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## **MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY IN LEARNING SPEAKING**

(A Survey Study at one of MA Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya)

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to explore the attitudes of Senior High School male and female students toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. This study also investigated the factors influence students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The writer conducted the questionnaire to measure the students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The writer also interviewed a number of eleventh grade students to explore the factors that affect their attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The participants of this study consisted of 58 students of eleventh grade of one of MA Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya. They were 25 male students and 33 female students. The results of the study showed that most of male and almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The results also indicated the factors influence their attitudes were their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, their habits speaking English in front of many people, their needs toward English and support from social environment. In conclusion, students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking is important. It helps students improving their English speaking skill. In addition, this study recommends the future research on the same topic can carried out by using other design in order to enrich the development of the theory of attitude.

**Key words:** male and female students, attitude, vocabulary mastery, speaking skill

## INTRODUCTION

Students in their daily life can have effective communication if they can understand each other when exchanging messages. The words used are the essential part in delivering their messages. Alqahtani (2015) states that by mastering vocabulary, language learners can construct successful communication. Furthermore, Nantawong and Inpin (2017) claim that vocabulary is an access tool in all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It can be inferred that vocabulary plays a key role in improving language skills especially speaking.

Speaking is one of language skills which needs vocabulary as the essential part in constructing meaning. According to Bashir, Azeem and Dogar (2011), speaking means not only about saying the words, but also delivering a message of the words. Students can get new words through oral communication to improve their accomplishment in speaking.

Students have their attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Baker (1992, p. 10) claims that “attitude is a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior”. Furthermore, Eshghinejad (2016) assumes that attitude is often seen as an important part affecting language accomplishment. From the definitions aforementioned, the writer concluded that attitude is individual’s response to ideas, objects, or situations which has influence to language performance. In connection with students’ attitude toward the important of vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, it can be favorable (positive) or unfavorable (negative).

The students’ attitudes toward vocabulary mastery play a key role in enhancing and motivating their performances in learning speaking. It is important to know students’ attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, so that teachers can motivate students and know what they need in order to enhance their performances in learning English especially speaking.

To support the present study the writer highlights some previous studies to figure out similarities and dissimilarities to the study. One of the studies was conducted by Azizifar, Ghaitasi and Gowhari (2014), which was entitled “EFL Adult Learner’s Attitudes towards Learning Speaking”. The study was carried out to investigate the EFL adult learners’ attitudes toward learning speaking in Ilam State University, Iran. Another study was carried out by Ali, Mukundan, Baki and Ayub (2012), entitled “Second Language Learners’ Attitudes towards the Methods of Learning Vocabulary”. The authors investigated students’ learning attitudes after they are exposed to three vocabulary learning methods, namely Contextual Clues, Dictionary Strategy and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The fieldwork covered 123 undergraduates, who were surveyed to identify the factors that affect their attitudes in learning vocabulary using these methods. Meanwhile, Vasu and Dhanavel (2015) conducted a study which was entitled “Understanding the Attitude of ESL Learners to Vocabulary Learning”. They explored the attitudes of learners towards the importance of vocabulary and their choice of sources to learn new words. The study was conducted among 730 first-year engineering students of Anna University, India.

Based on the previous studies, there was still none of study that analyzed students' attitudes toward vocabulary in speaking skill. In the first previous study, the researchers focused on the students' attitude toward learning speaking by investigating the EFL adult learners. The researchers of the second study investigated ESL undergraduates' attitudes towards the methods of learning vocabulary. In the third previous study, the researchers focused on the attitudes of engineering students towards the importance of vocabulary and their choice of sources to learn new words. Furthermore, the previous studies aforementioned did not observe two different groups of learning especially male and female classrooms in Senior High School level. Meanwhile, the present study focuses on Senior High School students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, especially in male and female classrooms.

## **METHOD**

### *Research design*

In this present study, the writer employed qualitative method especially a cross-sectional survey design. According to Creswell (2012, p. 42), "survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of population by studying a sample of that population." Furthermore, Fraenkel et al (2012) states that a cross-sectional survey collects information from a sample that has been drawn from a predetermined population. The writer used cross-sectional survey because it only took one time to collect the data.

### *Participants and research site*

The participants in the present study were 58 students of 11<sup>th</sup> grade of one of MA Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya. They were 25 male and 33 female students. The writer selected the participants by using convenience sampling. According to Fraenkel et al (2012, p. 99), "a convenience sampling is a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study." The reason for selecting the 11<sup>th</sup> grade as the sample of the study because they have various attitudes in learning English especially toward the important of vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Thus, the writer was curious about students' attitude toward the important of English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.

The present study was conducted in one of MA Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya. The writer had some reasons why the school was chosen as the research site. Firstly, the school welcome for the research, so the writer got permission to conduct the research. Secondly, the school is one of outstanding school in MA Islamic Boarding School level dealing with achievement in Tasikmalaya. Lastly, the writer has chosen this site because she lives in that area, so the writer could get an easier access in conducting the present study.

### *Data collection*

In collecting the data, firstly, the writer used questionnaire to investigate the phenomenon. A close-ended questionnaire with specific statements to rate on a Likert scale were employed to answer the first research question. Likert scale consists of options from strongly agree to strongly disagree which related to a particular target, and the items on Likert scales could express either a positive/favorable or a negative/unfavorable attitude toward the

object of interest. (Dornyei, 2003). He also suggested to omit the 'undecided' category (middle option) and use a six-point scale. Therefore, in this present study, the writer used the questionnaire consisted of six options, strongly agree, agree, partly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. On the whole, the questionnaire in the study contains 10 items concerning students' attitudes. The items consisted of two negative statements (number 8 & 9) that relate to indicate that students have negative attitude toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Meanwhile, eight items (number 1-7 & 10) indicated students have positive attitude toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. When students choose strongly agree, agree and partly agree toward positive statements, it can be categorized that students have positive attitude. In contrast, when students choose strongly disagree, disagree and slightly disagree toward positive statements, it can be categorized that students have negative attitude. Furthermore, when students choose strongly agree, agree and partly agree toward negative statements, it can be categorized that students have negative attitude. In contrast, when students choose strongly disagree, disagree and slightly disagree toward negative statements, it can be categorized that students have positive attitude. Moreover, the questionnaire was administered upon a total of 58 selected samples. The questionnaire was adapted from Eshghinejad (2016).

Secondly, semi-structured interview was selected by the writer to answer the second research question because it is formal and consist of a series of questions design to gain specific answers from the respondent. According to Gillham (2000, p. 65), "semi-structured interview can be richest single source of data and seem almost 'natural': there is a pace, a fluency, a responsiveness that seems to have nothing of 'technique' about it". In the interview session, twelve students participated to answer the second research question. They were two students who had highest score of speaking, two students who had middle score of speaking and two students who had lowest score of speaking. The interview was conducted after giving questionnaire. Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2012) suggested that it is important to record during interview session, no matter what kind of interview conducted in the research. The writer used video-recording device because the writer could play back the recording more slowly than spoken one. So, the writer could transcribe what the students' opinion about their attitude toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.

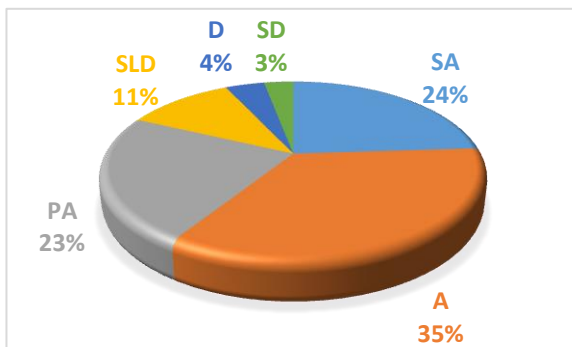
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data of the present study gained from questionnaire and interview. The data used to answer the research questions "what are the attitudes of male and female students toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?" and "what factors influence the students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?"

### *1. The attitudes of male and female students toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking*

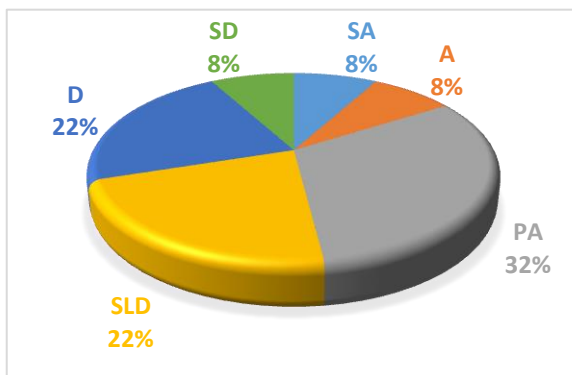
In this present study, the writer used questionnaire to answer the first research question "what are the attitudes of male and female students toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?". The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions with 6 options answer. Furthermore, students answered the questionnaire by giving a thick to the column of the appropriate statement. The writer calculated the frequency of participants' responses of each questionnaire

item by using percentage computation according to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991). There were 58 participants which consisted of 25 male and 33 female students. In details, the result of male and female students' attitude toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking are displayed on the following figures.



**Figure 4.1 Result of male student's response toward positive statements**

The result shows that most of male students have positive responses toward eight positive statements. It can be seen by the percentage in figure 4.1 using a likert scale. It displays that forty eight responses (24%) were strongly agree, seventy responses (35%) were agree, forty six responses (23%) were partly agree, twenty two responses (11%) were slightly disagree, eight responses (4%) were disagree and six responses (3%) were strongly disagree.

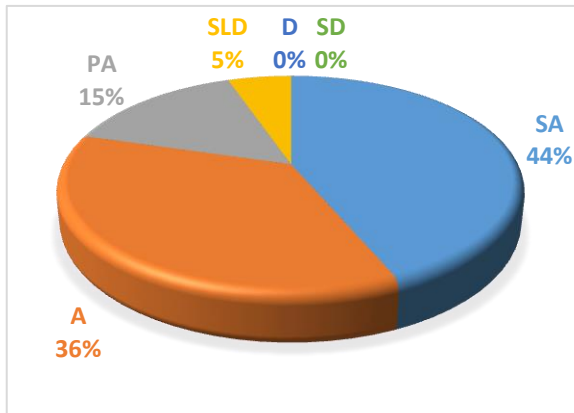


**Figure 4.2 Result of male student's response toward negative statements**

The result shows that most of male students have negative responses toward two negative statements. It can be seen by the percentage in figure 4.2 using a likert scale. It displays that four responses (8%) were strongly agree, four responses (8%) were agree, sixteen responses (32%) were partly agree, eleven responses (22%) were slightly disagree, eleven responses (22%) were disagree and four responses (8%) were strongly disagree.

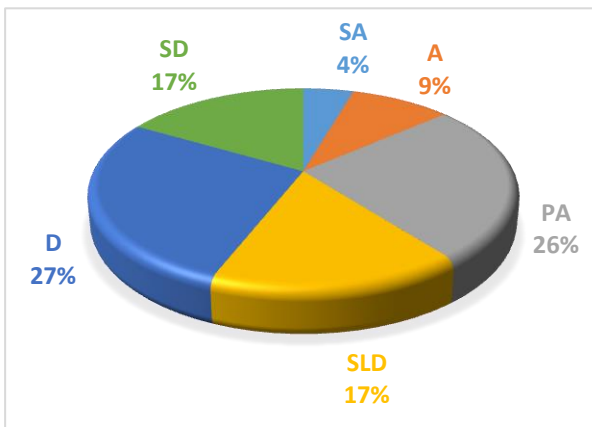
Based on the results of the figure 4.1 and figure 4.2, the writer analyzed that most of male students have positive responses toward eight positive statements. It means that most of male students have positive attitude. Furthermore, most of male students have negative responses toward two negative statements. It means that most of male students have positive

attitude. So that, the writer concluded that most of male students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.



**Figure 4.3 Result of female student’s response toward positive statements**

The result shows that almost all of female students have positive responses toward eight positive statements. It can be seen by the percentage in figure 4.3 using a likert scale. It displays that one hundred and fifteen responses (44%) were strongly agree, ninety five responses (36%) were agree, forty responses (15%) were partly agree and fourteen responses (5%) were slightly disagree.



**Figure 4.4 Result of female student’s response toward negative statements**

The result shows that most of female students have negative responses toward two negative statements. It can be seen by the percentage in figure 4.4 using a likert scale. It displays that three responses (4%) were strongly agree, six responses (9%) were agree, seventeen responses (26%) were partly agree, eleven responses (17%) were slightly disagree, eighteen responses (27%) were disagree and eleven responses (17%) were strongly disagree.

Based on the results of the figure 4.3 and figure 4.4, the writer analyzed that almost all of female students have positive responses toward eight positive statements. It means that

almost all of female students have positive attitude. Furthermore, most of female students have negative responses toward two negative statements. It means that most of female students have positive attitude. So that, the writer concluded that almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.

## *2. Factors influence the students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking*

The writer used semi-structured interview to answer the second research question "what factors influence the students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?". In the interview session, twelve students (six male and six female) participated to answer the second research question.

### a. Students' self-confidence

From the result of the first question of interview, there were some factors influenced their confidence. Firstly, from male students, they felt confident speaking English because they mastered English vocabulary, often spoke in front of many people, had been learnt speaking English since their childhood and had their own confidences. Secondly, from female students, they felt confident speaking English because they had enough vocabulary knowledge, often spoke English in front of many people, had been learnt speaking English since their childhood and support from other people. They also felt not confident because of their lack of vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation and English speaking ability of others were higher than they had.

### b. Student's success to communicate in English

From the result of the second question of interview, there were some factors influenced their statements about how successfully they communicate in English. Firstly, from male student, he said that he successfully communicated in English because he could speak English fluently. Moreover, from other male students, they said that they not successfully communicated in English because they not mastered English accent, pronunciation, and grammar yet. Besides, from female student, she said that she successfully communicated in English because she often as a candidate from her school in English competition. Furthermore, from other female students, they said that they not successfully communicated in English because of their lack of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation and grammar.

### c. Students' difficulties in using English vocabulary

From the result of the third question of interview, there were some difficulties they faced when they used English vocabulary in learning speaking. From male students, their difficulties were their accent which still mother tongue, their lack of English pronunciation and grammar. From female students, their difficulties were their lack of English pronunciation and grammar, they had no partner speaking English, and sometimes the teacher's explanation could not be understood.

### d. English-speaking people in the class

From the result of the fourth question of interview, there were some people who speaking English in their class. From male students, all of them said that there were some people speaking English in their class. They said that people who spoke English were good and had their motivation and willingness speaking English. Those people who spoke English also motivated students speaking English. Besides, from female students, all of them said that there were some people speaking English in their class. They said that people who spoke English were good and knowledgeable, can be as a partner speaking English and motivated them to be able speaking English.

From the results of the questionnaire aforementioned, to answer the first research question “what are the attitudes of male and female students toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?”, the writer assumed that most of male and almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.

From the results of interview that was conducted, the writer concluded that all of male and most of female students felt confident speaking English because they had enough vocabulary knowledge, had been learnt English since their childhood and accustomed speaking English in front of many people. They successfully communicated in English based on their achievement and fluency speaking English. They also had some difficulties when used English vocabulary in learning speaking, such as their lack of pronunciation and grammar, teacher and friend’s support. Moreover, people who spoke English in their class motivated them used English vocabulary in learning speaking.

In this section, the writer discussed the previous studies conducted by other researchers relating to the present study to support her result of the study. The purposes of the present study were to know male and female student’s attitudes and the factors influence their attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. After analyzed and interpreted the data from questionnaire and interview, the writer answers the research questions addressed such in preceding point.

Firstly, dealing with the first research question “what are the attitudes of male and female students toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?”, the answer is based on the results gained from the finding of questionnaire. Thus, the first research question can be answered that most of male and almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. This answer was proved with the evidences taken from the results of diagrams. The results from male students showed that 24% responses were strongly agree, 35% responses were agree and 23% responses were partly agree related to the positive statements of attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Meanwhile, the results from female students showed that 44% responses were strongly agree, 36% responses were agree and 15% responses were partly agree related to the positive statements of attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Those results were in line with the statement of Samadani and Ibnian (2015). They claimed that attitude can be seen as an inclination towards something both positive and negative respond.



Secondly, dealing with the second research question “what factors influence the students’ attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking?”, the answer is based on the results gained from the finding of interview. Thus, the second research question can be answered that all of male and most of female students felt confident speaking English because they had enough vocabulary knowledge, had been learnt English since their childhood and accustomed speaking English in front of many people. They successfully communicated in English based on their achievement and fluency speaking English. They also had some difficulties when used English vocabulary in learning speaking, such as their lack of pronunciation and grammar, teacher and friend’s support. Moreover, people who spoke English in their class motivated them used English vocabulary in learning speaking. Those answers were in line with the statement of Shoebottom (2007) as cited in Ali et al. (2012). He claimed that the students will be better in their speaking or writing if they know vocabulary more.

The result can be compared with the study that was conducted by Azizifar et al. (2014), which was entitled “EFL Adult Learner’s Attitudes towards Learning Speaking”. The study was carried out to investigate the EFL adult learners’ attitudes toward learning speaking in Iiam State University, Iran. To collect the data, the researchers used questionnaire and 70 EFL adult learners of Iiam State University both male and female students were required to answer all the items of the questionnaire honestly. The results showed that these participants have negative behavioral attitude towards speaking skill while they have positive cognitive and emotional attitude. Meanwhile, in this present study, the writer focused on Senior High School male and female students’ attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The writer used both questionnaire and interview to gain the data. The result showed that most of male and almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, this is contrast with Azizifar, Ghaitasi and Gowhari’s statements. It can be concluded that this present study is different with the study of Azizifar, Ghaitasi and Gowhari.

Moreover, the result of the present study can be compared with the study that was carried out by Ali et al. (2012), entitled “Second Language Learners’ Attitudes towards the Methods of Learning Vocabulary”. The authors investigated students’ learning attitudes after they are exposed to three vocabulary learning methods, namely Contextual Clues, Dictionary Strategy and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The fieldwork covered 123 undergraduates, who were surveyed to identify the factors that affect their attitudes in learning vocabulary using these methods. The findings from the study using ANOVA revealed that students who were exposed to CALL showed more positive attitudes in learning vocabulary compared to other methods. Meanwhile, in the present study, the writer focused on students’ attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking between two different groups of learning (male and female classrooms). The writer found that both male and female students have positive attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking apart from vocabulary methods. This is in contrast to Ali, Mukundan, Baki and Ayub’s study.

Furthermore, the result also can be compared with the study that was conducted by Vasu and Dhanavel (2015) which was entitled “Understanding the Attitude of ESL Learners to Vocabulary Learning”. They explored the attitudes of learners towards the importance of

vocabulary and their choice of sources to learn new words. The study was conducted among 730 first-year engineering students of Anna University, India. The results showed that students consider vocabulary as an important aspect of language learning. Students admit the importance of vocabulary to understand a text. Further, gender influences the choice of sources to learn new words, and the medium of education also significantly influences learners' attitudes and their choices of sources in vocabulary learning. Vasu and Dhanavel used survey study. Meanwhile, the present study used case study and focused on the student's attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. It can be concluded that this present study and Vasu and Dhanavel's study are different.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This present study investigated the students' attitude towards English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Two research questions were formulated in this present study covering male and female students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking and factors influence students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery in learning speaking.

Regarding the first research question, it was found that most of male and almost all of female students have positive attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Students have positive responses related to their attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Furthermore, by mastering English vocabulary, they felt more confident to communicate in English and helped them to improve their English skills especially speaking.

In the second research question, there were some factors influenced students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, such as their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, their habits speaking English in front of many people, their needs toward English and support from social environment.

Therefore, it can be concluded that students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking is important. It helps students improving their English speaking skill. Furthermore, there were many factors influenced students' attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. Moreover, in order to speak fluently, vocabulary mastery is needed. Thus, an appropriate vocabulary can be used.

This present study has strength and weakness. In this present study, case study was applied to investigate the students' attitude toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, so that the study answered the specific questions and investigated the data deeply. That is the strength of this present study. Besides, the weaknesses of this present study is not explore the information widely because this study only focused on vocabulary mastery in learning speaking, so that this present study has not been able to represent the whole aspects of learning English.

Referring to the conclusions, the writer also makes suggestions of this study. The writer would like to give some suggestions that are addressed to the students, teachers and those who are interested in carrying out further studies.

Firstly, the suggestion for the students. The writer suggests that the students should realized the important of English vocabulary mastery in leaning speaking. Thus, their interest and motivation toward English vocabulary mastery in leaning speaking can be increased, and it impacts to their attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in leaning speaking.

Secondly, the suggestion for the teachers. The writer suggests that the teachers should enhance their creativity in teaching vocabulary to improve students' English skills especially speaking. When the teaching and learning milieu are more interesting, the students feel interested and understand the material more. The teachers are also recommended to create an encouraging atmosphere in the English classes to promote the students' positive attitudes towards English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. They should also motivate the students to learn English vocabulary, highlighting its importance. This can be achieved by implementing the appropriate methods and activities of teaching English effectively.

Thirdly, the suggestion for those who are interested in carrying out further studies. The findings of this study are expected to be used as a consideration for further studies about students' attitudes toward vocabulary mastery. This present study has limitation. This present study only discovers students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in learning speaking. The writer suggests for further studies to investigate students' attitudes toward English vocabulary mastery in other English skills (listening, writing and reading) and also other variables is worthwhile.

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