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CONTENTS

LEARNERS' STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY

Marita Safitri

**Academy of Foreign Language of Sinema Yogyakarta,
Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University
Corresponding email: safitrimarita55@gmail.com**

Abstract

Learners frequently do not care about the strategies they use to improve their vocabulary mastery. On the other hand, a strategy is important in learning and increasing for both vocabulary and knowledge. Therefore, the objective of this research is to find out the strategies that the students adopt to improve their vocabulary mastery. A survey method was used in this research. A questionnaire was used based on Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaires (VLSQ) that is designed by Schmitt's Taxonomy. It consisted of 25 items. Data were analyzed by using descriptive analysis. The results showed that the students in this survey are medium strategy users and the metacognitive strategy is the strategy the students of Academy of Foreign Language of Sinema Yogyakarta mostly adopt to improve their vocabulary mastery. It is followed by memory, determination, social (discovery), cognitive and the least is social (consolidation). In the context of English as Foreign Language students, it is suggested to the students and other readers to balance the five strategies in applying them both in learning and in improving their vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: EFL Students, Learning Strategy, and Vocabulary Mastery.

1. INTRODUCTION

People communicate each other to have interaction through language they use. The use of language in communication plays the most important role since they have the same goals which are gaining and sharing information using the language. Communicating is the basic purpose of language. Therefore, language can be defined as a communication tool in human being life. In order to improve the social life quality, the language is important to be learned. In Indonesia, English has been established as a foreign language as stated in the 1994 National Curriculum. Based on the curriculum, the purpose of learning English in Indonesia is to enable Indonesian learners to speak and write in English (Anggriani, 2013).

Speaking and writing are the parts of English skills which absolutely need the role of vocabulary. Vocabulary takes an important part in English language acquisition, particularly for college learners. The vital stage is at the level of college; especially it refers to their improvement of English proficiency. In the process of vocabulary learning, it is

important both recognizing the meaning of a particular word and recognizing all the word aspects (He, 2010).

One common reason why college learners do not care about their strategies is because they think that as long as they can obtain new words and keep those words for a long time in their long-term memory, it is considered adequate. They do not notice or worry what strategy to use to increase their vocabulary mastery. On the other hand, a strategy is important in learning and increasing for both vocabulary and knowledge. They who are more aware about the strategies used and the reasons of using the strategies are the successful language learners (Cotterall and Reinders, 2004). Therefore, an appropriate strategy based on their needs and interests is needed for the college learners since it helps them to increase their vocabulary mastery. O'Malley and Chamot as cited in Cotterall and Reinders, 2004 mention the three different categories of strategies. Those consist of cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective strategies which are considered important in language learning.

The strategies are useful to help learners to learn effectively. It is considered helpful to make some effort to remember a new word by using consolidation strategies. These strategies come from the social, memory, cognitive, or metacognitive strategy groups (Schmitt, 1997).

Based on the background of the study, this research problem is formulated as the following: "What strategies do learners adopt to improve their vocabulary mastery?

A. Learning Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot as cited in Cotterall and Reinders, 2004 classify the three different types of strategies of language learning. They are cognitive strategies, metacognitove strategies, and social or affective strategies. Cognitive strategies involve identifying, remembering, storing or reviewing words, sounds and other aspects of the target language. The strategies work directly with the target language. Cognitive strategies are used to learn the language and to use it. Metacognitive strategies help language learning ultimately by helping learners in administering and monitoring their learning. Social strategies are related to things that the learners accomplish to direct their feelings and to control their interactions with others.

B. Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategy is an effort to develop competence both on linguistic and sociolinguistic in the target language. Memorization, initiation of conversation with native speakers, and inference are some examples of language learning strategy (Ellis, 2008). The construct of language learning strategy is to specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress to develop their skills

The Schmitt Taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies can be seen as follows

in a second or foreign language (Oxford, 1999).O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify the three different types of strategies of language learning. They are cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social or affective strategies. Therefore, it can be stated that language learning strategy is the students' selection of several techniques to solve their problems in learning which refers to specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that they use in to develop their own skills both in a second and in foreign language. As a result, the students who have strategies in learning become the successful language students.

C. Vocabulary Learning Strategy

Vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies which have attracted much attention since the late seventies. A vocabulary strategy is considered as a special instructional tool and way of going about directly or explicitly as well as the independent word learning skills. It is required in order to learn words independently (Riankamol, 2008).

It is added by Schmitt (1997), he states that learners must employ their knowledge of the language, contextual clues, and reference materials to build the new meaning (Determination Strategies) or ask another person who knows (Social Strategies) when they meet a word for the first time. In order to gain initial information about the new word, these strategies are labeled as Discovery Strategies. When they have been introduced once to the new word, building some efforts to remember the word is useful to through Consolidation Strategies, which can come from the Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive, and Metacognitive Strategies.

Table 2.1Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

TYPE	STRATEGIES
DET	Analyze part of speech
DET	Analyze affixes and roots
DET	Check for L1 cognate
DET	Analyze any available pictures or gestures
DET	Guess from textual context
DET	Bilingual dictionary (e.g. English-Indonesian dictionary)
DET	Monolingual dictionary (e.g. English-English dictionary)
DET	Word lists
DET	Flash cards
SOC	(Discovery) Ask teacher for an L1 translation
SOC	(Discovery) Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word
SOC	(Discovery) Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word
SOC	(Discovery) Ask teacher for meaning
SOC	(Discovery) Discover new meaning through group work activity
SOC	(Consolidation) Study and practice meaning in a group
SOC	(Consolidation) Teacher checks students' word lists for accuracy
SOC	(Consolidation) Interact with native speakers
MEM	Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning
MEM	Imagine word's meaning
MEM	Connect word to a personal experience
MEM	Associate the word with its coordinates
MEM	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms
MEM	Use semantic maps
MEM	Use "scales" for gradable adjectives
MEM	Peg Method1
MEM	Logic Method2

TYPE	STRATEGIES
MEM	Group words together to study them
MEM	Group words together spatially on a page
TYPE	STRATEGIES
MEM	Use new word in sentence
MEM	Group words together of a word
MEM	Study the spelling of a word
MEM	Study the sound of a word
MEM	Say new word aloud when studying
MEM	Imagine word form
MEM	Underline initial letter of the word
MEM	Configuration
MEM	Use keyword Method
MEM	Affixes and roots (remembering)
MEM	Part of speech (remembering)
MEM	Paraphrase the word's meaning
MEM	Use cognates in study
MEM	Learn the words of an idiom together
MEM	Use physical action when learning a word
MEM	Use semantic feature grids
COG	Verbal repetition
COG	Written repetition
COG	Word lists
COG	Flash cards
COG	Take notes in class
COG	Use the vocabulary section in your textbook
COG	Listen to tape of word lists
COG	Put English labels on physical objects
COG	Keep a vocabulary notebook
MET	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newspaper, etc)
MET	Testing oneself with word tests
MET	Use spaced word practice
MET	Skip or pass new word
MET	Continue to study word over time

Based on the Schmitt Taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies above, strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning include Determination (DET), and Social (SOC), strategies. Meanwhile, for strategies in consolidating a word once that it has been encountered, the strategies consist of SOC, Memory (MEM), Cognitive (COG), and Metacognitive (MET).

D. Vocabulary Mastery

Mastery of vocabulary can be defined as knowing the words and its meanings. It includes both how the words sound and how they are used in the context. Therefore, it is more complex (Furqon, 2013). It is added by Fitriana F. N, (2011) who says that vocabulary mastery is a comprehensive knowledge of vocabulary which students need to recognize and use. The mastery itself is the comprehensive knowledge. It means that vocabulary mastery is the comprehensive knowledge of vocabulary that students know or use.

According to Bachman and Chapelle in Read (2000), vocabulary mastery involves both knowledge of language and the ability to put language to use in context. The three components are the context of vocabulary use, the vocabulary knowledge and fundamental processes,

and metacognitive strategies for vocabulary use.

E. Related Studies

This research is supported by two related studies. The first related study is from Riankamol, (2008) entitled "A Survey Study of Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Gifted English Students at Triam Udomsuksa School in the First Semester of Academic Year 2008. The results show that the most frequent strategy used is metacognitive strategies by students with the highest mean score (2.61). The second related study is from Kafipour, 2011 entitled "Vocabulary Learning Strategies and their Contribution to Reading Comprehension of EFL Undergraduate Students in Kerman Province". The results show thatmetacognitive and cognitive strategies are determined as the most frequently used categories of strategies by 164 EFL undergraduate students. The results are proved by the overall strategy mean score of 3.06.

2. METHODOLOGY

For the method, this research was applied through a survey method in order to identify the students' strategies adopted to improve their vocabulary mastery.

For the instrument, a questionnaire was used based on Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaires (VLSQ). It was designed by Schmitt's Taxonomy to assess adult ESL students' strategies in increasing their vocabulary mastery. The VLSQ consisted of 25 items and the six strategy categories. They were the Determination, Social (Discovery), Social (Consolidation), Memory, Cognitive and Metacognitive.

Table 4.1 The Subscale Means of Overall Strategy Use

Subscale	Item Means	Rank
Determination	2.86	3
Social	2.84	4

The scales which were used to indicate the frequency of the usage were never or almost never, only occasionally or seldom, sometimes, usually, and always or almost always.

For the participants, the samples in this research consisted of 30 students of Academy of Foreign Language of Sinema Yogyakarta 2017.

For the data collection, the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaires (VLSQ) as an objective test was given to analyze the students' strategies in improving their vocabulary mastery.

For data analysis, data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Scoring system was based on Oxford's (1997, 2001) and used to find high, medium, and low strategy users. It shows that score 2.4 or lower was the low strategy use, 2.5-3.4 was the medium strategy use, and 3.5 or higher was the high strategy use.

3. FINDINGS

The results are obtained through the reliability of the instrument which consists of the 25 items of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire (VLSQ). The data then are analyzed using descriptive analysis and the data provide an acceptable coefficient and results as seen follows.

A. Descriptive Results

In order to answer the research problem and to conclude the most frequent strategies used by the college students, this following table shows the mean score and rank of the overall strategy use. It can be seen clearly in table 4.1 below.

Social (Discovery)	2.68	6
Memory (Consolidation)	2.93	2
Cognitive	2.76	5
Metacognitive	3.03	1
Overall	**2.85**	**-**

In table 4.1, it shows the students' preferences of each subscale. The main preference refers to metacognitive followed by memory, determination, social (discovery), cognitive, and social (discovery). It means that the overall tendency of strategies used by the college learners in improving their vocabulary mastery is metacognitive strategy. It is seen from the mean of metacognitive strategy which is 3.03.

The other results which are obtained show the most and least strategies used by the students. It will be seen clearly in the following tables.

Table 4.2 The Most Used Strategy Items

TYPE	Strategy	Mean
MET	I listen to English songs and news.	4.57
MEM	I study a spelling of new words.	3.8
MEM	I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook.	3.7
SOC	I ask my classmate for meaning.	3.63
SOC	I know some new words when working in group works.	3.63
MET	I memorize word from English books, articles, magazines, and other resources.	3.57
DET	I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.	3.37
DET	I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Bahasa Indonesia	3.2
MEM	I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries.	2.93
COG	I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook	2.87

In the table, it presents the most used strategies. From the results, it also shows the most used strategy items of the top 10 strategies are metacognitive strategies (MET). It means that from the total of 5 metacognitive strategies in VLSQ, 40% metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used.

The least used strategies will be presented in the table 3 below.

Table 4.3 The Least Used Strategy Items

TYPE	Strategy	Mean
COG	I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.	1.73
DET	I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings.	2
SOC	I ask native speakers for help.	2.03
SOC	I ask the teacher to translate the words into Bahasa Indonesia.	2.23
COG	I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.	2.26
MET	I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge.	2.26
SOC	I practice English in group work activities.	2.37
MET	I do not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them.	
COG	I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts.	2.4
MEM	I use physical actions when learning words.	2.5
MEM	I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it.	2.57

In the table, it presents the least used strategies. It shows the three of the top 10 strategies which are social strategies (SOC). It means that from the total of 6 support strategies in VLSQ, 50% social strategies are the least frequently used.

4. DISCUSSIONS

From the results obtained by using the VLSQ, it provides several findings. They are the level of strategy users, the most frequent strategy used, and the least strategy used by the students.

First, it explains the students in this survey are medium strategy users in improving their vocabulary mastery. The data show that there are some high strategy users. It is seen from the percentage that 70% students are medium strategy users, 23% are low strategy users and 7% are high strategy users in improving their vocabulary mastery. Since some of the students are fresh graduate of high school, it results the overall medium usage of strategies on the students.

Second, it shows that the overall tendency of the strategies used by college learners in improving their vocabulary mastery is metacognitive learning strategy. It is seen from the mean of metacognitive learning strategy which is 3.03. Metacognitive strategy is found as the second frequent strategy used. According to Riankamol (2008), metacognitive strategies help students learn with many English sources. Moreover, it can interest and motivate them. Listening to English songs and news, and memorizing words from English magazines are several examples of these strategies. Therefore, this strategy is the highest. The students prefer metacognitive strategies because the items in this category help them to overcome their difficulties that might arise when the text they read is complicated. These strategies are followed by memory, determination, social (discovery), cognitive, and social (consolidation).

Memory strategy is found as the third frequently used strategy or in the middle of other four categories of strategies. Consequently, it was less frequently used than determination and metacognitive strategies. However, it is more frequently used than social and cognitive strategies.

Moreover, in the determination the strategy, the most frequent strategy that was chosen is learning meaning of words by identifying its part of speech. It is predicted that the students are in the medium level in using strategy since they are fresh graduate students of senior high school. This level refers to their level. Therefore, the criterion of question is mostly chosen by the students. The students in this survey are considered as medium strategy users in increasing their vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, cognitive is the fifth frequent strategy. It can be predicted that the students are not very interested in repetition both in verbal and written. They also seldom use flash cards to help them in remembering new words. It is proved that they rarely use the flash cards to improve their vocabulary. Meanwhile, this strategy involves verbal repetition, written repetition, word lists, flash cards, notes in class, and the use of the vocabulary section in your textbook.

Third, the other interesting result enlightens that the students use less the social strategy. It is found as the least frequently strategy that is used by the students with the mean score of 2.68. Social strategy is found as the sixth frequent strategy. Since the samples of this research are the students of graduate program of ELS, absolutely they seldom ask their classmates for meaning and discover new meaning through group work activity studying. The reason is that they have been in the advanced level. Those strategies are generally used by the under level of advanced students. Moreover, the strategy that is done by interacting with

native speakers is the least frequent strategy that they used.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the reported findings, three conclusions are made. First, it can be concluded that the 30 students of Academy of Foreign Language of Sinema Yogyakarta are the medium users of strategies in improving their vocabulary mastery. Second, the most frequently used strategy is metacognitive strategy followed by memory, determination, social (discovery), cognitive and the least is social (consolidation). The last, it shows that metacognitive strategy is the most frequently strategy used in the context of English as a Foreign Language students as seen from the results of this research and other several related studies.

It can be concluded that the overall tendency of strategies used by college learners in improving their vocabulary mastery is metacognitive strategy. While the social strategy is considered as the least used strategy.

It is suggested to the students and other readers that they should be proportionally guided by the lecturer or teachers in using various learning strategies. Since the students are considered medium users in learning strategies, the students and other readers should balance those strategies in applying them in improving their vocabulary mastery. Even though social strategies are considered as the least frequent strategies used by the students, those strategies are very important in order to help the students to increase their vocabulary mastery. The reason is that it consists of repetition both in verbal and in written. Therefore, it is suggested to the students and other readers to maximally use the strategies to help them to enlarge their vocabulary.

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