

## Developing students' mastery on adjective using a systemic approach

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### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the systemic approach to develop students' mastery of adjective. The limitations of adjective mastery in this research were the kind, the use, the form, and the order. This research employed a quasi-experimental design with the non-equivalent control group. Sixty-two students in a private university are majoring in English Education chosen from two classes that were divided into two groups, namely experimental and control group. The experimental group was taught by using a systemic approach, while the control group was taught by using lecturing method. The instruments of this research were adjective tests. The data of the experimental group experienced improvement in their mastery of adjective in terms of kind, use, form, and order indicated by the posttest mean score of experimental group (75.40) that was higher than the posttest mean score of control group (54.6) and the t-test value which was higher than the t-table value ( $12.991 > 1.671$ ). Furthermore, the researchers found that the element of adjective which experienced most significant development happened on the order. The result of this research indicated that there was significant development between experimental and control class. It means that a systemic approach that was applied in the experimental group could develop the students' mastery of adjective. Thus it was concluded that the systemic approach was effective to develop students' mastery of adjective.

### Keywords:

Systemic approach; adjective; mastery

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There are eight parts of speech in English, and one of them is adjective. Richards (2001) stated that an adjective is a describing word. It comprises the leading syntactic part of which is to qualify a noun or noun phrase. It gives more information about the object signified. A group of words (adjective clause) with a subject and a verb can also function as an adjective, instead of just one word. Adjectives must be taught entirely; students need to know the types, the form, and the use of the adjective. To help the teacher teaching adjective to the students, the researchers used an approach called systemic approach.

Many students get difficulty in mastering and identifying adjectives. Using adjective in sentences correctly is still a problem for them especially the students of English Department in Makassar universities, including the university sample in this research because it consists of many elements. Dealing with that problem, the researchers realize that adjective must be taught as complete as possible and it requires the teachers to be innovative in

designing and preparing the teaching materials. Thus, one of the right approaches to be used in teaching adjectives is a systemic approach.

The systemic approach is one of the approaches that was applied by educational researchers to focus on interconnected aspects to stimulate students to explore a word in more areas of English so that students could have a better understanding because the adjective is taught in complete explanation. Akil (2016) declared that the systemic approach affects the system as a whole that emphasizes the universal idea in identifying and categorizing. Therefore, the researchers are interested to find out the effectiveness of using the systemic approach in teaching adjective to the second-semester students. The discussion of a systemic approach in this research is mainly based on the theory of Akil (2016) while the discussion of adjective mastery based on the theory of Schoenberg & Eckstut (1994) that focuses on four adjective elements: kind, use, form, and order. This research is hoped to change students' understanding and finally mastering adjective that most of them still have difficulty on it.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Systemic Approach**

Some experts have opinions about the systemic approach. Akil (2016) states that a systemic approach is an approach that considers the holistic point of view that covers the entire elements of a system. This approach consists of three main points; they are an intersection that refers to the presence of all system's element (everything) at the same time, an interaction that is about the interaction of all system's elements, and interrelation that implies all interactions of the elements support the achievement of the goal of the system. All elements should intersect, interrelate, and interacts one another.

Moreover, Fahmy and Lagowski (2011) stated that systemic approach encourages deep learning, as opposed to rote learning. It is suggested that systemic approach mimic our current understanding of how the human brain functions, as the underlying reason that the systemic approach is successful. Kaufman (2015) declared a systemic approach as an approach that affects anything in the system. It could be defined that defined systemic approach as the approach that describes something that happens or exists throughout a whole system. Also, Al-bhery (2010) declare that systemic approach depended on the concept of the system that meant a set of things that accumulated in a particular field and had several interrelations that aim at achieving specific goals. Therefore, the researchers conclude that systemic approach is an approach depended on the concept of a system that emphasizes the regularity and holistic point of view in identifying and categorizing adjectives to make the learners easily to master them. Teaching adjective by using a systemic approach systemic approach emphasizes the regularity and holistic point of view in doing or learning something. The figure below is the chart of systemic approach (Akil's theory) applied in teaching adjective (theory of Schoenberg).

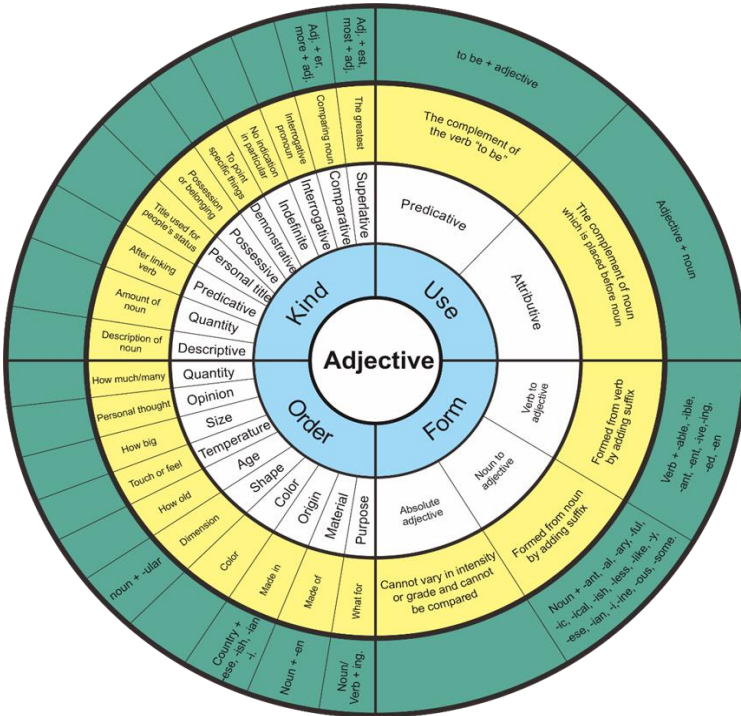


Figure 1. The chart of systemic approach applied in teaching adjective

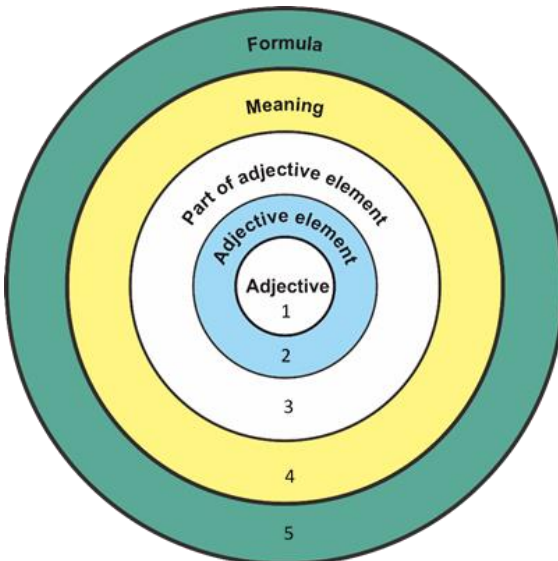


Figure 2. The description of the systemic approach chart applied in teaching adjective

Figure 2 above shows five circles, which the first circle is the adjective, the second circle is the elements of the adjective; they are kind, use form, and order (as seen in figure 1). The third circle is part of the adjective element where each adjective elements has different parts as seen in figure 1. The fourth circle is the meaning of the adjective, and the fifth circle is the formula of an adjective or how the adjective is formed

## **2.2 The Elements of Writing**

The elements of the adjective in teaching by using systemic approach are kind, use, form, and order (Schoenberg & Eckstut, 1994). Those elements cover 3 points of systemic approach; intersection, interaction, and interrelation as explained below:

### **2.2.1 Kind**

The different kinds of adjectives are discussed in detail in under their respective sections:

#### *2.2.1.1 Descriptive adjectives or adjective of quality*

Descriptive adjectives are those adjectives which describe nouns or the noun phrases.

#### *2.2.1.2 Adjective of quantity or numeric adjective*

Adjective of quantity talks about the quantity of the noun being talked about and provides an answer to the question of 'how much.' It shows the quantity or the numbers present in the sentence.

#### *2.2.1.3 Predicative adjectives*

Predicative adjectives are those who follow a linking verb and not placed before a noun. The predicative adjective does not act as a part of the noun it modifies but serves as a complement of a linking verb which connects it to the noun of the sentence.

#### *2.2.1.4 Personal titles*

Personal titles are adjectives where the titles such as Mr., Master, Miss, Mrs., Uncle, Auntie, Lord, Dr, Prof. and so on, are used as adjectives to describe the position of the noun. These titles could be placed in the front or even at the end.

#### *2.2.1.5 Possessive adjectives*

Possessive adjectives are used where the sentence shows possession or belongingness. They are similar to possessive pronouns and, in this case, are used as adjectives which modify a noun or a noun phrase.

#### *2.2.1.6 Demonstrative adjectives*

Demonstrative adjectives are used when there is a need to point specific things. The adjectives function as a way to demonstrate something and are similar to demonstrative pronouns.

#### *2.2.1.7 Indefinite adjectives*

Indefinite adjectives are used when the sentence has nothing to point out or specify. These adjectives are formed from indefinite pronouns and do not indicate anything in particular.

#### 2.2.1.8 *Interrogative adjectives*

An Interrogative adjective modifies a noun or a noun phrase and is similar to the interrogative pronoun. It does not stand on its own and includes words such as, which, what, who, whose, whom, where and so on.

#### 2.2.1.9 *Comparative adjectives*

Comparative adjectives are those which imply increase or decrease of the quality or quantity of the nouns. It is used to compare two things in a clause.

#### 2.2.1.10 *Superlative adjective*

Superlative adjectives express the greatest increase or decrease of the quality; it conveys the supreme value of the noun in question.

### 2.2.2 Use

Adjectives are used in two main ways; they can either be attributive or they can be predicative.

#### 2.2.2.1 *Attributive adjective*

This is the most common use of adjectives, standing next to a noun in a noun phrase. In English, simple and complex adjectives almost always come before the noun.

#### 2.2.2.2 *Predicative adjective*

Adjectives are said to be predicative when they are used as the complement of the verb to be, or other similar verbs such as get, become, and grow.

### 2.2.3 Form

#### 2.2.3.1 *Absolute adjective*

The Absolute Adjectives cannot vary in intensity or grade and have a quality that cannot be compared. Examples: complete, dead. It is said they are non-gradable and they do not normally have comparative and superlative forms. If something is complete then this is an absolute quality. It cannot be more complete. This is impossible. If a person is dead, he cannot be deader. Some Adjectives can be gradable and non-gradable depending on how they are used. (old, common) Example: He is a very old man (gradable). Last week I bought this old house (non-gradable).

#### 2.2.3.2 *Forming noun to adjective*

Some adjectives are formed from nouns and others are formed from verbs. The word forms are from Latin, Greek and other languages. There is no simple rule for adding suffixes, but there are common patterns.

#### 2.2.3.3 *Forming verb to adjective*

Another way to form an adjective is to add a suffix to a verb form. The suffix is the part added to the end of a word

### 2.2.4 Order

When a number of adjectives are used together, the order depends on the function of the adjective. The usual order is quantity, value/opinion, size, temperature, age, shape, color, origin, material, and purpose.

### 3 METHOD

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design was quasi-experimental design with the non-equivalent control group (Bordens & Abbott, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2012; Mills & Gay, 2012). It consisted of an experimental class and a control class. The experimental and the control group were given pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores depended on the success of the treatment that investigated the use of systemic approach influences the students' mastery on adjective for the second-semester students at English Department in one of the private universities in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The researchers used vocabulary tests as an instrument for collecting data. After that, the data were analyzed statistically using SPPSS program.

#### 3.2 Procedure

The procedure of teaching adjective by using a systemic approach was applied as follows:

Pre-activity (+15 minutes)

- Introducing a systemic approach and adjective as the materials.
- Asking the students about their prior knowledge about the material.

Whilst activity (+45 minutes)

- The researcher explained material by showing the diagram in figure 1 and 2.
- The researcher taught adjective by using a systemic approach. The first meeting, the researcher taught the kind of adjective by showing the diagram as seen below.

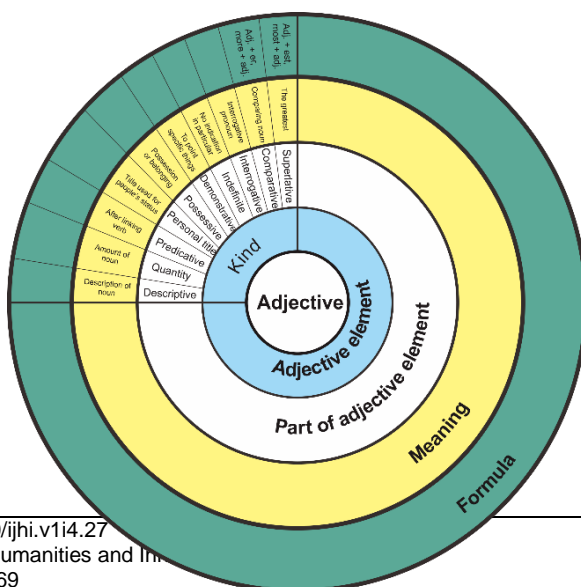


Figure 3 Diagram of Kind of Adjective

The second meeting of the treatment, the researcher taught the use of adjective by showing the diagram below.

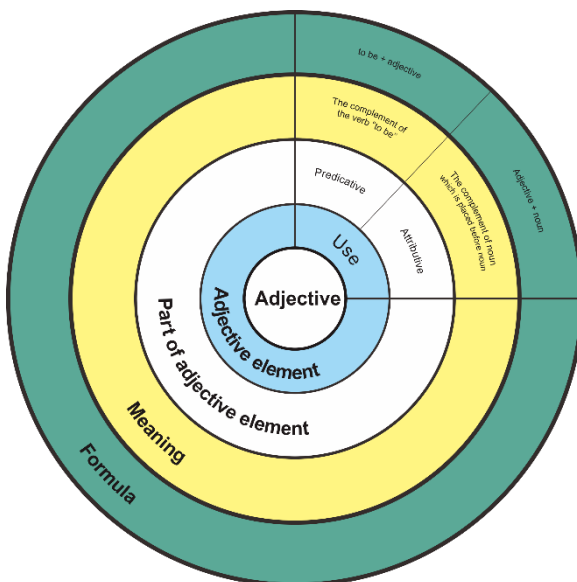


Figure 4 Diagram of Use of Adjective

The third meeting of the treatment, the researcher taught the form of the adjective

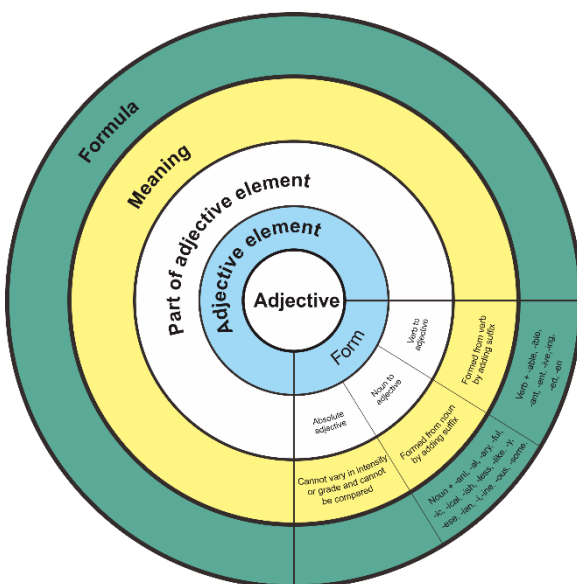


Figure 5 Diagram of Form of Adjective

The fourth meeting of the treatment, the researcher taught the order of adjective. Students were guided to understand the material by showing the diagram below.

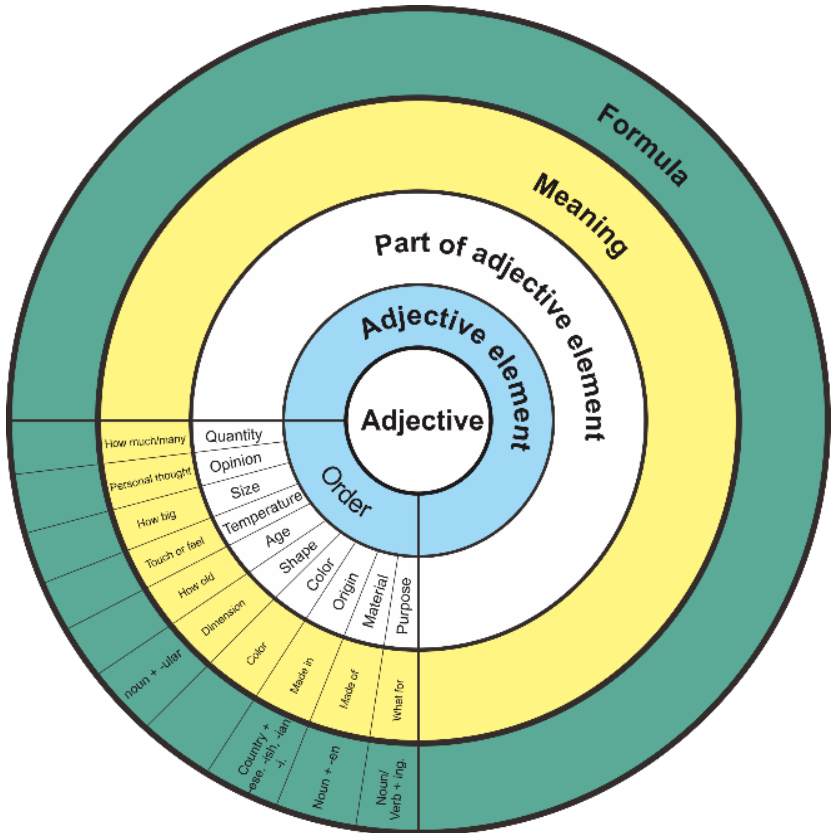


Figure 6. Diagram of the order of adjective

- The researcher observed the students' activities working in the class.
  - The researcher gave a chance to students to ask an unclear explanation.
- Post activity (+ 20 minutes)
- The researcher gave a chance to the students to give a comment or to ask a question about the material.
  - The researcher informed the students what they had done.



#### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research deal with students' score in post-test and pre-test for the both the control group and experimental group, the score of an independent t-test, and the score of analysis of variance. The findings are described as follows:

##### 4.1 Pair Test of Control Group

The paired result of each element of the adjective in the control group can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Control-group pair test

Adjective Elements	Test	Mean	N	Mean differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Kind	Pretest	39.35	31	12.903	6.914	30	.000
	Posttest	52.26	31				
Use	Pretest	59.35	31	4.839	4.728	30	.000
	Posttest	64.19	31				
Form	Pretest	41.29	31	12.581	9.059	30	.000
	Posttest	53.87	31				
Order	Pretest	39.68	31	8.387	5.429	30	.000
	Posttest	48.06	31				

Table 1 shows that the mean score of kind of adjective in pretest was 39.35 while the mean score of posttest was 52.26, so the mean difference was 12.903. The t-test result was 6.914 and the sig. (2-tailed) was .000. The data tells us that there is a significant improvement in student adjective mastery especially the kind of adjective. Significant improvement of the use of the adjective is also seen from the table. The mean score of pretest was 59.35 while the mean posttest score was 64.19, so the mean difference was 4.839. The t-test result was 4.728 and the result of the sig. (2-tailed) was .000. A form of adjective's pretest mean score in the table was 41.29 while the posttest means score was 53.87, so the mean difference was 12.581. The t-test result was 9.059 and the sig. (2-tailed) was .000. The data shows that there is a significant improvement of students' mastery of adjective especially the form of the adjective. Another significant improvement can be seen from the table is the order of adjective. The mean score of pretest was 39.68 while the mean score of the posttest was 48.06, it means that the mean score difference was 8.387. The t-test result was 5.429 and the sig. (2-tailed) Score was .000. Based on the data from the table, the researcher concluded that there was a significant improvement in adjective mastery of control group students after applying lecturing method in teaching four elements of the adjective. The most significant improvement was the kind of adjective.

##### 4.2 Pair test of Experimental Group

The paired mean score of the elements of adjective, the result of the t-test, and the significance of the experimental group show some different results. They can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Experimental-group pair test

Adjective Elements	Test	Mean	N	Mean differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Kind	Pretest	35.81	31	27.419	12.077	30	.000
	Posttest	63.23	31				
Use	Pretest	50.97	31	24.516	9.678	30	.000

Form	Posttest	75.48	31	24.323	9.627	30	.000
	Pretest	54.06	31				
Order	Posttest	84.52	31	33.548	15.584	30	.000
	Pretest	50.97	31				

The mean score of kind of adjective in pretest based on Table 2 was 35.81 while the mean score of posttest was 63.23, so the mean difference was 27.419. The t-test result was 12.077 and the sig. (2-tailed) was .000. The data tells us that there is a significant improvement in student adjective mastery especially the kind of adjective. The use of the adjective is also shown significant improvement. It can be seen from the table. The mean score of pretest was 50.97 while the mean posttest score was 75.48, so the mean difference was 24.516. The t-test result was 9.678 and the result of the sig. (2-tailed) was .000. Based on the table above, the form of adjective's pretest mean score was 54.06 while the posttest mean score was 78.39, so the mean difference was 24.323. The t-test result was 9.627 and the sig. (2-tailed) result was .000. The data shows that there is significant improvement of students' mastery of adjective especially the order of adjective. The table also shows significant improvement of the order of adjective. The mean score of pretest was 50.97 while the mean score of the posttest was 84.52, it means that the mean score difference was 33.548. The t-test result was 15.584 and the sig. (2-tailed) score was .000. Based on the data from the table, the researcher concluded that generally students' mastery of adjective of the experimental group was significantly improved after applying systemic approach method in teaching four elements of the adjective. The most significant improvement was the order of adjective.

### 4.3 Independent t-test

After applying a different treatment to control group and experimental group, the data was analyzed to know the mean score, standard deviation, mean difference, and the significance. The result can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Independent t-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean difference	t	df	Sig.
Control	31	54.84	5.074	20.839	12.991	60	.000
Experimental	31	75.68	7.368				

Table 3 shows that both the control group and the experimental group had 31 samples (N) for each of them. The mean score of the control group was 54.84 with 5.074 standard deviations while the mean score of experimental was 75.68 with 7.368 standard deviations. It means that the result of the mean difference between control group and experimental group was 20.839. The score of t-test was 12.991 and the score of sig. was .000. The data shows significant improvement that the mean score of the experimental group is bigger than the score of the control group ( $75.68 > 54.84$ ). The significance (t) result was bigger than t-table ( $12.991 > 1.671$ ) it indicated significance. The indication of significance can be seen from the score sig. that is smaller than alpha ( $.000 < 0.05$ ).

### 4.4 Analysis of Variance

The analysis of variance (Anova) is to see the paired mean score of the elements, the result of the t-test, and the significance. The statistic can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Variance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6730.903	1	6730.903	168.767	.000
Within Groups	2392.968	60	39.883		
Total	9123.871	61			

By Table 4 above, the score of F was 168.767. The data also showed that the sig. Value = .000 which is smaller than alpha ( $.000 < \alpha (0.05)$ ) it means that there was significant difference score of students' mastery of adjective in the experimental group. Based on the data above we can conclude that H1 was accepted and H0 was rejected for this research.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Applying a systemic approach to teaching adjective for the second-semester students majoring in English Education can develop their mastery of adjective. Based on the students' result either an experimental or control group before and after treatment, the researcher analyzed the significance score of the elements of the adjective. The significant score of kind of adjective in the experimental group was 12.077 while the score of the control group was 6.914. The significant score of use of the adjective in the experimental group was 9.678 while the score of the control group was 4.839. The significant score of the form of the adjective in the experimental group was 9.627 while the score of the control group was 9.059. The significant score of the order of adjective in the experimental group was 15.584 while the score of the control group was 5.429. It showed that the order of adjective had the highest insignificant difference. The data also indicated that the main difference score between experimental group and control group was 20.839. The developments of students' understanding can be also seen from the result of t-test where the score was 12.991 that was higher than the score of t-table ( $12.991 > 1.671$ ). Besides, to determine whether the students' mastery of adjective improved or not, the researcher used analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. The result can be seen on the table 4.12 the score of F was 168.767 that indicated a significant score of improvement, H1 was accepted and H0 was rejected. The data also showed that the sig. Value = .000 which is smaller than alpha ( $.000 < \alpha (0.05)$ ) it means that there was a significant improvement in students' mastery of adjective.

For a suggestion, this research can be used as an additional reference for lecturers in the academic environment of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is suggested to use a systemic approach to teaching adjectives to help students understanding adjectives faster and better. The systemic approach helps the students to master and comprehend adjectives because they are taught all interrelated elements related to adjectives. Also, this approach makes the students' more active in the classroom (Akib, Haryanto, Iskandar, & Patak, 2018) and motivates them to study English (Nair, 2011), especially adjectives. The students are supposed to learn adjective as one of the alternatives to add their vocabulary and to learn about nine inter-related elements namely use, usage, synonym, antonym, meaning, pronunciation, spelling, collocation, and order (Sannon, 2004). This study can lead other researcher's research with the same approach to use it in the different elements of English to know whether or not systemic approach theory can be a function to improve students' ability in another element of English or the different subject.

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