


EXPLORING VOCABULARY SIZE OF EFL STUDENTS:
A CASE STUDY OF RURAL AREA
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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: June 19, 2025 Revised: June 25, 2025) Accepted: June 29, 2025 Published: June 30, 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Vocabulary size EFL students Rural area</p>	<p>The aim of this research is to expose students' vocabulary size of SMPN 1 Sindue Tobata Donggala. Mixed methods design was utilized which involved two classes. The sample of this research was the grade VIII students of SMPN 1 Sindue Tobata which consisted 42 students and the informants were 4 students who are at good and poor score. Test and interview were distributed to collect the data. Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) was given to identify the word level of the students and interview was conducted to identify the factors that make students are difficult to master vocabulary. Therefore, the results of this research present that 27% students are at 2000-word level, 28 % students are at 3000-word level, 19 % students are at 5000-word level and 26 % students are not categorized or below the 2000-word level. Lack of strategy and interest in learning English are indicated as the internal factor. In addition, lack of media, technology and environment support are indicated as external factor. Thus, the teacher can provide some solution to bridge and solve the student's problem in improving their vocabulary size.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.</i></p> 
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INTRODUCTION

In learning English, vocabulary is the main capital for mastering language skill. It is generically defined as the knowledge of words and meanings. To achieve good reading, writing, listening, and speaking, students should surely have a lot of vocabulary and understand the meaning of the word. If students want to master English skill, it is crucial to have a sufficient quantity of words and to know their meaning and use (Anggraini, 2021). In learning a language, vocabulary facilitates a student to understand the context how the language is used (Syaifudin et al., 2020). The students who have big vocabulary will be easy in

learning language skill (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Thus, it is impossible for someone who wants to learn a good foreign language without having a plenty of words.

In junior high school, vocabulary is taught by integrating it into skill. However, the students can grasp all the skills if they lack of vocabulary. By having a lot of words, students can express their ideas through writing as well as speaking and they can catch the point well from the speaker and reading text in English. Nevertheless, the reality show that many EFL students especially in rural area indicated effortful to understand English because of limited words. One of the cases was in SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata. When the researchers did pre-observation and asked some vocabularies to the students in SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata, the students cannot respond the questions.

Thus, the researchers are interested in conducting research to early detect vocabulary size of the students and the factor that cause the students are effortful to master vocabulary. This research is urgent because it can provide some benefit information for the teacher and the students to figure some strategies in teaching and learning English and also to support them in achieving English learning goal.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research implemented mixed methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Test and interview were employed to collect the data. 42 students of VIII grade were as sample and 4 students who are in good and poor score as informants. Test in term of Vocabulary level test (VLT) adapted from Nation (1990) was used to evaluate vocabulary size of the students and interviews was conducted to identify the factors that make the students are difficult in mastering vocabulary. Next, the quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and statistically using a formula proposed by Gay et al (2012). The vocabulary size of the students will be classified based on the frequency of high frequency words, mid frequency words, and low frequency words. Furthermore, for interview, the data was analyzed into four steps proposed by Miles,et.al (2014): data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Result of the Test

The first instrument used by the researchers in collecting the data was VLT (Vocabulary Level Test). The samples were 42 students of VIII grade at SMPN 1 Sindue Tobata. The types of the tests consisted of 3 levels which each level has different items and the total of the test is 54 items. After collecting, calculating and analyzing the score of each student, the researchers present the data as follow:

TABEL 1
The Students' Score on the Vocabulary Size

NO.	INCITIAL	SCORE OF LEVEL		
		2000	3000	5000
1	AA	5	0	2
2	AB	16	11	10
3	AD	9	17	16
4	AF	8	2	0
5	AI	3	2	1
6	AL	10	15	7
7	AS	15	16	10
8	BE	8	9	3
9	DE	7	4	6
10	ES	16	13	10
11	EL	9	15	9
12	FA	16	16	10
13	FAK	15	16	12
14	FH	12	11	6
15	FI	2	15	7
16	FK	3	0	2
17	FRK	17	16	9
18	FRN	14	13	7
19	FN	14	11	8
20	IF	6	2	2
21	JA	13	13	10
22	MF	13	14	8
23	MO	10	13	5
24	MR	4	8	6
25	NA	13	15	9
26	NAZ	11	12	10
27	NS	11	12	12
28	NZL	3	5	6
29	NZT	4	11	8
30	OS	12	15	16
31	RA	13	15	10
32	RF	18	16	9
33	RFK	13	13	7
34	RFL	15	13	11
35	RFN	13	13	10
36	RS	15	13	10
37	RZT	12	14	10
38	SF	16	16	10
39	SW	16	16	11
40	TA	17	15	9
41	WA	13	11	11
42	ZF	11	13	7
Total Score		471	490	342

Average	11.2	11.7	8.1
% of Average Score	27%	28%	19%
Pass (≥ 80)	12	15	2
Fail (≤ 80)	30	27	40

The data above serves that 2000-word level as much as 27% students, for 3000-word level is 28% students, and 5000-word level is 19 % students. Therefore, 26% of students has vocabulary below the average level of 2000 words.

Result of the Interview

After giving a test to the students, the researchers interviewed 4 students. The researchers chose 2 students who get good score and 2 students who obtain poor score to find out in depth the factor that causes their difficulties in mastering vocabulary. Based on the results of the interview, the researcher found several factors contributing to students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary, they are a lack strategy and interest in learning English as internal factors, lack of media, technology and environment support as external factor

Discussion

The finding of this research reveals that students of SMP Sindue Tobata are interpreted passive in all English skills because the majority of the students are about at 2000 word-level. Learning strategies, learning interest, learning media, technology and environment support are indicated as the main factors of the students cannot expand their vocabulary. The words collection of the students can increase if they have a good strategies (Bambang Purwanto & Hidayad, 2022). The students who have various learning strategy have positive correlation with their vocabulary size (Yalçın Tılfarlıoğlu & Bozgeyik, 2012). The limitation of strategies in learning English is signaled because it is a new lesson for them.

As a new lesson, students usually point out disinterest as they find the lesson is complicated. Furthermore, English is a foreign language for Indonesian students in which have totally different rules with their mother language. Thus, the teacher should explore some approaches and methods to early build the students' interest in learning English. Students who have high interest tend to be more attentive in learning the lesson and motivation to improve their vocabulary, to practice their English skill (Ginting et al., 2021). The stronger the student's like in learning English, the better their learning goal will be (Lena et al., 2022). If almost of the students have high interest, they can be easy to create an interactive and supporting English learning environment

However, as one of schools that located in rural area, it seems difficult to integrate digital media or involve technology in learning English more deeply due to the internet connection are unstable. Therefore, the teacher should create innovative media and method that support the students in learning vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

After presenting the finding, it can be concluded that the vocabulary size of grade VIII students at SMPN 1 Sindue Tobata is almost at the level 2000 and 3000 words. The factors make the students have difficulties in mastering vocabulary involve learning strategies, learning interest, learning media, technology and environment support. Thus, the teacher can provide some solution to bridge and solve the student's problem in improving their vocabulary size.

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