdan & Biklen (2005). Thus, the researchers described the meaning for several individuals of their experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. In this study, experiences of the English teachers and the students under study were analyzed to portray what might be best to capture the difficulties or feelings of anxieties of the students when they learn English.

The data collection techniques used in this research were interview, observation and document review. These techniques were effective and efficient ways to understand the phenomena that existed and the factors that might influenced students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The subjects of this research were chosen purposively by interviewing teachers and students. The subjects of this study were also selected based on the considerations of the possibilities of those who understood the research problems.

Data analysis methods were using Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) theory of qualitative data analysis. There are four steps in analyzing the data that have been collected including data collection, data condensation, data display and verification or conclusion drawing. The collated data from the interviews and classroom observations were then categorized by using systematic coding. In the condensation process, the data were selected to be the most important ones that can be utilized to answer the research questions. Then in the process of data verification, the process for meaning-making and interpreting the data is the most important process because this process will lead to drawing conclusions where new findings for this study will provide new theories or novelty of this research.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

During and after collecting the data in the field using various techniques, the results of this research are as follows:

1. Students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery

From the result of the obtained data, it was found that students' have several difficulties in vocabulary mastery. First, students had difficulties in translating words. It was caused by confusion in grasping the meaning of Indonesian translation for an English word because a word in English has several meanings. For example, a student gets confused when faced with a text because sometimes the meaning is not accordance with the basic meaning of the word. It was explained by student 4 and translated by researchers as follows:

"I have difficulty in translating English into Indonesian or Indonesian into English. When the teacher gave me an exercise it was hard to translate the questions into Indonesian. Sometimes my teacher also asked me to translate Indonesia into English. I felt confused because in English words sometimes have several meanings. Sometimes the meaning that I knew did not match the question". In line with the statement above, Pertiwi, A. B., Rahmawati, A., & Hafidah, R. (2021). Explain teach vocabulary children can't speak foreign languages provides a collection of various vocabulary to memorize because the child will only feel forced to memorize everything. The experience of students under study showed that they have tried to master the word meaning in Bahasa Indonesia but when the teacher asked them to say the word again is they had already forgotten.

Second, students had difficulty in pronunciation. They were confused about pronouncing English words because typically English has a different writing and pronouncing system. A word can sound differently with the writing, unlike in Bahasa Indonesia, what you pronounce is what you look at in writing or text. For a new English learner, she/he must get confused when they should pronounce differently. This experience was explained by student 1 (translated by researchers) as follows:

"It is difficult in pronunciation because daily, I do not listen to the native English conversation also the pronunciation of English and Indonesian is different, so it is difficult to pronounce".

The students made some mistakes when pronouncing the vowel (*a, i, u, e, o*) in English words such as '*hours, high, idea*'. Many of them are reading with Indonesian pronunciation. For example, for the word '*hour*' which should be pronounced /'our (ə)r/ with silent /h/, the students pronounced it with strong /h-shower/. They are also confused with the pronunciation of '*our*'. The other mistake is when students pronounce the silent letter like '*write, listen, know, etc*'. They pronounce the English words like what they see in the text. This pronunciation problem seemed to be typical to any learner at this level.

Based on the results of observations, when students were appointed by the teacher to read a text in front of the class one by one. Many students mispronounced the word '*hours, high, idea, etc*'. On that occasion, many of them were reading with the Indonesian pronunciation system. The other mistake was when students pronounced the silent letter like '*write, listen, know, etc*'. They pronounce the English words as though they read the writing of Indonesian words i.e. the Indonesian sound system is ,what you pronounce is what you see in the writing.

The finding about mispronouncing the silent letter words was in line with the study by Salawazo et.al. (2020). They reported that one of the difficulties in learning vocabulary was pronunciation. The differences between spoken and written English have become a factor of difficulty for students in learning vocabulary. For example, when the students faced the words such as *muscle, listen, write, honestly, judge, and science*. Some words that contain silent letters are problematic especially, for Indonesia students

Third, students misspelled words. This was the activity that mostly happened because the students still confused themselves on distinguishing between Indonesian and English alphabets. It was explained by student 3 as follows (translated into English by the researchers):

"When the teacher gave tasks to spell words, I had difficulty spelling them because I was still confused about distinguishing between Indonesian and English alphabet."

Student experienced difficulty when the teacher gave a spelling quiz. In this quiz, the teacher said the word and the student wrote based on what they heard. The result showed that some students have made mistake of choosing letters like (rid for read, and shell for shall). In line with the problem above, wrong spelling happens when students have mistakenly made errors as the result of the wrong choice of letter, the omission of letters and the wrong order of letters. Pertiwi, A. B., Rahmawati, A., & Hafidah, R. (2021). explain the teacher must provide facilities for learning English vocabulary with teaches useful words and help children to understand meaning in its way. It means that if the students want to master vocabulary, students not only learn the words but they have to memorize them.

During the process of learning English, the students of SDN Kamalkuning were not able to remember a lot of vocabulary for a long time. When they tried to remember new vocabulary, they forgot the vocabulary that they remembered before. One of the factors was they did not do repetition. They just learned at school and they did not practice at home. This was told by student 5 as follows (translated into English by the researchers) "I find difficulties in remembering or memorizing vocabulary in English because I rarely repeat the words or sentences that I had already learned previously".

The above interview result has supported the theory by Pertiwi, A. B., Rahmawati, A., & Hafidah, R. (2021). Children can understand and know vocabulary is learned because it is repeated until understood. Even in a pesantren whose focus is in memorizing Al Qur'an the students should read the Quranic verses repeatedly, hence the repetition activity is important.

## 2. Factors of difficulties in vocabulary mastery

The first factor was students' reluctance to open the dictionaries. According to Harmer (2015), dictionaries are generally used when students have already read through a word and then look it up to check that they know how to use it. Students tend to ask directly to the teacher rather than look up the meaning in the dictionary first. One of the factors that causes students to be reluctant to open dictionaries. However, it was also found that some students did not have dictionaries.

They only used the dictionary provided by the school and the dictionary was not enough for one class. It was explained by student as follows (English translation done by the researcher) "One of the factors that make me difficult to master vocabulary I rarely use a dictionary, there are many words that I do not know or not familiar with." The other student has said: "Some of the factors that make me difficult to master vocabulary maybe because I did not have an English dictionary. I also rarely memorized vocabulary when I was at home."

Students who are reluctant to open dictionaries will make them difficult to understand words or sentences in a text, seeing that one word in English has a different meaning when confirmed with different context. This finding was in line with a study by Rohmatillah (2016) entitled 'Dictionary Usage in English Language Learning'. His study showed that the students who were reluctant to find out the meaning of words from the dictionary, they tended to misunderstand words as a result of the meaning of a word is not based on the context of the sentence.

The second factor was students were less interested in learning vocabulary. The students were less interested because they did not have the motivation to learn English Taufiqurrochman, I., & Karyani, U. (2019). Motivation from the environment can arise because students see or observing other people who can provide inspiration for his life, so Students are challenged to be able to carry out a better learning process. When learning English, students pay less attention to the material taught by the teacher, students lose interest in learning English. The students tended to be passive. They were lazy and felt bored during English lessons. They were not actively involved in the class, asking or answering questions, as was explained by student 1 as follows (translation has made by the researchers).

The other factor that made me difficult in mastering vocabulary was less motivation to learn English. I was bored and lazy in learning English' (Student 2, interview, Kamalkuning, 11 February 2024)

In line with the statement above, Taufiqurrochman, I., & Karyani, U. (2019). They lack self-confidence or anxious and nervous students then students do not focus on grammatical meaning. More over when the facilities they possess support their learning process. This is to show that when students are highly motivation. they will learn English better.

The third factor was students did not practice speaking English regularly. It happened because students did not know what they had to speak or the material to learn. When Students speak English. They are worried about making mistakes and being nervous. It was told by student 2 as follows (translation was done by researchers).

The factors that made it difficult to master vocabulary were that I did less practice speaking English. I did not know what to say I was nervous and worried that I make a mistake when spoke English. When students want to pronounce English words correctly, they must work hard to speak English every day. Students practice speaking English only when they are in class. At home they rarely learn English, let alone speak English. The biggest problem encountered by students was that they did not find someone to practice the lesson they had learned in the class. This is generally the actual problem of Indonesian students in learning English.

The above data were in line with the study by Widyasworo (2019) which found that the students had difficulties speaking because of inhibition, nothing to say, anxiety, lack of self-confidence and low motivation. This seemed to be the major problem faced by the students in the secondary vocational school level.

The fourth factor was external factors such as inadequate facilities and the influence of friends that make students difficult to master vocabulary. Kadoeng, E. (2023) Factors that hinder the improvement of English language skills in particular speaking ability is caused by low vocabulary, pronunciation or pronunciation of words correctly and courage in practicing it in everyday life students who do not yet appear significant. To support school learning activities, adequate facilities and infrastructure are needed, the affect the student learning process. It was as what Friends were also a factor that caused students to have difficulty in mastering vocabulary. For example, when students tried to speak English. their classmates laughed at him.

This made students were not confident and they became lazy to speak and learn English. It was told by student 5 as follows (translated by researchers) "Maybe, I did not pay attention to what my teacher said and I also did not like English lessons, for sure. Especially when my teacher asked me to read English loudly and my friends laughed at me. And I was shy which made me lazy to speak English.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and the data analysis the findings show that students experienced difficulties in mastering vocabulary when they learned English. There are factors identified in this research displayed as the following summary: 1) this research pinpoints that students have difficulties in translating words or sentences in English into Indonesian and vice versa. Students also experienced difficulties in understanding the meaning of words, pronunciation, and misspellings. They also have problems remembering or memorizing vocabulary in English due to a lack of practice. 2) Some factors that cause students difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The students were found reluctant to open dictionaries. They were also less interested in learning English. They did not practice speaking English regularly. Another to factors were external factors including inadequate facilities and the negative influence of friends that made it difficult to master vocabulary.

For future researchers, it is recommended to examine the influence of various factors such as cognitive development, exposure to the English language outside the classroom, and teaching methodologies on vocabulary acquisition. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different instructional strategies, like visual aids, games, and storytelling, in helping students retain and recall vocabulary. Additionally, investigating how students' first language impacts their ability to learn and use English vocabulary would offer valuable insights. A longitudinal approach, tracking vocabulary development over time, could also provide a clearer understanding of the long-term challenges and successes in vocabulary mastery.

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