

# **A Descriptive Study on Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary at the Eleventh Grade of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Jember**

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## **Abstrack**

Vocabulary is important for students to be mastered. By mastering vocabulary students can interpret all kinds of English words. The purpose of this study was to find out what problems students faced in learning vocabulary and how do students' solve vocabulary learning difficulties. The type of research used in this research is a qualitative descriptive study and the instrument that uses in this research is interview. The used of triangulation sources is also carried out to measure the accurate data. The results of this study can prove that there are three things that become difficult for students to learn vocabulary, namely, meaning, pronunciation, and memorization. How do students solve these difficulties by ask the teacher, open the dictionary, and get used to accessing English content.

**Key Word:** Students' Difficulties<sup>1</sup>, Vocabulary Learning<sup>2</sup>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is one of the components of English as a foreign language. It is very important to teach vocabulary to English language learners because it has a key position in the teaching and learning process. According to Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 255), vocabulary is a core

component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. When someone wants to master English, they should master the vocabulary first. It will help them in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. All of these skills will be better accommodated if a large number of

vocabulary is mastered. At the time of communication, it will not run properly because of vocabulary selection that is less precise when communicating. In fact, people who lack vocabulary will find it difficult to arrange the language.

Other difficulties can make students learn vocabulary ineffective. With these difficulties, students will not easily understand a meaning in English contexts such as books, articles, or others. There are some reasons why the researcher want to examine the difficulties of students learning or understanding vocabulary such, whether they have difficulty in understanding vocabulary, pronunciation, understanding the meaning of the text or environmental factors that do not support them in learning vocabulary.

In this study, there are two research problems, namely, what are the difficulties faced by the students while learning vocabulary and how do the students' solve the difficulties while learning vocabulary. Based on research problems and related theories, the objectives of the research are to find out the students

'difficulties in learning vocabulary and how do students' solve the difficulties while learning vocabulary.

## **METHOD**

This type of research is a qualitative descriptive study. The research subjects were eleventh grade students of high achievers, medium achievers, low achievers students, and also English teachers. The data instrument used online interviews through Google Meet. The research uses a semi-structured interview and aims at some specific questions related to students' difficulties in learning vocabulary to get data to be developed in this study. Semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses a set of questions developed to obtain specific information, Arikunto (1990).

In this study, there are three stages in analyzing data, namely by orgaizing the data, summarizing the data dan intepreting the data. The first thing to do in organizing data is reducing the data, which is done through a process called coding. Coding means reducing the data by grouping or categorizing the data

from the interview transcript. After the researcher groups the data that has been obtained, the researcher divides the data into several categories. All data has been collected to be more detailed or more specific to the problem. In summarizing the data, the researcher only summarizes the data that is really needed, to be sustainable with the object or focus of the study.

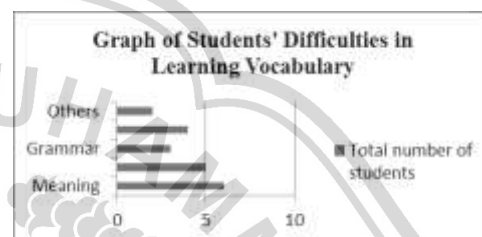
The focus of this research is to find out what are the difficulties of students learning vocabulary and provide strategies to overcome these problems. The last step taken by the researcher is to interpret the data. In this step, the researcher begins to reflect on the findings that the researcher has obtained from the data. In this step describe the findings and the conclusions. The use of source triangulation was also carried out to obtain accurate data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher used the interview method to collect the data about the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. The researcher have conducted and sorted out the necessary analysis data and there are three things that

the researcher found, namely: meaning, memorizing, and pronunciation. These three things become difficulties for students when learning or understanding vocabulary.

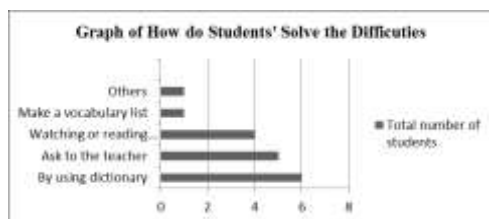
**Picture 1: Graph of Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary:**



From the six students it can be concluded that meaning, pronunciation, and memorizing most common answers stated by students when learning vocabulary, and two other difficulties are students are less attention when the teacher delivers material during the class, the kinds of vocabulary and how to use correct sentences or grammar rules. The researcher have also conducted a summarizing process and obtained three things about how they solve the problem, namely: by getting used to accessing English-language content, using an offline or online dictionary,

and asking the teacher.

**Picture 2: Graph of How do Students' Solve the Difficulties:**



It can be seen from the graph above that it can be concluded that from the six students, by using an online or offline dictionary can help them solve their vocabulary learning difficulties. The researcher also provide other specific questions about how they solve these difficulties, four students answers by getting used to reading or watching English content such as reading an articles, watching YouTube, reading English books and listening to English songs.

The researcher also provide an overview of a vocabulary learning strategy by Schmitt's theory (2000) to the subjects under study about how the subject as students solve their problems in understanding or learning vocabulary. Of the five strategies, all the subjects choose

Determination Strategy (DET), which is a strategy that uses learning aids such as dictionaries, guessing the content of the text and Social Strategy (SOC), which requires the help or interaction of other people around them such as friends and teachers to increase their vocabulary knowledge. This related to the responses from the English teacher who the researcher asked about the most frequent way students do to help them solve their vocabulary learning difficulties by asking the teacher, opening the dictionary, and asking to their friends.

Based on the findings obtained, the three difficulties that students experience are related to Thornbury's theory (2004, p. 27). He proposes some factors that make some words more difficult as follows: pronounciaton, meaning, spelling, lenght, and so on. The many types of vocabulary make it difficult for L2 students to translate or find the meaning of each word in the English text. As

a result, they do not understand the meaning contained in a text. The many types of vocabulary also make it difficult for students to remember. When the researcher gave a short text in English entitled "*Don't Discriminate*", some students said they forgot or remembered the vocabulary they had learned previously. The reason they gave was, there were many new vocabularies that they didn't know the meaning of and some vocabulary they knew but forgot the meaning so that they had difficulty understanding what the text was that the researcher gave them and English had many foreign words that they had not used in conversation in their daily life and makes it difficult for them to memorize the new word. The researcher also did a crosscheck with the English teacher when conducting an interview that they opened the dictionary and also asked to the teacher if they found it difficult to understand the content of the text.

In another effective way

to help students solve their problems when learning vocabulary can be found in previous research. Zuraida, Widya (2019) she wrote on her research discussion that the use of extensive reading techniques is effective in improving student vocabulary in her eleventh grade students. Based on her results of the calculation of the Mann Whitney test (U Test) by using SPSS application, it was found that there were significant differences in learning outcomes in the experimental class which was taught by extensive reading techniques and the control class which was taught using the conventional model in MAN 2 Pulang Pisau.

From the two types of research treatment, she concluded that learning English using extensive reading techniques has more influence on student learning outcomes when compared to language learning with conventional learning models.

## CONCLUSION

After all the result data were analyzed from the interviews that had been conducted, it was concluded that there were a variety of problems faced by students in learning English vocabulary. Based on the information

and statements that have been said by the data sources, the results of the study indicate the problems faced by students when they learn vocabulary and how do students' solve their problems as follows: meaning, pronunciation, and memorizing. There are three important points that researcher can find after gained a information through interviews about how eleventh graders overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary, namely: by getting used to accessing English-language content, using an offline or online dictionary, and asking the teacher. The Schmitt's (2002) theory answers the researcher's findings that students apply the Determination Strategy, an individual strategies used to understand the meaning of words and using reference materials such as dictionaries, analyzing affixes, roots, using dictionaries to convey

particular words and Social strategies belonging to this group involved interaction with others in learning new words, such as asking the teacher or classmates.

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