

STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING VOCABULARIES OF THE 8TH GRADE STUDENTS AT MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH ZAINUL HASAN GENGONG

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Abstract: The current study addresses two objectives: 1) knowing the intensity of strategy use in learning vocabulary, 2) describing how high and low achiever use strategy to solve possible problem. This study applied mix method approach. The participants of this study were 25 students of Islamic Junior High School Zainul Hasan Genggong. They were asked to complete a questionnaire that contains 50 statement about vocabulary learning strategy taken from Murdewi (2021). The strategies were determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive. The statistical result utilizing SPSS indicated that overall strategy were at moderate level, social strategy was confirmed as the highest mean score 3.22 and metacognitive strategy was at the lowest mean score 2.89. In relation to the strategy use, the findings showed that both high and low achiever used different strategies in learning vocabulary.

Keywords: Learning strategies, vocabulary skill, high and low achiever

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is an important aspect of language learning that should master by students. Vocabulary learning strategies play a critical role in students' vocabulary development. This is in line with Brown (1992), who stated that vocabulary is the foundation for constructing language and plays a critical role in communication. Further, a study which was conducted by Abidah, Kurniasih & Ni'mah (2019) stated that the level to which student's vocabulary was mastered influenced and positively correlated with their writing abilities, although not very strongly. As a result, low vocabulary scores are likely to have a negative effect on students writing scores. It happens because students don't have enough vocabulary, they sometimes spell words incorrectly while writing sentences, and they have become used to using improper grammar. Its mean that vocabulary. It implies that vocabulary is an essential aspect of learning English.

Another study by Gardner (2010) who defines vocabulary not only as a word's meaning, but also as how people use and store it, how they associate one word with another, and how people use these words. Vocabulary is an individual's library of words that they use; it also describes how sentences should be put together. Vocabulary has a real impact on your English proficiency. Vocabulary is one of the essential components of any language class because the more words they know and understand, the more they will understand when reading, speaking and writing English.

Learning strategies will help students in learning vocabulary. Schmitt (2000) stated that vocabulary learning strategies can motivate students and hold their interest while they are learning a language in a way that will enhance their vocabulary growth. Then, in another statement from Cahyono (2008), who claimed that active learning strategies should be used to acquire vocabulary since they help learners understand the meanings of new words, acquire more words, and effectively use words in communication. Therefore, using efficient strategies to learn vocabulary will help students improve their vocabulary, which will then affect their language skills.

Students needed several strategies to facilitate them in learning vocabulary, as Oxford (1990) shows learning strategies applied by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective more efficient and transferable. Schmitt (2000) also states that vocabulary learning strategies can empower learners' vocabulary development. Vocabulary should be learned by applying active strategies as it allows learners to understand unfamiliar word concepts, acquire a better word count, and successfully use words for communication purposes (Cahyono:2008). Therefore, the use of effective strategies in vocabulary learning will contribute positively to the development of students' vocabulary, which in turn will affect their language skills.

The processes language learners take to learn new English words are known as vocabulary learning strategies. As Schmitt (2000) states, Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) are designed to assist learners in learning by facilitating and optimizing vocabulary learning to achieve optimal goals. VLS empowers learners and promotes language in ways that enhance their vocabulary development. It can hold a learner's attention while they are learning. Schmitt created a comprehensive inventory of strategies for learning new words. According to Schmitt (1997), while many descriptions of vocabulary learning strategy have been proposed, there are five

subcategories in learning vocabulary strategy: determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive.

The ability to master vocabulary is necessary for language learners. The learners will undoubtedly experience some English-language issues if they struggle to understand it. Students' difficulties are conditions in which the students face the problem. Students' mistakes and errors during the learning process will show this. In the process of learning vocabulary itself, students face some difficulties. Thornbury (2002) explains that there are factors that make vocabulary difficult to be studied: pronunciation, spelling, length and complexity, grammar, range, connotation and idiomaticity, and meaning.

This study departed from the problem of the junior high school students that have limited vocabulary in understand the context of the text by knowing the meaning of the vocabulary. The students will find the difficulty in mastering speaking, reading, writing and listening if they have limited vocabulary. The researcher believes that when students used strategy in learning vocabulary, it can help both students and teacher in learning activities. The goal of the learning is vocabulary skill in line with the function of vocabulary learning strategies is to support students in learning vocabulary. The researcher planned to identify the intensity of the use of learning strategy in learning vocabulary and the difference between high and low achiever in the use of learning strategy in learning vocabulary.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed mix-method approach. There were two types of data collection and analysis. The first stage involved collecting data through questionnaire sheet which answered the first-research question. This was followed by the second stage, which involved conducting interview with high and low achievers to answer the second-research question.

The first instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 25 students. The questionnaire was adopted from Murdewi (2021) which consists of 50 statements about vocabulary learning strategies. The participants chose their answers based on their preferences. To indicate which propositions they preferred, the researcher applied the Likert scale with a determination score of 1 to 5 (Santoso, 2003). The range of the Likert scale consist of 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, and 5= Always.

The last instrument was interview. The instrument used to accumulate the data as entire and valid as possible. The interview was a plan for recording, measuring, or controlling,

especially as part of the plan actively the tools used for this research were the participants are asked to answer the question that was given by the researcher. This case is knowing how high and low students use strategies and solve problems in learning vocabulary. The researcher determined high and low achievers by using students' daily grades based at school. Thus, the students who were interviewed were 4 students. This study used semi-structured interview and the questions are related to what student's strategy in learning vocabulary. The interview session was conducted one week after the researcher collected the data of the respondents. Before the interview begins, the researcher prepared the recorder to record participants' answer.

Data Analysis

The data questionnaire utilized descriptive quantitative research for data analysis. the researcher calculated the mean score of students' responses. The researcher used Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 24 to calculate the mean score. The result of the questionnaire was transformed into descriptive statistics. After determining the highest mean of strategies, all item was reviewed to identify which item was the most commonly used strategy in learning vocabulary. According to Oxford(1990), the intensity of the use of the strategy is interpreted as being a high if the mean score of the strategy is between 3.45 and 5.00, medium if it is between 2.45 and 3.44 and low if it is between 1.00 and 2.44.

Furthermore, to analyze an interview section, the researcher transcribed the information of the interview into a dialogue-written form. In transcribing the interview, the data were translated and described in English to address the research questions and gain a better understanding of the learners' strategies. Then, the analytical conclusions have been drawn to evolve and describe the data more clearly and definitively based on the learners' answers.

FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher presented the findings of the students' data of vocabulary learning strategies used by students through a questionnaire and how high and low achiever used strategies to solve problem through an interview. The participants were twenty-five learners of 8th grade students of Islamic Junior High School Zainul Hasan Genggong.

Findings from the Questionnaire related to “To what extend do the students use strategies in learning vocabularies?”

In this part of the research, the researcher used descriptive method to evaluate how often each learning strategy was used to learn vocabulary in English. The result of descriptive analysis of the use of each strategy category as well as the overall strategy were shown in table 1.

Table 1 Intensity in the use of vocabulary learning strategies

Strategy Category	Mean	Frequency	Rank
Social	3.22	Moderate	1
Determination	3.21	Moderate	2
Memory	3.11	Moderate	3
Cognitive	3.08	Moderate	4
Metacognitive	2.89	Moderate	5
Overall strategies	3.10	Moderate	

The intensity of strategies used to learn vocabulary skills is shown in the following table, which was examined in terms of both each strategy and overall strategy. The table shows the overall strategies used at a moderate level ($M = 3.10$) by the students. This indicates that students sometimes used all the reported strategies. According to a further analysis of the five strategies used, social strategies were used the most often, with a mean score of 3.22. With a mean score of 2.89, metacognitive methods were used the least frequently in the interim. This indicates that the students used the social strategy more often than the other five strategies when applying the strategies to their learning of vocabulary.

Findings from the Interview related to “How high and low achiever used strategy to solve the possible problem in learning vocabulary?”

The interview was conducted face to face and recorded. This interview employed a semi-structured interview consisting of six interview questions involving for two high and two low achievers. The participants used pseudonyms as follows: P1, P2, P3, and Person 4. The focused data from the interview was used to gather information and address research questions pertaining to each individual’s result regarding the use of the strategy to solve possible problem in learning vocabulary. The descriptions of the interview results, including each participant responses to the six interview questions, were explained below.

Question 1 “How important is strategy in learning vocabulary?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 and P2 said that:

“I think the strategy in learning vocabulary is very important”

P3 and P4 added:

“I guess students really need strategy in learning because it is an important thing in learning vocabulary”.

Based on the learners’ answers, the researcher concluded that both high and low achievers equally perceive that the use of strategy in learning vocabulary is important.

Question 2 “What strategies do you use to learn vocabulary?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 and P3 said:

“I usually used social strategy in learning vocabulary”

P2 stated:

“I choose cognitive strategy to learn vocabulary”

P4 added:

“Memory strategy is a strategy that I usually use in learning vocabulary”

Based on the learners’ answers the high achiever used cognitive strategy, while low achiever used memory strategy. Surprisingly, both high and low students used the social strategy.

Question 3 “Why do you use these strategies in learning vocabulary?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 said that:

“Social strategy helps me to not waste time having to open a dictionary or book to look for the meaning of vocabulary”

P2 explained that:

“I used cognitive strategy because it helps me to added new vocabulary by write down it on my book”

P3 stated that:

“I prefer social strategy because it is easier than other strategies”

P4 added:

“I choose memory strategy because it helps more during exam”

Based on the learners’ answers, the researcher found that high and low achievers choose different strategies but it helps the students in learning vocabulary.

Question 4 “What benefits can you get after using learning strategies?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 explained that:

“I used social strategy to make it easier for me to discuss with my friends and make me more efficient than having to open a dictionary to know the meaning of the vocabulary”

P2 stated that:

“I used cognitive strategies because I like to write down the vocabulary that I have learned, so that I can learn it again”

P3 said that:

“I chose to use social strategies because I could ask the teacher and know how to pronounce the vocabulary”

P4 added:

“I use memory strategies because I usually memorize vocabulary and it make me easier to remember the vocabulary”

Based on the learners’ answers, the researcher found that both high and low achievers use strategy with the aim help the students in learning vocabulary in their own way.

Question 5 “What problem do you face while studying vocabulary?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 stated that:

“The difficulty I faced when learning vocabulary is that the writing and pronunciation are different. When my teacher said the word “white”, it sounds like “w-a-i-t”, so it makes me difficult to understand the vocabulary”

P2 said:

“The problem I found was that the writing and the pronunciation were not the same”.

P3 added:

“The difficulty I had in learning vocabulary is the difference between pronounce and writing, so it makes me difficult to know the meaning”

P4 explained that:

“The problem I faced when learning vocabulary was my inability to understand the writing and pronunciation because it was different”

Based on the learners’ answers, both high and low achievers faced the same problem; pronunciation, so it makes it difficult for them to know the vocabulary meaning.

Question 6 “How do you solve this problem?”.

Participants’ statements were explained in the excerpts below:

P1 explained that:

“The way I do to overcome this problem is I usually write a way to read by asking the teacher”

P2 added:

“The way I overcome this difficulty is I keep in mind the way pronounced the vocabulary while I write it”

P3 said that:

“I usually invite my friend to discuss the material when I find it difficult to learn about vocabulary”

P4 stated that:

“I usually ask the teacher when I don’t understand about the vocabulary”

Based on the learners’ answers, the researcher concluded that there are differences between high and low achievers in solving their problems. The high achievers tend to solve the problem through their own effort, such as writing how to pronounce and also note down the vocabulary they got, so they can learn it again. Meanwhile, low achievers tend to be effortless in solving their problems, they choose instant ways by asking other people without trying to find their own way.

DISCUSSION

Having been stated earlier, this current study was aimed to knowing the use of strategies for learning English vocabulary by the 8th grade students of the Islamic Junior High School Zainul Hasan Genggong and how high and low achiever use strategy to solve possible problem. The statistical result on the intensity of the strategy use showed that the 8th grade students of the Islamic Junior High School Zainul Hasan Genggong applied overall vocabulary learning strategies. They are determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and metacognitive strategy. In addition, it can be seen that social strategy was the students' most commonly used strategy in vocabulary learning because it had the highest mean score of 3.22. Besides, the Metacognitive Strategy category was the least used vocabulary learning strategy with the lowest mean score of 2.89. The mean score of overall vocabulary learning strategies implemented by the 8th grade students in Islamic Junior High School was 3.10. It implies that the students implemented the vocabulary learning strategy suggested by Schmitt (1997).

Students can use social strategies to get help from classmates, teachers, and native speakers in understanding a subject. Additionally, as they learn new vocabulary in English, they understand the definition of translating it. Students made an effort to engage with other students in the teacher's assigned material discussion. It was therefore claimed that students frequently employ social strategies in their learning. This finding also supports a previous study conducted by Permatasari (2021), who also identified the social strategy as the subcategory most frequently used by students. The result of this study also showed that the metacognitive strategy was the lowest mean strategy and was at a moderate level. The students at MTs. Zainul Hasan Genggong may not be acceptable to use metacognitive strategy because they are within the background of the Islamic boarding school, so they don’t have the media needed for metacognitive strategy

Furthermore, the result shows that high and low achievers used three types of vocabulary. The high achievers one used cognitive strategy, while the low achievers one used memory

strategy and another high and low achiever both used social strategy. The researcher found the differences between high and low achievers using strategies and solving problems in learning vocabulary. High and low achievers use different strategies in learning vocabulary. Besides, high and low achievers have different ways to solve their problems. High achievers tend to look for their own way to overcome the difficulty in learning vocabulary. Meanwhile, low achievers tend to use an instant way by asking other people to solve their problems. The result provides validity to the theory that underachievers may be miss-allocating effort to parts that are not necessary, with no visible or beneficial impact on their learning. According to Green and Oxford (1995), learning practices employed by low achiever students may not be ineffective overall, but they may not support their learning as well as they could. The strategies employed by low achiever do not always imply that their strategies are poor or incorrect. Rather, it might indicate that to increase their success, low achievers would need to incorporate more and more of the strategies employed by high achievers without having to change their repertory or end of the strategies they employ.

All in all, the result of this research explained that students categorized as high-achiever had their own typical way of using strategy and solving their problems in learning vocabulary. Using strategies to acquire knowledge is crucial, especially when learning a language. Strategy is an individual's approach to a task, according to Schumaker and Deshler (2006), as referenced in Protheroe and Clarke, (2008). As a result, it involves the way that person acts and thinks when organizing, carrying out, and completing the assignment as well as the results. Therefore, vocabulary learning strategies may have an impact on the educational results of learners, who may be categorized into high and low achievers. Some students were unable to advance their English proficiency due to various challenges encountered when acquiring vocabulary. Even though they received identical teaching from the same teacher, some students, on the other hand, gain English more quickly and easily than others.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research examined the findings about the extent to which strategies are used and how high and low achievers solve problems in learning vocabulary. According to the first results of the intensity investigation, the general strategies used were at a moderate level. On the other hand, students used the social strategies the most, while they used the metacognitive strategies the smallest amount. It can be drawn that all five primary categories – social, cognitive,

determination, memory, and metacognitive strategies – are used at the highest mean ($M = 3.22$) with social strategy and the lowest mean with metacognitive strategies ($M = 2.89$).

The findings of the research indicate that high achievers and low achievers used different strategies. The high achiever students preferred social and cognitive strategies while low achiever students preferred social and memory strategy realized that these methods assisted them in learning new vocabulary or terms. Some students chose the social strategy because they could use it to discuss it with a friend or even their teacher. On the other hand, students who chose the cognitive strategy did so because they believed that using strategies like taking notes, practicing, summarizing and analyzing, highlighting, copying their teachers, and looking up difficult words in dictionaries would help them improve their English language skills, particularly in vocabulary learning. Another side, a student's ability to learn can be impacted by using memory strategies. It can be said that learning vocabulary becomes easier when one uses their memory to retain certain facts.

There were some suggestions from the researcher: the students should be able to better understand their learning processes and strengthen their areas of weakness. Students need to comprehend how they learn best and how to facilitate their vocabulary strategy. The researcher expected that the teacher should recognize that different learners use different learning strategies since they learn differently depending on a variety of conditions. The researcher also hope that the future researchers will need to perform studies that are similar to this one and expand them to include other variables. In light of the sample population and research variable limits in this study, the authors expect that future researchers working on similar projects will be able to use a wider range of variables and participants.

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