



An Analysis of Students' Strategies in Developing English Vocabulary

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Abstract

This study aimed to highlight the students' strategies in developing English vocabulary applied by fourth-year English education students of Padang State University and to expose students' reasons for using vocabulary learning strategies based on Gu and Johnson theory (1996). This research used a quantitative descriptive method. The samples of this research were 79 students which used Total Sampling. The instruments of this research were questionnaire and interviews. In the questionnaire, it consists of 47 statements which were from the theory. The result of this research showed that students used Metacognitive strategies (95,58%), Beliefs strategies (92,34%), and Cognitive strategies (81,78%) to develop their English vocabulary. In more specific, it showed that students were dominated to use five vocabulary learning strategies: 1) Bottom-up strategies (98%), 2) Top-down strategies (96%), 3) Self-initiation strategies (96%), 4) Selective Attention strategies (95%), and 5) Guessing strategies (95%). Based on the interviews result, it also revealed that there were three points of students' reasons for using vocabulary learning strategies generally: 1) Students wanted to know the meaning of the words in detail. 2) Students wanted to remember the new words longer. 3) Students claimed that the strategy they chose was more efficient, comfortable, suitable and understandable strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching and learning. It assists all English skills which cover listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It is proven by Tnahn Huyen & Thi Thu Nga in Rouhani & Purgharib (Rouhani & Pourgharib, 2013) that define vocabulary as one of language component which links to the language skills. This importance of vocabulary is stated by Richards and Renanda in Aisyah (Aisyah, 2017) that vocabulary plays an important part in learning a foreign language and language proficiency which can influence how good learners at

listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Thus, vocabulary is an essential factor to improve students' language learning skills.

Although vocabulary is considered to be an important element of the language, the students often encounter with vocabulary in applying the four language skills; particularly, in comprehending English reading text, they cannot comprehend the text well. The disability to comprehend the English text is generally due to vocabulary problems. One of the possible problems is the limitation of vocabulary. In other words, it can be said that the students often encounter problems in applying the four language skills, one of the causes is due to the limitations of the vocabulary.

In addition to the problems above, vocabulary is not taught as one subject in the English curriculum in the English Department. It is not taught explicitly as a subject. It is generally integrated with a subject taught, for example in the language skills' subjects, like Reading, Speaking, Listening, and another subject- called Intensive Course. To some students, this may become a problem. They cannot develop their vocabulary well. In other words, from this situation, students should be able to build their own vocabulary learning strategies in order to build their new words.

According to Gu & Johnson (Gu & Johnson, 1996), Lawson & Hogben (Lawson & Hogben, 1996) and Schmitt (Schmitt, 1997) stated that studies of the vocabulary learning strategies used by L2 have demonstrated that the learners differ in the range of strategies they use and in the effectiveness with which they apply those strategies. Gu and Johnson (Gu & Johnson, 1996) provided one of the most comprehensive lists of vocabulary strategies in their Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ) that consisted of 47 items. The questionnaire was based on the previous strategy research (Oxford, 1990) and it is included in three sections: vocabulary learning beliefs, metacognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies. It was completed by Schmitt (Schmitt, 1997) and Ma (Ma, 2009) with affective or social strategies.

Some studies are similar or related to vocabulary learning strategies. The first research was conducted by Zhihong Bai (Bai, 2018) at Shanxi Normal University. The research entitled "An Analysis of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies". The research showed that the correct vocabulary learning strategies are very important to students. The research also found that English vocabulary learning strategy is helpful to increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning, but not all strategies are adapted to each individual.

The second research was conducted by Prashneel Ravisan Goundar (Goundar, 2015) at Fiji National University. The research entitled "An Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners." From these studies, the researcher found that there are various of vocabulary learning strategies as the most frequently used by EFL learners. They are repetition, memorization, dictionary strategies, use of translation, and using background knowledge and experience to guess. Furthermore, it also summaries the belief about vocabulary learning and the overall pattern of the use of strategies (Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, and Social/Affective Strategies).

In general, the study deal with vocabulary learning strategies, it is similar to the focus of the topic of this research. While the differences between those researches with this study are: firstly, the site of the previous research with this study. This study will be conducted in Padang State University. Secondly, they look at the detail of the samples' aspect, while this study just focuses on the type of students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies and reasons for using those strategies. Lastly, the previous research inspired the researcher to know the students' strategies that applied to develop vocabulary by the English students of the State University of Padang.

METHODS

This research is a descriptive research with a quantitative approach. Descriptive research involves collecting data to answer question concerning the current status of the study subject (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). It also involves describing characteristics of a particular sample of individuals or other phenomena. It concerned with determining "what is" primarily. It is a type of quantitative research that involves making careful descriptions of educational phenomena. The quantitative in this research was used to explain the data of students' strategies by using numerical data. The researcher chose descriptive quantitative research, for it described the current condition about students' strategies in developing English vocabulary at English Department of Padang State University.

The sample of this study was 79 students in fourth year of English education in Padang State University. They were asked to fill the questionnaire about vocabulary learning strategies in order to find the type of students' strategies in developing English vocabulary.

The research instruments which was used in this study was a questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, the data were scored to find out students' strategies in developing English vocabulary. The questionnaire was given to students by using Google form site and it took about 25 minutes to fill it. Students were filled out the questionnaire on 25 July 2020 until 03 August 2020. There were 79 students of English Education students who gave the responses to the VLQ of this research. They were asked to respond 47 items about their vocabulary learning strategies. This questionnaire divided into 4 parts which related to 12 kinds of vocabulary learning strategies based on Gu & Johnson (Gu & Johnson, 1996). The students answered each item on a 1-4 scale with answer choices ranging from *Strongly Disagree*–*Strongly Agree*. The interview was done to 12 students of the fourth year students of English Education at Padang State University. They were taken from four students who got the highest mean score, four students who got the medium mean score, and four students who got the lowest mean score.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

The first research question is what are the students' strategies in developing English vocabulary applied? The second research question is what are the reasons for the English students' of Padang State University using those strategies? The

answer of these two research questions were obtained by analyzing the questionnaire data and it was supported by the interview data.

Students' Strategies in Developing English Vocabulary

The first research question to be answered is 'what are the students' strategies in developing English vocabulary applied?'. Based on the result, these strategies were divided into three parts. They are Beliefs, Metacognitive, Cognitive, and Affective strategies. For Beliefs, it is followed by 3 strategies: 1) Memorization, 2) Bottom-up, and 3) Top-down. In addition, for Metacognitive, it is followed by 2 strategies: 1) Selective Attention and 2) Self-initiation. For Cognitive, it is followed by 5 strategies: 1) Guessing, 2) Dictionary, 3) Note-taking, 4) Memory, and 5) Activation. Furthermore, for Affective, it is followed by 2 strategies: 1) Source and 2) Anxiety (Gu & Johnson, 1996). The finding of first research question can be seen in this following chart:

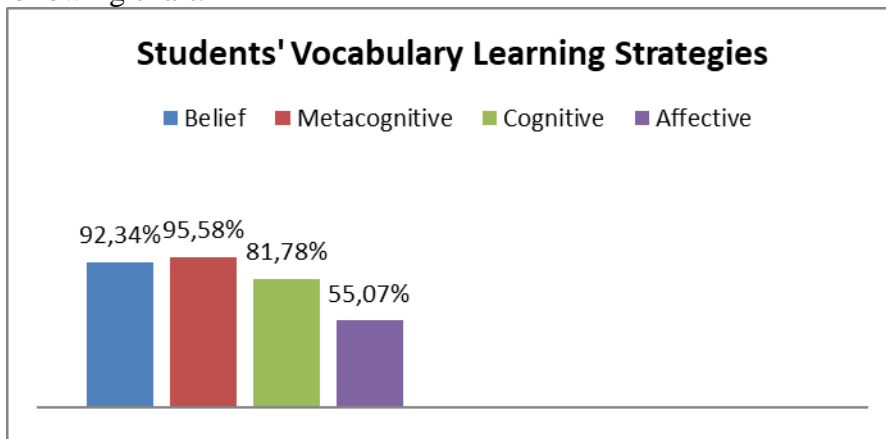


Figure 1. The Percentage of Students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Based on the chart, it showed that students used all the vocabulary learning strategies. It can be seen that 95,58% of students applied Metacognitive strategies in developing English vocabulary. Furthermore, there was 92,34% of students agreed to use Belief strategies. In addition, 81,78% of students also applied Cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, it was only 55,07% of students who used Affective strategies in order to improve their English vocabulary.

In more specific, the researcher found that the English students in Padang State University used all vocabulary learning strategies: Memorization, Bottom-up, Top down, Selective Attention, Self-initiation, Guessing, Dictionary, Note-taking, Memory, Activation, and Sources strategies. The only one of vocabulary learning strategy that the students did not use was Anxiety strategies. From those strategies, it was dominated by five strategies: Bottom-up strategies (98%), Top down strategies (96%), Self-initiation strategies (96%), Selective Attention strategies (95%), and Guessing strategies (95%).

Students' Reasons for Using Vocabulary Strategies

Based on the result of the interview, the researcher found some reasons why students choose the strategies to learn vocabulary. In general, the reasons of students

were: First, students wanted to know the meaning of the words in detail. In more specific, the reasons will be explained below:

- a. In using dictionary strategies, the students wanted to see the explanation of the words, the spelling, antonym, synonym. As stated by student 37: “...*alasan saya memilih strategi melihat kamus karena ketika saya melihat kamus maka di kamus tersebut penjabarannya itu banyak sehingga saya lebih mengerti, seperti cara spelling nya, ataupun eee gimana pembentukan kata itu tersebut. Selain itu juga antonym, sinonim, dan lain-lain.*” (The reasons I choose the strategy by looking a dictionary, because when I looked to the dictionary, there is an explanation about the word, therefore I become more understanding, such as its spelling, the form, antonym, synonym and etc.). It was also because they wanted to see the phonetic form, so that they can pronounce it well. It was stated by student 56: “*Kan ada ponetiknya, jadi ya karna ngebaca itu gak lihat kamus, yaa jadi ada cemasnya karena itu baru dan asing, ya jadinya butuh kamus.*”. (Because I don’t know how to pronounce it, that’s why I need to see phonetic form in the dictionary.) In addition, it was also mentioned by student 58: “*Jangkauannya itu lebih pasti, jawabannya lebih pasti.*” (measurement of meaning is absolutely right).
- b. Students chose to apply the words in daily life, because they wanted to know how to practice the words in their speaking. It was argued by student 58: “...*karena saya ingin melatih pengucapan saya dalam mengucapkan kosakata itu...*”. (because I wanted to practice the pronounce of the words in speaking...)

Second, students wanted to remember the new words longer. It can be explained in detail below:

- a. Students chose to practice the words in daily life, because they claimed that it can be remembered longer. It was stated by student 58: “...*juga ingin mempertajam ingatan saya mengenai kosakata tersebut...*”. (I also want to remember that word for long time in my memory). Also, it was also claimed by student 35: “*Karena dengan menggunakannya dalam percakapan sehari hari, kosakata tersebut akan lebih lama tinggal dalam ingatan.*” (Because by practicing it in daily life, the words will be remembered much longer). Student 37 also mentioned about this: “...*karena sesuatu hal yang di terus menerus dilakukan atau di ulang-ulang akan masuk ke longterm memory sehingga akan sangat nempel di otak...*”. (Because something which is continuously repeat will come to long term memory, so that it will be remembered in the brain). Furthermore, student 79 was stated also: “*Hmmm, alasan aku pakai strategi yang kayak gitu sih, karena di aku pribadi lebih mudah, gitu loh. Karena aku adalah bukan tipe orang yang menghafal, tapi aku adalah orang tipe yang memngulang, ketika aku mengulang sesuatu secara berkala itu akan mudah diingat, gitu...*” (The reason I applied the strategy, because it is easier for me. I am not good at memorizing, yet I am good at repeating something, when I repeat something gradually, it will be easier to remember it for me).
- b. Students took a note or wrote word list, because they believed it will make them easier to remember. It was stated by student 24: “*Karena strategi itu cukup gampang, dan ee efisien sih kak menurut aku, dan aku nyaman sih sama*

strategi itu. Karena nggak terlalu susah kan kak, kita cuma cari difficult word kemudian tulis di memo kemudian try to make a sentence atau try to practice in ee speaking, jadi itu strategi yang nyaman dan lebih gampang sih kak, menurut aku." (Because that strategy is easier and more efficient for me, and I am comfortable with that strategy, because it is not difficult, we just need to find difficult word, and then write them in note, then try to make a sentences or try practice it in speaking. Thus, it's a comfortable and an easier strategy for me). In addition, it was claimed by student 11: "*Lebih mudah kita ingat, karena yang kita catat sendiri...*" (It's easier to remember it, because we write it by ourselves...). Furthermore, it was stated by student 75: "*Ee Karena strategi ini ee dapat dengan mudah saya pahami dan ketika saya membaca lagi tulisan yang sudah saya ingat saya menjadi tambah ingat tentang arti ataupun maksud dari kosakata tersebut.*" (Because this strategy can be understood and when I read again the writing that I have already remembered, I become more understanding about the meaning of the words).

Third, students claimed that the strategy they chose was more efficient, comfortable, suitable and understandable strategy. In more specific, it can be showed in the following statements:

- a) Students guessed new words to improve their vocabulary, because they thought it helped them in learning vocabulary and it was suitable strategy. As stated by student 9: "*Dengan menggunakannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari dan menebak dalam suatu bacaan lalu mengecek kebenaran dari tebakan tersebut. Karena strategi tersebut lebih membantu dalam pembelajaran kosakata.*" (By practicing it in daily life and guessing it in reading text, then checking the meaning of that words. Since the strategy help me in learning vocabulary). Moreover, it was supported by student 28: "*Ya karena itu aja sih yang sesuai sama kondisi saya sekarang. Yang karena saya sebenarnya kan apa ya, eh how to say that yaa, karena itu yang cocok gitu jadi udah dari dulu kek gini....*" (It is because that's it which is suitable in my situation now. Actually, I have been using the strategy for a long time ago).
- b) Students used note-taking or writing words list strategies, because they claimed it was more efficient and comfortable strategy. It was stated by student 24: "*Karena strategi itu cukup gampang, dan ee efisien sih kak menurut aku, dan aku nyaman sih sama strategi itu. Karena nggak terlalu susah kan kak, kita cuma cari difficult word kemudian tulis di memo kemudian try to make a santance atau try to practice in ee speaking, jadi itu strategi yang nyaman dan lebih gampang sih kak, menurut aku*". (Because that strategy was simple, and efficient for me, and I am comfortable with its strategy. Because it is not too difficult also, we just find the difficult words, then write them in a memo. After that, I try to make a sentence or try to practice in a speaking. So, it is a comfortable strategy and understandable especially for me). Moreover, it was supported by student 11: "*Lebih mudah kita ingat, karena yang kita catat sendiri...*" (It is easier to be remembered, because I write it by myself.)

Based on the explanation above, there were some reasons why students choose the strategies. First, students used dictionary strategy because they want to see the meaning of the words, the explanation about the words, and the phonetic

form. Second, student chose to apply it in daily life, because they want to practice it in their speaking skill, and it will be easier to them to remember the words. Third, students used to make a note or words list strategy, because they become more understanding about the meaning of the word, and it is easier and more efficient to them. Lastly, students chose guessing strategies, because they are more comfortable with and it is suitable strategy for them.

Discussion

Based on the finding above, it can be seen the research focused on students' strategies in developing English vocabulary and the students' reasons. The first research question aimed to highlight the students' vocabulary learning strategies applied in developing English vocabulary. In general, it can be revealed that 95,58% of students applied Metacognitive strategies in developing English vocabulary. Furthermore, it also showed that 92,34% of students used Belief strategies to improve their vocabulary. Moreover, there was 81,78% of students tend to use Cognitive strategies to expand English vocabulary. In addition, it was only 55,07% of students who agreed to use Affective strategies in order to develop English vocabulary.

In more specific, the students applied almost all vocabulary learning strategies. They were Memorization strategies, Bottom-up strategies, Top down strategies, Selective Attention strategies, Self-initiation strategies, Guessing strategies, Dictionary strategies, Note-taking strategies, Memory strategies, Activation strategies, and Source strategies. It was only Anxiety strategies that mostly students did not use it. From those strategies, it was dominated by five strategies: Bottom-up strategies (98%), Top down strategies (96%), Self-initiation strategies (96%), Selective Attention strategies (95%), and Guessing strategies (95%).

From the explanation above, it can be seen that this finding was supported by Goundar (Goundar, 2019) who had conducted the research related to students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) and he found that Memorization, dictionary strategies, repetition, use of translation, and using background knowledge and experience in improving their vocabulary. In addition, this finding was also supported by Rahmatika (Rahmatika, Pertiwi, Karmala, & Nastiti, 2017) who had conducted the research about exploring students' VLSs and she found that the students chose memorization (100%) and repetition (86%) as their best way to learn vocabulary.

The second research question aimed to expose the students' reasons of using vocabulary learning strategies. Based on the interview result, it showed that there were three reasons why they used vocabulary learning strategies generally. Firstly, students wanted to know the meaning of the words in detail. In more specific, it can be explained in two points: 1) in using dictionary strategies, the students wanted to see the explanation of the words, the spelling, antonym, synonym (Dictionary strategies). 2) Students chose to apply the words in daily life, because they wanted to know how to practice the words in their speaking (Top down strategies). Secondly, students wanted to remember the new words longer. It can be explained in more specific: 1) Students chose to practice the words in daily life, because they

claimed that it can be remembered longer (Top down strategies). 2) Students took a note or wrote word list, because they believed it will make them easier to remember (Note-taking strategies).

Thirdly, students claimed that the strategy they chose was more efficient, comfortable, suitable and understandable strategy. It can be seen in two explanations: 1) Students guessed new words to improve their vocabulary, because they thought it helped them in learning vocabulary and it was suitable strategy (Guessing strategies). 2) Students used note-taking or writing words list strategies, because they claimed it was more efficient and comfortable strategy (Note-taking strategies). This finding was supported by Bai (Bai, 2018) who had conducted the research about analysis of students' VLSs. He also found that vocabulary learning strategy is helpful to increase the efficiency of learning English vocabulary.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the finding and discussion above, it was indicated that there were 11 strategies that students applied in developing English vocabulary: 1) Bottom-up strategies, 2) Top Down strategies, 3) Selective Attention strategies, 4) Self-initiation strategies, 5) Guessing strategies, and 6) Memory strategies, 7) Memorization strategies, 8) Dictionary strategies, 9) Note-taking strategies, 10) Activation strategies, and 11) Sources strategies. From those strategies, it was dominated by five strategies: Bottom-up strategies (98%), Top down strategies (96%), Self-initiation strategies (96%), Selective Attention strategies (95%), and guessing strategies (95%).

Furthermore, the students' reasons of using vocabulary learning strategies can be concluded to three points: 1) Students wanted to know the meaning of the words in detail. 2) Students wanted to remember the new words longer. 3) Students claimed that the strategy they chose was more efficient, comfortable, suitable and understandable strategy

Suggestions

Regardless of the findings and discussions, there are some suggestions offered by the researcher to the following points;

First, The fourth-year students at English department of Padang State University should improve the vocabulary learning strategies that they have applied to get more English vocabulary.

Second, In order to develop English vocabulary, it was suggested for the English students to know which vocabulary learning strategies they used.

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