# A Correlation Study between EFL Learners' Vocabulary Mastery and Their Translation Ability

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**Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their translation ability at MAN 3 Kediri. The study employed a correlational design. The present study comprised a sample of 98 students who were in the eleventh grade. The data was obtained from two specific examinations, namely a vocabulary test and a translation test. The Spearman correlation coefficient was employed to examine the data due to its non-normal distribution. The results of the study indicate that there is a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their translation ability in translating English text into Indonesian. There also exists a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their translation ability in translating Indonesian text into English. There is also a correlation between students' ability in translating English into Indonesian and their ability in translating Indonesian text into English. It is recommended that future academics undertake the task of identifying specific factors that have an impact on an individual's ability to translate.

**Keywords**: correlation, translation, vocabulary

## Introduction

Vocabulary is a list of words that a person knows and uses to communicate with others in a particular language. Raya (2019) defines vocabulary as all members of a word in a language that are used by someone. Renandya (2022) defines vocabulary as a core component of language that provides many of the basics of how students speak, listen, read, and write. Pikulski & Templeton (2004) state that vocabulary is the number of words used by, understood by, or at the command of a particular person or group. Therefore, vocabulary can be expressed as a list or series of words used to express ideas or meanings in communication. Vocabulary holds an important role in sharing ideas through writing and speaking.

In fact, most students pay less attention to vocabulary mastery when learning English. It is in line with the research conducted by Asidiqi (2018), Chamidah (2021), and Wiraldi (2020) which assert that students pay less attention to vocabulary achievement. Although improving vocabulary mastery strategies is important, in fact students are still not aware and pay too little attention to improving strategies in vocabulary learning. Thornbury (2006) says that by having vocabulary, students will be able to communicate with others and express the ideas clearly and easily.

Vocabulary plays an essential role in understanding all aspects of English; reading, listening, writing, and speaking. This means, in order to master English, students must master the vocabulary. In other words, it could be said that vocabulary is basic English. Mastering vocabulary assists in understanding the language. By having good vocabulary, students can understand a text correctly and precisely. Having a lot of vocabulary makes students understand the text easily (Faliyanti, 2015). To support the ability to comprehend the text, students need to learn a lot of vocabulary (Febrisera, 2021). Vocabulary mastery is one of the factors that affect writing ability. Low vocabulary mastery causes error in writing, difficulty in expressing ideas, and difficulty in choosing diction. Vocabulary also influences written communication as in translation.

Translation is the process of changing the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Having good translating skills is needed. As a result, the result of translation will be precise and correct. But most of the cases found are students having difficulties in translating English texts. It causes problems in translating the text. One of the influencing factors is the lack of vocabulary mastery. One of the things that causes students difficulty in translating English text is lack of vocabulary (Arono & Nadrah, 2019; Kusumayanthi & Fitria, 2020). Saricoban (2012) said that updating vocabulary is very necessary because when students do not

know the vocabulary, it will cause difficulties in translating texts. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is needed in order to assist students in understanding what is meant in the text (Subari, 2013). Kulsum (2020) pointed out that even knowing the general meaning of words does not mean that it will be easier to translate the text as a whole correctly because translation does not only require knowing the general meaning of words, but also requires adjustment to the context and diction of the target language. Therefore, translation is a complex process that requires good English skills, especially vocabulary mastery.

Many studies have been conducted to determine the effect and the correlation between vocabulary mastery and the ability to translate texts. The research conducted by Ula et al. (2021) found that vocabulary and grammar mastery are factors that determined translation ability. This shows that students who have more knowledge in vocabulary and grammar, the ability to translate texts will be better. The second study is conducted by Kulsum (2020). The result of this study indicates that the more vocabulary students have, the more accurate the translation result will be. The third research is conducted by Putri (2021). This study shows that there is a correlation between vocabulary score and the ability to translate in the first grade of *SMAN 4 Kediri*. From this study, it is concluded that to have good translation skills, students must master vocabulary first. The fourth study is conducted by Setiawan & Shalihah (2017).

This study shows a positive and significant correlation between student's vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate written texts. Because vocabulary mastery and translation are closely related, English as a foreign language (EFL) learner must improve the vocabulary skills to support the ability in translating English texts.

Taking into account the preceding findings, it is apparent that there is a link between vocabulary and translation. However, previous researchers have not yet presented proof as to whether there is still a correlation if the study is conducted on MAN (State Islamic Senior High School) pupils. Previous research found evidence only in higher education (Setiawan & Sholihah, 2017; Ula et al., 2021), English course students (Kulsum, 2020), and senior high school students (Putri, 2021). As a result, the researchers are eager to conduct this study in order to gather additional data on if there is still a correlation if the investigation is conducted on MAN students.

Based on the background of the study, the statements of research problems are: (1) How is the students' vocabulary mastery at MAN 3 Kediri? (2) How is the students' translation ability at MAN 3 Kediri? (3) Is there any correlation between student's vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate English text into Indonesian at MAN 3 Kediri? (4) Is there any correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate Indonesian text into English at *MAN* 3 Kediri? (5) Is there any correlation between students' ability in translating from English to Indonesian and their ability in translating from Indonesian to English?

**Theoretical Review**
*Vocabulary*

Vocabulary, as defined by Hatch and Brown (1995), is a list or collection of terms for a specific language or a list or collection of words that speakers of each language may use. Brown (2001) regards vocabulary items as a tedious set of terms that students must define and memorize. According to Penny Ur (1996), vocabulary is broadly defined as the terms people acquire in a different tongue. However, a new piece of vocabulary may consist of more than one word. In another definition, it is explained that aside from pronunciation and spelling, grammar, collocation, characteristics of meaning, and word construction, vocabulary is an essential aspect of language instruction.

Based on the definitions of vocabulary provided above, the researcher finds that vocabulary is a crucial component of learning a language. Thus, vocabulary is highly significant since students would be unable to communicate with that language if students did not know or lack the vocabulary of that language. Vocabulary may help students grasp all terms used in communication. The learners would struggle to acquire the target language if they lacked vocabulary mastery.

Learners must comprehend the vocabulary of the target language in order to communicate successfully when speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Furthermore, vocabulary is essential for EFL students because it is the initial step in learning new language (Ambarwati et al., 2020).

*Translation*

Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language (Catford, 1969). According to Hariyanto (2019), translation can be defined as the act of transforming the content of a text from the original language into a different target language, either without modifying or changing the meaning of the text, so that the reader may comprehend the substance of the text. Translation is the act of establishing equivalency from one language to another, and the translator modifies the style and culture while translating the text without compromising the content (Savitri, 2018). Danbaba (2017) explains that translation is the process of re-telling the meaning of the original message as exactly as possible to which it is being translated.

Translation ability refers to capacity to translate source language into target language, so that readers of target language, particularly those who do not understand the source language, can also understand the message of source language. According to Setiani (2020), translation ability is the combination of skills, competencies, and intelligence required to change the meaning of the source language to its equivalent in the target language. It means that even if the grammatical structure of the sentence changes, the meaning of the source language must remain the same. As a result, the ability to translate is one of the capacities to transfer ideas or thoughts from one language to another, or from the source language to the target language.

**Method**

*Research design*

This study is a correlational research. Correlational study examines the extent to which variables in one component are connected to variables in one or more other factors using correlation coefficients (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). Creswell (2012) clearly states that correlational design is procedure in quantitative research in which the investigators utilize correlational analysis to determine the degree of connection (or relation) between two or more variables. It denotes the use of correlational research to determine if one variable is connected to another. This study was designed to determine whether students' vocabulary mastery has a correlation or not with their ability to translate English text into Indonesian text and Indonesian text into English text at MAN 3 Kediri.

*Population and sample*

This research is conducted in the eleventh grade of MAN 3 Kediri. There are

14 classes in the eleventh grade of MAN 3 Kediri, with a total of 425 students. This study employed cluster random sampling to obtain the sample because the population is in groups and homogenous. Cluster random sampling refers to the selection of groups, or clusters, of subjects rather than individuals. With a higher number of clusters, cluster random sampling is more efficient, just as simple random sampling is more effective with a larger number of individuals (Fraenkel, 2006).

As a sample in this study then the researchers chose one class in each major: *MIPA, IPS, Bahasa, and Keagamaan*. It means there were four classes participating as samples in this research. The researchers provided fourteen pieces of paper; each piece was named with the following classes: *XI MIPA 1, XI MIPA 2, XI MIPA 3, XI MIPA 4, XI MIPA 5, XI IPS 1, XI IPS 2, XI IPS 3, XI IPS 4, XI IPS 5, XI IPS 6, XI Bahasa, XI Keagamaan 1, XI Keagamaan 2*, then the paper was rolled up and placed into the box, shaken, and took four pieces of the rolled paper, resulting in *XI MIPA 1, XI IPS 1, XI Bahasa, and XI Keagamaan* 1 as sample of the research.

*Research instrument*

The data is obtained through instrument namely tests. There are two tests in this research. They are vocabulary test and translation test. The vocabulary test employed in this study is a multiple-choice question with four options: a, b, c, and d.

According to Thornburry (2002), multiple choice tests are the most commonly utilized kind of evaluation since they are simple to assess and create. The test contained 20 multiple choice questions. The maximum total score obtained by students in the vocabulary test was 100. This score was obtained by dividing the total score by 20 times 100. The vocabulary test which is assembled in this research is in line with the curriculum in the senior high school level taken from *Permendikbud No.37/2018,* and it is in line with the syllabus used at school (MAN 3 Kediri).

In the translation test, the students should translate two texts in this research. Text 1 is translating English text into Indonesian and Text 2 is translating Indonesian text into English. The level of difficulty of the text is appropriate with the students' level of proficiency. In order to ensure that the translation test results are reliable, the researcher employed two raters in scoring the result of translation test. Before the two raters begin scoring, they made an agreement about how to score. In scoring students' translation ability, rating scale adapted from Machali (2009) was utilized.

*Data collection and analysis*

The process of data collection through vocabulary and translation test as follows: (1) the test is conducted in offline occasion that is in MAN 3 Kediri; (2) students who participated as samples gathered in their respective classes; (3) the test is carried out

during the English lesson schedule in each class; (4) the whole test is conducted in 90 minutes; (5) the researcher asks students to collect their smartphones on the teacher's table (it is forbidden to use Google translate and any kind of them in completing the test); (6) the researcher gives students 30 minutes to complete vocabulary test; (7) after completing the vocabulary test, students are asked to continue with the next test, which is the translation test; (8) the researcher gives students 30 minutes to translate Text 1 (English to be translated into Indonesian); (9) after completing the first text, students are given the second text; (10) the researcher gives students 30 minutes to translate Text 2 (Indonesian text to be translated into English); and (11) students who have finished working on tests are allowed to collect the results. They are then allowed to leave the class by taking their smartphones back. To answer the research questions, the data was analyzed using SPSS version 25.

**Result**

*Validity test*

The vocabulary test was undergone expert validation before then distributed for tried out. The respondents who were not included in the sample of this study as subjected to be the samples of the try-out, *XI-IPS 6*. The tryout contains 40 multiple choices questions. The item is valid if the significance value < 0.05.

The result showed that the valid items were question number 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40. It revealed that the number of valid items was 24 with 8 items having high validity, 13 items having enough validity, 1 item having low validity, and 2 items being un-interpreted. The researcher used 20 valid items to collect data in the real test that had 8 items of high validity and 12 items of enough validity.

There are two kinds of validity used in this translation test: content validity and construct validity. For content validity, the instrument was undergone expert. The content validity findings indicated that the instrument was quite good and corresponded to the material taught in the eleventh grade. For construct validity, it was intended to know whether the students can complete the translation test properly in accordance with the instructions. If students complete the translation test properly, the instrument is said to be valid. Based on the finding, the students could do the test completely, so the translation instrument was valid. They were declared that the test was incredibly understood.

*Reliability test*

The researcher utilized Cronbach's Alpha in analyzing the reliability of vocabulary test. According to Sujarweni (2014), the instrument is reliable if Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6.

The score of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.844. It can be concluded that the instrument of vocabulary mastery test was reliable because 0.844 is more than 0.60 (0.844 > 0.60). It was known that reliability level of vocabulary instrument is very high because it is on the range between 0.800-1.00.

Translation is a subjective test. Each student has a different perspective in translating the text and each person also has a different point of view on the result of translation. In order to ensure that the translation score is reliable, the researcher employs inter-rater reliability. It meant that there were two raters who scored each student's translation result.

Criteria for normality test are if the significance value is more than 0.05 then the data is normally distributed and if the significance value is lower than 0.05 then the data is not normally distributed. The Kolmogorov Smirnov was employed to do the normality test.

**Table 1.** Normality Test of Text 1

| One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Unstandardized Residual |
| N | | 98 |
| Normal Parameters[a,b] | Mean | .0000000 |
| | Std. Deviation | 13.49883309 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .168 |
| | Positive | .086 |
| | Negative | -.168 |
| Test Statistic | | .168 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000[c] |
| a. Test distribution is Normal. | | |
| b. Calculated from data. | | |
| c. Lilliefors Significance Correction. | | |

It can be seen that the score of students' vocabulary mastery and their ability in translating (0.000) was lower than 0.05, so it means the data is not normally distributed. Nonparametric statistics was used since the data was not normally distributed.

In analyzing the data, Spearman correlation was utilized. If the requirement for Pearson correlation coefficient is not applied, Spearman correlation coefficient can be used (Sedgwick, 2014). The acceptance and rejection criteria were: $H_0$ is accepted if sig > $\alpha$ = 0.05, $H_0$ is rejected if sig < $\alpha$ = 0.05 ($H_a$ is accepted). Spearman' correlation value is -1<rho<1. Hinkle et al. (2003) described the interpretation as follows.

**Table 2.** Interpretation of Rho Value

| rho positive | rho negative | Category |
|---|---|---|
| $0,9 \leq rho < 1$ | $-0,9 \leq rho < -1$ | Very strong |
| $0,7 \leq rho < 0,9$ | $-0,7 \leq rho < -0,9$ | Strong |
| $0,5 \leq rho < 0,7$ | $-0,5 \leq rho < -0,7$ | Moderate |
| $0,3 \leq rho < 0,5$ | $-0,3 \leq rho < -0,5$ | Low |
| $0 \leq rho < 0,3$ | $-0 \leq rho < -0,3$ | Very low |

The result of a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate English text into Indonesian text can be seen below.

**Table 3.** The Correlation Result

| Correlations | | | Vocab | Trans1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Vocab | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .267[**] |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .008 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Trans1 | Correlation Coefficient | .267[**] | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .008 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

The coefficient value between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate English text into Indonesian text is obtained 0.267 with a significant value of 0.008. Based on the data above, hypothesis testing can be done by comparing the level of significance (p-value) with alpha 0.05 or 5%. Because the significant (p-value) < 0.05 it means that the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and Null Hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. This means that there is a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability in translating English text into Indonesian text.

**Table 4.** Normality Test of Text 2

| One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Unstandardized Residual |
| N | | 98 |
| Normal Parameters[a,b] | Mean | .0000000 |
| | Std. Deviation | 6.61749562 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .107 |
| | Positive | .077 |
| | Negative | -.107 |
| Test Statistic | | .107 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .008[c] |
| a. Test distribution is Normal. | | |
| b. Calculated from data. | | |
| c. Lilliefors Significance Correction. | | |

It can be seen that the significance value of students' vocabulary mastery and their ability in translating Text 2 (0.008) was lower than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the data was not normally distributed. Then,

nonparametric statistics was used because the data was not normally distributed. Then, in analyzing the data, Spearman correlation was utilized.

*Correlation test*

The result of a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability to translate Indonesian text into English text can be seen as follows.

**Table 5.** The Correlation Result (Text 1)

| Correlations | | | Vocab | Trans2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Vocab | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .317[**] |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .001 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Trans2 | Correlation Coefficient | .317[**] | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |

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

The coefficient value between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability in translating Indonesian text into English text was 0.317 with a significant value of 0.001. Based on the data above, hypothesis testing can be done by comparing the level of significance (p-value) with alpha 0.05 or 5%. Because the significance (p-value) < 0.05 it means that the Alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and Null Hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. This means that there is a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their ability in translating Indonesian to English text.

**Table 6.** Normality Test of Students' Ability in Translating Text 1 and 2

| One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Unstandardized Residual |
| N | | 98 |
| Normal Parameters[a,b] | Mean | .0000000 |
| | Std. Deviation | 6.51203575 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .103 |
| | Positive | .063 |
| | Negative | -.103 |
| Test Statistic | | .103 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .012[c] |
| a. Test distribution is Normal. | | |
| b. Calculated from data. | | |
| c. Lilliefors Significance Correction. | | |

It can be seen that the significance value of students' ability in translating Text 1 (English test into Indonesian) and Text 2 (Indonesian text into English) was 0.012, and it was lower than 0.05. It can be concluded that the data was not normally distributed.

*Correlation test*

The result of a correlation between students' ability in translating from English to Indonesian and their ability in translating from Indonesian to English can be seen in as follow.

**Table 7.** The correlation of students' ability in translating Text 1 and Text 2

| Correlations | | | Eng-Indo | Indo-Eng |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Eng-Indo | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .367[**] |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Indo-Eng | Correlation Coefficient | .367[**] | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

The coefficient value between students' ability in translating from English to Indonesian and their ability in translating from Indonesian to English is 0.367 with a significant value of 0.000. Based on the data above, hypothesis testing can be done by comparing the level of significance (p-value) with alpha 0.05 or 5%. Because the significance (p-value) $< 0.05$, it means that the Alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and Null Hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. This means that there is a correlation between students' ability in translating from English to Indonesian and their ability in translating from Indonesian to English.

The findings of this study revealed that there is a positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and translation ability. The finding of this study is similar to the study conducted by Kulsum (2020), Putri (2021), Setiawan & Shalihah (2017). Kulsum (2020), Putri (2021), Setiawan & Shalihah (2017) found that the accuracy of translation correlates with the vocabulary mastered by the students. Because vocabulary mastery and translation are closely related, English as foreign language (EFL) learners must improve vocabulary skills to support the ability in translating the text. If students want to enhance their translation skill, the crucial thing is expanding the vocabulary.

Therefore, updating vocabulary is critical since students will struggle to translate if they do not know the vocabulary (Saricoban, 2012; Arono & Nadrah, 2019;

Kusumayanthi & Fitria, 2020). Thus, it is obvious that vocabulary mastery holds crucial role in translation skill. Vocabulary can be improved by using English movie (Sari & Aminatun, 2021; Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020; Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020; Lestari 2018), Instagram (Putri, 2022; Agustin & Ayu, 2021), English song (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021), crossword puzzle (Sadiyah et al., 2019; Ekayanti & Thohir, 2019), online games (Hadi et al., 2022), Webtoon (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021; Supitri, 2019; Wulandari, 2019), and gamification (Fithriani, 2021).

In this case, the first finding said that there was a very low positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and ability to translate text 1. It means that the higher vocabulary mastery, the higher students' ability to translate English text into Indonesian text. The second finding said that there was a low positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and ability to translate text 2. It means that the higher vocabulary mastery, the higher students' ability to translate Indonesian text into English text. The third finding said that there was a low positive correlation between students' ability to translate text 1 and their ability to translate text 2. It means that the students' ability to translate English text into Indonesia can be used to predict their ability to translate Indonesian text into English text.

For the next researcher, it is suggested to identify certain aspects influencing students' translation ability. It is supported theoretically by Khasanah & Solikhah (2022), Rokhman in Setiani (2020), Cao (2019), Nida & Taber in Sharifudin, (2019), Sriwantaneeyakul (2018), Khorasani & Ghanizadeh (2017). Khasanah & Solikhah (2022) explained that those factors are external factors, internal factors, learners as individuals, vocabulary, grammar (Ula et al. 2021), and internet technologies used in the translation process. Rokhman in Setiani (2020) mentioned that those factors are contextual, textual, and translator. Cao (2019) said that those factors are type of source text, purpose of translation, target text readers, position of SL and TL, emotional, and context. Nida & Taber in Sharifudin (2019) said that those factors are linguistic and non-linguistic. Sriwantaneeyakul (2018) said that the factor is critical reading ability. The result of the study showed that students with high levels of critical reading tend to have better translation ability. Khorasani & Ghanizadeh (2017) said that the factor is emotional intelligence. Translator with high emotional intelligence generates better translation.

## Conclusion

The first result showed r table (0.199) N= 98 and r count (0.267). Therefore, r count is larger than r table (0.267 > 0.199) means that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. As mentioned by Hinkle et al. (2003), the r table 0.267 has a very low interpretation value. So,

it can be concluded that there is a very low positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and ability to translate text 1 (English text into Indonesian text).

The second result showed r table (0.199) N= 98 and r count (0.317). Therefore, r count is larger than r table (0.317 > 0.199) means that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. As mentioned by Hinkle et al. (2003), the r table 0.317 has a low interpretation value. So, it can be concluded that there is a low positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and ability to translate text 2 (Indonesian text into English text).

The third result showed r table (0.199) N= 98 and r count (0.367). Therefore, r count is larger than r table (0.367 > 0.199) means that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. As mentioned by Hinkle et al. (2003), the r table 0.367 has a low interpretation value. So, it can be concluded that there is a low positive correlation between students' ability to translate text 1 and their ability to translate text 2.

This study makes a valuable contribution by providing a foundation for future researchers to explore the same topic across various locations and with diverse people. Based on the obtained findings, it is recommended that future researchers explore additional variables that may influence translation proficiency beyond vocabulary, including but not limited to grammar, utilization of online technologies, translator characteristics, critical reading aptitude,

emotional intelligence, and related elements. The researcher acknowledges that this study has several limitations. Therefore, it is anticipated that future researchers would endeavor to further improve and refine the aforementioned concept.

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