

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY AND WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT ABILITY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS IN SMP NEGERI 40 PALEMBANG

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Abstract:

The purposes were to find out the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text and the contribution of vocabulary mastery on writing ability. The population of the study was all of the 8th grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang. In choosing the sample, purposive sampling was used that involved 134 students. The data were collected by using vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability tests. The data were analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment to investigate the correlation between both variables and regression analysis. The results showed that the coefficient of r-value was 0.557. The category of correlation between vocabulary mastery and writing ability showed a moderate correlation. It was found that there was significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang. There was also contribution of

vocabulary mastery to writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students as much 31%.

Keywords:

Vocabulary mastery;
Writing ability;
Descriptive text

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English has become an important language in the era of globalization. It is an international language which is widely spoken in many countries as native language, second language, or a foreign language. It is considered to be the first international language to communicate among people from different countries. It is also used at many books and other written sources. Furthermore, English covers four skills to master namely speaking, reading, listening and writing. There are also three important components of English such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Those components play important roles in supporting the language skills used.

Vocabulary is one of the most important factors that need to be mastered by language learners. Thornbury (2002) stated that having a broad vocabulary means knowing many words. Takac (2008) adds that vocabulary can be defined intuitively as a dictionary or a set of words that have been taught in a foreign language. Meanwhile, Hiebert and Kamil (2005) affirm that vocabulary has a special place among language components. Therefore, vocabulary is very helpful for young learners to think and expand the knowledge of words. Without vocabulary mastery, a person will not be able to speak anything, will not be able to understand what he is reading, will not be able to write, nor will he be able to understand what he hears. In other words, language skills will be easy to master if learners have good vocabulary mastery.

Vocabulary mastery is closely related to language learning with limited mastery of words. Everyone also has limitations in understanding in terms of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It can be said without understanding good vocabulary, language is nothing. Vocabulary plays a big role for learners in acquiring language (Cameron, 2001). Considering the definition, vocabulary plays a very important role in understanding language, especially writing. Writing is one of the four skills that must be mastered by language learners. According to Spratt, Pulvernes, and Williams (2005), writing is the activity of communicating ideas by using letters, words, phrases, and clauses from a series of interconnected sentences. Moreover, Graham and Perin (2007) state that writing is a skill that refers to the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating and revising texts) to achieve various goals, such as writing reports or expressing opinions with others. While, Bram (2012) affirms that the term of writing can be defined as learners use written language throughout or share ideas with others, especially in the composition of one paragraph. As a skill, writing is often underestimated. But the facts show that teaching writing is not an easy task because students

often face difficulties to write what they think and express it on a piece of paper or on a computer screen.

One of the difficulties in writing is the lack of vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary is one important aspect in language learning. According to Khan (2005), it is impossible to learn a language without mastering vocabulary. When students want to learn language, they will first master the vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the problems faced by English learners. Because of limited vocabulary, the students have difficulty in conveying their ideas or thoughts well to others. Writing is a form of communication to express and pour ideas into writing (Nunan, 2003). Therefore, having a lot of vocabulary can help the students in learning, especially in writing skill.

Furthermore, Harmer (2003) stated that writing as one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing has always been part of the syllabus in teaching English. Writing is one of the English skills learned by students at school, while vocabulary is a supporting component. However, According to Hedge (1990) cited in Yuliani (2016) stated that to learn the writing skill effectively may not be easy because they are several things should be considered, for instance, sentence structure, grammar, the word choice used, and so on. Some students who have little command of vocabulary may confront some problems while they are in the process of learning these skills. Therefore, this study tried to investigate the level of students' ability in learning vocabulary and writing.

In the level of secondary school, many students still have difficulties in learning vocabulary mastery and writing skills, especially descriptive text. Descriptive text is a text that explains or describes something, especially about person. The purpose of descriptive text is to describe or explain an object so that the reader can feel, see, and hear the object described clearly. There were several obstacles in teaching and learning vocabulary mastery and writing skills. First, students face many difficulties to express feelings and ideas in written form if they lack vocabulary. Second, the lack of vocabulary mastery may be seen from their learning English. After interviewing one of the teachers at Junior High School 40 Palembang, it was found that the students' vocabulary mastery was low. It made them difficult to write. They sometimes wrote text without paying attention to the grammar or structure of descriptive text.

The various articles reviewed about the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang.

Therefore, this study were intended to find out the whether there was any significant correlation or not between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability and to find out how much students'

vocabulary mastery contributed to writing descriptive text ability of the eight grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read and write. According to Lehr (2004), vocabulary is knowledge of words and their meanings both in spoken and printed language and in productive and receptive forms used in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Furthermore, Richards and Rennadya (2002) explain that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. While, Hatch and Brown (1995) in Rohmatillah(2014), explaining the term vocabulary refers to a list or collection of words for a particular language or a list of words used by individual language speakers. In addition, Kamil and Hiebert (2005) define vocabulary as knowledge about the meaning of words. It can be concluded that vocabulary is considered as the most important part in learning a language. Having a large vocabulary can make it easier for students to read, write, listen, and speak foreign languages.

Kinds of Vocabulary

According to Nation (2001), there are three kinds of vocabulary as follows: 1) High-Frequency Words, it refers to the majority of the words that run in spoken and written texts and occur in all types of language usage. 2). Specialized Vocabulary, special vocabulary is created by systematically limiting the various topics or uses of the language under investigation. For example rose, jasmine, triangle, and roundabout. 3). Low-Frequency Words, It refers to large group of words that appear infrequently and cover only a small part of the text.

Meanwhile, Miller (2000) classifies vocabulary into four kinds as follows: 1) Receptive Vocabulary, it is words that students understand when student listen to speeches and read. The term receptive vocabulary is used to refer to listening and reading vocabulary. 2) Expressive Vocabulary, it is words that students use when speaking and writing. The term expressive vocabulary is used to express oneself. 3) Oral Vocabulary, it is words that students understand when students hear it and can be used in the speech. The term spoken vocabulary refers to combination of listening and speaking vocabulary. 4) Written Vocabulary, it is words that students understand when reading and can be used in their

writing. The term written vocabulary refers to the combination of reading and writing vocabulary.

From the explanation above, there are some kinds of vocabulary such as high- frequency words, specialized vocabulary, low-frequency words, receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, oral, and written vocabulary. This study focused on using high frequency words and written vocabulary because students must know the meaning of the words that frequently appear in written texts.

Writing

Writing is an English productive skill that students need to master in learning English because they need it for academic purposes. According to Brown (2001), writing is a thought process because writing is a process of putting ideas on paper to turn thoughts into words and give them a coherent structure and organization. Furthermore, Graham and Perin (2007) state that writing is a skill that refers to the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating and revising texts) to achieve various goals, such as writing reports or expressing opinions with others. In addition, Harmer (2004) states that writing encourages students to focus on using accurate language. While, Hyland (2003) argues that writing is a way of producing language and communicating in a written way.

Meanwhile, writing is an effective way to communicate and express thoughts, feeling, ideas, and opinions to other. It is the skill of expressing ideas, thoughts, and feeling to others in written symbols to make other people or readers understand the ideas conveyed. Therefore, it can be concluded that writing is a process to putting ideas in written form to turn thoughts into words and give them a coherent structure and organization.

The Stages of Writing

According to Harmer (2004), there are four stages of writing including planning, drafting, editing and final version. 1) Planning, in the planning, the writer begins to try to determine how to convey his ideas or thoughts, and also there are several things that the writer must pay attention to. This includes the purpose, audience, and structure of the content (or the sequence of facts, ideas, or arguments included) of the writing. 2) Drafting, the drafting phase to the writer's first version of the draft in which the writers have materialize what they have planned or thought into a text, but may still need some revisions. 3) Editing, the editing stage includes reflecting and revising what has been written by the writer. This can be done by the writer herself, or it can also be done by other readers who are

sometimes called upon by the editor to help provide some suggestions, comment, and corrections to the writing. 4) Final version, the final version is the last product of writing which has followed several processes from planning to editing. It is a draft ready to be sent to the intended audience.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a text that describes or explains a person. Abisarma (2001) adds that “descriptive text is a text that describes people, places, and objects in clear detail to help readers visualize an object being described”. The purpose of descriptive text is to provide information to readers about person in detail so that readers or listener can understand what is being described and can also imagine what is written or described even though have never seen it before. It has a generic structure consisting of identification and description. The language features are using simple present tense attribute verb, noun, action verb, and also focusing on a person.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative study focusing on correlation design. It consists of independent variable was vocabulary mastery and dependent variable was writing descriptive text ability. The population of this study was 365 students and the sample was 134 students. For choose the sample, the writer used purposive sampling. Choose purposive based on a certain characteristics in a population that has a dominant relationship so that it can be used to achieve research objectives. In selecting the sample, the writer determined based on the teacher recommendation four classes (VIII.1, VIII.2, VIII.4 and VIII.5) were selected sample because the students from classes had low vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, in this study, the writer used content validity to match the test item and materials for eighth grade based on curriculum 2013. Before giving the test to the sample, the writer conducted the try out to another class in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang with 33 students. the result of the try out was analyzed the corrected total-item correlation. The writer found the r-table was 0.344 (df=33). Based on the result of the try out test, it was found that twenty items of the instrument were not valid. Those items were the item 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 48, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, and 38. Therefore, those items were deleted. For the valid items, there were twenty items. Those items were the item 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18,

20, 21, 23, 35, 36, 37, 32, 33, 36, 39, and 40. Then, there were 20 valid items used an instrument for test.

From the result of Try Out (TO) consisting 20 valid items, the writer used Split- Half Spearman Brown to measure the reliability of the test. It was found that the reliability coefficient of vocabulary test was 0.880. It means that the test was considered highly reliable. Then, for reliability of writing test, the writer used inter-rater reliability using Pearson Product Moment correlations. It was found that the sig (2 tailed) value was 0.000, it means the results of the test were very highly reliable. In analyzing data, the writer used descriptive analysis, normality test, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

Descriptive Analysis of Vocabulary Mastery and Writing Ability

There are 134 participants in this test. The vocabulary test consists of 20 items of multiple choices with 40 minutes. The writing test consists of an essay text. The summary of descriptive analysis result presented in table 1.

Table 1
The Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Mastery

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Deviation
Vocabulary	10%	6%	3%	53.62	21.428
Writing	6%	8%	3%	54.19	18.385

Based on the results of vocabulary mastery, the total respondent was 134 students, the mean score was 53.62, minimum score was 10, maximum score was 100 and the standard deviation was 21.428. Meanwhile, in the result of writing descriptive text ability test, it was found that the total respondent was 134 students, the mean score was 54.19, minimum score was 25, maximum score was 93, and the standard deviation was 18.385.

The Result of Vocabulary and Writing Ability Test in Descriptive Text Test

Based on the result of vocabulary mastery test, there were 9 students (7%) classified in excellent category, 17 students (13%) were classified in good category, 29 students (22%) were classified in average category, 41 students (30%) were classified in poor category, and 38 students (28%) were classified in very poor category. The score distribution of vocabulary mastery is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
The Data Distribution of Vocabulary Mastery Test

Variable	Score	Category	frequency	Percentage
Vocabulary Mastery Test	86-100	Excellent	9	7%
	71-85	Good	17	13%
	56-70	Average	29	22%
	41-55	Poor	41	30%
	0-40	Very poor	38	28%
Total (N)			134	100

Based on writing ability test in descriptive text, there were 9 students (%) classified in excellent category, 15 students (11%) were classified in good category, 30 students (22%) were classified in average category, 48 students (36%) were classified in poor category, and 32 students (24%) were classified in very poor category. It is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
The Data Distribution of Writing Descriptive Test Ability

Variable	Score	Category	frequency	Percentage
Writing Descriptive Text Ability	86-100	Excellent	9	7%
	71-85	Good	15	11%
	56-70	Average	30	22%
	41-55	Poor	48	36%
	0-40	Very poor	32	24%
Total (N)			134	100

Normality Test

Based on the normality test with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the value of asymp significant vocabulary mastery was 0.070 and writing descriptive text ability was 0.263 then it were normal because > 0.05 , the value asymp. The results of both tests were normal.

The Correlation Analysis

It was found that correlation coefficient between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability r-value 0.557 at the significant(2-tailed) 0.000. It means that students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability was significant

correlated since significant (2-tailed) (0.000) was lower than 0.05. Both variables were correlated. Furthermore, the Pearson Correlation was 0.557. It indicated that the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability was in moderate level.

DISCUSSION

It was found out that the coefficient of regression value influenced vocabulary mastery in writing ability was 0.310. It means that the contribution of vocabulary mastery to writing descriptive text ability was 31%. It was found that the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang have poor to average categories in vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability. It could be seen in the data shown that there were 9 students who got excellent category of vocabulary mastery. This may happen because the students have the same basic experience in learning English. This makes them more comfortable to share their thoughts in class. Then, there were 17 students who got good category of vocabulary mastery, because some of them learn vocabulary from watching movies and playing games. Furthermore, there were 29 students belonging to the average category vocabulary mastery. In addition, there were 79 students included in the category of poor vocabulary mastery, it's due to lack of vocabulary mastery.

CONCLUSION

After conducted the study on the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang, the research problems can be answered. First, there was significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang because sig.(2-tailed) 0.000 was lower than 0.05. It means that H_a is accepted and H_o (null hypothesis) is automatically rejected. The value of rvalue was 0.557, it indicated that there was a moderate correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang.

Second, from these result there was a positive effect between students' vocabulary mastery and writing descriptive text ability of the eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 40 Palembang. In addition, the regression analysis showed that the coefficient of the effect of vocabulary mastery on writing ability was 0.310. It means that the contribution of students'

vocabulary mastery to writing descriptive text ability was 31%. In other words, vocabulary mastery affects writing ability.

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