VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY UNDERGRADUATE INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Vocabulary is crucial in all language acquisitions, whether the first language, second language or foreign language. Due to the importance of vocabulary, a comprehensive language learning strategy is needed. The present study investigates the various vocabulary learning strategies used by undergraduate Indonesian students majoring English Language Education Study Program in learning new words. Descriptive qualitative was applied as a research method to find out the objective of the research. The techniques of data collection used in this research were observation and questionnaire. The data analysis used in this research was the interactive model analysis from Miles and Huberman that consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The results showed that there were seventeen strategies used by the students in learning vocabulary.

Keywords: *Language acquisition, vocabulary learning strategies*

Abstrak

Kosakata sangat penting dalam semua pemerolehan bahasa, baik bahasa pertama, bahasa kedua, atau bahasa asing. Karena pentingnya kosakata, diperlukan strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang komprehensif. Penelitian ini menyelidiki berbagai strategi pembelajaran kosakata yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa Program sarjana di Indonesia jurusan Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dalam mempelajari kata-kata baru. Deskriptif kualitatif digunakan sebagai metode penelitian untuk mengetahui tujuan penelitian. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah observasi dan angket. Analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis model interaktif dari Miles dan Huberman yang terdiri dari reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada tujuh belas strategi yang digunakan siswa dalam mempelajari kosakata. Setiap siswa memiliki strategi sendiri-sendiri yang lebih cocok untuk mereka dalam mempelajari kosakata agar dapat meningkatkan penguasaan kosakatanya dengan lebih mudah.

Kata Kunci: *Pemerolehan bahasa, strategi pembelajaran kosakata*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition has a very important role in English language learning. McCarthy (1992) states that meaningful communication cannot take place without having sufficient knowledge of vocabulary. Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency which serves much of the basis for how learners listen, speak, read and write (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Vocabulary is the key in all language skills. In foreign language learning, vocabulary learning is one of the essential parts as the meanings of new words which are very often emphasized, especially in classroom. It is also central to language teaching and is strongly crucial to a language learner (Alqahtani, 2015). As one of the knowledge parts in language, vocabulary plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language (Cameron, 2001). The learners must have sufficient vocabulary when they are learning a new language (Wilkins in Thornbury, 2004). In learning English, if they have a lot of knowledge about English vocabulary, they can comprehend the language well. The more people master vocabulary the more they can speak, write, read and listen.

Davies and Pearse (2000) suggest that vocabulary in communication situations is usually more essential than grammar as it is annoying for language users when they cannot communicate effectively due to the lack of needed vocabulary, therefore, insufficient vocabulary knowledge will lead the learners to difficulties in communication. In learning vocabulary, learners have to put certain amount of efforts which Nation (2000) describes as 'learning burden'. According to him, different words have different weight of learning burdens and each aspect of knowing a word may contribute to the learning

burden. In learning English vocabulary, students have to be educated and taught the strategies for learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategies are important to students' vocabulary knowledge in learning a foreign language by helping students easier to understand new words who are unfamiliar. Students have to be persuaded to use appropriate strategies in order to learn vocabulary. Every student has his/her own best strategy which is appropriate for him/her in learning English vocabularies. Thus, teachers have an important role to decrease the students' learning burden by guiding them to use appropriate strategies.

Vocabulary learning strategies are particular strategies that are employed by the students only to acquire vocabulary. There are many classifications that are created by researchers on vocabulary learning strategies. Mostly the classification of vocabulary learning strategies is generally taken from language learning strategies despite there are some additions in the list of the strategies. It is empowered by statement of Pacivic Takac (2008) says that lists of vocabulary learning strategies are usually a part of general strategies classifications which show that many multipurpose strategies may be used in vocabulary learning.

The first classification is proposed by Gu and Johnson (1996). Gu and Johnson employed strategies that are existed in Oxford's language learning strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive, and memory strategies. Then, Gu and Johnson created one strategy, namely activation strategies, to be added in their taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. It means there are four strategies that are proposed by Gu and Johnson. The second classification is recommended by Nation (2001). Nation created his own classification of vocabulary learning strategies into three groups: planning, sources, and processes. Planning vocabulary learning strategies involve deciding on where to focus attention, how to focus the attention, and how often to give attention to the item

The last classification is recommended by Schmitt. Schmitt (2000) states that commonly used vocabulary learning strategies seem to be simple memorization, repetition, and taking notes on vocabulary. The three of the used vocabulary learning strategies are existed in the Oxford's classification of language learning strategies as well. In other words, the classification that is proposed by Schmitt refers to Oxford's taxonomy despite there is a new category of specific strategies that is added in the list of vocabulary learning strategies, namely determination strategies. Schmitt (2000) concludes Schmitt's classification of vocabulary learning from fifty-eight strategies into thirty-one strategies. All of the strategies are divided into two main groups that are used to find the meaning of a new word and to empower knowledge of the new word when detecting it again.

METHOD

This is descriptive qualitative study. The informants are the English Language Education Study Program students from first semester of vocabulary in use class in Khairun University. There were 22 students who involved as the sample. The techniques of data collection used in this research were observation and questionnaire. Observation which was used in this research was passive participation observation. The observation was conducted by note taking in the classroom. The questionnaire was conducted by translating the questions in the informants' mother tongue. The questionnaire was given through Google form. The data analysis used in this research was the interactive model analysis from Myles and Huberman (1984) which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

DISCUSSION

This research aims to find the learning strategies that the students used in learning new words. Based on the interview and questionnaire, it is found that there were seventeen strategies used in learning vocabulary used by the students. The findings in this research are concluded in two tables. Table 1 aims to show the kind of strategies which are used by the students in improving vocabulary

and table 2 aims to show the rank of the strategies which are used by the students in vocabulary learning.

Table 1: *Kinds of Strategy Used by Students*

The Kinds of Strategies Used
Analyzing part of speech
Guessing meaning from textual context
Using a dictionary
Asking teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word
Asking classmates for meaning
Studying and practicing meaning in a group
Connecting word to a previous personal experience
Connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms
Studying the spelling of a word
Saying new word aloud when studying
Verbal repetition
Written repetition
Keeping a vocabulary notebook
Using English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)
Testing oneself with other tests
Skipping or passing new word
Continuing to study word over time

Based on table 1 we can see that there are seventeen strategies used by the students in learning vocabulary. Each student has his/her own strategies which are more appropriate for them to improve their vocabulary mastery more easily.

Table 2: *Number of Strategy Used*

The Kinds of Strategies Used	Number of Users
Analyzing part of speech	22
Guessing meaning from textual context	22
Using a dictionary	22
Asking teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word	10
Asking classmates for meaning	17
Studying and practicing meaning in a group	15
Connecting word to a previous personal experience	20
Connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms	18
Studying the spelling of a word	22
Saying new word aloud when studying	22
Verbal repetition	22
Written repetition	22
Keeping a vocabulary notebook	20
Using English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)	22
Testing oneself with other tests	16
Skipping or passing new word	8
Continuing to study word over time	14

Table 2 shows that *analyzing part of speech, guessing meaning from textual context, using a dictionary, studying the spelling of a word, saying new word aloud when studying, verbal repetition, written repetition and using English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)* are the strategies which are most frequently used in learning vocabulary. There were seventeen strategies which identified through the observation and the questionnaire. These strategies are divided by two parts, namely observable strategies and unobservable strategies. The questionnaire is needed to find out the kind of strategies which are unobservable in the classroom. The application of *analyzing part of speech, using a dictionary, asking teacher, asking classmates, studying and practicing in group, connecting word to synonyms and antonyms, studying the spelling word, saying word aloud, verbal repetition, and keep a vocabulary notebook* is included in the observable strategies, and the rest of the application of the

strategies is unobservable strategies. Oxford (1990:194) states that "there are many language learning strategies that cannot be observed". *Guessing meaning*, *connecting word to previous experience*, *written repetition*, *using English-language media*, *testing oneself with other tests*, *skipping or passing new word*, and *continuing to study over time* are included as kinds of unobservable strategies in this research because they refer to mental process and are invisible.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions, it could be found that there were seventeen strategies used by the students in learning vocabulary. There were observable and unobservable strategies. Some unobservable strategies which were used by the students in improving vocabulary, namely *guessing meaning, connecting word to previous experience, written repetition, using English-language media, testing oneself with other tests, skipping or passing new word, and continue to study the word over time*. These strategies are unobservable because they refer to mental process and invisible. The application of using English-language media actually could be observed but this strategy was not found during observation in the classroom so that it is included in unobservable strategy in this research. In addition, the factors which influence the learning process in this research were variables and could not be avoided. The factors of teaching and learning setting, environment, culture, learning style, and motivation which used by each student in this research are greatly influenced the strategy used and strategy choice of the students in vocabulary learning. Whereas, the application of *analyzing part of speech, using a dictionary, asking teacher, asking classmates, studying and practicing in group, connecting word to synonyms and antonyms, studying the spelling word, saying word aloud, verbal repetition, and keep a vocabulary notebook* are included in the observable strategies. Each student has his/her own strategies which are more appropriate for them in learning vocabulary in order he/she can improve his/her vocabulary mastery.

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