

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM MALANG

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Abstract: The research was addressed to measure the intensity of the use of strategy categories in learning English vocabulary and to compare the use of strategies in learning English vocabulary by high and low achievers. This study applied quantitative design in the form of ex-post-facto. The subjects of the study were 70 students of English Department at University of Islam Malang. They were asked to complete a questionnaire of strategies of learning vocabulary and test of vocabulary. The results of the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-sample t-test. This study showed that all strategy categories were used equally, and all the strategies were used at the high-frequency level. It was also identified that there was a significant difference in the use of vocabulary learning strategies through high and low achievers with the p-value (.003). It meant that H_a was accepted and (H_o) was rejected. Finally, it indicated that high achievers' use of vocabulary learning strategies was more intense than low achievers.

Key Words: Vocabulary, learning strategies, vocabulary proficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the essential elements of learning a foreign language. Students have to learn many new words to ease them in communicating with others. In line with this, Richards and Renandya (2002) found that the core component of language mastering is vocabulary, which plays a role as a basis for students to master their ability to listen, speak, read, and write English. Besides, Bai (2018) also maintained that vocabulary is the building block of a language. It has been used to compose sentences, express ideas and meanings, and, of course, as a key to communication. By mastering English language vocabulary, students were able to improve their four English language skills they are; reading, writing, listening and speaking. It meant that mastering vocabulary could improve students' English abilities and achievements.

Although vocabulary is an indispensable element in language learning and communication, learning vocabulary is not easy. It was supported by Afghari and Khayatan (2017) who argued that learning new vocabulary, which is the essential component of language learning, is a complex process involving many sub-processes and tasks that require a great deal of preparation to be internalized. Students also faced difficulties learning vocabulary such as finding the meaning of unfamiliar words, keeping them in memory, and using them by exercising and increasing their vocabulary. Consequently, students are required to have some improper strategies to overcome several difficulties in learning vocabulary.

Students needed several strategies to facilitate them in learning vocabulary. Oxford (1990) explained that language learning strategies are crucial, enabling students to be active, independent, involved in the development of communicative skills. An appropriate language learning strategy is needed to improve proficiency and self-confidence. Samperio (2019) also pointed out that one of the factors that determined high and low student achievement is the use of learning strategies to help students succeed in learning the language. According to Ghazal (2007), in learning vocabulary, students use more strategies than integrated tasks, so they need to have the right strategy for learning English. Hardan (2013) stated that each learning process requires a suitable method or strategy to achieve essential learning outcomes.

Oxford (1990) and Schmitt (1997) are some researchers involved in developing VLS classification and taxonomy. According to Oxford (1990), there are two main learning strategies, a namely direct strategy that included memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while indirect strategy that covered metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. On the other hand, Schmitt (1997) classified vocabulary learning strategies into five groups: memory, determination, social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategy.

Some theories above have clarified the significance effect of learning strategies used on students' vocabulary mastery. However, the results of research conducted by Maghsoudi and Golshan (2017) have shown that except for a small and reverse correlation, no significant correlation exists between vocabulary

learning strategies and vocabulary size. In this study, the researcher wanted to determine the frequency of using learning strategies in English vocabulary learning. Furthermore, the researcher examined the use of learning strategies to learn English vocabulary with successful and less successful learners to be more accurate.

Asgari and Mustapha (2010) examine the form of vocabulary learning strategies used in learning English as a Second Language (TESL) by Malaysian ESL students. This research finding discussed types of strategies used by ESL students in learning vocabularies, such as learning a word through reading, using a monolingual dictionary, employing different English language media, and implementing new English words in their regular conversation. In this study memory, determination, and metacognitive strategies were popular strategies, and learners are keen to use them.

Another research was carried out by Bakti (2018), who investigated the use of VLS for junior high school students in English learning. This research showed that students chose practical, simple, and fast strategies in vocabulary learning. Strategies such as checking whether the word was also an Indonesian term, making guesses the meaning of the word from the context, asking the teacher to provide the meaning, learning the word with their classmates, remembering the word through studying and paying attention to the spelling of the word, emphasizing the word, and using English media have often been chosen in this study.

Among some previous studies, the previous researchers have not measured the intensities of the use of learning strategies in English vocabulary learning. The previous study used ESL as the subject in their study. On the other hand, another gap was found in the second previous study, which explored vocabulary learning strategies used in the junior high school context. In this study, the researcher chose undergraduate students of EFL as the subjects. As a consideration, this current study requires further all elements within the study.

In this study, the researcher planned to identify the existence of the use of learning strategies in learning English vocabulary and the difference in the use of

learning strategies in learning English by high and low achievers. Based on the background of the study above, the researcher formulated the problems as follows:

1. To what extent do English Department students at the University of Islam Malang use English vocabulary learning strategies?
2. Is there any difference between how high and less low achievers use strategies to learn English vocabulary?

METHOD

The researcher applied the quantitative method. It was carried out specifically through ex-post-facto research. The subjects were taken from the large population of second-semester students of the English department at the University of Islam Malang. Three classes were taken randomly based on accessibility as the subjects in this research. The number of students used as subjects in this study was 70 students.

The data of the research were obtained through a questionnaire and test of vocabulary size. A questionnaire was adapted from Schmitt's (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) taxonomy. It was applied in this research because it was broad and accessible to be used in research with the same coverage and suitable for this study. The questionnaire consisted of thirty- four strategies which were grouped into five categories: (a) memory strategies (7 items), (b) determination strategies (7 items), (c) social strategies (7 items), (d) metacognitive strategies (6 items), and (e) cognitive strategies (7 items). The scale used in the questionnaire for each statement was: *1= never true to me, 2= rarely or usually not true to me, 3= a little true to me, 4= usually true to me, and 5= always or almost always true to me*. The questionnaire used was translated into Indonesian with validation from the Integrated Laboratory Faculty of Teacher Training and Education.

The last research instrument, namely the receptive vocabulary test, was employed to group the students into high and low achievers. The Vocabulary Size Test of Nation and Beglar (2007) was adapted as a vocabulary size test in this

study to assess the vocabulary size of the students. The test consists of 50 questions of multiple choices.

The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire of strategies of learning vocabulary and test of vocabulary. Both of the instruments were designed in the form of Google form. Analysis of the average score for each category of the strategy was carried out using descriptive statistics to evaluate the intensity of learning strategies. Besides, an average score analysis was performed for each category of strategy to assess the frequency of learning strategies utilization. It was considered average when the mean is between 1,00 and 2,44, moderate between 2,45 and 3,44, and high between 3,45 and 5,00 (Oxford, 1990). An independent sample t-test was used to measure differences in strategy use between high and low achievers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Question 1: To what extent do English Department students at the University of Islam Malang use English vocabulary learning strategies?

In this part of the study, the researcher used descriptive method to assess the frequency of use of learning English vocabulary of each learning strategy. Descriptive analysis results 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 English vocabulary learning strategies

Strategy categories	Mean	Frequency	Rank
Social	3.58	High	1
Cognitive	3.53	High	2
Metacognitive	3.51	High	3
Determination	3.46	High	4
Memory	3.40	High	5

This table 1 showed that the intensity of the use of the overall strategy was at a high level (M= 3.5). Further examination of the use of each strategy category revealed similar findings at the high level, with four strategies being used with a mean score higher than 3.45 and one strategy category being used with a mean

score lower than 3.45. In this case, social strategies (M = 3.58), cognitive strategies (M = 3.52), metacognitive (M = 3.51), Determination strategies (M = 3.46) were the high level strategy categories used and the last memory strategies (M = 3.40) were the strategy categories with lowest frequency use. This result indicates that there is no dominant category of strategies.

Question 2: Is there any difference between how high and less low achievers use strategies to learn English vocabulary?

It needed to be clearly understood that the ultimate purpose of this study was to describe whether there was a comparison of the learning strategies used by high and low achievers to learn English vocabulary. According to the vocabulary test result, after calculating the score of vocabulary tests, there were 39 high (score= 100- 66) achievers and 31 low achievers (score= 65- 0). In this study, the researcher used t-tests with IBM SPSS version 20 for independent samples to analyze the results of comparisons when completing the data. If the results of research significance below .05, then it can be said that the results of this study were significance at .05level or in other words normality distributed, but if the significance data was under the level of significance 0.05, it could be said that the data was not significant compared. The descriptive of independent samples t-tests and the summary of independent samples t-tests can be seen as follow:

Table 2 *Difference in the use of strategies for Learning English Vocabulary by high (N=39) and low achievers (N=31)*

Strategy categories	Groups	Mean	Mean difference	Sig (2-tailed)
Determination	High	3.56	.23	.035
	Low	3.33		
Memory	High	3.48	.17	.032
	Low	3.31		
Social	High	3.73	.32	.000
	Low	3.41		
Metacognitive	High	3.62	.24	.018
	Low	3.38		
Cognitive	High	3.52	-.01	.933
	Low	3.53		

Table 2 showed the difference in the use of strategies for learning English vocabulary by high (n=39) and low achievers (n=31). The differences between high and low achievers' in the use of strategies were from -.01 (lowest difference) for cognitive strategies to .32 (highest difference) for social strategies. It was also identified that there was a significant difference in the use of determination strategy (sig= .000), metacognitive strategy (sig=.018), memory strategy (sig=.032), and memory strategy (sig=.035) to learn English vocabulary through high and low achievers. However, the use of cognitive strategy (sig=.418) for high and low achievers did not make significant differences.

Table 3 Difference in the use of strategies for Learning English Vocabulary by high (N=10) and low achievers (N=10)

Strategy categories	Groups	Mean	Mean difference	Sig (2-tailed)
Determination	High	3.47	.30	.041
	Low	3.17		
Memory	High	3.73	.77	.001
	Low	2.96		
Social	High	3.73	.43	.000
	Low	3.30		
Metacognitive	High	3.77	.52	.006
	Low	3.25		
Cognitive	High	3.74	.49	.038
	Low	3.25		
Overall	High	3.69	.46	.003
	Low	3.23		

Table 3 showed the difference in the use of strategies for learning English vocabulary by high (n=10) and low achievers (n=10). Different findings were obtained when researchers attempted to compare the data between the ten highest and the ten lowest achievers. The result in the table 3 showed that the differences between high and low achievers' in the use of strategies were from 0.30 (lowest difference) for determination strategies to .77 (highest difference) for memory strategies. The results of this study showed that there were significant differences in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between high and low achievers with

the following outcomes: social strategy (.000), memory strategy (.001), metacognitive strategy (.006), cognitive strategy (.038) and identification strategy (.041). Based on the result of overall strategies used by high and low achievers, the p-value was .003. The result showed the p-value lower than .05 ($<.05$), which means that there were significant differences in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between high and low achievers.

Discussions

As stated earlier, this study was carried out in general to explain the use of strategies for learning English vocabulary by students of the English Department at the University of Islam Malang. The findings showed that the English Department students at the University of Islam Malang applied overall vocabulary learning strategies. They are determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and metacognitive strategy. This finding was in line with Sitohang, Afriazi, and Imranuddin, who found that the students applied overall strategies suggested by Schmitt (1997). 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 3.58. Besides, the Social Strategy category was the least used vocabulary learning strategy with the lowest mean score of 3.40. The mean score of overall vocabulary learning strategies implemented by the University of Islam Malang English Department students was 3.50. It means that the students implemented the vocabulary learning strategy suggested by Schmitt (1997) in the "high" predicate.

The social strategy has been used to clarify the definition of new words that have come across. This strategy involved arguing with others about the sense and operating in groups. This strategy gave the interactions within the classroom between classmates and teachers more attention. According to the results of this study, the social strategy was a sub-strategy with the highest mean among the five vocabulary learning strategies used. This finding was also supported by previous research conducted by Al-Bidawi (2018) that identified the social strategy as the subcategory most frequently used by students. Asgari and Mustafa (2011) referred

to in their findings in a study on Malaysian students that social strategy was strongly emphasized. They were looking for help when the students struggled with the issue.

This study also showed that the memory strategy was the lowest mean strategy and was at a moderate level. Oxford (2006) claimed that the students were simply not using memory strategy, especially beyond elementary school. Therefore, it may not be acceptable to use by the English Education Study Program students because they were required to practice the words so that they could use them in verbal and written form and memorize every word.

However, this finding contrasts with the results of the study reported by Maghsoudi and Golshan (2017). This study found that the most common use of vocabulary learning strategies was metacognitive, and the lowest frequent was a social strategy. Correspondingly, Azadeh, Asgari, and Mustapha (2010) also revealed that memory, determination, and metacognitive strategies were respectively popular strategies and learners are keen to use by Malaysian ESL students. The different findings among these studies may be due to the different instruments used. Maghsoudi and Golshan (2017) obtained strategic preference data from SILL by Oxford (1990). Another factor that might affect the different results of this study from the previous study was the subject. This study used EFL learners, whereas previous research conducted by Azadeh, Asgari, and Mustapha (2010) allowed ESL learners as subjects. EFL learners only used English as a foreign language, while ESL learners use English as their second language.

A significant result emerged when the strategies implemented by both high and low achievers were compared. This study successfully proved to be a significant difference between high achievers and low achievers in learning English vocabulary using the five categories of Strategies. Analysis findings have shown that the two groups used four types of strategies with significantly different frequencies. The researchers also performed a second data calculation to support the results of this study by comparing the top 10 high achievers and the 10 lowest achievers. The results of the second calculation indicated that all the strategies had the p-value (.003) that was lower than .05 (<.05). It meant that there was a

significant difference in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between high and low achievers.

It indicated that high achievers' use of vocabulary learning strategies was more intense than low achievers. It was supported by Bekele (2013) who pointed out that there was a correlation between the students' understanding and their language achievement, and the students' preferred VLSs and their English language achievement, i.e., the high-level students choose more VLSs than the low-level students to learn and test new vocabulary. Additionally, there was a significant disparity between the high and low achievers in terms of VLS used while many of the high achievers 'usually' and 'always' use almost all of the strategies, while many of the low achievers 'never' and 'Rarely' use many of the strategies to identify the definitions of new English words and refine the words they have learned.

This finding was supported by theory from Samperio (2019), who stated that one of the factors that determined high and low student achievement is the use of learning strategies that can help students to become successful in language learning. Hardan (2013) also stated that each learning process requires a suitable method or strategy to achieve essential learning outcomes. It can be concluded that the implementation of learning strategies can determine the success level of learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Vocabulary is the core component of language mastering. To learn vocabulary, students need to have several appropriate strategies. This study investigated the intensity of use of strategy to learn English vocabulary by second-semester students of English Department at UNISMA. The study reveals that all of five strategy categories –memory, determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies – are used at the high level ($M=3.5$) with social strategies found to be used at the highest frequency ($M=3.58$) and memory strategies found as the lowest frequency ($M= 3.40$). Furthermore, there is a significant difference between high and low achievers in the use of strategies. Finally, It indicates that

the use of vocabulary learning strategies by high achievers are more intense than low achievers ones.

There were some suggestions from the researcher: English teachers must encourage teaching and learning environments where high-level students can help low-level students practice various VLSs that improve their English vocabulary. With the limitations of the research variables and the sample population in this study, the writer hoped that other researchers conducting the same work would be able to use a wider variety of variables and subjects. Researcher also expected that future researchers will be able to distinguish between high and low achievers with better quality differences and will be able to use around 25 percent of high achievers and 25 percent of low achievers from a large number of subjects.

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