VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES APPLIED BY THE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF BENGKULU UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this research were to find out vocabulary learning strategies applied by the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University and also the most and the least frequently applied strategies. This research was designed as a descriptive quantitative. The population was 343 students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University. The sample of this research was 86 students chosen randomly from the population. The instrument was questionnaire adapted from Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy (1997). The result of this study showed that the students applied the six groups of vocabulary learning strategies. However, the mean score of overall strategies indicated that the students applied the strategies in the frequency of "Sometimes". Moreover, Determination strategy was the most frequently applied by the students, followed by Metacognitive strategy, Cognitive Strategy, Memory strategy, Social (Discovery) strategy, and Social (Consolidation) as the least frequently applied by the students. It can be concluded that the students of English Education Study Program preferred to learn and deal with new word individually to ask people's helps.

KeywordS: *Vocabulary, Learning, Strategies*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan strategi-strategi belajar kosakata yang diaplikasikan oleh mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Bengkulu dan juga strategi yang paling sering dan yang paling sedikit diaplikasikan oleh mahasiswa tersebut. Penelitian ini dirancang sebagai penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif.Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah 343 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Bengkulu.Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 86 mahasiswa yang dipilih secara acak dari populasi. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah angket yang dikembangkan dari Taksonomi Strategi-strategi Belajar Kosakata (Schmitt, 1997).Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa tersebut mengaplikasikan enam kelompok strategi belajar kosakata. Bagaimanapun, rata-rata keseluruhan strategi menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa tersebut mengaplikasikan strategi-strategitersebut dengan frekuensi "Kadang-kadang".Selain itu, strategi Determinasi merupakan strategi yang paling sering diaplikasikan oleh mahasiswa, diikutiolehs trategi Metakognitif, strategi Kognitif, strategi Memori, strategi Sosial (Penemuan), dan strategi Sosial (Konsolidasi) sebagai strategi yang paling sedikit digunakan oleh mahasiswa. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris lebih

menyukai belajar maupun menemukan arti kata baru secara individu daripada meminta bantuan orang lain.

Kata kunci: *Kosakata, Strategi, Belajar*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is an essential part in learning a foreign language. Learners cannot master the language without learning vocabulary first since vocabulary is the words of a language. It is stated by Rubin and Thompson (1994), vocabulary learning is the heart of mastering a foreign language, since one cannotspeak, understand, read, or write a foreignlanguage without knowing a lot of words. It means learners who have problems in vocabulary may find it hard to communicate understandably. On the other hand, they who have wide vocabulary will be easier to express their ideas. Therefore, learners have to improve their vocabulary before learning other aspects of the language.

Mastering English vocabulary is considered to be very important for the learners, especially the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University whose major is English. Since they are prepared to be an English teacher in the future, they are expected to have good vocabulary. Moreover, almost all of books used by the students are in English.

Also, teaching and learning process in the classroom uses English. It means the students need to have good vocabulary in order to be able to read the books and to follow teaching and learning process.

In English Education Study Program, vocabulary is not a subject. It is integrated or learned through other subjects. It means the students should improve their vocabulary individually. However, the students of English Education Study Program often got some good English achievements, such as got scholarships and exchange students programs and also won some English competitions, such as debate, speech contest, and news casting competition. In addition, the students also often existed in many events outside the campus even though there is no facility that specially provides the information for the students.

However, the students of English Education Study Program have different vocabulary that can be seen from their English achievements and also their TOEFL score. Some students have good vocabulary while others have lower vocabulary. The difference may be because of learning strategies applied by

the students. The students who have good vocabulary usually used strategies to improve their vocabulary while the students who have lower vocabulary do not have specific strategies in improving their vocabulary.

Since applying strategies in learning vocabulary are useful to help the students in learning vocabulary, they need to apply the appropriate strategy to help them in mastering vocabulary.Oxford (1990) defined learning strategies as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable. It means that applying the appropriate strategies can help the students in improving their vocabulary since vocabulary is taught inductively by the lecturer in the classroom.

Considering the importance of learners' strategies in learning vocabulary, some researchers have conducted research that concern about vocabulary learning strategies. Among the researchers, Kafipour*et al*. (2011) have investigated vocabulary learning strategies used by Iranian Undergraduate Students. They found that memory strategy was the most frequently used strategy by the students. In contrast,

cognitive strategy was the least frequently used. Other research conducted by Nirattisai and Chiramanee (2014) to find out vocabulary learning strategies applied by the students of Prince of Songkla University. They found that the most frequently applied strategy by the students was Determination strategy while social strategy was the least frequently applied. They also found that the students applied the strategies proposed by Schmitt (1997) and Siriwan (2007) in the frequency of "Sometimes".

Based on the explanation above, the researcher assumes that the students of English Education Study Program applied strategies in learning vocabulary. Therefore, the researcher is interested to find out vocabulary learning strategies applied by the students and also the most and the least frequently applied strategies. In this research, the researcher adapted vocabulary learning strategies from Schmitt's taxonomy (1997). The researcher conducted a research entitled **"Vocabulary Learning Strategies Applied by the Students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University"**.

According to Hornby (1984), vocabulary is a total number of words which make up a language; and a range of

words known to, or used by a person. Vocabulary as a crucial part in a language needs to be acquired by the learners since it affects their ability in the four skills, which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It is supported by Richards (2002) that vocabulary provides a lot of basics for someone about how to speak, listen, read, and write. In order to be able to master vocabulary, learners need to apply the appropriate learning strategies.

Chamot (2004) stated that learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning goal. It means, learning strategies are useful for the students in reaching their language learning goal. The strategies in vocabulary learning also considered to be very important in mastering vocabulary.

There were some vocabulary learning strategy taxonomies proposed by the linguists, such as, Gu& Johnson (1996), Nation (2001), and Schmitt (1997).However, Schmitt's taxonomy was chosen in this present research because this taxonomy classifies vocabulary learning strategies in more detail.

There are six strategies in his taxonomy. They are organized into two dimensions. Schmitt defined each strategy as follows:

Discovery dimension; these strategies are used to discover a new words' meaning. The strategies are:

Determination strategies (DET) used by an individual when faced with discovering a new word's meaning without resource to another person's expertise. The word's meaning can be discovered through guessing from one's structural knowledge of a language, guessing from an first language cognate, guessing from context, or using reference materials.

Social strategies (SOC) use interaction with other people to improve language learning. Learners can ask teachers or classmates to find information about a new word and the answers can be in a number of ways such as synonyms, translations, etc.

Consolidation dimension; these strategies are used to remember a word once it has been introduced. The strategies are:

Social strategies (SOC) study vocabulary knowledge with other people. Learners can learn or

practice the words in a group work or interact to others people.

Memory strategies (MEM) traditionally known as *mnemonics* whichinvolve relating the word to be retained with some previously learned knowledge, using some form of imagery, or grouping. A new word can be integrated into many kinds of existing knowledge (e.g., previous experiences or known words) or images can be custom-made for retrieval (e.g., images of the word's form or meaning attributes). Grouping is an important way to aid recall, and people seem to organize words into groups naturally without prompting.

Cognitive strategies (COG) exhibit the common function of manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner. These strategies are similar to memory strategies, but are not focused so specifically on manipulative mental processing; they include repetition and using mechanical means to study vocabulary, including the keeping of vocabulary notebooks.

Metacognitive strategies (MET) involve a conscious overview of the learning process and making decisions about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best way to study. This includes improving access to input, deciding on the most efficient methods of study/ review, and testing oneself to gauge improvement. It also includes deciding which words are worth studying and which are not, as well as persevering with the words one chooses to learn.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive quantitative method. The population was the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University. The sample was 86 students chosen randomly from the population. The researcher adapted Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy proposed by Schmitt (1997) as the instrument in this research.

The researcher analyzed the data by using proportion formula and mean score formula. After getting the percentage and the mean score from each strategies and groups, the researcher determined the predicates of the strategy into Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The 58 strategiesproposed by Schmitt (1997) were dividedinto six groups of vocabulary learning strategies, namely Determination strategy, Social (Discovery) strategy, Social (Consolidation) strategy, Memory strategy, Cognitive strategy, and Metacognitive strategy. To investigate the frequency of the questionnaire items, the researcher has divided the items into five categories which were Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never.

The following chart presents the result of overall vocabulary learning strategies applied by the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University. The data are presented as follows:
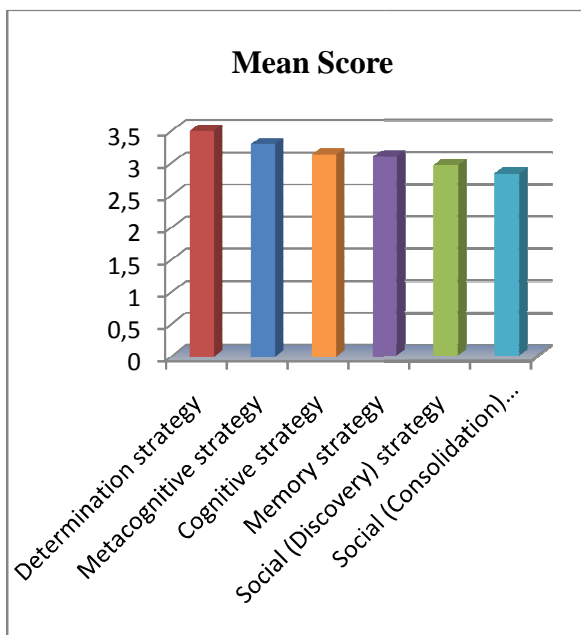
The chart above shows the students of English Education Study Program applied the six groups of vocabulary learning strategies. They were Determination strategy, Social (Discovery) strategy, Social (Consolidation Strategy, Memory strategy, Cognitive Strategy, and Metacognitive strategy.

Moreover, it can be seen that Determination strategy was the only strategy that *often* applied by the students while the others strategies were *sometimes* applied by the students. It means that the group of Determination strategy was the most frequently applied strategy by the students in learning vocabulary since it had the highest mean score 3.50. In contrary, the group of Social (Consolidation) Strategy was the least frequently applied vocabulary learning strategy with the lowest mean score 2.83.

The mean score of overall vocabulary learning strategies applied by the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University was 3.14. It means the students applied vocabulary learning strategy proposed by Schmitt (1997) in the predicate of "Sometimes".

Determination Strategy

According to Schmitt (2000), determination strategy was the strategy used by the learner to find the meaning of new words without asking another person's help or expertise. Determination strategy was found as the most frequently applied by the students. This strategy may be easy to be used by the students since they can find the meaning of new words easily, for example, using some supporting tools. Nowadays, there were many kinds of translation tools that can be accessed or downloaded by the students, such as e-dictionary and google translate. Those translation tools can help the students easier in dealing with new words. Therefore, the students preferred to deal with the meaning of new words individually. This finding was in line with Schmitt (1997), Nirattisai and Chiramanee (2014), and Astika (2006) in which Determination strategy became the most favored strategy by the students.

Metacognitive Strategy

Metacognitive strategy involves a conscious overview ofthe learning process and making decisions about planning, monitoring, orevaluating the best ways to study. However, the result of this study shows that metacognitive strategy *sometimes* applied by the students. Since metacognitive strategy needs self-management in learning vocabulary means that the students need more time to prepare their learning activity, to monitor their progress, and to evaluate their whole study. It seems that this strategy is quite difficult for the students since they need management skill to apply this strategy in learning vocabulary.

Cognitive Strategy

This strategy is similar to memory strategy, but is not focused so specifically on manipulative mental processing; it includes repetition and using mechanical means to study vocabulary. Nevertheless, this strategy was *sometimes* applied by the students. Since cognitive strategy encourages the students to learn and practice vocabulary by using vocabulary notebook, word list, and flashcard, it may be not really interesting for them to use it. The students tended to use enjoyable strategies that can help and encourage them to learn vocabulary frequently. Besides, it seems that the students need to give more time to make it by themselves. Thus, the students did not apply this strategy that much.

Memory Strategy

According to Schmitt (2000), memory strategies engage learners in learning the new word through mental processing by associating their existing or background knowledge with the new word. However, the result of this study showed that the students *sometimes* applied this strategy in learning vocabulary. Memory strategy is usually applied by beginner level or elementary school. Oxford (2006) stated that students simply did not use memory strategy especially beyond elementary school. Therefore, it may be not suitable to be used by the students of English Education Study Program since they are expected to practice the words in order to be able to use it in spoken and written than memorize each word.

It is supported by the result found by Kafipour*et al*. (2011) in which memory strategy was the most frequently applied strategy by the subjects of their research since the subjects are junior EFL students. Therefore, memory strategy was still suitable for them.

Social (Discovery) Strategy

Social (Discovery) strategy was the opposite of determination strategy in which learners used this strategy to find the meaning of new words by interacting with other people. Based on the result, the students were *sometimes* applied this strategy. The possible reason was because dealing with new words was not really difficult for the students since they can find the meaning of new word easily by using many ways such as guessing from the context. They also can use translation tools such as e-dictionary and google translate which were very popular to be used among the students in this era. Hence, they preferred to solve this problem by themselves without asking other people's helps so that they did not apply this strategy frequently.

Social (Consolidation) Strategy

The group of Social (Consolidation) strategy was found as the least frequently applied strategy by the students. According to Schmitt (2000), Social (Consolidation) strategy was used to improve language learning by interacting with other people. The students probably wanted to practice English vocabulary with other people but the condition and environment did not encourage them to do that. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, most of people did not speak English. Therefore, the students only have a chance to practice English vocabulary

with their lecturers and their friends mostly in the classroom. In addition, the students tended to be shy or unconfident to practice English outside the classroom so that they preferred to use Indonesian language in communicating with their friends. This finding was in line with Nirattisai and Chiramanee (2014) who found social (consolidation) strategy as the least frequently applied by the students.

As a conclusion, Cohen (1998) stated that language learning strategies including vocabulary learning used by the students comes from their conscious thought and behavior. In addition, Schmitt (1997) stated that vocabulary learning strategy used by the learners depend on a number of factors such as motivation, proficiency, and culture. Furthermore, Suprapto (2009) stated that there are some factors that influence students learning strategy, which both inside and outside factors. The internal factors could be in form of motivated, brain, attitude, learning style, learning strategy, while the external factors could be in form environment, teacher, curriculum, students, and perception. Hence, the strategies applied by the learners were different because of those factors.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After conducting the research and doing the analysis about the students' strategies in learning vocabulary, it was found that the average students of English Education Study Program applied the six groups of vocabulary learning strategies proposed by Schmitt (1997). The strategies are Determination strategies, Social (Discovery) strategy, Social (Consolidation) strategy, Memory strategy, Cognitive strategy, and Metacognitive strategy. Since the mean score of overall strategies was 3.14, it was concluded that the strategies applied by the students were in the predicate of "Sometimes".

The result also showed that *Determination strategy* was the most frequently applied vocabulary learning strategy by the students in which the mean score was 3.50 with predicate "Often". Meanwhile, *Social (Consolidation) strategy* was the least frequently applied strategy in which the mean score was 2.83 with predicate "Sometimes". It indicated that the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University preferred to apply *Determination strategy* to help them in learning vocabulary.

From the results, it can be concluded that the students of English Education Study Program of Bengkulu University preferred to learn vocabulary and deal with new words individually.

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