

A STUDY ON STUDENTS' OBSTACLES IN MASTERING VOCABULARY AT SMK AL IMAM JEMBER

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Abstract

Vocabulary is the basic language element, which has crucial role in language learning. Whereas the book is mostly in English, some students get difficulties in mastering vocabulary. This research aims to know the kinds of students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary. This research is descriptive qualitative which explains the phenomena systematically, factually and accurately by interview and observation. The subject are eleventh grade students at SMK Al-Imam Jember. The result is explained in the form of describing words, and it is presented in narrative. Based on the result, the students of SMK Al Imam Jember had six obstacles in mastering vocabulary and seven causes the students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary. Moreover, students' learning could be affected by internal and external factor. Internal factor consist of physic and psychological aspect. While for external factor, consists of social environment and nonsocial environment. Those factors caused by the students rarely use English as mean of communication and never write and learn new vocabulary during learning or in their daily activities.

Key words: Students' Obstacles, Vocabulary Mastery

INTRODUCTION

Thornburry (2005:13) described that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. It shows that vocabulary is one of language element that should be mastered by English learners because it is the basic element to make sentences and express idea and meaning, and a key of language communication. Furthermore, this also helps people in understanding text while reading or listening. Baskin et al (2017:126), stated the more words a person knows, the more he has

developed in thought because every word is placed in the human mind as a concept. In short, vocabulary plays significant role in learning language. Furthermore, Zhihong Bai (2018:55) depicted that learning strategies are behaviors or actions which students use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable. Again, it also gives them chance to enhance their vocabulary knowledge using their own ways. By using strategies that suitable with their own style of learning, students can enjoy the learning process so that they get rich vocabulary. Chamot (1986) in Bai (2018:854) found that successful language learners use group activity strategies more frequently to learn vocabulary. It shows that strategies are very useful to make the learners understand easily what they face off. Moreover, Goundar (2015:293) said that strategies are important for language learning because they are a device for active, self-responsible learning. Therefore, using strategies as tools in learning vocabulary will help students build their self-confidence up and raise their ability to learn by their own.

Vocabulary plays an important role in Vocational School because most of the vocational material is written in English. Besides that, some major in Al-Imam vocational High School of Jember required the students to learn more about English, such as Engineering Technical where most the material is in English. The mastery of English could be a significant requirement in order to be successful in the process of learning. It could be seen from the fact that most of scientific books are written in English and the students are supposed to comprehend those books. English is considered as difficult subject by students of Al-Imam Vocational School of Jember. Students have some difficulties in understanding the subject material especially English Vocabulary. This is the reason why the students' motivation in learning English is low. Moreover students at vocational high school who take non English major, they feel that learning English is something difficult and quite boring because they do not have enough vocabulary. Most of the students have low motivation in learning English. It can be seen during teaching learning process where most of the students are not confidence in joining the class. They are afraid of the teacher asked them to read or speak English and found some difficulties in learning vocabulary. Besides, the teacher is very reluctant to use impressive and interesting educational media. The teacher focus only on the text book

(workbook) which seem to be too rigid for student. These situations make students get difficulties in mastering vocabulary.

This present research, study the English vocabulary problem to know the kinds of students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary of Vocational Senior High School students and the cause students get difficulties in mastering vocabulary, specifically students of SMK Al-Imam Jember.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design is qualitative. Qualitative study focuses the participant's experience of interacting with a phenomenon, in time and context certain and in that condition or natural setting, as well as a variety of meanings it gets (Crocker, 2009). Therefore, every individual see the phenomena from their own point of view so that a reality or truth can be interpreted differently (multiple interpretations), depending on how close or how close experiences individuals interact with the phenomenon or their world.

This research focuses to know the kinds of students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary at SMK Al-Imam Jember. So the goal is to make explanations systematically, factual and accurate. In this case the researcher used the descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative design views one problems or phenomena from the naturalistic perspective (Sandelowski, 2000), which in practice can be place / space, atmosphere, environment, organization, culture, time, and so on. Descriptive qualitative was built based on the general premise developed by the constructivist, its interpretation is based on participant's point of view. Therefore, this design is aimed to understand at phenomena that are still not clear meaning and form and impossible approached in a quantifiable manner. Because of the characteristic is nature, then this natural setting very complex, dynamic, and various. That's why this design must also be limited by context. Thus, this research focuses on student's obstacles in mastering Vocabulary at SMK Al-Imam Jember.

The results of the research more focuses toward the data interpretation found in the field. The results are not written in the form of figures and tables with statistical measures, but it is explained in the form of describing words, and it is presented in narrative. The participant selected was eleventh grade/XI TEI students that selectively based on teacher recommendations those are six students. The students involved in this study

were considered to have language competence and had the responsibility of organizing language improvement programs for all students in the school. It is hoped that their involvement in English classes and extracurricular activities can provide more information on their vocabulary learning difficulties. Thus, the difficulties in learning vocabulary were varied. Besides, the researcher also selected one English teacher to collect the information about student's problem in learning vocabulary.

In collecting the data, the researcher conducted with Interview and observation. As stated in Haryanto (2015:25), Bogdan and Biklen (1998) said that interview is purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more that is directed by one in order to get information from the other. In addition, it enables participants to discuss their interpretations and how they perceive the issue from their own point of view (Cohen et al., 2007). A semi-structured interview was used in this study. The aim was to find the perception of the students' toward problem in mastering vocabulary.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There were some descriptions of data collection from the field research. It was to answer the research problems by describing the data analysis through interview and observation.

The Result of Students Interview

The researcher pointed the result of interview by following:

1. First student has pronunciation difficulty.
2. Second student has reading and translating difficulty.
3. Third student has recalling and memorizing difficulty.
4. Fourth student has writing and pronunciation difficulty.
5. Fifth student has Grammar difficulty such as using *to be*, *to infinitive*, and adding letters/es.
6. Sixth student has Arranging the words to a phrase, phrase to a sentence difficulty.

The result of observation

The first observations were made during the teaching and learning process by observing students and teacher activities. Here the teacher presented material regarding recount text and informed students who were not familiar with vocabulary in the form of nouns and verbs. The teacher also drilled the students' pronunciation by asking them to read aloud the

displayed text in the form of Microsoft Power Point presentation. In that activity, vocabulary was the main focus, the teacher only gave a brief explanation of the structure of the text. The class was conducive. Most of students were ready to accept learning materials from the teacher. Then, the teacher began to use the game method in this first action. All students involved in the game without exception. In that first action, the teacher prepared lottery numbers that already consisted a vocabulary order that must be interpreted. There were students who complain when they got long words to be guessed. However, there were also students who did not really mind the length or shortness of words, as well as how easy or difficult they were to guess. However, it was more about the fun involved in the game and a great curiosity to find the answers.

In the second observation, the teacher asked to work on a workbook/ worksheet and discussed the existing questions, in the discussion, there were found that students had errors in word pronunciation and errors in writing words correctly, for example 'beginning' was written 'beggening' and 'shall' was written 'sell' and some errors in composing sentences. Another thing in the second observation, most of the students became passive because they just waiting for discussion from the teacher. That activity made the students felt bored.

The cause of the students' difficulties in mastering the vocabulary

Based on the result of interview observation above, the researcher concluded that the obstacles in mastering vocabulary at the eleventh grade students of SMK Al Imam Jember were caused by the following:

1. The students rarely use English as mean of communication in their community, either school or social community.
2. The students almost never write and learn the list of new vocabulary during learning.
3. The students are negligent in doing their translation tasks given by the teacher.
4. The students often had difficulties in translating English texts into target language (Indonesia).
5. The students were reluctant to use their new vocabulary into practice in their daily life.
6. The students rarely read English books, whether it is in school or at home.

7. The students did not fully comprehend the short texts given to them during learning.

After undertaking the research on students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary at the eleventh grade students of SMK Al Imam Jember and based on the analysis of research findings, it indicates that the students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary was affected by factors in their learning. Those were internal factor and external factor as Siregar and Nara (2010) stated that internal factor consist of physic and psychological aspect. Physic aspect may affect the spirit and intensity of the students in their learning process. As for psychological aspect, it relates to their internal conditions such as motivation, talent, interest, attitude, and intelligence. While for external factor, it arises from the student self-external which consists of two aspects; social environment which includes teacher, family, society and nonsocial environment which includes learning facilities such as school, curriculum, home, learning time, and nature. After analyzing the result of the teacher's interview, the researcher found some problems with the students' test scores. For the UAS or final test, the students' percentage who achieved the minimum score criteria or KKM (75) were only 60 % or thirteen (13) students, and 40% or nine (9) students were failed to reach the minimum score criteria. In the UTS or mid-term test, only one student or 5 % passed the minimum score criteria and twenty one (21) students or 95% were failed to achieve it.

According to the result of the interview, the researcher noticed some students' obstacles in mastering vocabulary, they are; (1) the students were having difficulties in pronouncing English words, (2) The students were having a hard time in translating the words during their reading activity, (3) The students find it difficult in recalling and using the words they have memorized into practice, (4) The students were having difficulties in writing the English words, (5) The students were lacking in English grammar such as using to be, to infinitive, and adding letters/es, and (6) the students could not arrange the words to be a phrase, and a phrase to be a sentence properly.

CONCLUSION

As stated in Mofareh Al qahtani (2015), Cameron (2001) said that vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role

for learners in their language acquisition. It means that vocabulary is really significant for learners' language development. Learners who acquire language accept first the world of vocabulary as the provisions in learning language itself. Moreover, students' learning could be affected by internal and external factors. Those two factors could influence the intensity, achievement, spirit and capability of the students' learning process. In line with this, Sardiman (1986: 750) explained that learning motivation is a non-intellectual psychological factor. Its unique role was in the development of passion, pleasure and enthusiasm for learning.

All the factors mentioned above lead to the students' low achievement in English. Those were caused by the students rarely use English as mean of communication in their community, either school or social community, they almost never write and learn the list of new vocabulary during learning, their negligence in doing their translation tasks given by the teacher, they had difficulties in translating English texts into target language (Indonesia), they were reluctant to use their new vocabulary into practice in their daily life, they rarely read English books, whether it is in school or at home, and they did not fully comprehend the short texts given to them during learning. In addition, after analyzing the interview the researcher found another information on how the students solved their problems, those are by reading the text, writing, translating the words, watching English movie, and arranging the words to make phrase and a sentence.

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