

## THE USE OF VOCABULARY JOURNAL IN ENRICHING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY AND THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ITS USE

Fika Nurul Hanifia\*  
Neng.vika@gmail.com

\*Fika Graduated in 22 February 2013 from English Education Study Program of Indonesia University of Education

**Abstract:** The research was aimed at discovering the effects of vocabulary journal on the students' vocabulary mastery and also their attitudes toward its application in the class. This research employed quasi-experimental design. Fifty students of eighth grade of a Junior High School in Bandung were taken and divided into two groups namely control group and experimental group. The data were gained from pre-test, post-test, and interview. The data of the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed using t-test while the data of the interview were analyzed descriptively. The result of the post-test showed the sig. (2-tailed) .000, which meant that after the treatment, both classes were different in terms of vocabulary score statistically. Experimental class tended to have better scores than control class did. Moreover, the data of the interview showed positive responses to the use of vocabulary journal in learning vocabulary. In summary, it was proven that to some extents vocabulary journal is effective to develop students' ability in mastering vocabularies.

**Keywords:** *Students' attitudes, Vocabulary journal, Vocabulary mastery*

### Introduction

Due to the importance of English as an international language, the Indonesian government has made some efforts to obtain human resources who are able to understand and master English well. As launched by Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993 dated 25th February 1993, the Indonesian government has determined English as the foreign language to be learned by the students in Indonesia from elementary school as local content up to the university level.

Although English is a compulsory subject at school in Indonesia, the result has not been satisfactory enough yet (Nurweni & Read, 1999). In fact, many students have graduated from the school with minimum ability in using English. One of the

factors is because of the lack of vocabulary. Nurweni and Read (1999) administered a study about vocabulary size in Indonesia. A total of 324 freshmen completed Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test. The results revealed that their subjects had a vocabulary size of 1,226 frequent words and 240 general academic words. This fact is really disappointing since vocabulary has been regarded as one of the most important parts in a second or foreign language acquisition (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997)

A great deal of literature revealed that vocabulary provides the basis for mastering English skills i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking (Hammer, 2007; Carter, 1987; Lewis in Wijayani, 2009; Iriyana, 2007; Lestariningsih, 2008). It will be hard to master the language without mastering or understanding a certain number of vocabularies (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Therefore, it has to be realized that

*“no matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (McCarthy, 1990, p.vii).*

In other words, vocabulary must not be neglected by anyone who learns a language.

Poor vocabulary knowledge of Indonesian students is a matter of serious concern and their quest for finding suitable way to improve vocabulary knowledge is getting more intense.

Considering some problems above, one of the alternatives way suggested is the use of vocabulary journal. The vocabulary journal is a kind of personal dictionary; learners record the words they encounter, along with their meanings and any other important aspects (Bozkurt, 2007). Based on the previous studies, it has been frequently suggested that vocabulary journals are recommended as effective tools for students to use to take charge of, organize and manage their vocabulary learning (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Woolard, 2000; Bone, 2000; Fowle, 2002; Bozkurt, 2007; Walter, 2009).

Several benefits have been described to the use of vocabulary journals. They are described as follow:

First, it has been reported that the use of vocabulary journal can enhancing vocabulary study (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995). Second, it can improve students' ability to the use of dictionary and guess from context (Ledbury, n.d.). By using a dictionary, learners may be encouraged to use guessing meaning from textual context in order to enhance incidental vocabulary learning.

Next benefit is enhancing students' autonomy (Fowle, 2002). Enhancing students' autonomy in vocabulary learning is a must for the great impact that it causes on learning process. Benson (2003) attached that students who think and work strategically are more motivated to learn and have a higher sense of self-efficacy or confidence in their own learning ability. Besides that, vocabulary journal also enables learners to revisit each word and make the vocabulary they meet active (Lewis, 2000). Many students learn new words relatively quickly but they also forget them quickly too (Pinter, 2004). Taking this into account, the vocabulary journal can facilitate the learners review the material any time.

The other benefit is vocabulary journal also provide multiple learning strategies. Since learners are individuals and have different learning styles, the best teaching plan may be to introduce students to a variety of learning strategies. The last, vocabulary journal is also beneficial for the teacher. The vocabulary journal keep teachers informed about learners' progress (Fowle, 2002; Nation, 1990).

This study used quasi experimental, a type of research design which included experimental and control group without random sampling. There were two groups that were taken for this study. First, was the Experimental Group (EG) which was treated by using vocabulary journal in learning vocabulary process, and the second was the Control Group (CG) in which was employed word list.

The population in this research was the eighth grade students of a private junior high school in Bandung. The selection population then was narrowed into a sample. The sample of this study involved only two classes from the four existing classes, one as experimental group and one class as control group. The two classes were chosen to

be a sample based on teacher's recommendation, with the same level proficiency of English consideration.

The methods used to collect the data from the above participants were vocabulary test and interview. The pre-test and post-test were administered to both experimental and control group. The pre-test was conducted to show students' basic vocabulary and later on it was used as data to compare both control group and experimental group in the post-test. Then, an audio-taped interview was conducted to the experimental group in which the class was given treatments in order to confirm the use of the vocabulary journal and to discover students' responses toward using vocabulary journal in enriching students' vocabulary mastery. The data on the tapes were then transcribed to enable further analysis.

From the analyzed of pre-test data by using SPSS 17 for windows both experimental and control groups, it can be known that the scores were normally distributed and homogenous. Therefore, the statistical test used to test a hypothesis or comparing two means is independent sample t-test. The result shows that the significance of means in both groups for equal variances assumed is 0.704. It was more than level of significance 0.05 ( $0.704 > 0.05$ ). The means of the two groups were not significantly different. In other words, both groups have equal ability in mastering vocabulary before the treatment was conducted. In conclusion, the null hypothesis was accepted. Meanwhile, the result from independent t-test on post-test showed that experimental group had significantly different. The result of calculation by using independent t-test showed that the significant value is 0.022. It was lower than 0.05 ( $0.022 < 0.05$ ). It also shows that  $t_{obt}$  is higher than  $t_{crit}$ . The result of dependent t-test presented that the significance 2 tailed was 0.00. It is lower than 0.05 ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. It means that the treatment was given to experimental was significant to improve students' vocabulary achievement.

It was also supported by the calculation of effect size. Based on the effect size criteria, the effect size result showed that the r value represented a high effect size. It

is implied that the independent variable, which is vocabulary journal has mayor effect in improving the students' vocabulary mastery.

This finding above is in accordance with the research conducted by Walter and Bozkurt (2007) which emphasize on the effects of the implementation of vocabulary journals on the lexical competence. They have been demonstrated that the use of vocabulary journals was effective in enhancing vocabulary development, and that both teachers and students had positive attitudes to their use, as well as to their inclusion in classroom activities.

The data from interview indicate that the students have some positive response toward the application of the technique conducted in this study. Related to the advantages using vocabulary journal, there are four points highlighted derived from students' answer on the interview.

First, the result reveals that 6 of 10 students (60%) found that vocabulary journal can help them to enriching their vocabulary knowledge. It is due to the fact that the students find it easier to memorize the vocabulary. It is in line with the experiments on vocabulary which is suggest that students remember best when they have actually done something with the words they are learning (Brown, 2001). In addition, this result is proved by the students' post-test result in which most of their score were significantly improved.

With regard to review, the result show that 2 of 10 students (20%) stated that the use of vocabulary journal facilitating them to review the vocabulary. Many students learn new words relatively quickly but they also forget them quickly too. Taking this into account, the vocabulary journal can facilitate the learners review the material any time. It is because vocabulary journal enables learners to revisit each word and make the vocabulary they meet active (Lewis, 2000).

Besides, 10 students (10%) perceived that the use of vocabulary journal enhance students' autonomy in learning English vocabulary. It is in line with Fowle (2002), who is states that vocabulary journal can enhance students' autonomy. Last, 1 of 10 students (10%) perceived that the use of vocabulary journal can facilitate them to know their progress on vocabulary knowledge. The vocabulary journal keeps them

informed about their progress (Fowle, 2002; Nation, 1990). In similar way, Lewis (2000) states that “the vocabulary journal is not just as a decoding tool, but a resource which individuals can use as an encoding instrument to guide their own production of language” (p. 43).

Through vocabulary journal they could write their new vocabulary when they learn English at class, it also could be remembered and used in their daily life. Finally, there are many new vocabularies that can be used continually by students orally or in written product. Because vocabulary development is not only about learning words but also learning phrases or chunks, finding words inside them and learning even more than those words (Cameron, 2001).

However, some suggestions from the findings are addressed to English teachers and future researcher in the field of methodology. Concerning suggestion to the teacher, English teachers are suggested to rectify students' vocabulary journal as feedback for the students. Then, the students will learn from their mistakes.

Moreover, this research is just one effort to improve students' vocabulary mastery. The findings of this research are expected to use as a starting points to conduct further research in the same field.

Future researchers are suggested to conduct their studies comprises as many samples as possible from different schools and employs random samples to accomplish more accurate and defensible results. Besides, observations and questionnaires also should be carried out to obtain more detailed information. It was also suggested that the study should be conducted longer. By studying it longer, the researcher would obtain more detailed and comprehensive results.

## References

- Benson, P. (2003). *Learner autonomy in the classroom*. In D. Nunan (Ed.) Practical English language teaching. PRC: Higher education press/McGraw Hill.
- Bone, B. (2000). *Lessons from a Vocabulary Journal*. Voices From the Middle, 7(4), 17–23.
- Bozkurt, N. (2007). *The effect of vocabulary notebooks on vocabulary acquisition*. Thesis. Bilkent University, Ankara. Unpublished.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Language to Young Learner*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, R. (1987). *Vocabulary and second/foreign language teaching*. Language Teaching, 20 (1), 3-16.
- Fowle, C. (2002). *Vocabulary notebooks: implementation and outcomes*. English Language Teaching Journal, 56(4), 380–88.
- Iriyana, R. (2007). *The effectiveness of bingo game in increasing vocabulary to elementary students*. A research paper. UPI. Unplished
- Ledbury, R. (n.d.). *Vocabulary notebooks: ways to make them work*. [Online]. Available at [http://www.developingteachers.com/articles\\_tchtraining/vbookspf\\_robert.html](http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/vbookspf_robert.html) [3 August 2012].
- Lestariningsih. (2008). *The effectiveness of using game in improving students' vocabulary building*. A research paper. UPI. Unpublished.
- Nation, I.S.P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. New York: Newbury House.
- Nurweni, A., & Read, J. (1999). *The English vocabulary knowledge of Indonesian university students*. English for Specific Purposes, 18(2), 161-175.
- Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Jakarta. (1993). *Kurikulum pendidikan dasar. Landasan, program dan pengembangan*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Schmitt, N. and Schmitt, D. (1995). *Vocabulary notebooks: theoretical underpinnings and practical suggestions*. English Language Teaching Journal, 49(2),133–43.

Schmitt, N. and McCarthy, M. (Eds.), (1997). *Vocabulary: description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 199–228). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a Successful Language Learner*. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle.

Woolard, G. (2000). *Collocation - encouraging learner independence*. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching Collocation* (pp 28-46). Boston: Thomson-Heinle