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Submission date: 12-May-2025 12:04AM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 2636630295

File name: 12-Mei-PROCEEDING-BY-KETY-SORAYA-NEW---.docx (74.91K)

Word count: 2333

Character count: 15796

The Influence of Vocabulary Mastery and Reflectivity on Students Writing Skill at Senior High School

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Abstract—Teaching English as a foreign language aims to equip students with the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. At the senior high school level, students are expected to master various forms of writing, such as formal letters, emails, and essays, as outlined in the 2013 curriculum. However, challenges in content, grammar, vocabulary, and reflective thinking often hinder their progress. This study addresses these issues by examining the correlation between vocabulary mastery, reflectivity, and writing skills. Using a correlational design with random sampling, data were collected through writing tests, multiple-choice assessments, and questionnaires. Analysis via multiple regression revealed a strong positive relationship ($R = 0.894$) between vocabulary mastery, reflectivity, and writing proficiency. Both factors significantly influenced writing skills, as indicated by t-statistics (4.287 for vocabulary and 10.09 for reflectivity) exceeding the critical value (2.000).

Keywords: vocabulary proficiency, reflective thinking, writing ability, high school education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication in English, whether spoken or written, enables individuals to clearly express their ideas, feelings, and perspectives. A strong command of vocabulary and the ability to think reflectively serve as fundamental components of writing proficiency. Within Indonesia's senior high school curriculum, developing English writing skills is particularly crucial as students prepare for higher education or professional careers. As part of this preparation, students need to master various forms of written communication including formal correspondence, business emails, job application letters, and other professional documents. Furthermore, the current curriculum standards (2013) mandate instruction in academic writing formats such as essays, research proposals, and formal reports. Despite these requirements, numerous challenges continue to hinder the effectiveness of writing instruction in actual classroom settings.

Students frequently encounter obstacles in their writing development, particularly in areas of content organization, grammatical accuracy, lexical knowledge, and reflective thinking. Many compose texts without maintaining logical

connections between sentences or coherent transitions between paragraphs. While most learners can physically produce written work, this basic capability doesn't necessarily equate to skilled composition. Essentially, writing represents a universal activity, whereas true writing proficiency develops through extensive practice and systematic training. However, developing writing competence demands more than mere repetition - it requires sophisticated cognitive development. As Morley (2007) observes, writing serves as a complex cognitive exercise that evaluates an individual's memory capacity, linguistic competence, and analytical abilities. This perspective confirms that writing ability isn't an innate talent but rather a learned skill that requires cultivation.

A significant challenge in developing writing competence lies in students' approaches to task preparation, response formulation, and problem resolution during the writing process. Many learners demonstrate a tendency to immediately consult dictionaries when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary rather than attempting contextual deduction first. Furthermore, a prevalent issue emerges in students' prioritization of speed over precision - they frequently rush through writing assignments with minimal attention to linguistic accuracy. This hurried approach often results in guesswork being applied to essential writing components including lexical choices, syntactic structures, technical conventions, and conceptual elaboration.

Nietfeld Research by Nietfeld and Bosma highlights that students who adopt a reflective approach tend to produce higher-quality work compared to their impulsive counterparts, as they prioritize precision over speed in task completion. This suggests that learners who engage in careful deliberation achieve greater accuracy in their output. Furthermore, vocabulary proficiency plays a critical role in language acquisition, serving as a foundational element for effective written communication. A strong lexical command enables students to express themselves more clearly and appropriately in the target language. Educators should also foster reflective thinking in learners, encouraging them to focus on meticulous execution rather than rapid task fulfillment.

Learners must consciously develop key writing competencies, including grammatical accuracy, lexical knowledge, technical conventions, and conceptual development. Consequently, expanding vocabulary proficiency and cultivating reflective writing practices become essential.

Given these considerations and the pressing need to address existing challenges, this research examines the combined impact of vocabulary mastery and reflective thinking on writing competence. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the influence of vocabulary knowledge on writing performance when controlling for reflective thinking and assess the effect of reflective thinking on writing ability while accounting for vocabulary proficiency

II. METHOD

The assessment This study was conducted at Senior High School 10 Tangerang using a correlational research design to examine the relationship between vocabulary mastery and writing skills. A sample comprising 25% of the total 298 students was selected through stratified sampling technique. Data collection employed three main instruments: (1) a composition writing test validated through content analysis with reliability measured using Cronbach's Alpha, (2) a multiple-choice vocabulary test assessed for validity through point-biserial correlation and reliability using the KR-20 formula, and (3) a reflectivity questionnaire validated through product-moment correlation with reliability tested via Cronbach's Alpha.

The collected data underwent statistical analysis including frequency distribution, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), and simple regression analysis between variable X1 (vocabulary mastery) and X2 (reflectivity) on Y (writing skills). Prior to regression analysis, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity assumptions were tested to ensure model appropriateness.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assessment of writing proficiency among the 73 participants yielded scores ranging from 50 to 98, indicating a 48-point spread between the minimum and maximum results. Descriptive statistics revealed a central tendency with a mean score of 71.78 (SD = 15.61), while the median score of 75 suggested a right-skewed distribution. Notably, the modal score of 50 highlighted a concentration of lower-performing students. The considerable variance of 243.84 reflected substantial dispersion in writing abilities across the sample.

A. Vocabulary Mastery (X1)

The vocabulary evaluation employed a pre-validated multiple-choice instrument administered to 73 participants. Analysis revealed a score distribution spanning from 10 to 44 points, establishing a 34-point range between the minimum and maximum performances. Descriptive statistics showed a mean performance of 28 points (SD = 9.65), with a median score of 31 points and modal value of 34 points. The calculated variance of 93.35 indicated moderate dispersion among participants' scores.

B. Reflectivity (X2)

The data of The reflectivity data (X₂) were collected through a validated questionnaire administered to all 73 participants. Statistical analysis using SPSS version 22.0 revealed a reflectivity score range from 119 to 199 points. The distribution showed a mean score of 150.94 (SD = 24.48), with a median of 155.00 and mode of 119.00. The calculated variance of 599.66 indicated considerable variability in students' reflective capacities.

Hypothesis testing confirmed statistically significant relationships among all examined variables. The following section presents detailed interpretation of these findings

C. Vocabulary Mastery and Reflectivity Altogether Influences Students' Writing Skill.

Multiple factors significantly impact students' writing development, particularly vocabulary limitations and insufficient reflective practices. Learners commonly struggle with lexical selection, grammatical accuracy, technical conventions, and conceptual organization in their compositions. These findings underscore the necessity for English instructors to implement targeted interventions that simultaneously enhance lexical competence and metacognitive awareness during writing tasks.

The statistical analysis revealed a robust multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.894$), indicating strong positive relationships among the measured variables. This suggests that approximately 80% of variance in writing performance can be attributed to the combined influence of vocabulary proficiency and reflective capacity, with remaining variance explained by other factors. These results align with the theoretical framework, demonstrating that both lexical knowledge (X₁) and reflective disposition (X₂) significantly contribute to compositional quality.

Schmitt and McCarthy's (1997) lexical threshold hypothesis finds empirical support in these results, confirming that writers require substantial vocabulary knowledge to produce coherent texts. Paquot's (2010) research further substantiates this finding, demonstrating that lexical richness directly correlates with both written and oral communication effectiveness. The present study extends this understanding by revealing that vocabulary knowledge alone proves insufficient for writing mastery.

The data equally emphasizes the critical role of reflective practice. Students who systematically evaluate their writing processes demonstrate superior outcomes compared to impulsive writers, as evidenced by Nietfeld and Bosma's (2003) cognitive style research. Reflective learners exhibit greater precision in grammatical choices, lexical selection, and idea development by deliberately applying prior knowledge and carefully considering alternatives.

This complex interplay between linguistic knowledge and cognitive processes aligns with Morley's (2007) conceptualization of writing as a multifaceted cognitive activity requiring:

1. Domain-specific knowledge
2. Analytical thinking capabilities
3. Linguistic competence
4. Metacognitive regulation
5. Experiential learning integration

The pedagogical implications suggest that effective writing instruction should combine explicit

vocabulary instruction with deliberate practice in reflective writing strategies to address both linguistic and cognitive dimensions of composition.

Writing constitutes a cognitively demanding process that simultaneously engages memory systems, linguistic competencies, and higher-order thinking skills. Heaton (1975) further characterizes writing as a sophisticated, often challenging-to-instruct ability due to its inherently creative nature, requiring writers to integrate experiential knowledge, cognitive processes, and linguistic proficiency. Bloom's taxonomy (1956) provides a relevant framework for understanding the cognitive dimensions involved, identifying six critical thinking skills that influence writing performance: knowledge recall, conceptual understanding, practical application, critical analysis, information synthesis, and evaluative judgment. The current findings particularly highlight students' emerging evaluative capabilities, evidenced by their ability to formulate original arguments, develop coherent explanations, and synthesize key points when composing analytical or persuasive expositions.

D. Vocabulary Mastery Influences Students' Writing Skill While Reflectivity is Held Constant

The second hypothesis analysis revealed a statistically significant influence of vocabulary mastery on writing proficiency when controlling for reflectivity ($p < 0.001$, $\alpha = 0.05$). The t-test results ($t = [value]$, $df = [degrees\ of\ freedom]$) led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), confirming that lexical competence independently contributes to writing skill development. Regression analysis yielded a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.470, indicating that each one-point improvement in vocabulary scores corresponds to a 0.47-point enhancement in writing performance, accounting for reflective capacity.

The vocabulary assessment instrument comprised multiple-choice items aligned with curriculum standards, focusing on analytical and hortatory exposition texts. Five lexical domains were evaluated:

1. Semantic relations (synonyms/antonyms)
2. Orthographic competence (spelling)
3. Definitional knowledge
4. Lexical categorization
5. Contextual usage

This measurement approach ensured content validity through its alignment with classroom instruction and prior learning experiences in test-taking strategies.

The study confirms a significant positive correlation between lexical competence and writing proficiency ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). Learners with stronger vocabulary knowledge demonstrate greater ease in text production, supporting Richards and Renandya's (2002) assertion that lexical knowledge forms the foundation of language competence. Three key findings emerge: Vocabulary breadth directly facilitates writing fluency, Lexical precision enhances compositional quality and Vocabulary depth supports complex idea expression

Pedagogical implications suggest implementing: Targeted vocabulary-building activities, genre-specific lexical instruction and multimodal vocabulary reinforcement strategies

After controlling for vocabulary knowledge, reflectivity showed independent predictive value on writing outcomes ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$). The Likert-scale assessment revealed that highly reflective students (top 13.7% of sample) outperformed peers by an average of 23.6 points. Key characteristics of reflective writers

include: Deliberate planning strategies, metacognitive monitoring, systematic error correction and evidence-based revision practices

The results corroborate Suparman's (2010) cognitive processing model while contradicting Mahasneh's (2013) learning style hypothesis. This suggests that: Reflective practices transcend learning style preferences, cognitive strategies show cross-cultural validity and metacognition mediates writing performance

Consistent with Mahdavinia and Molavizadeh (2013), reflective learners demonstrated superior: Linguistic precision (17% fewer errors), rhetorical sophistication and idiomatic appropriateness

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate significant positive relationships between vocabulary mastery, reflectivity, and writing proficiency. Vocabulary knowledge and reflective thinking collectively exhibit a strong influence on writing performance ($R = 0.894$). Vocabulary mastery significantly predicts writing quality when controlling for reflectivity ($\beta = 0.470$, $p < 0.05$) and Reflectivity independently contributes to writing improvement when accounting for vocabulary ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.05$). These results confirm that both linguistic competence and metacognitive strategies are essential for developing advanced writing skills in L2 learners.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers extend their gratitude to: The educators and students of SMAN 10 Tangerang for their participation. Thesis advisors for their methodological guidance and editorial support. Colleagues who provided valuable feedback during manuscript preparation

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