

**CORRELATION BETWEEN VOCABULARY MASTERY AND  
TRANSLATION TOWARD THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF SMP  
SHAIENDRA PALEMBANG**

**By:**

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**Abstract :** The aim of this study was to find out whether or not there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and translation toward the first year students of SMP Shailendra Palembang. This study was conducted using correlational research method to the first year students of SMP Shailendra Palembang with the total number of 70 students consisting of two classes. The whole students in the population were all taken as the sample. Two kinds of test (vocabulary and translation) were used to collect the data. The results of the tests were scored using percentage analysis formula. Then, the pearson product moment coefficient correlation was applied to know whether or not there was a significant correlation between the two variables. The findings showed that the value of  $r$ -obtained was 0.964, while the value of  $r$ -table was 0.235 with degree of freedom (df) of 70 at the level of significance 0.05 for two-tailed test. Since the value of  $r$ -obtained was higher than the value of  $r$ -table, it indicated that there was a significant correlation between the vocabulary mastery and translation toward the first year students of SMP Shailendra.

**Key words:** correlation, mastery, vocabulary and translation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, people in every country are expected to be able to communicate in English since it is regarded as an international language in the world. Huda in Alwi and Sugono (2000, p. 59-78) mentions five factors that have made English an international language:

“(1) Its internal linguistic features (2) the large number of English speakers, (3) the

wide geographical spread of where it is used, (4) its importance in fields such as politics, international diplomacy, economics and business, science and technology, and culture, and (5) the use of English by countries which currently dominate world.”

It is no doubt that English is known internationally for its features, users, settings, functions and needs. In many countries, English is studied and used by students at every level of

education for different purposes. Even, its status is also ruled by the government through language policy of each country whether it is as a foreign or a second language.

Most people over the world learn English as their foreign language. Hamid (1996, p.8) states that learning a foreign language is learning to communicate in the foreign language, written or oral, as the target language. Therefore, many people within countries start to learn English as early as possible in order to be proficient and accustomed to using it.

In Indonesia, English has been considered as the first foreign language to be taught as a compulsory subject at schools or colleges. As Zain (1995) stated that “English has now a compulsory foreign language in our secondary and high schools, it is essential for our boys and girls who will be the future leaders of the nation to have a thorough grasp of this world language” (p.3). It is hoped that the students will be encouraged to learn English from the beginning.

Moreover, the four language skills of English such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are expected to master. The mastery of

these four language skills will be possible to obtain if the students comprehend some aspects of English such as grammar or structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Vocabulary was considered as one aspect of language which has important role because vocabulary or lexis is all the words in a language, which enables speakers of the language to transfer meaning from English as the source language into the target language. Lack of vocabulary can make someone find difficulties while grasping meaning of a language because vocabulary consists of many words starting from the easiest up to the most complex ones.

Vocabulary is list of words with their meaning, especially at the back of a book used for teaching a foreign language. Sweet (2001) describes that “Words are combined into sentences and this combination becomes ideas or thoughts”. It could be said that vocabulary items were words which could be arranged and grouped in such a way to construct a communication or interaction in terms of phrases, sentences or utterances in order to express feeling or thought. Since the words are very important aspect in learning English, students must have a

good knowledge and mastery of vocabulary in order to be able to use it well both in oral or written forms.

Furthermore, Guffey in Djunaedi (1996, p.3) states that “Words are the basic of thought, we can think with words, understand with words, and communicate with words”. This implies that many things people have in their mind will not be released out or perceived by others if they do not have any capability to use the words. The messages can be expressed, transferred, and understood through the words. According to Richards and Renandya (2002, p.255), vocabulary is the core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. It indicates that the mastery of vocabulary is very important when learners decide to master the four language skills. In other words, foreign or second language learners who possess good knowledge of vocabulary tend to be more proficient and successful language learners.

Djunaedi (1996) states that vocabulary can be divided into two major categories; namely function words and content words. Function words have little or no meaning by themselves, for example: “to”, “for”,

“in”, and “of” (prepositions), articles “the” and “a/an” (determiners), and pronouns. Function words are also called structure words because they only have grammatical meaning as they occur with other words (content words) or others in the sentence. Meanwhile, content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They are the content words of a language which are sometimes called the open class words because we can and regularly do add new words to these classes (Fromkin and Rodman, 1997, p.67).

The knowledge of vocabulary makes meaning can be analyzed through various expressions spokenly or in writing. There are many textbooks or printed materials such as newspaper, tabloid, magazines, and scientific books written in English. Those materials include English vocabulary starting from the easiest words up to the most complicated ones.

Comprehending written English text is not an easy thing for most Indonesian students. In junior high schools, it was still found that many students were not able to comprehend the English text well because they felt that it was difficult to translate a text from English into Indonesian. Lestari

(1997) investigated the students' problems in translating English into Indonesian. She found that the major percentage of the samples had problems in translating English into Indonesian. It was assumed that the students were still poor in vocabulary and they had less-experiences and practices of doing translation. It made them difficult to translate the text from English into Indonesian.

Translation seems to be complicated and quite hard to do when people intend to convey the meaning of their interaction while sending message spokenly or writtenly to other people with different language. Some efforts should be wisely taken into account when people start to translate the source language into the target language. In short, it can be said that in translating from one language into another language, a translator should always study the text as a whole before he begins to translate it. After obtaining a picture of the whole, it can be broken up into its parts. The analysis will move from the simpler to the more complex. The smallest unit of equivalent should be determined first. From the above explanation, it is assumed that there is a closely relationship between learner's

mastery in vocabulary and translation. Hence, this finding inspired the writer of this present study to conduct a further research dealing with the relationship between student's mastery in vocabulary and in translating English text into Indonesian.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Correlational research method was done to investigate the relationship between vocabulary mastery and translation as the independent and dependent variables. According to Martella, *et al.* (1999, p.201), "In essence, the correlational method is a particular way of collecting and analyzing data aimed at the discovery of relationships between or among variables and, depending on the data analysis procedures used, the causes for a pattern of behavior". Here, the sets of data were obtained from the same group of sample.

In this study, total sampling method was used. If the subjects of the research are less than one hundred, it is better to have them all (Arikunto, 2002, p.112). Therefore, the participants involved in this study were 70 students of SMP Shailendra Palembang, studying in the first year. They were all

taken from the whole population which consisted of two classes, namely; class I.1 and class I.2.

Two kinds of test were administered to collect the data, namely; Vocabulary and Translation Tests. The Vocabulary Test consisted of 50 items of vocabulary in the form of multiple choice questions containing function and content words. In Translation Test, students were asked to translate 40 items of phrases/sentences from English into Indonesian. The test had been tried out to 20 non-sample students from other school but still in the same proficiency level with the sample students. The results showed that the two kinds of tests were valid and reliable to be used as the instruments since the contents of the tests were specified and related to the content of syllabus, and the reliability coefficients of vocabulary and translation were 0.89 and 0.70.

This correlational study was conducted by delivering the tests in two sessions of administration continuously during the students' class hours in order to know the relationship between the students' vocabulary mastery and translation. First, the vocabulary test was administered for one and a half

hours. Second, the translation test was then administered for two hours.

Furthermore, the data obtained from the tests (vocabulary and translation) were scored using percentage analysis. The scores were then calculated using the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation to know the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of both tests. This coefficient was used to prove the hypotheses, which had been formulated.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The scores obtained by the students in vocabulary and translation tests were tabulated. The result of the vocabulary test showed that there was one student who achieved the highest score (90), and one student who achieved the lowest score (40). Meanwhile, from the result of the translation test, it was found that the highest score was 90 achieved by twenty students, and the lowest score was 60 achieved by three students.

Then, the scores were analyzed by applying Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation formula in order to know the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) which indicated whether or not there was a significant correlation between

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the students' mastery in vocabulary and in translation. Before applying Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, an assumption needed to be achieved. Firstly, the data should have had normal distribution. One-sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the data. To run the calculation, SPSS version 15 was used. The results are displayed below.

**One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

		Vocabulary	Translation
N		70	70
Normal Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Mean	67.79	78.69
	Std. Deviation	8.391	8.043
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.153	.122
	Positive	.093	.088
	Negative	-.153	-.122
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.280	1.021	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	.248	

a. Test distribution is Normal.

From the table above, it could be seen that Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of Vocabulary test was 0.075 and Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of translation test was 0.248. Since the Sig values were higher than 0.05, it indicated the normality of data for both tests.

**Correlations**

		Vocabulary	Translation
Vocabulary	Pearson Correlation	1	.964**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	70	70
Translation	Pearson Correlation	.964**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table showed that the value of r-obtained was 0.964 with the degree of freedom (df) of 70 at the significance level of 0.01 for two-tailed test. Meanwhile, the value of r-table was 0.235. Since the critical value of r-obtained was higher than r-table, it could be interpreted that the Null Hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) was confirmed. In other words, this result had proved that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary and translation mastery toward the first year students of SMP Shailendra Palembang. The strength of r-value could be interpreted based on the following guidelines (Cohen, 1988).

$r = .10$ to $.29$ or $r = - .10$ to $-.29$	small
$r = .30$ to $.49$ or $r = - .30$ to $-.49$	medium
$r = .50$ to $1.0$ or $r = - .50$ to $-1.0$	large

Since the value of r-obtained was 0.964, there was a large correlation between the two variables (vocabulary and translation).

This findings indicated that students' achievement in translating English phrases/sentences into Indonesian greatly depended on their vocabulary mastery especially in function words and content words. It was assumed that if the students had

large vocabulary items, it would easily enable them to transfer meaning from English into Indonesian. Since the students had good vocabulary mastery, they could translate the phrases/sentences from English into Indonesian well. Furthermore, the students' knowledge of translation also helped them to translate the complicated English sentences into Indonesian easily. By having a good knowledge of translation including its types and process, the students could wisely decide what to do first and what to do next. Therefore, some considerations could be made during the process of translation.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the result of the two kinds of test (vocabulary and translation), it was found that the value of  $r$ -obtained (0.964) was higher than the value of  $r$ -table (0.235) at degree of freedom (df) of 70 and the level of significance of 0.05 for two tailed-test. It meant that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was confirmed. It could be concluded that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary and translation mastery toward the first year students of SMP

Shailendra Palembang. Since this study only aimed at investigating whether or not there was a relationship between variables involved, a further research would hopefully be helpful to explore the causal relationships between variables.

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