THE USE OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES BY THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BENGKALIS STATE POLYTECHNIC

Rionaldi, Mukhaiyar, Kusni Language Education Program, State University of Padang

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi-strategi belajar kosa kata yang paling sering digunakan oleh mahasiswa dan penggunaan strategi berdasarkan pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata yang tergolong ke dalam pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata tinggi, sedang, dan rendah, serta alasan penggunaan strategi tersebut. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 30 mahasiswa pada Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis tahun akademik 2012/2013. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kosa kata, angket, wawancara, dan observasi. Temuan penelitian deskriptif ini menunjukkan bahwa 'expanding strategies' adalah strategi yang paling sering digunakan, sedangkan 'social discovery strategies' adalah strategi yang paling jarang digunakan dalam belajar kosa kata. Kelompok pencapaian hasil belajar yang tergolong kedalam pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata tinggi menggunakan 'expanding strategies' dan 'guessing strategies' strategi yang paling sering digunakan. Kelompok pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata yang tergolong kedalam pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata sedang menggunakan 'expanding strategies' dan 'practice strategies' sebagai strategi yang paling sering digunakan. Selanjutnya, kelompok pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata yang tergolong kedalam pencapaian hasil belajar kosa kata rendah paling sering menggunakan 'repetition strategies' dan 'expanding strategies'. Adapun alasan-alasan penggunaan strategi belajar kosa kata yang digunakan responden adalah aksesibilitas, ketertarikan, keakuratan, dan budaya.

Keywords: Vocabulary, learning strategy, achievement,

Introduction

Vocabulary plays the key role in the whole process of second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) learning. One cannot speak, understand, read or write a foreign language without knowing a lot of words (Rubin and Thompson, 1994:79). On the other hand. language learners with vocabulary knowledge can achieve a great deal of success in their classroom, their social life, and in their continuing acquisition of the target language as stated by Siriwan (2007:23).

Nevertheless, vocabulary still appears to be the major problem for students who study English as a foreign language (EFL). Priyono limited (2004:26)states that vocabulary is the main problem of Indonesian EFL students. It is supported by Nurweni and Read's research finding (1999:161) which estimated the Indonesian freshmen's vocabulary size as merely 1226 words, which were much below the expected one of 4000 words.

In Bengkalis States Polytechnic, especially at English Department, English Department students still have problems in vocabulary. It is based on the researcher's interview with English vocabulary lecturer of **English** Department of Bengkalis Polytechnic. The lecturer said that the first year students of English department of Bengkalis Polytechnic still have problems in vocabulary in terms of discovering the meaning of new words through guessing, finding appropriate meaning of words, and remembering the meaning of new words. Moreover, bilingual vocabulary level test conducted by researcher on March 4, 2013 on the first year students of the English department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic found that 8 out of 30 (26.67%) of the students' vocabulary size were below 1000 word level, 12 out of 30 (40.00 %) students were at 1000 word level and only 10 out of 30 (33.33%) students were at 2000 word level.

interview The and the preliminary research conducted show that the first year students of English department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic have problems learning vocabulary. Those problems might be caused by large numbers of words in English, limited types of strategies in learning vocabulary offered by lecturers, limited type of strategies used by the students in learning vocabulary, and lack of students' motivation to discover various, appropriate, and effective strategies in learning vocabulary.

Strategies are very important in EFL learning vocabulary. According to Oxford (1990:1) "strategies are important especially for language learning because theys are tools for active, self-directed involvement which is essential for developing

communicative competence.

Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self confidence."

Vocabulary learning strategies part of language learning strategies. Marin-Marin (2005:74) vocabulary defines learning strategies as those conscious and unconscious, planned and unplanned steps and actions that L2 learners take to discover and consolidate the form, meaning and usage of words. Similarly, Intaraprasert (2004), on the other hand, defines vocabulary learning strategies as any set of techniques or learning behaviors, which language learners reported using in order to discover the meaning of a new word, to retain the knowledge of newly-learned words, and to expand their knowledge of vocabulary.

The importance of vocabulary learning strategies is also stated by Nation (2001:358). He states that vocabulary learning strategies allow learners to take control of their own learning and they are useful at every stage of vocabulary learning. Therefore, language learners must have knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies, and use them in learning vocabulary in order to achieve success in language learning.

A number of researchers (Gu & Johnson, 2003; Schmitt, 1997, 2004; Marin-Marin, Intaraprasert, 2005) have proposed various classifications of vocabulary learning strategies. Marin-Marin (2005)grouped vocabulary learning strategies into four major categories. They are (1) dealing with unknown vocabulary which include guessing strategies, dictionary use strategies, social-discovery strategies,

skipping strategies; (2) taking vocabulary note: memorization/retaining vocabulary which include repetition strategies, and association strategies; and (4) further practice/ consolidation strategies. Since many students have problems in learning vocabulary, finding out the vocabulary learning strategies used by the students is important. The findings may help language teachers and lecturers to better understand how students learn vocabulary. Furthermore, it may help lecturers to improve the students' vocabulary by introducing the beneficial vocabulary learning strategies to the students, designing appropriate materials and activities to improve students' vocabulary learning and to make vocabulary learning easier, faster and more enjoyable.

Method

The research was a descriptive which mixes research the quantitative and qualitative method (mixed method research). conducted at English Department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic, Province. Bengkalis, Riau subject of this research was the first students of the English Department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic who had taken Vocabulary I and were taking Vocabulary II course in 2012-2013 academic year. A total of 30 participants of the first year students of English department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic participated in the study.

To collect quantiative data, the research used vocabulary test, and questionnaire, while to collect the qualitative data, the research used observation and interview.

Vocabulary test was used as a basis for grouping the students into high vocabulary achivers, average vocabulary achievers low and vocabulary achievers. The responses to the questionnaires were used to find out the vocabulary learning strategies used by the students and those three groups. The interview was used to find out the reasons of using those strategies in learning English vocabulary. The data were analyzed with quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis.

To identify the vocabulary learning strategies used by the participants, the current study made use of the questionnaire adapted from Marin-Marin's (2005:54), and Intaraprasert's (2004:157) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. All 48 items in the questionnaire were organized and classified under 8 different groups of strategies as four statements on guessing strategies, 4 on dictionary statements strategies, three statements on social discovery strategies, fourteen statements on note taking, three statements on repetition strategies, nine statements on association strategies, nine statements on expanding strategies, and two statements on practice strategies.

In reporting the frequency of strategy use, the researcher employed Oxford's (1990: 300) key to understanding mean scores on SILL which also uses the 5point Likert scale. The average scores which fall in the range of 3.5-5.00 are defined as high frequency use of learning strategies, the averages in 2.5-3.4 as medium frequency use, an the averages in 1.00-2.4 as low frequency use. The frequency of use were measured by 5-point Likert-scale from 1= never or almost never true of me, 2= rarely or usually not true of me, 3= somewhat true of me, 4= usually true of me, and 5= always or almost always true of me. Statistical analysis was carried out using The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 17.0).

Table 1: Descriptions of The Categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Indica	Sub-	Item No	No of
tor	indicator		items
DMV	Guessing	DMV 1-4	4
	Dictionary	DMV 5-8	4
	use		
	Social	DMV 9-11	3
	discovery		
NTV	Note taking	NTV 1-14	14
RKV	Repetition	RKV 1-3	3
	Association	RKV 4-12	9
FCV	Expanding	FCV 1-9	9
	Practice	FCV 10-	2
		11	
			48

*Note

DMV= Discovering Meaning of New Vocabulary Items

NTV= Note Taking Vocabulary Items

RKV= Retaining the Knowledge of Newly-learned Vocabulary Items

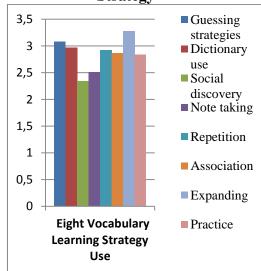
FCV = Further Consolidating Vocabulary

Findings and Discussion

The finding of the research contains the most and least frequently used strategies used by the first year students of **English** department, the most and least frequently used strategies used by high, medium, and low achievers, and the reasons of using the most and least frequently used strategies.

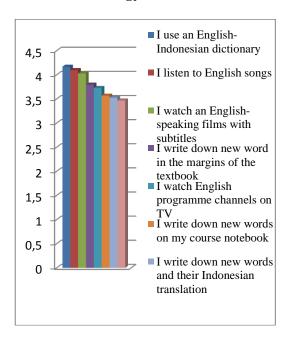
To describe the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies, descriptive statistics, including means standard deviations of the eight categories and their subdivisions are employed. The results of descriptive analysis are presented in Table 3. As the table indicates, expanding strategies (M=3.28, SD=0.982) were reported as the most frequently-used strategy of eight vocabulary learning strategies, followed by practice strategies (M=3.08,SD=0.915), guessing strategies (M=3.08,SD=0.973), dictionary use strategies (M=2.97,SD=0.863), repetition strategies (M=2.92,SD=0.909), (M=2.86,association strategies SD=0.934), note taking strategies (M=2.51,SD=0.859). Social discovery strategies (M=2.40,SD=0.796) were the least frequentlyused strategies.

Chart 1: Descriptive Statistics for Each Vocabulary Learning Strategy



When it comes to the most and the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies with respect to individual items, Table 3 shows that the most frequently used strategies of vocabulary learning strategies. The most frequently-used strategy was " I Use an English-DMV 6 (M=4.17).Indonesian" strategies coming next were FCV 4 I Listen to English songs" M=4.10) > FCV 5 " I watch an English-speaking films with subtitles" (M=4.03) > NTV1 "I write down information about new word in the margins of the textbook or where the word occurs" (M=3.80) > FCV 2" I watch English programme channels on TV to expand the knowledge of vocabulary" (M=3.73) > NTV2 "I write down new words on my course notebook" (M=3.73) > NTV6 "I write down new words and their Indonesian translation" (M=3.53), and DMV 4 "I guess the meaning by looking at the pictures accompanying the text " (M=3.47).

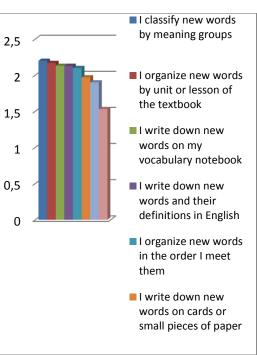
Chart 2: The Most Frequently Used Vocabulary Learning Strategy Items



The results in Table 4 reveal that RKV6 "I use the Keyword Method" (M=2.20) > NTV3 "I write down new words on my vocabulary

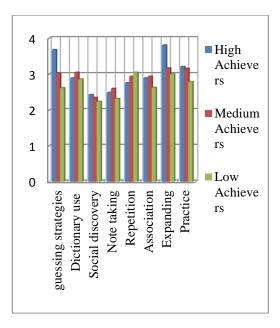
notebook" (M=2,13) > NTV7 "I write down new words and their definitions in English" (M=2,13) > NTV 14 "I organize new words in the order I meet them " (M=2.10) > NTV4 "I write down new words on cards or small pieces of paper, which I carry with me" (M=1,97) > NTV 5 "I write down new words on wall charts, posters and small pieces of paper, which I stick somewhere at home", (M=1.90) > and DMV 11 "Ask other people" (M=1.70) were determined as the least frequently used strategies.

Chart 3: The Least Frequently Used Vocabulary Learning Strategy Items



Based on the vocabulary test result, the students can be classified into low, medium, and high achievers of vocabulary learners. data obtained both questionnaire and vocabulary test showed that the use of strategies by high achievers was different from average and low achiever learners. This is illustrated in the table below:

Chart 4: The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by High, Medium, and Low Achievers



In terms of eight strategy achievers used categories, high expanding and guessing strategies as the most frequently used strategies, while medium achievers used expanding and practicing strategies, and low achievers used repetition and practice strategies as the most frequently used strategies. taking and social discovery were the least frequently used strategies for all learners, regardless of the learners' ability in learning vocabulary. It besides expanding indicates that strategies, high achievers favored using guessing strategies, while medium achievers favored using practice, and low achievers favored using repetition strategies. in short, all groups favored using expanding strategies, yet they did not favor using and note taking, and social discovery strategies.

Expanding strategies were the most frequently used strategies used by high, and medium achievers, and

also as the second most frequently used strategies by low achievers. However, high achievers used expanding strategies more frequently (M=3.81) than the use of medium and low achievers (M=3.17; 3.00). It indicates that high achievers usually use expanding strategies. However, medium and low achievers only used these strategies in medium use frequencies which indicate these strategies were only sometimes used by medium and lower achievers. In of strategy items, achievers used 7 out 9 items in high frequency use, whereas medium achievers used 2 out of 9 items, and low achievers used only 1 out of 9 strategies expanding in high frequency use. However, all groups reported using songs, movies, and TV program as the most frequently used strategies to expand vocabulary.

Social discovery and note taking strategies were the least frequently used strategies for all groups. All groups reported using social discovery strategies in low frequency use (M= 2.43; 2.35; 2.24) which means these strategies were generally not used by all participants. The result indicates that all groups did not favor using social discovery in discovering the meaning of new vocabulary.

All groups also reported using note taking strategies as the least frequently used strategies beside social discovery strategies. The use of note taking strategies was in the higher end of low use range (M=2.32 for low achievers) to lower end of medium use range (M=2.60 for medium achievers). High achievers used note taking strategies more frequently than the use of low achievers (M=2.49; 2.32). However,

the use of these strategies was in the higher end of low use range. It means these strategies were not generally used by higher and low achievers. The data also revealed that all groups did not favor making and using study aids such as flash card, word list, and vocabulary notebook, and also organizing vocabulary items

High achievers were different with medium and low achievers in using guessing strategies. They were the second most frequently used strategies besides expanding strategies for high achievers. Moreover, they used these strategies in high frequency use. In contrast, medium and low achievers only used these strategies in medium use. It indicates, the high achievers usually used guessing strategies compared with medium and low achievers which only sometimes used guessing strategies. In strategy items, high achievers used 3 out 4 items in guessing strategies in high frequency use which includes guessing from context, part of speech, and pictures accompanying text. In contrast, no strategy used by medium and low achievers was in high frequency use.

Repetition strategies were the most frequently used strategies used by low achievers which differentiate them with medium and achievers. They used these strategies more frequently than medium and low achievers did. It indicates that low achievers paid much attention to memorize the new words by repeating the new words rather than making associations high achievers did.

In terms of strategy categories, the participants favored using expanding their knowledge of vocabulary, yet, they did not favor to use social discovery to discover the meaning of new words. It is with consistent Marin-Marin's (2005:158) finding. Furthermore, Kafipour's (2010:619),and Amirian's (2013:639) also found social strategies as the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies.

Expanding strategies were also the most frequently used strategies used by high, medium achievers. It is congruent with Al-Shuwairekh's (2001), Siriwan's (2007), and Cheng's (2008) findings.

Expanding strategies especially using English media such as English songs, English-speaking films, and English program channels on TV were usually used by participants. It is congruent with the findings of Marin-Marin (2005), Mongkol (2008), and Asgari (2011).

The using reasons of strategies in learning **English** vocabulary got from interview. The data reveals that expanding strategies frequently was the most strategies. It was because of the usefulness of expanding strategies especially using English media such as English songs, English-speaking film, English TV program. The participants could learn new words while having entertainment. Besides that they could easily find and access various and up to date media to encounter new words. Besides that, those media could be used whenever they had free time. The following interview transcript being translated into English shows the proof.

P1: "I think reading is very entertaining and can improve vocabulary Reading, for instance, can be done whenever we have free time. If we have free time, we can take the book

with us, read the book while having relax time, so do watching movie and listening to song" (Translated script)

P6: "I got new words from electronic media such as watching TV, listening English songs because they are easy to access.besides that, I can get new words while having entertainment" (Translated script)

Social discovery strategies, strategies to discover the meaning by asking teachers, classmates, friends, and others, were reported as the least-used strategy used by the participants and also by all groups of achievers. It is congruent with Arjomand and Sharififar (2011), Kapifour (2011), and Amirian's (2013:639) findings in Iran and Kudo's (1999:1) survey on Japanese senior high school students.

The reason of the less frequently used social discovery strategies was the less accurate information got from social discovery. The participants preferred to use dictionary to social discovery because dictionary provided more accurate meaning compared with asking friends, classmates, or other people. The following interview transcript proves that.

P14: "I consult dictionary to find out the meaning because asking friends, their answer is not totally correct" (Translated Script)

Another reason was the culture of asking. The participants felt shy and afraid felt of asking, especially asking their lecturers. The following interview transcript shows the proof:

P9: (I feel shy asking the lecturer)

P:11:(I feel afraid of asking lecturer)

It is supported by Bremner in Cheng (2006:105). He argues that the cultural value in some Asian cultural contexts regard asking questions as disruptive, impolite, and disrespectful which might be the reason of many learners do not favor asking others.

Another reason is because of English vocabulary learning tended to be done as an individual process as stated by Kafipour (2011:621-622). He states that since English vocabulary learning tended to be done as an individual process and learning a word does not necessarily require social interaction, thus, they preferred not to seek other's help. states Moreover, he that the educational based system on individualism also another reason of the least frequently use of vocabulary learning strategies.

The difficulties to find out the one who has good English skills in their family and community was another reason of the least frequently used social discovery strategies as in the following transcript:

P3: "No one can be asked, Sir.

None of my family member
can speak English, Sir"
(Translated script)

Note taking also the least frequently used strategies used by participants and also by achievers' group. The participants in this study showed less preference to use study aids, such as vocabulary notebook, wall chart, posters and card. This findings are consistent with Marin-Marin (2005), and Cheng (2006).

Making and using study aids such as word card, flash card, vocabulary notebook, and also organizing note were generally not used by participants in note taking strategies because of several reasons. Lack of motivation to make and use study aids are the first reason expressed the participants. by Besides that, they thought that making and using those study aids was not effective for them because they were not sure whether they would review them later. In fact, they had experienced using and making those study aids when they were in senior high school.

P1: "I think, making and using those study aids is not effective for me. Because I am not sure, I will review them letter" (Translated script)

P9: "I sticked new words in my bedroom when I was in senior high school. But, I don't do it anymore, because I am lazy to do it". (Translated script)

It is supported by Cheng (2006: 111) who states that the reasons of seldom use of not readymade study aids such as word lists, flashcard, and vocabulary notebook are because these strategies require extra efforts to create by themselves. Moreover, these strategies also need extra time to undertake these activities outside the classroom.

The participants also showed less preference in organizing the new words or word grouping strategies. Most of them do not have special way to organize the new words they met. This result is consistent with Al-Shuwairekh's (2001:261) who reported that the participants in his study did not seem to use any word-grouping strategies when making notes on new items.

The reason of lower use of organizing note was the difficulties in organizing or grouping the items was quite difficult. In fact, organizing vocabulary in meaningful ways makes it easier to learn as stated by Schmitt and Schmitt (1995:133). It is proved in the following transcript:

P4: "Categorizing the words is quite difficult to find out which category the word should be" (Translated script)

Guessing strategies were the most frequently used strategies used by high achievers besides expanding strategies which differentiate them with medium and lower achievers. 6 out of 7 high achiever students reported using guessing strategy as the first option to find out the meaning of a new word. thought that guessing was a fast process to find out the meaning of new words for them because they did not need to look up word in many pages and choose the appropriate meaning of several meanings exist in dictionary. The following interview transcript shows a reason why they used guessing strategies.

P1:" (I prefer to guess the meaning of the new word because it is much faster. if I use dictionary, I should look up word in many pages to find it and several meaning also exist in dictionary. By guessing, the

meaning might be quite different with dictionary has but the most important one is the meaning is appropriate with the meaning intended." (Translated script)

It is supported by Mart (2012:178) who states that the ability to guess the meaning of a word without referring to a dictionary saves time and allows the reader to continue reading without interruption which increases reading efficiency.

Knowledge in guessing was another reason of the high achievers used guessing strategies. Most low achievers got difficulties in guessing the meaning of new words because of lack of knowledge of guessing strategies. Besides that, they were afraid of making wrong guesses. The following interview transcript shows a reason why the low achievers do not use guessing strategies

P12: "guessing might be correct or wrong. Asking friends, the meaning of words might be correct or wrong. It is better for me to consult dictionary because dictionary give clear explanation and I get it by myself." (Translated script)

P13: (I don't know much how to guess)

It is supported by Dakun (2002:18) who states that contextual guessing may be especially helpful to students with higher proficiency and those with low level proficiency are often frustrated with this approach. It is also strengthened by Alhaysony (2012:520) who argues the reason

beginning L2 learners are not able to use guessing is their lack of basic language skills in the target language sufficient to make sense of new words and their contexts. Similarly, According to Intaraprasert (2005:167) states that getting the meaning from the context is not always easy for students because the context alone does not provide enough information for students to guess the meanings of words or phrases. Besides that, many words are not always interpretable through the context in which they appear..

Repetition which is considered 'shallow' strategies compared with 'deep strategies such associations were used more frequently by participants and also as the most frequently used strategies used by low achievers in this study. Low achievers paid much attention to retain the knowledge of new words in learning vocabulary. They used repetition because they thought they were easy to do compared with making associations. It is supported Intaraprasert (2005:95) that bv repetition strategy has been considered as the first and easiest strategy that learners pick up and use. In contrast, associations which is considered as 'deep strategies such associations were used less frequently because they require a greater cognitive effort so that, it was more difficult than repetition for the subjects to use as stated by Schmitt (1997:132).

Using English-Indonesia dictionary was the most frequently used strategy item used by participants in vocabulary learning strategies. All participants frequently used English-Indonesian dictionary rather than using English-English dictionary because they

thought that English-Indonesian dictionaries helped them understand the words easily and quickly. On the other hand, understanding the meaning of word in English-English dictionary was quite hard to understand and gave them more trouble since they have to face more English unknown words. following interview transcript shows a reason why participants used English-Indonesian dictionary rather English-English than using dictionary. It is proved in the following interview transcript.

P10: "I consult dictionary especially English-Indonesia dictionary because consulting English-English dictionary give me more trouble sir." (Translated script)

P8: "I use English-Indonesian dictionary such as Hasan Shadily's English-Indonesian dictionary because it is more complete and the meaning is clearer." (Translated script)

It is strengthened by (1987:282).Thompson He demonstrates that bilingual potentially more dictionaries are efficient and more motivating sources of information for language Similarly, Béjoint learners. Moulin in Hayati (2005:65) also state that bilingual dictionaries are ideal for quick consultation.

Based on the research findings and discussion of the findings, the researcher realizes that there were some limitations in this research. First, this research was only limited on the eight categories of vocabulary learning strategies

adapted from Intaraprasert (2004), Marin-Marin (2005)which probably not yet cover all students' strategies in learning vocabulary such as students' mental process, beliefs and attitudes toward vocabulary learning. Next. this research was still small scale research since the subject of the research was only the first year student of English department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic enrolled academic year 2012/2013. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other **English** department students of Bengkalis State Polytechnic. Finally, research investigated the students' strategies in learning **English** vocabulary and the strategies used by high, medium, and low achievers. There is no separation in terms of their gender, their previous academic background.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the researcher can draw a conclusion about the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

1. Among the eight strategy categories, English Department of Bengkalis State Polytechnic used expanding strategies as the most frequently used strategies, followed by practice, guessing, dictionary use, repetition, association, and note taking strategies, while social discovery strategies were the least frequently used strategies. In particular, using English-Indonesian dictionary guessing from pictures were the most popular strategies, while asking other people, using and making study aids, and organizing

- vocabulary items were rarely used.
- 2. High achievers used expanding strategies and guessing strategies as the most frequently used strategies, medium achievers used expanding strategies and guessing strategies, and low achievers used repetition strategies and expanding strategies as the most frequently used strategies. Note taking and social discoveries were the least frequently used strategies for all participants, regardless of their achievement.
- 3. The reasons of using expanding strategies as the most frequently used strategies were expanding vocabulary especially through English media was entertaining, up to date and easy to access, while less accurate information, feeling shy and afraid of asking, and difficulties to find the one who has good English skills in community were the reasons of students using social discovery as least frequently-used the strategies.

Suggestions

In accordance to the conclusions above, the researcher proposes suggestions as follows:

1. The lecturers are suggested to help the learners in learning vocabulary by introducing them beneficial vocabulary learning strategies such as using guessing strategies and then consulting confirm dictionary to their guesses in discovering the meaning of new words, using deeper processing / association strategies rather than shallow or repetition strategies to retain the new words, using more new words in communication and find

- more ways to practice to better retain the new words, and using and increasing exposure to various media to expand vocabulary knowledge.
- 2. The other researchers are suggested to conduct further research in area of vocabulary learning strategies at Bengkalis State Polytechnic or at other universities in Indonesia by also considering gender and academic background.

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