

## **The Use of Rosetta Stone® as Teaching Media to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery**

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**Abstract:** The objectives of the research are to identify: (1) whether the use of Rosetta Stone® can improve students' vocabulary mastery; (2) the strengths and weaknesses of Rosetta Stone®. The research was carried out at a Junior High School in Surakarta, Central Java in 2014/2015 academic year. It was conducted in two cycles and applied Rosetta Stone® as teaching media for teaching vocabulary. The data were analysed by qualitative and quantitative methods. The result of the research showed the improvements, students could: (1) pronounce most of the words correctly; (2) memorized the new words more easily; (3) use the correct grammar in sentences. The class situation also improved, the students: (1) gave a full attention and did not make non-academic activities during teaching learning process; (2) tended to be active learner. In addition, the students' mean score also improved. The strengths of Rosetta Stone® are on the enhancement of teaching learning process. On the other hand, the weaknesses of this software are on the task preparation and the images limitation.

**Keywords:** *vocabulary mastery, media, Rosetta Stone*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning English is essential for many purposes especially for global communication. As stated by Harmer (2001: 1) English has become a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other's and where one or both speakers are using it as a 'second' language (*lingua franca*). Based on the fact above, many governments and ministries of education believe that it is important for students to learn English (Baker & Westrup, 2000: 2). Students' effort of learning English can be the key factor to their long term progress. At the beginning, it is important for the students to have a good vocabulary in

learning English. Vocabulary is necessary for expressing meaning in the receptive (listening and reading) and the productive (speaking and writing) skills. Without a good knowledge of words and meanings, both written and verbal communication will be difficult to comprehend.

Vocabulary mastery for the second language (including English) is not simple. Several problems may happen to the students when they are making effort to improve their vocabulary mastery. The problems that students have with vocabulary usually depend on the native language backgrounds. It could be partial or all aspects in vocabulary. Based on the observation result and interview conducted from a Junior High School in Surakarta, it

can be concluded that the students' vocabulary mastery is still low. The problems that were found: (1) Students often made mistakes in pronouncing words. The students pronounced most of the words just like the Indonesian people pronounce their words. As the examples, the students pronounce "woman", "key", and "soap" incorrectly. The correct pronunciation should be [wʊmən], [ki:], and [soʊp], but their pronunciation became [wɒmən], [keɪ], and [sɒp]; (2) Students found it difficult to remember meaning of words. The students often forgot the meaning of words although it has been previously explained. The teacher needs to explain the meaning of words over and over again; (3) Students often made grammar mistakes in sentences. The students were found facing difficulties in understanding and using some of English grammar. For example, in the sentence "He (need/needs) medicine but he doesn't (want/wants) it", they wrote it "He needs medicine but he doesn't wants it".

The other data were gained after the researcher held a pre-test. The students got low scores under their passing grade of 7.5. The mean of the students' scores were 6.69 with only 9 students passed the test, and 21 students did not pass the test. This data made the researcher sure that the students required an improvement in English vocabulary learning.

The problems might be caused by some factors in English class such as: (1) The students did not fully pay attention to the teacher. They often made non-academic activities such as talking with their friends or drawing something in their paper; (2) The students were passive during teaching-learning process, especially when it comes to the

communication task. The students become quiet when the teacher asks them to practice the task. (3) The learning activities were only taken from English books. Furthermore, there were no variations in English learning. The teacher could try to use various teaching methods and media, but she didn't. This condition makes the students not interested in learning.

Reflecting from the current situation, it can be said that the students needed a better learning activity in order to improve their vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the researcher proposed the solution by using Rosetta Stone® as a teaching media in learning activity. Rosetta Stone® is language-learning software that is designed to teach language the way people learn their native language. It associates words with objects, actions, and ideas that convey meaning (Hass, 2008: vi). Rosetta Stone® is personalized learning paths based on students' goals. It consists of pictures, words and sounds that will enhance students' vocabulary mastery. Rosetta Stone® provides attractive interface and shows several expanded examples at the same time. The students will be able to understand both the meaning of the word and know how to use the word in the sentences.

According to Bowden (2012) Rosetta Stone® helps the students become familiar with everyday topics and vocabulary. It offers lots of practice for hearing the language. Rosetta Stone® allows students to hear native speakers, and this helps students learn how to better pronounce the language. By using Rosetta Stone® in classroom, it will help the teacher to provide more active, interesting and effective learning activity especially for vocabulary improvement.

In order to solve students' problem in vocabulary learning, the teaching and learning activity should be interesting. The teacher could try some variations in his teaching technique or use interactive teaching media. Olsen says (2010: xi) the study of vocabulary should be enjoyable because students benefit greatly from increased word power. By using Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup>, the students will get the new enjoyable experience in their vocabulary learning. If previously the students learn vocabulary by using the textbook only, now the students can add their learning experience by seeing the real-life images, not only illustration, and supported by clear native speaker's voice that will help the students to practice their pronunciation. Furthermore, the interactivity element is similar with online learning experience.

Compared with the other media, for example: slide presentation, printed-based, and audio material, Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> has several strength points. First, it consists of pictures, text, and sounds. In other words, this software is the combination of all media above. Second, Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> provides various interactive tasks that is designed to make the students interested in vocabulary learning. The teacher just needs to give simple instruction, additional explanation, select the appropriate task, and evaluate the students' progress. Third, this software has the feedback feature. The visual feedback is useful for tracking the students' progress.

The combination of modern user interface and visual feedback will help the students to achieve their goal in vocabulary learning. When the students are interested, their vocabulary mastery should be improved and the vocabulary problems could be solved. The objectives of the

research are: (1) To identify whether the use of Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> can improve students' vocabulary mastery; (2) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> when it is used in this research.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, the researcher used Classroom Action Research (CAR). As mentioned by Burns (2010: 2) action research is part of a broad movement that generally has been going on in education. It is related to the ideas of reflective practice and the teacher as researcher. Action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to explore the researcher's teaching context. One of the main aims of action research is to identify a problematic situation or issue relating to the participants, who may include teachers, students, managers, administrator, or even parents. McNiff and Whitehead (2006: 5) state that action research is about practitioners creating new ideas about how to improve practice, and putting those ideas forward as their personal theories of practice.

This action research was conducted by using the model developed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart in Burns (1999: 32). They explain that action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process, which consists of four essential „moments“: (1) Planning. This step is to identify a problem or issue and develop a plan of action in order to improve what is already happening; (2) Action. It is a step to act and implement the plan; (3) Observation. It is a step to observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs; (4) Reflection. The last

step is a reflection to reflect on, evaluate, and describe the action in order to make sense of what has happened and to understand the issue that have been explored. These moments are the fundamental steps in a spiraling process.

The research has been conducted in one of state junior high school in Surakarta. The situation of the school was quite conducive for teaching and learning activity. This research was carried out from March to April 2015. The school has several facilities for the students, such as language laboratory, multimedia laboratory, science laboratories, library, counselling and guidance centre, student's health unit, and school's mosque. With all of the facilities in the school, the students should be facilitated in learning activities.

The subject of this research is the eighth grade G students. There were 30 students, consisting 16 boys and 14 girls. The researcher chose this class because most of the students were less interested in learning English and have some problems in their vocabulary mastery as indicated in the observation and pretest result.

The research was conducted in two cycles; each cycle consisted of four meetings. The qualitative data were collected through observation, interview, field notes and questionnaires. The quantitative data were collected using test. Those qualitative data were analyzed by qualitative methods; assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, reporting the outcomes. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were analyzed by calculating the mean score of pre test, post test 1 and post test 2.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

After analyzing the research result which was gathered from several sources of data such as pre-research observation, field notes, lesson plan, photograph, interview, the score of pre-test and post-test, the teacher - researcher concluded several findings which answered the research question in chapter one. The research findings included the improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery and the response of the students when the Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> was being used as teaching media in English lesson. Students' vocabulary mastery improvement after Action Research: (1) The improvement of mean score in cycle 1 was 7.55 and in the cycle 2 was 8.12; (2) The students could pronounce most of the words correctly; (3) The students memorized the new words easier (4) The students could use the correct grammar and rarely made mistakes in sentences; (5) The students gave a full attention and didn't make non-academic activities during teaching learning process; (6) The students tended to be active learner. It indicated they could answer the questions related to the material given in learning process. The improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery from cycle 1 to cycle 2, can be seen in table 1.

The research findings in the previous section showed that the use of Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> as teaching media could improve the students' vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from the students' achievement in the class, both in classroom activities, tasks, and in tests.

*Table 1. The Improvement of The Students' Score*

Kind of Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test 1	Post-Test 2
Mean of the students' score	6.69	7.55	8.12

From the pre-test, the score was 6.69. In post-test 1 of the first cycle, the students' mean score was 7.55. In addition, in the last post-test conducted on the second cycle, they got 8.12. It showed that the second post-test was higher than the first post-test, and the first post-test was higher than the pre-test.

The interactive tasks given were intended to make the students interested in learning English vocabulary. According to Fore and Corley (2010) Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> is an interactive, multimedia computer program that incorporates words, sounds and imagery. It matches spoken words and text with photographic images from real life. The program teaches language by the association of words and meaning derived from images. It presents a series of vivid photos, and a word or sentence describing the photo is spoken while the text is displayed on the screen.

The students select which picture goes with that word or sentence. The students advance using language they have learned and clues from new images. The students constantly interact with the program to confirm their intuition and check what they have learned. If they are right, they proceed. If not, they get another chance. With the proper time of practice using Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> in vocabulary learning, as the result, the students could achieve the vocabulary mastery improvement.

The use of Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> as teaching media has positive results at the research implementation. It also helps

students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Hiebert and Kamil (2005: 3) state that vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> tasks enabled students to develop their knowledge of meanings of words. According Baker & Westrup (2000: 37) students learn new vocabulary in two stages. First, when they read or hear new words, they know about the word and can usually recognize it, but they are not yet ready to use it in speech or writing. Later, when they start to use the word, it becomes part of their active vocabulary. However, this process of learning to use new words can take a long time. To speed up this process, the teacher can help students by providing useful ideas for recording and storing new words and giving lots of practice with new words. Based on Baker and Westrup statement, the teacher can speed up vocabulary learning process by providing useful ideas and giving lots of new words practice. The idea of using Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> as teaching media is a useful idea because Rosetta Stone<sup>®</sup> made students understand words meaning better because of its real life images. Once the students memorized the meaning of words, they got another enhancement from the sentences below the images. The activities on their worksheets also helped made them stay active in teaching and learning process. The students given the chance to practice their pronunciation during the learning activities. The audio sample was native speaker audio provided by the software, so

the students could learn from the native speaker's audio pronunciation. It means the use of Rosetta Stone® as teaching media speeded up the process of vocabulary learning.

Troike says (2006: 137) vocabulary has two dimensions: as receptive versus productive, and as conveyed by written versus oral modes of communication. The activities that have highest priority in academic competence are receptive (reading and listening), which function primarily in processing input; the activities with highest priority for interpersonal competence are oral (listening and speaking), which function in processing both input and expression. The result of research showed that the use of Rosetta Stone® as teaching media could improve students receptive and productive vocabulary. For the receptive vocabulary, it helped the students to memorize word meaning. For productive vocabulary, it helped the students to improve their pronunciation. The vocabulary mastery improvement could be achieved because Rosetta Stone® teaches language in identical way with the way people learn their first language, by connecting words to objects and events of real-life images. It provides several features like speech recognition, analysis tool, contextual formation and adaptive recall that will help people learn the new language (Hass, 2007: iii).

Rosetta Stone® is kind of educational media that can be used to develop students' English competence including vocabulary mastery. This statement suits with Meigs definition. Meigs (2006: 20) states that media in education aims to develop a broad based competence in relation to print, but also in symbolic systems of images and sounds. According

to Simkin et al. (2002: 13-14) there are five basic types of media in general use: (1) Images. Images come in many forms. A few notable types include graphs, maps, photographs, and drawings; (2) Text. This includes everything from image captions to paragraphs of information; (3) Sound. A few examples are voice recordings, music, and sound effects. Sounds can be used alone or to enhance another media element; (4) Motion. This includes cartoon-type animation, video, and moving transitions between screens of media. (5) Interactivity. This means making buttons and hyperlinks. Rosetta Stone® consists of several types of media (images, text, sound and interactivity) intended to enhance the process of vocabulary teaching and learning process.

Brett and McKay (2012) mentioned several points showing the importance of vocabulary. According to them expanding learners' vocabulary should be a lifelong pursuit, because the vocabulary: (1) Gives the ability to say anything precisely; (2) Helps understand other people; (3) Helps understand what the learners read; (4) Assists in becoming a more informed and involved citizen; (5) Bolsters the ability to grasp ideas, think more logically and incisively; (6) Allows to communicate effectively; (7) Boosts the powers of persuasion; (8) Helps the learners to make a good impression on others. Based on the Brett and McKay statement, it is very crucial for students to master their vocabulary. By using the Rosetta Stone®, it gave the better opportunity for students to develop and expand their vocabulary since Rosetta Stone® provided various interactive task supported by images and sounds. For the students, vocabulary learning became interesting and easier. The feedback feature of Rosetta Stone®

allowed students to notice which part of learning that required correction. The students also got the chance to practice what they have learnt. At the end of research, the students could memorize, understand and achieve the vocabulary mastery improvement in interesting way.

After using it for several meetings in teaching learning activities, it can be concluded that Rosetta Stone® has several points of strengths as follows: (1) It motivates students to learn English vocabulary; (2) The teaching and learning process has enhanced better than before the action research. The teaching learning activity changed to be more conducive and controlled. The students became paid more attention to the lesson; (3) It helps the students to memorize word meaning; (4) It helps the students to improve their pronunciation; (5) The combination of sentences and images make the students easier to understand word grammar; (6) The series of task are interesting and make the students more active. On the other hand, the weaknesses of Rosetta Stone® are indicated as follows: (1) It requires quite long time to select the material and create the task; (2) The image resources of the software are limited; (3) It requires additional teaching method/strategy for a few students who did not fully achieve their vocabulary improvement; (4) Some images are not suitable for teaching mental action words.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of action research, the researcher draws a conclusion that the use of Rosetta Stone® as teaching media can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The result of the research showed that the use of Rosetta Stone® as teaching

media is able to improve the students' vocabulary mastery as indicated by the fact that (1) students could pronounce most of the words correctly; (2) students memorized the new words more easily; (3) students could use the correct grammar and rarely made mistakes in sentences. The improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery is also supported by the test result (test scores). From the pre-test, the score was 6.69. In post-test 1 of the first cycle, the students' mean score was 7.55. In addition, in the last post-test conducted on the second cycle, they got 8.12. It showed that the second post-test was higher than the first post-test, and the first post-test was higher than the pre-test.

Besides, the use of Rosetta Stone® as teaching media refined the class situation. Before the research, the students were passive, doing non academic activities and paid little attention toward the teacher. After the research, the students were active, not doing non academic activities and paid full attention toward the teacher.

Having concluded the result of the research, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions for the English teachers and for the other researchers. For the teachers, the researcher suggests that English teachers have to be creative in determining the appropriate method and use interesting teaching media in order to motivate the students. The teachers should give the students more chances to practice and explore their knowledge. Besides, the teachers should improve their skill in managing class to create improvement during teaching and learning process. Finally, for other researchers, This research is one of the ways in improving students' vocabulary mastery. For the other researchers who have the similar problems

in vocabulary mastery, they can try to apply this teaching way. It is also expected that the result of this research can be used as an additional reference for future research in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

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