

## **A study on students' vocabulary size at junior and senior high school students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to find out the vocabulary mastery of students in Junior and Senior High School consisted of State and Private School. Those schools were located in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus. The curriculum has set the amount of the vocabulary size should be mastered by students. However, there is no specific test designed by the curriculum to measure students' vocabulary size. To answer these questions, survey method has been used in order to find out students' vocabulary size in Junior and Senior High School. The researcher used The Vocabulary Level Test developed by Webb et. al. (2017), The 6000 Level Vocabulary Level Test by Beglar (2010), and questionnaire consisted of students' demography and perception. The research shows almost all of the schools involved in this study were passed the curriculum, requirement. The result found that the schools who got high score were SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung (5340 words) from Senior High School and SMP Al-Kautsar (4275 words) from Junior High School. The research also found there are some differences of the vocabulary size between the students of State / Private School and Urban / Non-urban school. In conclusion, there are some factors that indicated influence students' vocabulary size; learning facility, English course participation, students' experience in learning English, and etc.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary size, Vocabulary Level Test, High School*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is form of word that has a meaning. Firda, et al. (2021) stated vocabulary is the core of a language which is also the core for students to speak, listen, read, and write well.

Mastering vocabulary is extremely important for the students. Since vocabulary is one of the crucial part of language which support students in learning the language. Moreover, mastering vocabulary in large number will help students in developing their language ability. (Sutarsyah, 2021).

Improving English skill can be done by enriching vocabulary. Nagy (1988) said increasing vocabulary is the basic phase in the education process. Furthermore, Nagy stated that the lack of vocabulary brings obstacles for students. Since the vocabulary is the foundation of language learning, it involved in every part of the language. Therefore, it is important for the students to improving and increasing their vocabulary mastery.

Vocabulary size test purposed to provide an estimation of vocabulary size for second and foreign language learners in both general and academic English. By knowing the vocabulary size of the learners, the teacher can estimate how far the previous learning is achieved. The vocabulary size measurement is significant in planning, diagnosis, and research. To design and developing student's vocabulary, it is extremely crucial to know the extent to which the vocabulary mastered by students (Nation & Beglar, 2007). The size of students' vocabulary can also be a reference for the teacher in mapping out the upcoming teaching learning activity.

According to Ghaedi & Shahrokhi (2016), vocabulary is the essential factor in a language since most of the meaning is lexically delivered. Mastering numerous vocabularies can support students improving another part in a language. As stated by Kurniawan (2016), vocabulary is the heart of the language. Words are the most significant element used in language. Shortly, vocabulary is a component in word form that builds the language.

Testing vocabulary to the students can motivates them to study, since the test is exhibit their knowledge and progress in learning new words (Machmud, 2021). The teachers can use the result of the test as a reference in defining the learning strategies to be applied in the next learning activity.

Vocabulary size refers to the number of words that a person knows. According to Srimongkontip & Wiriyakarun (2014), the vocabulary range used in daily communication is around 3,000 to 10,000 words. Quezada (2020) said students' vocabulary size is important as it was the determiner of their comprehension in English. Having large vocabulary size means students are more capable in learning the language.

Vocabulary level is the extent of vocabulary mastery possessed by learners. Nur in Nation (2015), stated that there have been two types of frequency counts of university texts. There are basic vocabulary or the most frequent vocabulary used (General Service List), and low frequent vocabulary (Academic Word List and Technical Term/Off List).

VLT developed by Webb, Sasao, & Ballance (2017) comes with 5 levels that will measure vocabulary knowledge at the 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, and 5000 levels. There are 2 forms of the test, which are A and B in the newest version of VLT by Webb, Sasao, & Ballance (2017). The updated VLT by Webb, Sasao, & Ballance (2017) used matching format with 10 3-items clusters per level (three keys and three distractors) and three definitions at each level of the test. The test is used to measure test takers' knowledge of the same proportions of nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

The definition of perception based on Robbins and Judge (2013) is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to make sense of their environment. According to Irwanto (2002), perception divided into;

1. Positive Perception

Positive perception is a perception describes all knowledge and responses that continue with the effort to use it. Furthermore, positive perception is positive interpretations that involve human evaluating something around them.

2. Negative Perception

Negative perception is a perception that describes all knowledge and responses that are not in harmony with the object in perception. It will proceed with passivity or reject and oppose the perceived object.

Thus, positive or negative perception will always affect person to do an action and it depends on how person describe any knowledge of an object that is perceived.

Perception is determined by individual perception and situational factors (Fuady et. al, 2017).

According to Fuady et. al (2017), some factors influence a person's perception as follows:

1. Internal Factors: feelings, attitudes, desires or hopes, attention (focus), learning process, physical state, psychiatric disorders, values and needs are also interests and motivation.
2. External Factors: family background, sex, information obtained, knowledge, intensity, size, resistance, repetition and motion, new and familiar things, or alienation of an object.

A study conducted by Srimongkontip & Wiriyakarun (2014) shows the vocabulary size mean scores of 12th grade Thai-English Bilingual Program in The Suksa Bilingual School

knowledge is still below the required target both Academic Word List level (AWL) and students' depth of vocabulary. Other research done by Sudarman & Chinokul (2018) shows the students only possessed around 1,273 word families. The study also indicates the students' vocabulary mastery is still low. The students could not pass the 2,000 or 3,000 high frequency word level and the academic vocabulary level. The previous studies showed that students cannot gain the target vocabulary size that ideally should be mastered by the students.

The research was needed to find out the vocabulary mastery of State and Private of SMA and SMP Students in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus and students' perception towards vocabulary mastery. The result of this research was expected as a reference for teachers and students in improving vocabulary mastery

## II. METHOD

This research was conducted through quantitative method. Sugiyono (2014) defines quantitative method as a method that used numbers in represent the data and analyzed by statistics. The researcher aims to find the level and the size of students' vocabulary that currently in middle and high school. The data of the research obtained from students' scores in Vocabulary Level Test and the questionnaire. The populations involved in this research were SMA N 2 Bandar Lampung, SMA N 1 Sumberejo, SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung, SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting, SMP N 22 Bandar Lampung, SMP N 1 Gisting, SMP Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung, and SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting. The schools located in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus, Lampung. The sample of this study was represented by one class from each grade. In estimating the vocabulary size mastered by the students, the researcher used the formation below:

### **Number of representative words in each word frequency × % mastery**

For example: 1000 word level (1000 x 85%) = 850 words

In analyzing the data, this study applied numerical descriptive statistic. Numerical statistic descriptive is defining the mean, the minimum and maximum score, and standard deviation.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

The research was conducted in order to measure students' vocabulary size. Table 3 below shows SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung got the highest score of the vocabulary size which is 5340 words, while SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting got the lowest score of 3801 words. In other side, from all of the SMPs School, SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung got 4275 words as the highest score, and the lowest score gained by SMP Muhammadiyah Gisting with the score of 2910 words.

**Table 3. The Result of the Vocabulary Test**

SMA (Grade 12 <sup>th</sup> )				SMP (Grade 9 <sup>th</sup> )			
SMA N 2 Bandar Lampung	SMA N 1 Sumberejo	SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	SMP N 22 Bandar Lampung	SMP N 1 Gisting	SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting
5340	4130 words	5027	3801 words	4054	3221	4275	2910 words

## 1. The Students Vocabulary Size

### a. Senior High School Students

Chart 4.1 shows the overall amount of SMA (State and Private) students' vocabulary size from 4 schools in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus. The highest score achieved by SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung by obtaining 5340 words. Otherwise, SMAN 1 Sumberejo got 3801 words which also categorized as the lowest.

School	Vocabulary Size (words)
SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	5340
SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	5027
SMAN 1 Sumberejo	4130
SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	3801

### b. Junior High School Students

As the SMP who got the highest score, SMP Al-Kautsar got 4275 words as shown in Chart 4.3. The lowest score was from SMP Muhammadiyah Gisting that gained 2910 words.

School	Vocabulary Size (words)
SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung	4054
SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	4275
SMPN 1 Gisting	3221
SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting	2910

## 2. Questionnaire

This part deals with the result of the questionnaire that has been filled by SMA and SMP students.

### a) Demography

#### • Gender

Schools	Gender (students)		
	Male	Female	
Senior High School	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	4	28
	SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	14	20
	SMAN 1 Sumberejo	9	27
	SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	9	18
Junior High School	SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung	12	17
	SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	10	18
	SMPN 1 Gisting	9	21
	SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting	17	13

#### • Participation in English Course

Schools	Participation (students)		
	Yes	No	
Senior High School	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	22	10
	SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	17	17
	SMAN 1 Sumberejo	5	31
	SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	5	22
Junior High School	SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung	11	18
	SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	16	12
	SMPN 1 Gisting	2	28
	SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting	1	29

• Facility in Learning English

		School	Very Complete	Complete	Less Complete	Incomplete
Senior School	High	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	10	17	5	0
		SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	12	14	7	1
		SMAN 1 Sumberejo	2	17	15	2
		SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	0	8	15	4
Junior School	High	SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung	5	17	7	0
		SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	9	18	1	0
		SMPN 1 Gisting	9	17	4	0
		SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting	4	15	11	0

• Duration in Learning English

		School	Duration (hour)			During English class only
			<1	1	>2	
Senior School	High	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	6	7	5	14
		SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	5	3	5	21
		SMAN 1 Sumberejo	1	1	0	34
		SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	0	1	1	25
Junior School	High	SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung	3	3	3	20
		SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	3	7	1	17
		SMPN 1 Gisting	3	1	0	26
		SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting	2	3	5	20

b) Perceptions

		School	Statements	Responses			
				Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Senior School	High	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	I like English subject.	15	13	2	2
		SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung		10	12	5	7
		SMAN 1 Sumberejo		1	24	9	2
		SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting		2	14	8	3
Junior School	High	SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung		4	11	14	0
		SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung		4	17	6	1
		SMPN 1 Gisting		4	14	12	0
		SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting		2	6	19	3
Senior School	High	SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung	I enjoy with the way my teacher teaches.	24	8	0	0
		SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung		18	11	3	2

		SMAN 1 Sumberejo		7	18	10	1
		SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting		2	13	10	2
Junior High School		SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung		15	14	0	0
		SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung		10	18	0	0
		SMPN 1 Gisting		16	13	1	0
		SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting		3	11	16	0

## Discussions

According to table 6 it has been found that from SMA schools only SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting whose not pass the curriculum requirement as the score of their vocabulary size is 3801 which still below the requirement. In other side, all of the SMP schools were passed the curriculum expectation.

**Table 6. Vocabulary Size Result**

SMA (Grade 12 <sup>th</sup> )				SMP (Grade 9 <sup>th</sup> )			
Curriculum Expectation: 4000 words				Curriculum Expectation: 1500-3000 words			
SMA N 2 Bandar Lampung	SMA N 1 Sumberejo	SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting	SMP N 22 Bandar Lampung	SMP N 1 Gisting	SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung	SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting
5340 words	4130 words	5027 words	3801 words	4054 words	3221 words	4275 words	2910 words
passed	passed	passed	not pass	passed	passed	passed	passed

### 1. The vocabulary size of State SMA students in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus

From the research that has been conducted, it was revealed that SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung got bigger vocabulary size than SMAN 1 Sumberejo. The vocabulary size for SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung is 5340 words, while 4130 words for SMAN 1 Sumberejo. There is a difference of SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung vocabulary size with the study conducted by Afriando (2015). The study showed the vocabulary sizes of SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung were 3416 for MIA class and 3317 for IIS class which means the students did not achieve the curriculum requirement at that time. In conclusion according to the result, the vocabulary size of SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung and SMAN 1 Sumberejo were passed the curriculum requirement which is 4000 words for SMA students. The research shows SMAN 2 students positive perception towards the statement English as favorite subject as the students mostly were chose option 1 and 2. The study also found that the external perception factor, knowledge, may contribute to the difference of students' vocabulary mastery, since the number of the participation of English course in both school is quite differ.

### 2. The vocabulary size of Private SMA students in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus

The study found that the vocabulary size of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung is higher than SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting. The average vocabulary size of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung is 5027 words and the vocabulary size of SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting is 3801 words. The study of Afriando (2015) showed the vocabulary sizes of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung in IIS and MIA class were 2761 and 2632 words means the school was not achieve the curriculum requirement since the score was still below 4000 words.

According to the result SMA Al-Kautsar passed the curriculum requirement with the score of 5027. However, SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting did not fulfill the curriculum requirement. The positive perception towards the statement of English as favorite subject was found in this research as most of the students of SMA Al-Kautsar were chose option 1 and 2. The statement of the way the students are enjoying their teacher teaches or not found to have positive statement similar with previous case. The knowledge as the external factors of students' perception also indicated contributing on students' vocabulary mastery difference, as the study found the different amount of students who are join English course or not.

### **3. The vocabulary size of State SMP students in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus**

The vocabulary size of SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung is 4054 words, which is higher than the vocabulary size average of SMPN 1 Gisting that is 3221 words. The external factors of perception which is knowledge, found to be a factor that differ students vocabulary mastery. Similar with previous case, there are big difference number between the students who participate in English course and those who did not participate. As much as 11 students of SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung were joining English course, while only 2 students of SMPN 1 Gisting who were taking English course. The previous study conducted by Novianti (2016) stated that there is no difference of vocabulary size between students who take English course and those who had not. However, the study revealed that there is a possibility of students' vocabulary size difference regarding their participation in English course.

### **4. The vocabulary size of Private SMP students in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus**

The vocabulary size of Private SMP in Bandar Lampung and Tanggamus seems to looks very contrast. SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Gisting only got 2910 words, which means lower. On the flip side, SMP Al-Kautsar got 4275 words that also categorized as the biggest from all SMP that participated in this research. The factor that probably causes SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting students to have lower vocabulary size is the participation in English course. Out of 30 students, only 1 student who was joined an English course. On the contrary, the amount of students in SMP Al-Kautsar who join English course is bigger than who not join. 16 students were stated yes, and 12 students were stated no with the statement whether they are participating in an English course or not. It means that the external factor of perception (knowledge) may contribute to the difference of student vocabulary mastery. The students joined English course seems to have high score. Again, the study proved that there is difference vocabulary size between the students who participate in English course and those who did not participate. SMP Al-Kautsar shows positive perceptions towards the statement whether they are enjoy with their teachers' way in teaching as most of the students were chose option 1 and 2.

### **5. The vocabulary size of State and Private SMA students in Bandar Lampung**

The vocabulary size of SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung and SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung was slightly different. SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung got 5340 which is bigger than SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung who got 5027. In the study conducted by Afriando (2015), SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung also got the highest vocabulary size compared to other schools in Bandar Lampung. Both of SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung and SMA Al-Kautsar showed positive perception toward the statements of English as favorite subject and their perception to their English teacher way teaches.

### **6. The vocabulary size of State and Private SMA students in Tanggamus**

SMAN 1 Sumberejo seems to have more vocabulary size than SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting. SMAN 1 Sumberejo got 4130, while SMA Muhammadiyah Gisting got 3801. Referring to the

curriculum, SMA Muhammadiyah cannot fulfill the curriculum requirement since the size of the vocabulary is still below 4000 words.

### **7. The vocabulary size of State and Private SMP students in Bandar Lampung**

SMP Al-Kautsar got 4275 in the vocabulary size test which is bigger than SMP 22 Bandar Lampung that got 4054. Generally, state school is assumed as superior school rather than private school. However, the result proved that private school can be more superior to state school. Therefore, there should be a further research to prove the statement above. Both of SMP 22 and SMP Al-Kautsar showed positive perception toward the statement of whether the students are enjoying the way their teacher teaches. This may be related to the results of the vocabulary mastery scores from the two schools which were higher than the other two schools.

### **8. The vocabulary size of State and Private SMP students in Tanggamus**

SMPN 1 Gisting got 3221 in the vocabulary size test. It was quietly bigger than SMP Muhammadiyah Gisting that got 2910 words. There are assumption that state school is has better performance rather than private school. According to the result above, the assumption is proved. Another factor that influences students' vocabulary size is students' perception toward their English teacher. The study revealed as much as 16 students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting stated the way their English teacher teach is less pleasant, 11 students stated pleasant, and the rest of 3 students stated very pleasant. In the other side, SMP Al-Kautsar showed positive perception with the statement of the way their English teacher teaches. It implies that the teacher plays an important role in students' vocabulary size enhancement. Therefore, improving or modifying the learning activity can be done in order to make significant improvement on students' vocabulary size.

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion, the researcher would like to conclude as follows:

### ***State & Private Schools***

There is an assumption stated state school is better than private school. However, the research found that the private school (SMP Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung) got the highest score of vocabulary size, beating two state schools. Therefore, it can be conclude that private school can has good performance rather than state school, obviously with the support of several factors like learning facility, effective teaching method, friendly school environment, etc.

### ***Bandar Lampung & Tanggamus Schools***

Schools in Bandar Lampung as a school located in urban area are assumed to have good performance rather than non-urban area schools which are Tanggamus schools. As what have been found on the study, SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung got the highest score of vocabulary size among all of the SMA's schools included in the research, followed by SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung in the second place. Meanwhile, in the level of SMP, SMP Al-Kautsar is the school who got the highest score of vocabulary size followed by SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung.

One of the factors that influence student's vocabulary size in urban and non-urban area is the facility in learning English. The students in urban area tend to have more access to various facility rather than the students in non-urban area. Apart from that, the study found that the participation in English course of the students in non-urban area is lower than the students in urban area. The lower participation of English course may cause by the least number of English language course institutions in non-urban area and the lack of student interest in taking English course.

Suggestions are given to the participants who are closely related to this research. The suggestions are made based on the conclusions of this research. They are presented as follows:

### ***For teachers***

Based on the analysis of the result, it was found that there are some students that do not feel pleasant with the way the English teacher teaches. Considering those finding, the English teachers suggested to upgrade or modify the teaching styles or visualize the materials in case to make the students fully engaged in learning activity.

### ***For further researchers***

The research still needed further improvement. For further researchers who want to conduct related to the recent research are suggested to add more level of the vocabulary size in order to know how wide the vocabulary mastered by the students. Another suggestion for further researcher is involving more participants to give more variation of the data.

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