

**THE EXTENT TO WHICH MPBI STUDENTS AT WIDYA MANDALA
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN SURABAYA USE NATION'S FIRST 1000
MOST FREQUENT WORDS IN THEIR WRITTEN
EXPRESSION OF IDEAS**

THESIS

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APPROVAL SHEET
(1)

This thesis entitled **The Extent to Which MPBI Students at Widya Mandala Catholic University in Surabaya Use Nation's First 1000 Most Frequent Words in their Written Expression of Ideas**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Sadtono', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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ABSTRACT

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Words are the most essential foundation of a language in which their use frequency and contexts can, to a great extent, ease and facilitate their learning. In fact, in the early years of instructed language learning, students learn first a few thousand mainly high frequency words (Groot, 1999: 111-126). High frequency words which are encountered through repetitions yield significant effects of learning (Higa, 1965: 167-179). Words of high use frequency when taught through real life contexts and concrete associations not only provide more effective learning but also become strong initial basis of word knowledge to enable their further development (Stanovich, 1986: 360-406). A number of phenomenal theories of second or foreign language acquisition which are closely related to the concepts of high frequency words led the writer to strongly believe that words which are most frequently encountered by EFL students in their language learning would be more likely, to a large extent, reflected first in their expression of ideas (Zimmerman, 1997: 121-140). In line with this perspective, Paul Nation claims that there are 1000 most distinct words (MFW-K1) which are most frequently used in university students' academic textbooks. These 1000 words make up the largest coverage of their academic textbooks' contents to which students' subject comprehension is mainly attributed. University students who have read many academic textbooks and written many academic papers are assumed to be well-familiar with these 1000 words which should be highly reflected in their expression of ideas as well. Based on his soundly-built belief, the writer conducted a research to examine the extent to which MPBI students at Widya Mandala Catholic University use Nation's MFW-K1 in their written expression of ideas. The findings of this research are viewed as of great importance to plan and design most effective EFL vocabulary instruction as the results will determine not only how to teach words but also what words to teach first.

The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis on MPBI students' test papers of Teaching English Speaking. He applied the research design of conceptual content analysis which examines the existence and occurrence frequency of certain words and concepts in a text (Berelson, 1952) while the subjects' test papers used as the analysis texts reflect their authentic written expression of ideas in responding to the in-class and timed test questions. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of analysis outputs, the analysis of these texts was carried out with the aid of the computerized Word Indexer Version 1.1 as the writer's research instrument. Prior to the system analysis process, data entry was standardized to bring all the words used in the test papers in conformity with the system of word identification of MFW-K1. Variants were removed, word irregularities were standardized, misspellings were revised, and grammatical mistakes were ignored. The outputs indicate that the largest portion of words that made up the overall expression of ideas in each text belongs to Nation's MFW-K1. Significantly, the MFW-K1 use percentage amounts to an average of 83.37 % of all the words used in MBPI students' texts. The researcher's detailed examination into the word types that constructed the whole ideas of each text shows that MPBI students used a relatively small number of MFW-K1 words to get across their ideas to a great extent. In fact, out of all the texts analyzed, the number of MFW-

K1 word types used by MPBI students ranges from 129 to 187 words only. Furthermore, a thorough word count analysis to classify these words into content and function words found that this small number of MFW-K1 word types was mostly made up of content words. These content words, which were on the average twice the number of function words identified in MPBI students' texts, are the roots and basis of word knowledge that actually built up the central messages of communication and basically accounted for the great extent to which MPBI students could use MFW-K1 words to express their ideas in the target language. These research findings constitute substantial evidence to prove that Nation's First 1000 Most Frequent Words (MFW-K1) indeed cover the largest majority of academic textbooks' contents. In addition, these 1000 MFW-K1 words which are repeatedly encountered by EFL learners during their long course of EFL study are also, to a great extent (from 74 to 89 %), used and reflected in their written expressions of ideas. Learning from the fact that these 1000 MFW-K1 words are the most frequently used words in academic textbooks and also extensively used by EFL learners in their expression of ideas to meet their academic needs, the teaching of these 1000 MFW-K1 words must be introduced to EFL learners as early as possible because a good command of these MFW-K1 words will significantly improve the extent to which EFL learners can develop their competence in their EFL acquisition and enable further development.

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