

A STUDY ON THE LEARNING VOCABULARY DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES USED BY HIGH ACHIEVERS OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP

Ayu Wulandari^{*}, Yahya Alaydrus^{2*}, Durriyyatun Ni'mah^{3*}

1. Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Islam Malang

2&3 University of Islam Malang

Abstract: This article aims at knowing the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary and the strategies that used by the students to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. Adequate vocabulary will help students in mastering four skills in English which cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The research design of this study was descriptive qualitative. The population of this study was the higher achievers in English subject at seventh-grade students at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang. The instrument that used in this research was a questionnaire. The finding of the study showed that each student in the seventh grade of SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang has their own difficulties in learning vocabulary. However, the majority of the students have the same difficulties. They are the pronunciation of the word, the use of the word appropriately, understanding the meaning of the word, and the lack of their motivation in learning English. Each student also has their own strategies to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. They are memorization strategy, note-taking strategy, learning media strategy, and the guessing strategy

Keywords: Learning Vocabulary, Students, Difficulties, and Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English teaching and learning in Junior High School is using the curriculum 2013. According to Shafa (2014), the curriculum 2013 has the learning teaching principles that are; the teaching-learning process focuses on the students, students were encouraged to find out more than only get the explanation from the

teacher, learning and teaching use the various sources and media, learning and teaching process that focus in the application of the students' skills. Based on the researcher's observation at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang, some of the teaching principles above were applied in the English teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process is focused on the students, they are encouraged to be able to work together and solve the problems in a group. By using this learning model, students may be able to increase their skills in learning a language. There are four skills that must be integrated well to be successful in learning English which covers reading skill, listening skill, speaking skill and writing skill (Sadiku, 2015).

In the process of learning language, it cannot be denied that the students must have adequate vocabulary first. As in the curriculum 2013 for the seventh grade in Junior High School level, in core competence 3.5 showed that the students expected to be able to understand and mention the name of the animals, public buildings, and things in their surroundings. In other words, the students have to learn about the words, the meaning of the words, and the use of the words first to assist them in understanding the material in learning English. Adequate vocabulary will help students in mastering four skills in English (Asyiah, 2017).

The vocabulary learning may not be stated specifically in the curriculum 2013. However, Wulanjani (2016) stated that vocabulary learning and teaching should be combined into the four skills in English. Vocabulary contained in the print form such as reading and writing and in the oral form such as listening or speaking (Alizadeh, 2016). In other words, vocabulary learning was given to the students through English subjects that involved in reading, listening, speaking, or writing skills because vocabulary learning is integrated into four skills in English.

During the teaching and learning process, the students may face several difficulties. Based on the researcher's observation at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang, the researcher realized that most of the students claimed that they feel difficult to understand the teacher's explanation and most of them were also passive during English teaching-learning process. Hence, the researcher asked to the students concerning their difficulties in learning English. Some of the students stated that

they have difficulties in memorizing new words and spelling the words because the pronunciation of their first language and English are different.

Dealing with the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary, the researcher also asked to one of English teachers in SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang about the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. He stated that the problem was there was not enough time for the English teacher to only teach vocabulary to the students and also the lack of the students' motivation in learning vocabulary. These problems are related to khajloo's (2013) statement, there are some deficiencies in learning English subject in the school such as the low hours of English language teaching, the lack of students' interest and motivation in learning English and the lack of concentration in class.

In this case, students' success in learning vocabulary depends on how the students are aware and can solve their difficulties. If the students know what the difficulties that influence their vocabulary, it would be easy for them to find the solution to overcome their difficulties. The students may study hard to increase their vocabulary and they may also use the appropriate learning strategies in learning vocabulary. Learning strategies are the learners' technique, approaches, tactics, or specific behaviors that aims to make their learning more effective (Nie and Zhou, 2017). In other words, learning strategies are useful for the students to develop their ability in learning language. The learning strategies are needed to solve the students' difficulties that might help the students to succeed in learning a language. For this reason, the researcher is interested in conducting a research about the difficulties encountered and the strategies used by students in learning vocab accordingly, this research is entitled: A Study on the Learning Vocabulary Difficulties Encountered and Strategies Used by the High Achievers of the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang.

PREVIOUS STUDY

The researcher has found some previous studies that related with this research. The first study was conducted by Saniyah (2011). The title is "Students' Problems in Learning English Vocabulary". The researcher used descriptive research as the research design. The instruments used in this research are

interview and questionnaire. The results of this research showed that there are some problems in learning vocabulary that faced by English Department students of IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The errors generally grouped into some categories that were words classes, homonym, homophones, homograph, polysemy and word formations. Meanwhile, the common problem that found by the researcher is the students' problem in remembering the new words.

The second previous study is conducted by Ningrum (2015) entitled "Students' Problems in Learning Vocabulary at Eighth Grade in One of Junior High School in Jambi". The researcher used mix method research as the research design. The researcher used test and interview as the instruments of this research. The researcher only chooses 3 students who got the lowest score in the test. The findings of this research showed that the eighth grade students of SMP N 10 Jambi were categorized into enough categories.

Next study is conducted by Rohmatillah (2014) entitled "A Study on the Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary". In this research, the researcher used qualitative research. Interview and questionnaire were the instruments that used for gaining the data. The findings from this research showed that there are some difficulties that faced by the students from the first semester at IAIN Raden Intan Lampung; (1) most of the students find the difficulty in pronouncing the words, (2) they were also difficult in writing and spelling the words, (3) the other difficulty was the grammatical form of the words, (4) most of the students face the difficulties in choosing the appropriate meaning of the words and (5) they still confused in using the words correctly and, (6) most of the students were also confused when they found idiomatic of the words.

From those previous studies above, this research was different. This research was conducted to the seventh grade students that have high achievement in English subject. The researcher was used qualitative method to collect the data from the participants. In addition, the researcher also focused on the students' strategies in learning vocabulary.

METHOD

This research aims to investigate the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary and their strategies to overcome their difficulties. Therefore, the researcher used qualitative research as the research design. Bolderston (2006) stated that qualitative research is an approach which tries to get the insight about the social phenomena or the perspective of the participants' experience. This research design was used to get information about the difficulties faced by the students in learning vocabulary. Moreover, this research design also can explore the strategies that used by the students to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary.

The participants of this research were the higher achievers in English subjects from the seventh grade students at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang. The researcher only took the students who have higher achievement in English subject because the researcher wanted to find out the difficulties encountered and the strategies used by the higher achievers of English subject in learning vocabulary. With the recommendation of the English teachers, the researcher chooses the students who have an average score above 80. There are 33 out of 106 students were chosen as the participants of this study. They were from seventh grade level that is class A, class B, class C, and class D.

In this research, the researcher used questionnaire as the instruments of the research. This instrument was used to find out deeper information about the students' difficulties and the strategies used in learning vocabulary. Before conducting the research, the researcher asked permission to the school especially to the English teacher who teaches the seventh grade students. Then the researcher chose the participants who were proper to this study with the help of the assessment and recommendation from the teacher. After received permission from the teacher and got the participants, the researcher contacted the participants to explain about the purpose of the study and the questionnaire. Then, the researcher shared the questionnaire and explained about how to answer the questionnaire correctly.

After completing all the data collected from the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed the data. The qualitative analysis used three processes; data reducing, data displayed, and conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10).

Data Reducing was the process of selecting, abstracting and summarizing the data from the questionnaire in written notes or transcriptions. The researcher focused on the important data that had been collected, then the researcher categorized the data about the difficulties in learning vocabulary and about the strategies that used by the students.

After reducing the data, the researcher conducted Data Displayed. The researcher described the data into the description or narrative form. After that, the researcher also analyzed the data by using some expert theories.

The last step was Conclusion. The researcher drew the conclusion based on the data displayed. After that, the researcher presented the results of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research, the researcher analyzed the data using percentages. According to the results of the questionnaire, the researcher found that every student had his/her difficulties in learning vocabulary, but some of the students had the same problems that often faced during learning vocabulary. They were some main difficulties encountered by the students during learning vocabulary such as the different pronunciation of the students' first language with the pronunciation in English, the lack understanding of the words meaning, the lack understanding about how to use words appropriately, and the lack of the students' motivation in learning English vocabulary. These findings appropriate with the Afzal's (2019) statement that is the problems in learning vocabulary are in pronouncing the word, spelling the new word, using new word correctly, identifying grammatical structure of words and guessing the meaning of the word.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the researcher found that every student had his/her difficulties in learning vocabulary, but some of the students had the same problems that often faced during learning vocabulary. They

were some main difficulties encountered by the students during learning vocabulary such as the different pronunciation of the students' first language with the pronunciation in English, the lack understanding of the words meaning, the lack understanding about how to use words appropriately, and the lack of the students' motivation in learning English vocabulary.

Table 4.1 The Students' Difficulty in Pronouncing the Word

No	Question	Yes	Sometimes	No
1.	I understand how to pronounce the word correctly	33.3%	3.1%	63.6%
2.	I feel difficult to pronounce the words correctly	6.1%	87.9%	6.1%
3.	What problems do you think you face when you pronouncing the word?			

The percentage of question number 1-3 in table 4.1 showed that 63.3% of students felt difficult to pronounce the words. Based on the students' answers for question number 3, the result showed that most of the students claimed that they found the difficulties in pronouncing the word because of the different pronunciation of their first language with the pronunciation in English

Table 4.2 The Students' Difficulty in Deciding the Words' Meaning

No	Question	Yes	Sometimes	No
4.	I understand how to deciding the word meaning correctly	6.1%	87.9%	6.1%
5.	What problems you face when you want to decide the word meaning correctly?			

From the result of analysis in table 4.2, some of the students claimed that understanding the meaning of the word was the next difficulty that they faced in learning vocabulary. The data showed that 87.9% of students sometimes felt difficulty in understanding the meaning of the word. According to question number 5, the researcher found that the students felt difficult in understanding the meaning of the words because they felt unfamiliar with the word itself.

Table 4.3 The Students' Difficulty on the Use of Word

No	Question	Yes	No
6	I know how to use the words appropriately	27.3%	72.7%
7	I feel difficult to use the words appropriately	57.6%	42.4%
8	What problems you face when you want to use the word appropriately?		

In the table 4.3 showed 57.6% of students claimed that they felt difficulty in using the word appropriately. Next, in question number 8 the researcher found that some of the students were difficult in using the words because of the lack of students' understanding in using and pronouncing the words correctly

Table 4.4 Students' Strategies to Overcome the Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary

No	Question
9.	If you find difficulties in learning vocabulary, what learning strategies that you used to help you in learning English vocabulary more easily?

The data above showed that the students felt difficulty in learning vocabulary because of lack motivation in learning English vocabulary. Motivation is one of the important factors that play a vital role in learning English at all levels. Therefore in this research, the researcher only focused on the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary, but also on the strategy used by the students to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary.

There are some strategies used by the students to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. They are memorization strategy, note-taking strategy, learning media strategy, and guessing strategy. According to the SILL questionnaire number 9-15, the data showed that the memorization strategy was one of the strategies that students used to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. According to Sozler (2012), memorization strategy is the activity in remembering and regaining the new knowledge such as acronym, keywords, image, etc. In Table 4.5 - 4.9, the data showed that 54.5% of students often remembered the sound or image of the word. 15.2% of students often used the new vocabulary in a sentence, 30.3% of students often practiced their vocabulary, and 24.2% of students often reviewed their English lesson. From the data above,

the researcher found that all these learning techniques used by the students to make them easy in memorizing the new vocabulary.

Note taking strategy was also the strategy that students used in learning vocabulary, 33.3% students claimed that they often write their new vocabulary to make them easy in learning vocabulary. According to the research conducted by Bai (2018), note-taking strategy is favored strategy that used by most of the students.

Learning media strategy was one of the strategies that students used in learning vocabulary. Some of the students claimed that they improved their vocabulary through watching the English film and reading the English novel. Besides having fun, watching English movie can help students in learning grammar and introduce them in new vocabulary (Kusumaningrum, 2015).

Guessing strategy was the next strategy that students used in learning vocabulary, the data from Table 4.11 - 4.12 showed that students often guessed the meaning of the word in a context. According to Schmitt (2008), learning vocabulary through guessing was one of the preferable strategies. In other words, the guessing strategy can help the students in understanding the new words.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to find out the difficulties in learning vocabulary encountered and the strategies that used by high achiever at seventh grade students at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang. The research design of this study was Descriptive Qualitative research. The study was conducted to the seventh grade students at SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang. The participants were the higher achieving students in English subject. The instrument used in this research was questionnaire. There are 9 questions about the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary and 10 questions that asked to the students dealing with the strategy that they used to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary.

The data were analyzed by using percentage in a table and the result of the research showed that each student has his/ her own difficulties in learning vocabulary. However, majority of the students have the same difficulties in

pronouncing the words, using the words appropriately, understanding the meaning of the word, and lack of motivation in learning English. Those are proven by the results of data analysis which showed that most of the students claimed that they faced these difficulties in their process of learning vocabulary.

Next, the data showed that each student has his/ her own strategy to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. The strategy classified into some types. The first strategy that used by the students was memorization strategy. The students tried to memorize vocabulary in various ways such as remember the sound or image of the word, use the new vocabulary in a sentence, practice and review their English lesson. The second strategy was note taking strategy; the students claimed that this strategy could make the students easy in reviewing their new vocabulary. The next strategy was learning media strategy, since lack of motivation was one of the main problem in learning vocabulary, the utilized of media in learning process could be the best way in learning vocabulary process. According to the data, the students claimed that they preferred to watch movie or read novel in English version in order to help them in learning vocabulary. The last strategy that used by the students was the guessing strategy. The students claimed that they preferred to guess the meaning of the word in order to help them in understanding the meaning of the word.

According to the results of this study, the researcher expects that the result of this study can be the additional information for the future researchers who are interested to conduct the study in similar topic. The researcher also realized that this research has some limitations, therefore the researcher highly expects that the future researcher can explore more deeply about this topic.

Next, the researcher hopes that the result of this study can help the teachers to handle the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary, especially at seventh grade students in SMP Wahid Hasyim Malang.

The last, the researcher highly expects that the students can use the results of this study to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. The students

can also apply the various strategies found in this research in order to help them in learning vocabulary.

REFERENCES

- Afzal, N. (2019). *A Study on Vocabulary Learning Problems Encountered by BA English Majors at the University Level of Education*. 3 (10): 81-98.
- Alizadeh, I. (2016). Vocabulary Teaching Techniques: A Review of Common Practices. 1(1): 22-30.
- Asyiah, D. N. (2017). *The Vocabulary Teaching and Vocabulary Learning: Preceptions, Strategies, and Influences on Students' Vocabulary Mastery*. Unpublished Thesi. Bandung, Faculty of teacher training and education. Indonesia University of Education.
- Khajloo, A. I. (2013). *Problems in Teaching and Learning English for Students*. 7(3): 56-58.
- Kusumaningrum, M. A. D (2015). *Using English Movie as an Attractive Strategy to Teach Senior High School Students English as A Foreign Language*. 1(18): 11-18.
- Miles, M, B & Huberman, A, M (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book*. London: Sage Publications.
- Nie, Y & Zou, L (2017). *A study of vocabulary learning strategies used by excellent English learners*. 4, 101-106.
- Schmitt, N. (2008) 'Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning'. 12(3), pp. 329-363
- Sozler, S. (2012). *The Effect of Memory Strategy Training on Vocabulary Development of Austrian Secondary School Students*. 46: 1348 – 1352.
- Wulanjani, A. N. (2016). *The Use of Vocabulary-Games in Improving Children's Vocabulary in English Language Learning*. 12(1): 76-83.
- .