U-DICTIONARY FOR TEACHING EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY: IS IT EFFECTIVE?

Rizka Aulia[1], Aisyah Hamidiyah[2], Akhmad Baihaqi[3*]

[1,2,3]Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa
akhmad.baihaqi@untirta.ac.id

Abstract

This study aimed to determine whether the U-dictionary application is effective in teaching eighth-grade students at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon to master English vocabulary. This research used a quantitative with quasi-experimental design. This research was conducted at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon at the academic year 2023-2024. This research used cluster sampling with a sample of 64 students, which consisted of 32 students from the experimental class and 32 students from the control class. In collecting the data, the researcher used a test in the form of a pre-test and post-test of vocabulary mastery to measure the students' English vocabulary. The data was analyzed with the statistical calculation of the t-test formula through the SPSS version 23 program. The result of this research showed the sig. value (2-tailed) is 0.000, where this value is lower than the significant level of 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). It is shown that H_a was accepted while H_0 was rejected. The effect size obtained is 0.93092, which is included in the large effect category. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is an effect of the U-Dictionary as a learning medium on students' English vocabulary.

Keywords : learning media, U-dictionary, vocabulary

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the important aspects of language for the students to understand every single word, written and spoken, in their new foreign language. It is important because vocabulary is a fundamental factor in learning a language, especially English language. Gough in Yuliyanti & Siahaan (2022) claims that vocabulary is important since it carries the content of what we want to say. Therefore, the first thing in teaching English to students is to introduce them to English vocabulary.

The English vocabulary of Indonesian students is still low because learning English only focuses on grammar. As said by Yuliyanti & Siahaan (2022) teachers in Indonesia have only focused on teaching grammar, until they forget that the goal of language skills is to communicate well in using the language, in this case, English. In addition, the problem in learning vocabulary also lies with the students. As Panjaitan et al., (2021) and Juanto (2020) stated, many students cannot express their opinions, ideas, and

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suggestions because they lack a vocabulary. Another fact mentions that government policy in the *Kurikulum 2013*, learning English at the elementary school level is an optional subject. Meanwhile, at the junior high school and senior high school levels, there is a reduction in time spent on English subjects (Alfarisy, 2021). This is also one of the factors in students' lack of mastery of English vocabulary. One of the skills that can help us acquire new vocabulary is reading skills. As said by Rahmasari M, Baa, & Korompot (2023), reading can facilitate students in discovering new vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation in a meaningful context.

The problems related to the lack of English vocabulary have also been found in the MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon. Based on pre-observation in 2023, the English teacher stated that the student's English vocabulary of eighth-grade students was still weak because they only learned English at school. Some students still have difficulty memorizing English vocabulary. Therefore, when reading English text, they have difficulty determining the meaning of the text they read. In addition, learning English which only uses speech methods without involving the media is one of the factors of the weak of English vocabulary in eighth-grade students at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon.

The rapid advancement of information technology has had a significant impact on human life, especially in the field of education. Technology is used as one of the innovations as learning media (teaching tools) in the field of education (Firmadani, 2020). The media that can be used in the learning process is mobile phones. Mobile phones offer an ideal platform for learning because they can be used anywhere, are affordable, compact, and wireless, and contain applications that can support learning (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). One such type of application is a dictionary.

There are various types of English dictionary applications; one example is U-Dictionary. U-Dictionary is a free dictionary and translation application, which has an official Oxford Dictionary in 12 languages and offline translation in 58 languages,

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and it is not only the most trusted English dictionary but also a useful multi-language translator (Hapsari, 2022). Another unique thing about this application is that there are games that can help add new vocabulary.

Research on U-Dictionary and vocabulary has been conducted by previous researchers, as has been done by Hapsari (2022) and Wulandari & Handayani (2020). From the two studies that have been conducted, both of them have concluded that the U-Dictionary has a positive impact on students' English vocabulary and makes it suitable for use as a learning medium. Sari & Pratolo (2024) stated that U-Dictionary as a learning media is beneficial in helping EFL learners increase their vocabulary knowledge. The gap between those previous studies lay in the method used. Those previous studies used a qualitative and mixed method. This research, meanwhile, used a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design.

Looking at the background and the previous studies, the researchers are interested in raising the research entitled "U-dictionary for Teaching Eighth-Grade Students' English Vocabulary Mastery: Is It Effective?" This research aimed to determine whether there is an effect of U-dictionary as a learning media on the eighth-grade students' English vocabulary mastery at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon. The researchers determined the statistical hypothesis, which can be considered as follows:

H_0: There is no effect of the U-Dictionary as a learning media on students' English vocabulary mastery.

H_a: There is an effect of the U-Dictionary as a learning media on students' English vocabulary mastery.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary is the words that are taught in a foreign language (Přibilová, 2006), and it exists in oral, printed, productive, and receptive formats that are used in four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Lehr et al., 2004). This implies that vocabulary is a collection of words that a person has or learns in a language, which is important in supporting the mastery of the four

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language skills. The term “mastery” refers to one who has exceptional ability and expertise in a particular field. As such, having a strong command over various terms and their meanings is known as vocabulary mastery.

Vocabulary is divided into active and passive vocabulary (Harmer, 1991). More broadly, vocabulary is divided into four types, corresponding to the four language skills: oral vocabulary, writing vocabulary, listening vocabulary, and reading vocabulary (Good in Hasan, 2018). Therefore, it can be concluded that spoken and written vocabulary are part of active vocabulary because we use them in spoken and written conversations. Meanwhile, listening and reading vocabulary are part of passive vocabulary, as we acquire them from someone's speech or writing.

Vocabulary knowledge is not only important, but it is also essential to learning and developing a foreign language (Khan et al., 2018). It means that the amount of vocabulary you have will make it easier to develop other language skills. When we have a wider vocabulary in our target language, it also helps support all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Wilkins in Thornburry (2002) states that without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. It means that almost anything can be said with words.

Learning Media

The medium (plural: media) is a means of communication used by the sender to convey information to the recipient (Smaldino et al. (in Marpanaji et al., 2018)). Learning media is defined as a tool in the form of physical and non-physical used by teachers in conveying material to students to be more effective and efficient (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019; and Mardiah et al., 2021). Therefore, learning media is a tool used by teachers (both in physical and non-physical forms) to convey material to students more effectively and efficiently so that learning objectives can be achieved properly.

Every learning medium has its characteristics. These characteristics can be identified through the ability of media to generate the sensory

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stimulation of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Hikmah (2019), divided media into 3 types: (1) visual media, (2) audio media, and (3) audio-visual media. As technology develops in the field of education, the types of media used by teachers in their learning also increase. Raharjo & Pitaloka (2020) divided learning media into two types, namely learning media in non-electronic forms, such as books and pictures, and learning media in electronic form, such as applications on mobile phones.

U-Dictionary

Based on the U-Dictionary website, U-Dictionary is an offline and online dictionary that can be downloaded from a smartphone. It was developed by Yuodao in Hong Kong and released in 2016. Hapsari (2022) states that U-Dictionary is a lightweight utility for translating more than 30 languages without or with an internet connection, so through U-Dictionary, everyone can no longer only translate short phrases and phrases, but also practice their skills in any language. U-dictionary is one of the best English learning applications and a popular dictionary application that can be used by the public (Wiratman, 2021). In addition, U-dictionary is a translator application with more than 30 languages that can be translated, one of which is English, and in U-dictionary some features can be used to improve the English language skills of its users.

Like other applications, U-dictionary also has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of this application are: being free of charge, easy to download on mobile phones, easy to use, can be used anywhere and anytime, and equipped with a variety of different features (such as spelling quizzes, word games, English corners, and pronunciation tests) (Azhar, 2023) (Putri, 2021), and (Ulfiani, 2020). The disadvantages of this application are that many advertisements appear when using it, so it can disturb students, it cannot be used when the student's mobile phone battery is running low, and some features are accessed with a premium account (Azhar, 2023), (Yuliyanti & Siahaan, 2022), and (Ulfiani, 2020).

Reading Comprehension

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Reading comprehension consists of word reading and comprehension. Reading is crucial for long-term vocabulary growth because reading exposes readers to words repeatedly and teaches them how to utilize them in a variety of sentences and contexts (Qureshi et al., 2023). Reading is not only reading aloud the content or text but also understanding the meaning of the content and text through reading comprehension (Zalha et al., 2020). Comprehension is the process of constructing the meaning of a text by connecting prior knowledge and experience (Pardo, 2004; Fatmawan et al., 2023). Therefore, reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from the text to understand what is described in the text.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used a quantitative method. The quantitative research method is used to test objective theories by investigating the relationship between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research aimed to explain certain phenomena, determining the causes and significant effects of variables on one another by using numerical data collection.

A quasi-experimental design was used in this research. Quasi-experimental research is the same as true experimental design, which is research that tries to find a causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Abraham & Supriyati, 2022). However, in quasi-experiments, the researcher cannot randomly create groups for the experiment (Creswell, 2012). or example, in classroom research, it is not always possible to select subjects randomly because the subjects have naturally formed into a group (a naturally formed intact group) (Abraham & Supriyati, 2022).

In this research, the population was 191 eighth-grade students at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon, divided into six classes. In determining the sample, the researcher used cluster sampling, which refers to a sampling method in which members of the population are randomly selected from naturally formed groups called 'clusters'. The selection of this group of students or classes is called an intact group,

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meaning that the class is already available (Abraham & Supriyati, 2022). Therefore, the researcher only randomizes or draws which class uses a class that uses U-dictionary as a learning media and which class uses a printed dictionary as a learning media. The two classes selected as samples were 8A as the experimental class and 8C as the control class, with 32 students in each class.

In collecting research data, researchers used research instruments. Research instruments are tools used to measure the value of the variables under study (Sugiyono, 2013). Research instruments make it easier for researchers to carry out research, make the results better, more valid, more complete, and more systematic, and make it easier for researchers to process the data produced. In this research, the researcher tried out the item tests for the instruments. After that, the try-out questions were tested on classes outside of the sample, and valid and reliable questions were sought to serve as pre-tests and post-tests.

The pretest was carried out to find out before treatment scores of the student's English vocabulary mastery. This test was conducted in the experimental class and control class. The test was related to the greeting card material and also related to synonyms and antonyms words. The purpose of the pre-test is to see the student's English vocabulary before giving the treatment. The post-test was done following the treatment given by the students in the experimental and control classes. The purpose of this post-test is to see whether the U-dictionary as a learning media used effects students' English vocabulary mastery.

The data were analyzed after the data was collected using an independent sample t-test. Before analyzing the data, there were two tests to be done: normality and homogeneity. To find out the difference in the occurrence of the effect between the control class and the experimental class, Cohen's d effect size was carried out to measure the level of significance of the study and to know precisely how large the effects of the data are.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

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Results

The researchers conducted a pre-test on the experimental and control class samples. This test was given to measure the students' vocabulary mastery before the treatment. The following are the pre-test results of the experimental and control classes, as shown in the table below:

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
PostTest Experiment	32	46.7	100.0	81.456	13.7204
PostTest Control	32	46.7	86.7	69.997	10.7140

Table 1. The result of the pre-test score

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
PreTest Experiment	32	33.3	80.0	53.341	11.4860
PreTest Control	32	26.7	80.0	57.806	13.6379

Table 1 shows the pretest scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The experimental class had the highest score of 80, and the lowest was 33.3. While the control class had the highest score of 80 and the lowest was 26.7. The mean and standard deviation showed slight differences. The experimental class gets a value of 53.341 for the average and 11.4860 for the standard deviation. While the control class gets 57.806 for the mean and 13.6379 for the standard deviation. It can be concluded that students in the experimental class and control class get the same highest score. Even so, the average value of the control class is higher than the experimental class.

After the treatment, the students in experimental class scored higher than the control class. The following are the pre-test results of the experimental and control classes as shown in the table below:

Table 2. The result of the post-test score

The experimental class post-test results get a minimum value of 46.7 and a maximum value of 100. The control class post-test results get a minimum value of 46.7 and a maximum value of 86.7. The experimental class showed higher mean and standard deviation scores than the control class, with a mean score of 81.456 and a standard deviation score of 13.7204, respectively, compared to the control class's mean score of 60.997 and standard deviation score of 10.7140.

The Shapiro-Wilk formula is used to determine if data is normally distributed using the SPSS version 23

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program. If the significance value is less than the alpha value (a = 0.05), the data is not normally distributed, and vice versa. The following is the result of the normality test:

Table 3. Normality of the test

Class	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
PreTest Experiment	.943	32	.092
PostTest Experiment	.934	32	.052
PreTest Control	.937	32	.063
PostTest Control	.938	32	.066

Table 3 shows the significance value of the four learning outcomes is greater than the alpha value (a = 0.05), which means that the experimental class pretest and posttest data and the control class pretest and posttest data are normally distributed.

The homogeneity test determines the level of similarity of variance between the two classes. If the significance value is less than 0.05 (a = 0.05), the variance is not homogeneous, and if it is greater than 0.05 (a = 0.05), the variance is homogeneous. The results are analyzed using the Levene test using the SPSS for Windows program:

Table 4. Homogeneity of variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
PreTest Result	Based on Mean	.514	1	62	.476
	Based on Median	.146	1	62	.704
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.146	1	54.493	.704
	Based on trimmed mean	.398	1	62	.531
PostTest Result	Based on Mean	.591	1	62	.445
	Based on Median	.623	1	62	.433
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.623	1	61.999	.433
	Based on trimmed mean	.634	1	62	.429

The variance homogeneity test using the Levene test results in a pretest significance value of 0.476 > 0.05 and a posttest significance value of 0.445 > 0.05, indicating that the control and experimental classes are homogeneous, as they come from the same population.

The T-test is a hypothesis test used to determine the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable. It is performed when the pretest and posttest data are normally distributed and from the same variant or homogeneous. The SPSS 23 for Windows program is used to compare the calculated significance of each independent variable on the dependent variable with α = 5% (0.05) significance level.

Table 5. Hypothesis test with T-test

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Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
2.912	.093	3.724	62	.000	11.4594	3.0773	5.3079	17.6109
		3.724	58.559	.000	11.4594	3.0773	5.3007	17.6181

Table 5 showed the post-test value sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000, with an alpha value of 5% or 0.05. This means that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is smaller than the alpha value (0.000 < 0.05). From these results, it can be seen that in this study H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means that the U-Dictionary application as learning media effects students' English vocabulary.

To see the size of the effect of the U-dictionary application on English vocabulary proficiency in class VIII students of MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon, researchers measured it with Cohen's d effect size (1988). In this case, the researchers used the effect size calculator (Cohen's d) for the T-test on Google. The results obtained were as follows:

Picture 1. Effect size calculator

The effect size value is 0.93092, indicating that this value falls into Cohen's large effect category.

Discussion

Referring to the research results, there is a difference in the post-test results between the use of the U-dictionary application and a printed dictionary in improving the English vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students of MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon. The use of the U-dictionary application gives better and higher results compared to the use of a printed dictionary. The average post-test score in the experimental class was 81,456 and 69,997 in the control class.

Based on data analysis and hypothesis testing, the calculation results show that the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected while the alternative

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hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Data analysis showed that the Sig (2-tailed) of the independent sample t-test is 0.000, lower than α = 0.05. This showed that U-dictionary as a learning medium is effective for the mastery of English vocabulary of eighth-grade students at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that the use of U-Dictionary as a learning media affects students' English vocabulary. Sari & Pratolo (2024), found that students were satisfied with the use of the u-dictionary learning media for learning vocabulary, stating that u-dictionary was an effective learning media and beneficial in helping EFL learners increase their vocabulary knowledge. Likewise, Wulandari & Handayani (2020), stated that U-dictionary has a positive or good effect as learning media in teaching speaking, particularly in increasing the vocabulary. This study conforms with these results, which showed that the U-Dictionary application provides an increase in students' mastery of English vocabulary and makes the students more enthusiastic and excited when using the U-Dictionary during the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The study found that using U-dictionary in eighth-grade English vocabulary mastery at MTsN 3 Kota Cilegon significantly improved students' scores. The experiment class mean scored higher (81.456) than the control class mean scored (69.997), and students were more enthusiastic and motivated. The study also conducted a t-test to test the hypothesis, confirming the effectiveness of the U-dictionary, with a Cohen'd effect value of 0.93092, indicating its high effect category. The last, other quantitative studies are suggested to have further discussion in examining how U-dictionary effects other skills.

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