Vocabulary learning strategies used by first year of EFL students

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to find out the type of vocabulary learning strategies that the first year students of Faculty of Economics at Merdeka University, Pasuruan commonly use. This study used qualitative research design; that is, to analyze vocabulary learning strategies used by the students. After the students had done to fill the questionnaires, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews to each of the students in order to get depth information about their vocabulary learning strategies. Based on the strategies for discovering meaning; using an English-Indonesia dictionary, guessing meaning from context, and analyzing pictures or gestures were the strong preferences. While, the less-used from discovering meaning were checking for L1 cognate, analyzing affixes and roots, and analyzing part of speech. In terms of strategies for consolidating meaning; studying and practicing meaning within a group, imaging word form, and imaging word's meaning were preferred. While, the less-used strategies from consolidating meaning were testing oneself with word tests, skipping or passing new word, and continuing to study word over time.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary plays important roles for English Language Learning (ELL), both in elementary and college levels. In the process of learning English, sometimes students face some difficulties to find suitable words to explain their expression. Aitchison (2003) states that words are all about how we learn, remember, understand, and find the appropriate ones to use them. Therefore, *mnemonic* is a good way for learning English vocabulary.

Without a question, vocabulary is the initial factor to all the language skills, and a person with a limited vocabulary might find difficulties in speaking, writing, reading or understanding in a second language or foreign language learning (Halilah, Rashidah, Rashidah, & Majid, 2014).

In terms of learning strategies, O'malley and Chamot in Çelik & Toptaş (2010) defined learning strategies as individuals' use the special thoughts or behaviors as a support for them to comprehend, learn, or keep new information. Thus, vocabulary learning strategies comprise a certain knowledge relating one's do to figure out the meaning of new words, retain them in long-term memory, and whenever need them to compose in a language used, he can easily recall them. Rutmets in Halilah, Rashidah, Rashidah, & Majid (2014), In the classroom of second language learning, the teacher teaches students with the same teaching method. However, some students can acquire the language successfully while others fail. Thus, one student with others may have different Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Several studies have been done to investigate vocabulary learning strategies used by English as a Foreign Language students, such as Afshar, Moazzam & Arbaby (2014) and Hashemi & Hadavi (2015).

Afshar, Moazzam & Arbaby (2014) investigated vocabulary learning strategies used by 173 EFL (undergraduate) students in Iran. The data is in a form of a validated questionnaire. Based on independent t-test result, both group were not significantly different in the use of vocabulary learning strategies. Further, the result showed the vocabulary strategy used by the learners frequently.

Hashemi & Hadavi (2015) conducted an investigation on the use of vocabulary learning strategies

among 185 EFL students in Iran. The reseachers adopted Gu and Johnson questionnaire. The results indicate that the most frequently used strategy was note taking, while autonomy was the last used strategies. Ellis (1997) said that some learners would use learning strategies when they are experienced with some problems. With employing language learning strategies can help students to solve their learning problem and as a result they can improve their language proficiency. Moreover, he said that successful learners use strategies than unsuccessful learners. Thus, language learning strategies are very important to give contribution to the development of linguistic competence.

This study used vocabulary classification applied by Schmitt because it is the most comprehensive classification among others. Schmitt in Mustapha & Asgari (2011) classified vocabulary learning strategies to be two main groups of strategies, namely discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. Then, he categorized vocabulary learning strategies into five sub-categories, namely, determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Thus, this research aims to find out the type of vocabulary learning strategies that the first year students of Merdeka University Pasuruan commonly use.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This research is aimed to investigate the use of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Merdeka University Pasuruan students. The researcher decided to use qualitative research design because the researcher would like to find and develop for further quantitative questionnaire development. To enrich the data gathered about various type of vocabulary learning strategies that the first year students of Faculty of Economics at Merdeka University, Pasuruan commonly use, the researcher also interviewed all the subjects after the students have been done to fill the questionnaires.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

For collecting the data, the researcher used questionnaire and interviewed all the subjects. Before collecting the data, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian language to minimize student's problem. Besides, it was intended to avoid misinterpretation in comprehending each item and response scale. The researcher translated the questionnaire into Indonesian language by keeping as much as possible the referential meaning of the words without changing any content of them.

After the questionnaire had been translated, the researcher conducted a pilot test to 10 students in order to identify and resolve any ambiguity if there is any. Ten volunteers were involved in the pilot study on 26 of March 2017 before the main study. The researcher asked those 10 students to fill the questionnaires and asked some comments or suggestions to make the questionnaire more effective. Based on the result of the pilot test there were no modifications that were made according to the feedback from the participants in the pilot study. Because the students had no difficulties in comprehending the questionnaire, the data collection could directly be conducted. The data for this research was collected during end of March – April 2017. After the students had done filling the questionnaires, the researcher interviewed each of the sampled subjects. The data obtained from the frequency questionnaire were analyzed by using mean and standard deviation.

2.3. Population and Sample

In this research, the population was the first grade students of EFL students in Faculty of Economics, Merdeka University Pasuruan. The overall population of this study was 140 students. In this study, the researcher had to choose all of the population to be the participants of this study.

2.4. Research Instruments

Research instruments of this study were frequency questionnaire and completed with interviewing all the participants. Cohen (2017) explained that questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straight forward to analyze. It was administered to a selected sample from a specific population.

Based on the theory, the researcher chose to designed a questionnaire survey instrument to measure the

frequency of the vocabulary learning strategies. It consisted of two parts, namely the subject's personal information, and 40 questions related to the strategies that the students might have used.

To complete the result gathered from questionnaire, interview method were also used to enrinch the data. It is important since the purpose of this research is to describe and explore experience about vocabulary learning strategy.

The second instrument used was interview. After the students have done filling the questionnaires, the researcher interviewed each of the sampled students. The interview questions were mainly designed to ask how they dealt with vocabulary learning strategies. According to Merriam (1998) interview is a method to gather qualitative data from participants. The interview was conducted individually with all respondents, so the researcher obtained a deep understanding of each student when they were learning English vocabulary.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Finding

The graph below represents the categorization of vocabulary learning strategies use averaged over 140 participants, the results were shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Classification Based on Schmitt (1997) that Used by Participants (N=140)

Vocabulary Learning Strategies		Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Result
Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning	Determination Strategies			
	Use an English-Indonesia dictionary	2.98	1.003	Usually used
	Guess meaning from context	2.96	1.007	Usually used
	Analyze pictures or gestures	2.96	1.004	Usually used
	Check for L1 cognate	1.76	1.005	Seldom Used
	Analyze affixes and roots	1.76	1.008	Seldom Used
	Analyze part of speech	1.65	1.008	Seldom Used
	Social Strategies			
	Ask teacher for help	2.78	1.003	Usually Used
	Ask classmate for help	2.78	1.003	Usually Used
Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered	Social Strategies			
	Study with a group of students	2.76	1.003	Usually Used
	Speaking with native speaker	1.65	1.009	Seldom Used
	Memory Strategies			
	Connect word to a previous personal experience	1.34	1.009	Seldom Used
	Associate the word with its coordinates	1.34	1.009	Seldom Used
	Connect the word in its synonyms and antonyms	1.33	1.007	Seldom Used
	Use Semantic maps	2.76	1.009	Usually Used
	Image word form	2.76	0.945	Usually Used
	Image word's meaning	1.22	0.967	Usually Used
	Use keyword method	1.20	1.009	Seldom Used
	Group words together to study them	1.20	1.007	Seldom Used
	Study the spelling of a word	1.19	1.009	Seldom Used
	Say new word aloud when studying	2.54	0.894	Usually Used
	Use physical action when learning a word	2.33	1.009	Seldom Used
	Cognitive Strategies			
	Verbal repetition	2.20	0.948	Usually Used
	Written repetition	2.20	1.009	Seldom Used

Word list	**2.13**	**1.006**	**Seldom Used**
Put English labels on physical objects	**2.13**	**1.005**	**Seldom Used**
Keep a vocabulary notebook	**2.11**	**0.983**	**Usually Used**
Metacognitive Strategies			
Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)	**2.76**	**0.965**	**Usually Used**
Test oneself with word tests	**1.17**	**1.007**	**Seldom Used**
Skip or pass new word	**1.17**	**1.006**	**Seldom Used**
Continue to study word over time	**1.15**	**1.009**	**Seldom Used**

Table 1 showed means and standard deviations of vocabulary learning strategies used by the first year students of Merdeka University Pasuruan. The most used frequently strategies was determination, using an English-Indonesia dictionary (x= 2.98). On the other hand, the less-used frequently strategies was metacognitive strategies, using continue to study word overtime (x=1.15). To discover most- and less-used vocabulary learning strategies of learners, the result was shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Most- and Less-Used Vocabulary Learning Strategies

No.	Most used vocabulary Learning Strategies	Mean	No.	Less used Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Mean
1.	Use an English-Indonesia dictionary	2.98	1.	Check for L1 cognate	1.76
2	Guess meaning from textual context	2.96	2.	Analyze affixes and roots	1.76
3	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	2.96	3.	Analyze part of speech	1.65
4	Ask for help frinds or teachers for change or explain with a new word	2.78	4.	Interact with native speaker	1.65
5	Ask classmate for meaning	2.78	5.	Connect word to a previous personal experience	1.34
6	Study and practice meaning in a group	2.76	6.	Associate the word with its coordinates	1.34
7	Use Semantic maps	2.76	7.	Connect a word with the synonyms and antonyms	1.33
8	Image word form	2.76	8.	Connect word to a previous personal experience	1.32
9	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)	2.76	9.	Image word meaning	1.22
10	Say new word aloud when studying	2.54	10.	Use keyword method	1.20
11	Use physical action when learning a word	2.33	11.	Group words together to study them	1.20
12	Verbal repetition	2.20	12.	Study the spelling of a word	1.19
13	Written repetition	2.20	13.	Test oneself with word tests	1.17
14	Word list	2.13	14.	Skip or pass new word	1.17
15	Put English labels on physical objects	2.13	15.	Continue to study word overtime	1.15
16	Keep a vocabulary notebook	2.11			

Based on strategies for discovering meaning, using an English-Indonesia dictionary, guessing meaning from context in a text, and analyzing pictures and gestures were the strong

preferences. While, the less-used from discovering meaning were checking for L1 cognate, analyzing affixes and roots, and analyzing part of speech.

In terms of strategies for consolidating meaning, study and practice meaning within a group, image word form, and image word's meaning were preferred. While, the less-used strategies were from consolidating meaning, namely test one student with word exam, skip and passed with a new expression, and study hard.

The results showed that EFL learners in Faculty of Economics, Merdeka University Pasuruan used vocabulary learning strategies in low frequency because they were not aware of vocabulary strategies mentioned in this present study.

3.2. Discussion

The undergraduate program in the Faculty of Economics at Merdeka University, Pasuruan has the objective to enhance reading skills of its undergraduate students. This can be seen from the course outline; the materials that contain of many vocabulary and reading texts related with business provide the students.

The Common Strategies Use

The findings of this study showed that Faculty of Economics, Merdeka University Pasuruan students used social strategies and metacognitive strategies, that is the most common vocabulary learning strategies used by participants of this research. Almost all of the students used the most popular and common strategies namely using monolingual dictionary, guessed from context, and learned through English language media such as internet.

From the result of interviewing the participants it was found that the students used some new strategies which were related with vocabulary learning strategies. There is the relationship between the materials provided by the teacher with the choice of their language learning strategy. Regarding the rank ordering above, it can be seen that the most frequently strategy used by the participants was determination strategy. Based on the data obtained from interviewing the participants, it was found that the three most frequently used strategies for solving reading problems was dictionary use, recognizing when not understanding, and writing down the unknown vocabulary meanings in the dictionary in the text read.

Another strategy beside classified by Schmitt that used by some students to retrieve new expressions were listening to English music; watching an English-subtitle or English-speaking movie; communicate with English club or English speaking community or native speaker abroad through social media like Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Path, and etc. Possible explanation of this finding was the students felt easier to learn and maximized their English learning through instructional media. Moreover, the explanation of this result is the students also take the advantage of technological developments as a means of vocabulary learning.

Moreover, from this study it can be found that the students used new English words when they were speaking in daily activity. The students used new expressions with their classmate, asked questions at classrooms, and asked the teacher to paraphrase the difficult sentences.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the finding it can be concluded that strategies for discovering meaning; using an English-Indonesia dictionary, guessing meaning from context, and analyzing pictures and gestures were the strong preferences. While, the less-used from discovering meaning were checking for L1 cognate, analyzing affixes and roots, and analyzing part of speech. In terms of strategies for consolidating meaning, study and practice meaning within a group, image word form, and image word's meaning were preferred. While, the less-used strategies was from consolidating meaning.

According to the finding of this study, there are several suggestions that can be noticed. The advantage of this research is that it can make the students and public more conscious of the importance of vocabulary learning strategy because it can improve their learning process.

5. References

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