

**ASSESSING VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE OF  
PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SELECTED  
SCHOOLS IN KEDAH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The central purpose of this study was to empirically measure the vocabulary knowledge size of primary school students. The study was carried out with a sample of 1327 English as a Second Language students, from two different schools i.e. one urban and one rural. The whole population in both schools were involved in the study. The students attempted the Picture Vocabulary Knowledge Test (Ahmad Affendi Shabdin, 2003) which assesses the vocabulary knowledge size of the students. After the test, a small number of the students were interviewed by raters for the purpose of determining students' true lexical knowledge. The results indicate that generally all the students in this study had quite a high vocabulary knowledge size. As indicated in the interview, the responses on the test were generally based on their true lexical knowledge.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Is vocabulary knowledge one of the factors why some students succeed in language learning in the primary school and some do not? This is an important question, which needs to be addressed especially when many scholars (e.g. Nation (1997, 2001), Read (2000), Schmitt (1997, 2000) and Laufer (1997)) continuously stress the importance of mastering vocabulary in the acquisition of a language. This, however, does not necessarily mean that students need to simply increase the number of words they should know in order to meet their language needs. Besides vocabulary knowledge, there are other language aspects, which are equally important, especially when reading and comprehending a text such as grammatical competence, an understanding of how texts are organized, background knowledge of the subject and others. Researchers in second language vocabulary acquisition (e.g. Read, 2000), however, argue that adequate knowledge of words is a prerequisite for effective language use. Students who have a limited amount of vocabulary usually have problems in comprehending the content of the reading text.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to understand the problems with regards to the English language in Malaysia by focusing on the students themselves. Since students learn the language for almost eleven years in school, surely there must be something that the students have learnt about the language. The national exam results do provide some

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