LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY EFL STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY AT MAMBAUL ULUM ISLAMIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Alfin Nurul Hidayah Laila[1], Wanda Dwi Lestari[2], Ulfa Yuliasari[3*]

[1,2,3]English Education Study Program, PGRI University of Ronggolawe
[*]Email: ulfa.yulia11@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is one of the language aspects that must be learned by the foreign language learners. Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for foreign language learners because limited vocabulary in learning a foreign language make the student's barrier in communication. Students will find difficulties in learning English if they do not know strategies in learning vocabulary. The data collecting techniques were questionnaire. The questionnaire were distributed to 30 students at Senior High School MambaulUlum Islamic grade XI. The objective of this research was to know the most learning strategy mostly used by the students of vocabulary. The result of the data showed that many students employed more than one strategies in learning vocabulary. Those strategies were using metacognitive strategies, cognitive, memory and activation strategies. The most dominant strategy was repetition in memory strategy. In this strategy, most of learners believed that repetition was the best way to remember words.

Keywords: vocabulary; learning strategies; language learning strategies

INTRODUCTION

Background of the problem

According to Cameron vocabulary as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language [1].Vocabulary is now a current focus in ESL pedagogy and research [2]. Vocabulary is important in the learning process, but some English class students at Mambaul Ulum Islam do not have the attention to improving their vocabulary skills. This is evidenced when speaking class. Students who have been limited in their vocabulary have just been silent in discussions.

Instead, students who realize how important vocabulary is will consider studying vocabulary more deeply. Those who have an interest in developing vocabulary have learning strategies to expand their vocabulary. A more recent study conducted by Goundar investigated the VLS most commonly used by British adults as foreign language learners [3]. The various aspects of the research and the methods used to achieve the goal will be significant to a larger audience of language learning.

Generally, vocabulary is a vital tool for communicating, and does not sufficiently harm the literal meaning of speech in communication [4]. Some researchers are making efforts to link learners' language learning strategies to vocabulary learning [5]. Vocabulary is considered by researchers to be an important means of communication. However, language learners sadly face their greatest obstacles when navigating this area [6].

Vocabulary is the building block of a language because they label objects, actions, ideas without which one cannot convey its intended meaning [7]. An example of this point is, when a person is thirsty in a foreign country and needs to drink water, one only needs to ask someone or signal to someone how to drink water and simply say 'water'. The recipient will immediately understand and interpret that a person is thirsty. Thus, there is no essential need for a complete sentence to be spoken but only one word which in this example is 'water'.

Understanding students' learning strategies is important for teachers and researchers because they try to develop a learning environment that stimulates high learning outcomes [8]. Students who do not have adequate vocabulary or word learning strategies continue to struggle through their educational careers, leading to a continuous cycle of frustration and failure [9].

Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies [10]. According to Nation, it is important that the strategy must first 'involve a choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from [10]. Secondly, it must be 'complex, that is, there are several steps to learn'. Thirdly, it should 'require knowledge and benefits from training' and finally, it should be 'improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use'.

Some researchers have begun to show renewed interest in new vocabulary learning strategies, underscoring the importance and relevance of vocabulary acquisition skills among L2 learners. Some researchers have analyzed different methods of vocabulary presentation and the effect they have on retention skills. Many studies have sought to determine the best vocabulary retention strategies for learners in the last 21 years [11].

This research will focus on the use of vocabulary strategies in student learning, where vocabulary is the most important unit in a language. In learning English, vocabulary will affect student learning outcomes [12]. The students learn vocabulary through simple words by listening to the people who speak around them [13].

The reason researchers chose the high school level was to find out how far students' vocabulary was understood during their education from elementary to high school. Researchers also want to know what strategies they always use to make it easier for them to learn vocabulary, because from elementary to high school many teachers always teach their students with the lecture method, so researchers want to know the extent to which students can learn vocabulary and with which strategies.

Aims of the Study
1) To know thelearning strategy used by the students of vocabulary in Islamic Senior High School MambaulUlum.
2) To know the most learning strategy used by the students of vocabulary in Islamic Senior High School MambaulUlum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research design
This research is categorized as a descriptive study because the researcher involves collecting data on student learning strategies in vocabulary at Mambaul Ulum Islam High School to answer questions about people's opinions on the problem of learning strategies.

Participants
The quesionaire was distributed to 30 students at Mambaul Ulum High School class ISLAM CLASS XI.

Data Analysis
The data of this study have been analyzed using descriptive statistics in which the number of frequencies will be tabulated and converted into percentages. Quantitative: The method of conducting research, adopted from a quantitative approach, is a questionnaire. Researchers used a google form to test a questionaire that included 34 statements. Therefore, this study will use an adapted version of the vocabulary strategy questionnaire proposed by Gu and Johnson [14] and similar to the study conducted by Noor and Amir [15]. The data are recorded accordingly in a descriptive statistical format that forms the basis of the paper and is highlighted in the conclusion of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 students of Mambaul Ulum Islamic High School.

RESULTS
The research used an adapted version of the Vocabulary Strategyquestionnaire that was proposed by Gu and Johnson [14] and similar to the study conducted by Noor and Amir [15]. The data is recorded accordingly in descriptive statistics format where 'frequency counts were tabulated and converted to percentages'.

Metacognitive
Table 1. Self Initiation Strategies

Self initiation strategies	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I think about my progress in vocabulary learning.	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)
I try to find out all I can about the new words I learn.	28 (93%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
I only focus on things that are related to examinations.	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	14 (47%)

It was discovered that learners do self-reflective practices, thus it was revealed that 80% of the learners think about the progress in vocabulary learning. Furthermore, 93% of the respondents try to find out all that they can about the new word which includes; its meaning, usage, other definitions and pronunciation. The belief that learners only focus on the things that relate to examination was proved valid as 87% of the subjects were agree with this concept.

Table 2. Selective Attention

Selective attention	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I know which words are important for me to learn.	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
I look up words that I'm interested in.	12 (40%)	2 (7%)	6 (20%)
I make a note of words that seem important to me.	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
I know what cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.	10 (33%)	12 (40%)	8 (27%)

The data revealed that 40% learners took own initiative to lookup words that they were interested in. Also, 87% of the respondents know the words that are important for them to learn. To assist in achieving the latter, they make notes of words which seem important and a total of 87% learners attested to this. On the contrary, 40% of the learners stated that they were unsure about what cues to use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.

Cognitive

Table 3. Use Background Knowledge

Use background knowledge	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I skip words I don't understand	14 (47%)	4 (13%)	12 (40%)
I use my experience and common sense to guess	28 (93%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
I guess the meaning and then look at the dictionary (when I meet new words in reading)	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)

It was revealed in the study that majority of the respondents used their prior knowledge (93%) such as experience and common sense "in guessing the meaning of the words". One of the strategies that 80% of the respondents use after guessing the meaning is to look at thedictionary for its meaning and compare the answers.

Table 4. Using Linguistic Clues

Using linguistic clues	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I make use of my knowledge of the topic to guess the meaning of word	28 (93%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
Guess word's meaning from word classes, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
I analyze the word structure (prefix, root and suffix) when guessing the meaning of the word)	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)

In terms of linguistic clues, 87% of the learners use the word classes, such as parts of speech to guess and discover the meaning of new vocabulary items. Furthermore, 93% of the respondents highlighted that they used topical knowledge to guess the meaning of a word. It was also revealed that 80% of the learners analyze the word structure (prefix, root andsuffix) in order to guess the meaning of the word.

Table 5. Dictionary Strategies

Dictionary strategies	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I use an English dictionary	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)
I use a bilingual dictionary	30 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I use the dictionary to find out the pronunciation of the word	24 (80%)	4 (13%)	2 (7%)
I use the dictionary to find only the meaning of the word	14 (47%)	6 (20%)	10 (33%)
I look in the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word	20 (67%)	6 (20%)	4 (13%)
I use the dictionary to find the appropriate usage (example sentence) of the word	22 (73%)	8 (27%)	0 (0%)

One of the methods to learn new vocabulary is through dictionaries. It was revealed that 80% respondents used an English dictionary. In addition, a higher data revealed that 94% learners used bilingual dictionaries. Also, it was found that a common use of the dictionary by the 80% EFL learners is to check the pronunciation of the vocabulary. On the contrary, only 47% use the dictionary to find the meaning of words.It was interesting to note that 67% of the respondents' recourse to the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word. Furthermore, 73% of the learners made use of the dictionary in locating the appropriate usage of a word which includes example sentences.

Table 6. Note Taking Strategies

Note taking strategies	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I have a vocabulary note book to list down new word	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
I write down the English word and translation of the word in my language	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
I only take note the meaning of the word	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I take note of the usages of the word (example sentences, part of speech, etc.)	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)
I take note of the synonym or antonym of the word	20 (67%)	10 (33%)	0 (0%)

A common practice in EFL classroom where learners use vocabulary was also highlighted in the research. The data showed that 87% of learners list down new words in a vocabulary note book. It was impressive to see the role played by translation as 87% of the respondents stated that they write down words and then translate the words into their own language. Furthermore, 47% of the learners disagreed that they only took note of the meaning of the word. As 80% of the learners stated they took note of the usage of the word and example sentences as well. Interesting to note through the data, 67% take note of the synonym or antonym of the words whereas; 33% unsure.

Activation

Table 7. Activation Strategies

Activation strategies	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I make use of the words I learned in speaking and writing	30 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I make use of the words I learned in everyday situations	28 (93%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)

The data revealed that 100% of the learners make use of the words that they have learned in speaking and writing. In addition, 93% of the respondents stated that they make use of words learned in everyday situations. This means that learners are confident in using words in everyday situation in either spoken or written English.

Memory

Table 8. Words Should be Memorized

Words should be memorized	Agree	Unsure	Disagree

The best way to remember words is to memorize word lists	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
Repetition is the best way to remember words	30 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
It is only necessary to remember one dictionary definition	12 (40%)	10 (33%)	8 (27%)
I can acquire a large vocabulary by memory of individual words	28 (93%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)

The data revealed that 97% of learners believed that repetition was the best way to remember words. On the other hand, 87% of learners agreed that memorization of words list was the best way to remember words. Furthermore, 40% of the respondents agree that it was only necessary to remember one dictionary definition.

Table 9. Memory/Repetition Strategies

Memory/ Repetition Strategies	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
To remember a word, I repeat it aloud to myself	22 (73%)	2 (7%)	6 (20%)
To remember a word, I write it repeatedly	16 (53%)	6 (20%)	8 (27%)
I create a mental image of the new word to help me remember the word	22 (73%)	6 (20%)	2 (7%)
To remember a word, I analyze the word by breaking it into different parts	24 (80%)	2 (7%)	4 (13%)

In terms of memory strategies, it was highlighted that 73% leaners repeat words aloud to themselves in order to remember a word whereas, 53% of the respondents also choose to write words repeatedly, in order to remember a word. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that 73% of the respondents "create a mental image of a new word" in order to remember a new word. 80% of the participants analyze the words by breaking it into different parts in order to remember words.

Table 10. Most common strategies used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Strategy	Statistics in Percentages (%)
Guessing (through experience and common sense)	93%
Dictionary	94%
Translation	87%
Note taking	80%
Repetition	97%

Teachers of English as a foreign/second language have always encountered that learners find it very difficult to acquire vocabulary. When learners sometimes question teachers how vocabulary can be acquired then teachers are not equipped with a variety of strategies to explain to the learners but simply two or three. The learners need proper guidance when acquiring vocabulary as it is the basis of the whole language which they want to learn.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the English VLSs that are most commonly used as foreign language learners. The various aspects of the research and the methods used to achieve the goal will be significant to a larger audience of language learning. The repetition strategy is shown as the VLS most commonly used by EFL students. Furthermore, the study revealed that EFL students typically use guessing, memorization, dictionary strategies, translation use and use background knowledge and experience to improve their vocabulary.

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