

# STUDENTS' PREFERENCES ON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES BETWEEN FIRST YEAR AND SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM MALANG

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**Abstract:** Vocabulary learning strategy is seen as one of the most important factors for student success in learning English. The study aimed to investigate the students' preference on vocabulary learning strategies frequently used and vocabulary mastery by second and fourth semester students of English Education Department students in University of Islam Malang. The questionnaire of vocabulary learning strategies was administered to 35 second-semester students and 35 fourth-semester students. They were asked to fill out questionnaires about vocabulary learning strategies by Schmitt (1997) that consist of 34 numbers which including the Memory, Cognitive, Determination, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies. The devices were designed in google form and online data collection. The results of the study show that participants used vocabulary learning strategies. In the second and fourth semesters, students were found to have different significant at three strategies used by the students: memory strategy (sig= ,032), metacognitive strategy (sig= ,021) and social (sig=,022). Here were the intensity vocabulary learning strategies used by second semester and fourth semester students.

**Keywords:** Students' Preference and vocabulary learning strategies

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of industry 4.0 communication in English language is the most important aspect for communication. Mastery of English is one of the principles to speak in English. It means that learning language is the key for communication and ease the students to focus on vocabulary learning strategies. Baligrna et.al (2015) stated that vocabulary is the compilation of words in a language.

Generally, a vocabulary grows and evolves with age serves as a valuable and fundamental resource for communication and information acquisition. It is evident from the argument that students need vocabulary learning strategies. According to

Roche & Harington (2013), the preponderance of the evidence suggests that vocabulary knowledge must be first sufficiently established for an L2 to become a tool for learning. There are many effects indicate that vocabulary awareness tests may predict competency and academic performance in writing and speaking. It can be neglected it has the same meaning with previous paragraph.

Theoretically, the students who learn language as foreign language should have basic in mastering the language. There are three elements for language mastery, namely vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (Cahyono&Widiati 2008). It means that the students should be mastery of three elements, but many students cannot speak naturally and the most problem faced by students is lack of learning strategies. Mastering vocabulary is the basic competence for students in learning English, but many students do not know about learning strategies. Ceklik&Toptas (2010) stated that vocabulary learning strategies are strategies for the exploration and development which are used by students to describe the meanings of new words when they first come across them to consolidate meanings. It was clear that the students used determination strategies more than and social strategies. Then, strategies for consolidation include cognitive, metacognitive and memory.

There are some early researchers conducted studies related to the vocabulary learning strategies use. The first study conducted by Najafi et al. (2017: 180-186) the participants of the study consisted of 178 EFL students of Islamic Azad University. Based on the data analysis, it was conducted that Iranian EFL learners were in general moderate vocabulary learning strategy use. A thorough review of the data ranked the order of the requests of strategies as; social, metacognitive, memory, compensation and affective strategies from the most frequent to the least common approaches adopted by study participants. Moreover, EFL students with the first ranked was social strategy it means that social strategy was the EFL students' preference to applied vocabulary learning strategies.

The second study was conducted by Abid (2018) had examined the vocabulary learning strategies used by learners of English as a foreign language. That research was aimed to find the amount of strategies and the domain

frequency of the strategies that usually the learners used for learning vocabulary. Participants in the study were 100 undergraduate students of the Iraqi EFL. The findings show that the EFL is unaware of the procedures they are supposed to adopt while studying vocabulary in Iraq Learners. As a result, the size of the participants' vocabulary is very small and has no connection with the techniques that they reported using. It was clear that in this study there was no dominant strategies used by students to applied vocabulary learning strategies.

Another previous study conducted by Wanpen, Sonkoontod and, Nonkukhetkhong, (2012: 312-320) stated that the students with academic backgrounds had higher technical vocabulary competences than those with academic backgrounds students whose experience in education was in the field of general education. Differences in how learning techniques are used have been identified among students who have employed various educational backgrounds. A study toward the vocabulary learning strategy used by different educational backgrounds.

In this case, the current researcher found some differences in early studies above. The first, second, and third studies were conducted to research about vocabulary learning strategies of the EFL students in general. The subject of the first, second, and third studies were EFL students of University level in which they focus the vocabulary learning strategies use and differences educational background. Subsequently, the current researcher conducts a study under the university level with English Educational department students as participants. The study focuses on students' preference on vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary mastery which vocabulary has become one part of a language and compulsory subjects that the EFL students must learn to improve their language skills. In this study, the researcher focuses on vocabulary learning strategies, specifically to find out the intensity of the strategies used by second semester and fourth semester students.

Based on the background of the study, the questions of the study can be formulated as follow:

- 1) To what extent do students of the English Education Department at the University of Islam Malang use the strategies in learning English vocabulary?
- 2) What are the differences and similarities in the dominance of learning strategies used by second semester and fourth semester in their frequencies and categories?

The researcher has formulated a hypothesis that there is a significant difference and similarities in the dominance of learning strategies used by second semester and fourth semester in their frequencies and categories. This study aims to know the students' preference on vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by second and fourth semester students. Moreover, it is also conducted to know the vocabulary learning strategies used by the second and fourth semester students in learning vocabulary and to determine whether there is a significant difference in the frequency and category use of vocabulary learning strategies by second and fourth semester students.

According to Abid (2018) determination strategies which involve analyzing the unknown word, its constituent elements, its surrounding context, checking its L1 cognate, or consulting the dictionary to determine meaning. It means that determination strategy is higher than other strategies. In the meantime, students who have retained and by means of metacognitive strategy, vocabulary tended to be better stored the score of VTS (Vocabulary Size Test) is higher than those who employ cognitive or social strategy (Aisyah, 2017). Social strategies maintain working with others (mainly teachers and classmates) to arrive at word definition. Indriati (2014) who report that cognitive strategy they are seen to be similar to the memory strategies, but they tend to focus more on the mechanical aspects of vocabulary learning like keeping a vocabulary notebook, repeating the word either orally or in written form, taking notes and highlighting words, and labeling physical objects. And metacognitive: they are related to how the learners can evaluate their own learning in order to be able to improve it most efficiently. These strategies include studying the word repeatedly, paying attention to the words used in L2 media, and testing oneself with vocabulary tests regularly.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research used a quantitative approach in the form of a comparative research design. In this study, there are two variables that researcher highlights, independent variable (second semester and fourth semester students) and dependent variable (vocabulary learning strategies). The specialized of vocabulary is academic vocabulary, which is comprised groups of words that also appear across a wide variety of scholarly topics. The participants of this study was the second and fourth year of English education department learners of Universitas Islam Malang. In this study, the researcher used ex-post facto research design in form of comparative research type. Accordingly, were involved in this study which consist of 35 students from second semester and 35 students from fourth semester.

The researcher used questionnaire as the instrument of this study. This current study used vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) questionnaire by Schmitt's (1997) to measure the difference of language learning strategies used by both groups of students, a self-report questionnaire was used to assess the frequency of the use vocabulary learning strategies. The VSL questionnaire was used around the world for students of foreign languages in universities, schools, and also language courses, in the VLS, language learning strategies which consists of 34 items are grouped into six categories for assessment: (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 instrument was administered in an online way due to the COVID-19 in which the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) questionnaire was administrated to the learners by google form.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Findings**

The data were analyzed and classified by using the SPSS 20 Statistical Program. Descriptive statistics used to measure standard deviation, mean, and sum in which to find out the vocabulary learning strategies frequently used. Besides, an independent T-test was used to measure the vocabulary learning

strategies usually used by both second and fourth semester students and to measure the significant differences between second and fourth semester students and their vocabulary learning strategies.

Table 4.1 Students' preference on use strategies of learning English vocabulary for second semester students.

Strategy Category	Mean	Frequency	Rank
Determination	3.5102	High	1
Cognitive	3.4858	High	2
Metacognitive	3.2333	Moderate	3
Memory	3.0980	Moderate	4
Social	3.0694	Moderate	5

This table showed that students' preference on the overall strategy used by second semester students is moderate level mean of 33. The deployment of determination strategies is at the highest with the mean of 3.5102, showing that student at second semester prefer to learn vocabulary by to evaluate the unknown word, its constituent elements, its contextual context, to test its cognate L1 or to consult a dictionary to determine the meaning. According to Nacera 2010, such study findings can be explained by the fact that the students who use these first three techniques gather more vocabulary improving English learning by summarizing, speaking, reading and writing English, which takes more times and resources but more research leads. This case explains the findings of this research, which indicates that second semester students used cognitive strategies more frequently than metacognitive, memory and social.

Unfortunately, social strategies are the lowest strategies that applied by students second semester with the mean of 3.0694. It indicated that the students did not believe that this strategies can influence their vocabulary mastery. In short, the strategies used more by the second semester students were at high and moderate level. This finding explained that there were 2 types at the highest levels and 3 types at the moderate levels that applied by second semester students to improve their vocabulary mastery.

Table 4.2 Students' preference on use strategies of learning English vocabulary for fourth semester students.

Strategy Category	Mean	Frequency	Rank
Determination	3.6530	High	1
Metacognitive	3.6143	High	2
Memory	3.5306	High	3
Social	3.4449	Moderate	4
Cognitive	3.3592	Moderate	5

As it is seen in the table showed that the students' preference on the overall strategies used by fourth semester students at a high level mean of 35. The deployment same as second semester of determination strategies is at the highest with the mean of 3.6530. Showed at fourth semester students still prefer to learning vocabulary like as second semester students. Then, cognitive strategies is the lowest strategies that applied by students fourth semester with the mean of 3.3592. It indicates that the students rarely used cognitive strategies in learning vocabulary mastery. In short, each category of vocabulary strategies was used at high and moderate level. Further findings revealed that 3 types of strategies are the high level; determination, metacognitive, and memory strategies and 2 types of strategies are the moderate level: cognitive and social strategies. In the meantime, students who have retained and by means of metacognitive strategy, vocabulary tended to be better stored the score of VTS

(Vocabulary Size Test) is higher than those who employ cognitive or social strategy (Aisyah, 2017). Then it was found that both second semester and fourth semester students have the highest mean at the used of determination strategies

Table 4.3 The Difference in the Use of Strategies of Learning English Vocabularies by Second semester (N=35) and fourth semester (N=35).

Strategy categories	Groups	Mean	Mean difference	Sig (2-tailed)
Memory	Semester 2	3.0980	-,43265	.032
	Semester 4	3.5306		
Determination	Semester 2	3.5102	-,14286	,264
	Semester 4	3.6530		
Social	Semester 2	3.0694	-,37551	,022
	Semester 4	3.4449		
Metacognitive	Semester 2	3.2333	-,38095	.021
	Semester 4	3.6143		
Cognitive	Semester 2	3.4858	-,12653	,392
	Semester 4	3.3592		

This table showed that the significance of memory strategies was .032, determination strategies was .264, social strategies was .022, metacognitive strategies was .021, and cognitive strategies .392. From the result of the data analysis that there is significant and have differences significant of the use of strategies applied by second semester and fourth semester is found in the use of memory strategy (sig=.032), social strategy (sig=.022) and metacognitive strategy (sig=.021). It is conducted that is a significant differences to applied vocabulary learning strategies by second semester and four semester. There are two strategies, however which shows the results that there is no significant

difference in the use of determination strategy (.254) and cognitive strategy (.392) for second semester and fourth semester. The researcher also find the improvement of the intensity applied of the overall strategies by second semester at moderate level (M=33) and fourth semester at a high level (M=35). Nematollahi et.al (2017) stated that best feedback chances may be found in contexts that include learning events, features learners, language assignments and student needs, learner methods, use of various resources, task purpose, task in various levels of specific vocabulary learning techniques and strategies. It means that learning strategies from second and fourth semesters have improvement in terms of the average level both of the semesters with determination strategy was the highest level.

## **Discussion**

The researcher found in this study that the second and fourth semester students in the English education department of Universitas Islam Malang use all the vocabulary learning strategies in the different amounts in learning English vocabulary. There was no strategy was found to be "always" used by all of the students. However, the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies for overall second and fourth semester students is determination strategies. Then, in the second semester the highest frequency of strategy use was also in determination. It means students in the second semester and fourth semester have a common learning frequency in determination strategies which in the process of learning vocabulary students more refers to the context or evaluate vocabulary through the dictionary. It is in line with Celik and Toptas (2010) who reported that At different levels, the Turkish EFL learners preferred to use determination strategies more than the other ones. On the other hand, they consider the cognitive approaches to be the least favored group for strategy. This is the same as the results of this study in the fourth semester, namely the frequency of the use of the strategy that is most often used is the determination strategy and the strategy that is least used is cognitive strategy. Different with Wanpen, Sonkoontod, and Nonkukhetkhong (2012) who found that students at English Specific purpose (ESP) commonly used metacognitive strategies were used in all the samples. It is interesting that using metacognitive strategies like using English-language media,

missing or losing new words, testing yourself with word tests and continuing to learn words over time are the high-frequency approaches used by all students. This can be explained by the fact that the students of English Specific purposes (ESP) can access its materials in their daily lives such as television shows, foreign films, newspapers and the Internet are easy to use. Frequently vocabulary strategies for students of English for specific Purposes (ESP) the highest was metacognitive strategies. Then, favored line social, determination, and memory strategies to cognitive strategies. The result of this study showed that the frequently of the highest mean on determination strategies. It was contrasted with this current study, the different result could be influenced by the different participants major and the subject of the study. The participants of the previous study was students of English Specific Purposes (ESP) and this current study was from English Education Department students.

This finding is in comparison to Abid (2018), has shown that EFL learners in Iraq are unaware of the procedures that they are supposed to adopt in vocabulary learning. As a result, the size of the vocabulary of the participants is very small and there is no association with the techniques they reported using. Another finding by Al-Bidawi (2018) who examined the vocabulary strategies applied by the Saudi undergraduate EFL students highest strategies was social strategies and, to a lesser degree were cognitive strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, memory strategies and determination strategies. The differences result of this study were from the second semester highest frequency was determination strategies and to a lesser degree were similar consists of cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, memory strategies and social strategies. Then, from fourth semester highest frequency was determination strategies and to a lesser degree were metacognitive strategies, memory strategies, social strategies and cognitive strategies. The different result could be influenced by the different participant level and the subject of the study. The participants in the previous study was the Saudi undergraduate EFL students, but the participants in the current study were second semester and fourth semester of English Education Department students.

An interesting finding occurs when comparing the strategies applied by both second semester and fourth semester students, they used determination strategies at high levels. And the results of the t-test showed that there were significant differences in the strategies applied by the second and fourth semester students. The participants on the research are 35 students of second semester and 35 students of fourth semester. Then, the results of the independent t-test showed that the highest average results were in the category of determination strategy in the second and fourth semester students. Then, this research was conducted online, the time and results were less than optimal because the data retrieval was not directly monitored by the researcher.

#### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The first result revealed vocabulary learning strategies that the students used more are determination strategy, metacognitive strategy, memory strategy, social strategy and cognitive strategy. From those five strategies, the data analysis from SPSS showed on moderate level of mean 3.3 and determination strategies found to be the most frequently used of mean 3.5102. The second investigation was the students' preference on strategies used by fourth semester students, it can be concluded that overall strategies found to be applied in high level of mean 3.5 with the determination at the highest frequency ( $M=3.6531$ ). From the data, it means that the similarity found in this study show that the second and fourth semester students applied the same strategy category at high level with determination as the category with the highest mean from another strategies.

It can be concluded that second semester and fourth semester have the development in the frequency of applying vocabulary strategies. The level was found that moderate level ( $M=3.3$ ) for second semester and high level ( $M=3.5$ ) for fourth semester as well the both of semesters was the highest mean value possessed by determination strategies. Then, after using the t-test the results show that there is significant difference between the second semester and fourth semester.

In addition, the finding that shows the difference between second semester and fourth semester students in applying the vocabulary learning strategies. It was found that there were significant differences between the categories of learning

strategies, namely memory strategy ( $\text{sig}=0,032$ ), metacognitive strategy ( $\text{sig}=0,021$ ), social strategy ( $\text{sig}=,022$ ) at the level of .05. And two strategies exist, namely determination strategy ( $\text{sig}=,264$ ), and cognitive ( $\text{sig}=,392$ ) had a significant value  $> 0,05$ . This can be inferred that there is a significant difference between second-semester and fourth-semester students in the use of English vocabulary learning strategies.

The researcher hopes that from the findings of this study are intended to improve the teaching and learning practices especially in process of teaching and learning vocabulary strategies for English teachers or lecturers. Then to find out the strategies that their students used to develop their mastery of vocabulary. From this results in study, students are supposed to get support to understand their learning strategies, then to improve their vocabulary mastery, and students need to know their learning approach and how they plan to promote vocabulary learning. It is also expected that students at the second semester level can increase the use of learning strategies in learning English vocabulary, so that when the semester level increases the frequency of learning strategies also increases. Researcher also hopes that students at the fourth semester level can develop their learning strategies so they can continue to develop their achievements.

The researcher have some suggestions for further researchers that is about data retrieval. First, in this research there is only an instrument, namely questionnaire of vocabulary learning strategies by schimitt (1997), for the next researcher presents two instruments, namely questionnaire of vocabulary learning and vocabulary test according to variables. Second, data collection was done online through google form because there was a covid-19 virus that caused all the learning process activities to be conducted online. In the process of collecting data it was less effective because of some factors, such as participants cannot be ascertained the amount, time cannot be determined because of the limited distance. It can be concluded that data collection is more efficient through offline rather than online. Then, the other factors are from the variables that show every factor promoting, improving and increasing the standard of vocabulary learning research strategies. With the limitations of the research variables and the sample

population in this analysis, the researcher hopes that broader variables and subjects can be used by other researchers who conduct the same research.

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