



THE EFFECT OF LACK OF VOCABULARY MASTERY ON THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND QUESTIONS IN THIRD GRADE STUDENTS AT PELANGI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PENGARUH KURANGNYA PENGUASAAN KOSAKATA TERHADAP KEMAMPUAN MEMAHAMI SOAL PADA SISWA KELAS III SD PELANGI

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Abstract

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi tingkat penguasaan kosakata dalam kaitannya dengan kemampuan pemahaman bahasa Inggris siswa kelas tiga SD Pelangi. Kosakata merupakan fondasi penting dalam proses pembelajaran, terutama dalam memahami instruksi dan pertanyaan yang terdapat dalam soal pelajaran. Kurangnya penguasaan kosakata dapat menjadi hambatan yang signifikan bagi siswa dalam menginterpretasikan makna pertanyaan, sehingga memengaruhi hasil belajar mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data dikumpulkan dari guru dan siswa bahasa Inggris melalui berbagai teknik, serta tes kosakata untuk mengukur tingkat pemahaman siswa.

Kata Kunci: Penguasaan Kosakata, Kemampuan Memahami Soal, Siswa Kelas III SD Pelangi.

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the level of vocabulary mastery in relation to English comprehension skills among third-grade students at Pelangi Elementary School. Vocabulary is an important foundation in the learning process, especially in understanding instructions and questions contained in lesson questions. A lack of vocabulary mastery can be a significant obstacle for students in interpreting the meaning of questions, thereby affecting their learning outcomes. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were collected from English teachers and students through various techniques, as well as vocabulary tests to measure students comprehension levels.

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Ability To Understand Questions, Grade Iii Students Of Pelangi Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

The ability to understand questions in English learning in elementary school is greatly influenced by vocabulary mastery. At the elementary school level, students are still in the early stages of language acquisition, so limited vocabulary often becomes a major obstacle in understanding instructions, questions, and simple texts. A limited vocabulary makes it difficult for students to grasp the meaning of key words in questions, thereby hindering the process of understanding context, selecting answers, and drawing conclusions. This is in line with Munibi (2023) finding that vocabulary mastery has a significant relationship with the ability to understand English texts, as vocabulary is the basis for decoding and meaning.



This finding is reinforced by Azizah (2022) research, which shows that elementary school students with limited vocabulary tend to rely on guessing meanings, asking friends for help, or translating words one by one, thus slowing down and reducing the accuracy of their comprehension of questions. Meanwhile, Hutomo (2012) research on elementary school students shows that vocabulary mastery contributes greatly to reading comprehension skills, which are also directly related to the ability to understand questions. In other words, the lower the students' vocabulary mastery, the greater the likelihood that they will misunderstand the content of the questions.

This condition is also seen in elementary school students in various other studies. Nursiniah (2024) found that vocabulary difficulties caused students to fail to understand texts even when they had been simplified. This shows that the main problem is not the structure of the questions, but rather a weak command of vocabulary. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that limited vocabulary is an important factor that affects the quality of question comprehension, especially in English subjects at the elementary school level.

In view of this phenomenon, this study aims to describe in depth how limited vocabulary affects elementary school students' ability to understand English questions through a qualitative approach. The research was conducted through interviews and direct observation, so that the results are expected to provide a realistic picture of the obstacles experienced by students and provide strategic recommendations for teachers to improve student comprehension.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the effect of limited vocabulary on the English comprehension skills of third-grade students at Pelangi Elementary School. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena naturally and observe how the learning process takes place in a real-life context. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research allows researchers to understand the meaning contained in the experiences of students through direct interaction with the research environment.

This study was conducted at Pelangi Elementary School, involving English teachers and third-grade students as research subjects. The subjects were selected purposively, based on the consideration that they were the ones who best understood the vocabulary learning process and the challenges faced by students in understanding English questions. The researcher was present in the classroom to observe the learning situation, the interaction between teachers and students, and the difficulties that arose when students worked on questions that used instructions or vocabulary in English.

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out directly in the classroom by applying moderate participatory observation, in which the researcher was present as an observer without being fully involved in the learning activities. These observations were used to see how vocabulary learning strategies were applied, how students responded to instructions, and the types of difficulties they experienced. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with English teachers to obtain information about teaching strategies, students' vocabulary proficiency levels, learning obstacles, and how teachers identified students' mistakes in understanding questions. In addition, interviews were also conducted with several students to find out their experiences in learning vocabulary, difficulties in



understanding certain words, and how they solved English questions in class. Documentation data was obtained through the collection of student worksheets, practice questions, and photos of learning activities relevant to the research focus.

The collected data were analyzed using (Miles, 2014) analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The reduction process was carried out by filtering and selecting data relevant to the research focus. Next, the reduced data were presented in the form of a narrative description so that patterns and relationships between data could be clearly seen. The final stage of drawing conclusions was carried out by interpreting the meaning of the data to understand how vocabulary mastery affects students' ability to understand questions. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher used source and technique triangulation, namely comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as reconfirming with teachers (member checking) to ensure the accuracy of the information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the vocabulary test results using two texts ("My Pets" and "My House"), it was found that out of 19 students, only 6 students were able to answer most of the questions correctly. This means that around 31.5% of students understood the basic vocabulary that appeared in the text, while 68.5% of students still had difficulties.

Students' difficulties can be seen from their recurring mistakes. Most students do not understand question words such as how many, what, who, and where, so they tend to guess the answers without reading the entire text. For example, in the text "My Pets," many students answered the number of animals randomly (e.g., 'two' or "four"), when the correct answer was three. This shows that their ability to understand detailed information in reading passages is still low.

From observation, students often read texts hastily, do not pay attention to the content, and focus more on the pictures. Some students simply copy words from the text without understanding their meaning. This is also reinforced by the results of documentation on students' worksheets, which show repeated incorrect answers in the same section. These findings are in line with research by Carney & Levin (2002), which states that students often use pictures as visual "scaffolding" when reading and lack focus on linguistic text processing, resulting in suboptimal understanding of textual meaning. Over-reliance on visual illustrations can hinder the development of decoding skills and deep reading comprehension.

Interviews with teachers also reinforce these findings. Teachers stated that students still have limited English vocabulary because vocabulary learning is not carried out regularly. Students also tend to memorize words separately, rather than through the context of stories or sentences. These findings are in line with Nation (2013), who states that vocabulary mastery is the main foundation in language learning. When students only memorize words in isolation without context, they lose the opportunity to understand the use of these words in real communicative situations. As a result, even though students may know the meaning of a word, they have difficulty applying it in more complex sentences or texts.

From the overall findings, it can be concluded that students' vocabulary skills are still relatively low. This test shows that most students are not yet able to connect words with their meanings in context and are unable to understand simple information in English texts. However,



the six students who answered correctly show that the method of reading and answering text-based questions is still effective for some students and can be developed as a further learning strategy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the vocabulary proficiency level of third-grade students at Pelangi Elementary School is still low and has a direct impact on their ability to understand English questions. Limited vocabulary makes it difficult for students to grasp basic information in texts, resulting in suboptimal reading comprehension. Vocabulary proficiency has been proven to be a determining factor in students' success in understanding instructions and questions.

Thus, poor vocabulary mastery has a significant influence on students' ability to understand questions. Vocabulary teaching needs to be improved through more interactive, contextual, and routine activities, such as reading exercises, language games, the use of visual media, and a program of memorizing at least three words per day. Improving learning strategies is expected to help students build a better understanding of texts and improve their overall learning outcomes.

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