

INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING VOCABULARY IN THE SECOND GRADE AT MTS ASH-SHALIHIN

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to know students' strategies when learning vocabulary. About the strategy, there are five vocabulary learning strategies obtained by researcher based on Schmitt, (2000) namely determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and metacognitive strategy. In these five strategies, the researcher wants to know what strategies are used by students at MTs Ash-Shalihin, and why their vocabulary has not improved. To find out which strategies students use for learning vocabulary, the researcher used survey method. In the survey method, the researcher found that the most common strategy used by students in the second grade at MTs Ash Shalihin in learning vocabulary is social strategy. Researcher noted each result from the data and sources obtained on average they always use this social strategy in learning anything. Most of them are comfortable with the situations they experience in using social strategies but this by itself is not enough for them to grasp any learning, especially vocabulary. Most of them quickly forget what they learn because the strategy forces them to practice everything without learning the basics first. This research finds that every student in the second grade at MTs Ash-Shalihin uses social strategy to communicate with the people around them. The most common strategy was "social strategy" 48%, followed by "determination and cognitive strategy" 14%, "memory strategy" 13%, and "metacognitive strategy" 11%. Many students choose this social style because they enjoy direct communication, but they do it out of curiosity and rarely assess. As a result, this communication is not effective since individuals communicate according to their preferences.

Keywords: *Investigation, Learning Vocabulary, Students Strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a key element of language development; each study has added something new to the area vital part of language proficiency, vocabulary serves as a foundation for students' skills to speak, listen, and both read and write. Tsuraya and Silaturahmi (2021) mentioned that many experts argued that vocabulary is one of the fundamental aspects of language learning because it can influence and develop an individual ability to communicate both in verbal and written form. Tsuraya and Admowardoyo (2018) mostly read texts in Indonesian schools using authentic materials such as newspapers, articles, novels, and so on which contain many vocabularies. It includes a person's grasp of word meanings, their capacity to understand and articulate concepts, and the variety of words they can use to communicate successfully.

Learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, or understanding. It can happen through formal education, like in a classroom, or informally, through everyday experiences. According to Aitchison (2003), mastering words involves the processes of learning, remembering,

understanding, and choosing the fitting ones for communication. There are many ways to learn, and what works best for one person may not work for another. Explained in the verse of AL Qur'an surah Al-Ankabut-43:

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعُلَمَاءُ

Translation:

“And these parables We have made for mankind, and none will understand them except those who are knowledgeable.”

The above verse explains that by learning we gain knowledge, and a knowledgeable person is more important than someone who does not know. Two virtues sometimes go unnoticed, namely, how to see and be seen. People who are knowledgeable see more positive things in their views.

Learning vocabulary is easy because there are no rules or formulas to grasp, unlike when learning grammar. Vocabulary serves as a foundation for all four language skills and grammar. When listening to something in English with a repertoire of understood words, we effortlessly derive meaning from what we hear. The same applies to speaking; a rich vocabulary allows us to articulate ideas and concepts effectively. Mastering a set of words enhances the enjoyment of reading, as we comprehend each used term. In writing, we can employ this vocabulary to express our ideas creatively. Proficiency in vocabulary makes the process of using grammar structures and functions easier. When people travel abroad, they often bring a dictionary to aid communication rather than a grammar book, highlighting the significance of a robust vocabulary in connecting with others. Ultimately, with a strong grasp of vocabulary, students can easily master the English language. According to Thornbury (2002:13) emphasizes the crucial role of vocabulary as a foundational element in communication, surpassing even the importance of grammar. Cameron (2001) also underscores the vital role of vocabulary in language knowledge, playing a significant part in overall language proficiency. Then, Allen & Vallete (1977) also suggest that mastery of vocabulary progresses alongside learning, enhancing grammar and pronunciation, with all three mutually supporting language skills. Pacidda (2010) also said, asserts that a rich and well-understood vocabulary is a key factor for fluency and proficiency in language, particularly in the context of English. Finally, Wardani (2015) follows by saying, positioning vocabulary as a fundamental aspect of language, present in all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Overall, vocabulary is a fundamental pillar in communication and learning. Enriching one's vocabulary is not only crucial for language mastery but also has positive impacts on various aspects of life.

Vocabulary learning strategies are techniques or approaches individuals use to enhance their understanding and retention of new words. Strategies may include context clues, word associations, mnemonic devices, and regular practice. Effective vocabulary learning strategies can facilitate language acquisition and improve overall language skills. Schmitt (1997) also said VLS is characterized as learners' initiatives to aid their comprehension and recall of vocabulary. The methods for learning vocabulary—rather than language in general—are the focus.

Numerous research has created taxonomies of various vocabulary learning techniques, including those by Schmitt Schmitt (1993), Nation (2001), Fan (2003), and Gu (2003). Schmitt (1997) built on Oxford's (1990) strategies, stressing determination, social interaction, and memory; Gu (2003) further refined Gu's classification, adding primary strategies like dictionary and guessing, as well as a remembering category that included repetition, association, grouping, analysis, and known words strategies. Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) distinguished between remembering a word and learning a new one. Gu (2003) also distinguished between learning a new vocabulary and remembering an existing one.

Strategies in language learning can be viewed as a customized method of learning new words according to students' interests. These techniques include non-observable mental processes like memorizing, emotional regulation, and word visualization in addition to observable behaviors like taking notes and verbalizing what is remembered. Language instructors frequently stress the

importance of these tactics for successful language learning, especially when it comes to vocabulary. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) play a crucial role for junior high school students as they aid in grasping new words, expanding their vocabulary, and fostering independent learning. Despite the significance, technical vocabulary isn't explicitly taught in English lessons at this level, leaving students without a consistent source. Thus, students must develop their methods for deciphering unfamiliar words autonomously to enhance comprehension of course materials.

Ash-Shalihin Islamic Boarding School in Gowa Regency includes MTs Ash-Shalihin. There are three distinct parts to this madrasah in one place: MA Ash-Shalihin, MTs Ash-Shalihin, and MI Ash-Shalihin. Additionally, there is a student residence located within a madrasah that is immediately connected to a mosque. The traditions of character-based pesantren (noble values), yellow book wisdom, general knowledge, entrepreneurship, self-development, and technology are all stressed by this educational institution. This is also a great deal in line with the curriculum that they follow, which is the K–13 curriculum, where the primary means of evaluation is morality and character. The government and donors' funding enables the accomplishment of the goals.

This educational establishment has received funding and works with ICON PLUS to offer free internet access to the school. The government provides free schooling to the santri and santriwati. Polite and immoderately educated as a safeguard against the future. Tahfidz al-Qur'an lessons, scouting, OSIM, lectures, and other abilities are encouraged to match the community's dependable standards. When putting many of the programs into practice, it can be clarified that following the congregational dhuhur prayer, the students are given a cultum to impart knowledge, comprehension, and religious motivation to ensure that they make the right decisions in their personal and social lives. The establishment of the Ash-Shalihin Islamic Boarding School is part of Mts Ash-Shalihin's aim to advance humankind in the fields of science and technology for use in society.

Since this institution sharpens general knowledge, scholars are interested in conducting studies there in the hopes of improving language skills as well. MTs Ash-Shalihin students, still have a limited vocabulary, making it challenging for them to communicate their emotions and wants. A teacher should always instill in their students the need to speak, pronounce words correctly, and modulate their tone according to the situation. One of the English teachers at this school stated in prior interviews that the level of vocabulary mastery among the kids is still quite low.

As a result, the researcher is interested in studying this school because the researcher wants to find out what methods students employ to learn vocabulary to expand their vocabulary in English, and whether those methods make the students less motivated to learn vocabulary. On the other hand, when it comes to cognitive skills, students at MTs Ash-Shalihin consistently come up with original and thought-provoking ideas, are adept at organizing the information they are given, actively work through problems assigned by the teacher, and participate in all extracurricular activities.

2. METHOD

This survey requires interaction and relationships between researchers and research subjects to obtain the necessary data. It involves collecting numerical data through surveys, experiments, and observations. This data is then analyzed using statistical methods to test hypotheses, identify relationships between variables, and generalize about a population. Quantitative is often used in the natural and social sciences, such as biology, chemistry, psychology, economics, and sociology. This research focuses on the second grade at MTs Ash-Shalihin which consists of 30 students, using a total sampling technique.

The total sampling technique is sampling where the number of samples is the same as the population. Coincidentally, there is only one class, to provide data related to the research questions. To collect information from respondents, the researcher conduct research using the questionnaire with the following steps. A.) Prepare paper sheets containing questionnaires. B.) Asked permission

from the school, and the second-class homeroom teacher then made an appointment with the class president. C.) Introduce self to the respondents. D.) Gave a sheet of paper containing the questionnaire and explained how to answer the questionnaire to the students. E.) Gave a time to students to answer the questionnaire. F.) Helps students explain or translate when they do not understand the question.

This research chose questionnaires, about questionnaire is consist of standardized questions that participants respond to typically in writing. It can be self-administered online, sent via email, or conducted in person. These questionnaires may feature closed-ended questions with predetermined choices (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale) that let participants express themselves freely. The data were collected using a questionnaire with multiple choice questions to get the data from the participants for further data analysis for the presentation of the findings. Participants were conducted to augment the frequency questionnaire that was used to collect data for this study. Cohen (2017) emphasized how well the questionnaire collected organized, quantitative survey data. The purpose of the questionnaire, which was given to a subset of the population, was to gauge how frequently vocabulary-learning strategies were employed. It was divided into two sections 40 questions concerning the strategy are used, and personal information. In using survey research methods where data collection uses questionnaires, there are several data collection techniques obtained by the researcher. A.) First, figuring out how well each student answered the questionnaire overall. The Likert scale used in this survey was 5, as shown in the table below:

Table 3.1 Scoring of Positive and Negative Statement

Number	Scale	Score	
		Positive statement	Negative statement
1.	Always	5	1
2.	Often	4	2
3.	Sometimes	3	3
4.	Rarely	2	4
5.	Never	1	5

Criteria for score interpretation based on intervals include:

Number 0% - 0.9% = Never

Number 10% - 15.3% = Rarely

Number 20% - 24.6% = Sometimes

Number 30% - 25.9% = Often

Number 40% - 30% = Always

Second, employing a formula from Khadir (2015) in Ridha, (2021) to determine the sample's overall mean score as follow:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

M = total mean score

$\sum X$ = total of students' scores

N = number of students

Third, to know students' vocabulary learning strategies, the researcher analyzed and concluded by using the calculation of tendency categories. Meanwhile, the dominant aspects of vocabulary learning strategies used were analyzed by calculated the mean score of each aspect. The highest mean score is considered as the dominant aspect of vocabulary learning strategies.

$$Percentage = \frac{\text{Mean score of each factor}}{\text{Sum of mean score}} \times 100\%$$

Trismasari et al. (2016) in Ridha, (2021)

3. RESULTS

The goal of this study was to find out how students learn vocabulary to learn English. It also sought to determine what strategies they employ and whether these strategies help them increase their vocabulary. It also may not help them increase their vocabulary at all because the strategies they employ make them bored, which lowers their enthusiasm for learning English through vocabulary enrichment. Participants in this study, consisting of 24 students who completed the questionnaire provided by the researcher, are second-grade students at MTs Ash-Shalihin.

Table 1. The results percentage of five strategy

Strategies	Percentage
Determination strategy	14%
Social strategy	48%
Memory strategy	13%
Cognitive strategy	14%
Metacognitive strategy	11%

We can see that “social strategy” was used by a large percentage (48%), “determination and cognitive strategy” tied with the same percentage (14%), “memory strategy” had a percentage of (13%), and “metacognitive strategy” had the lowest percentage of (11%). Many students choose such social strategy because they like direct communication, but they do it out of curiosity and rarely assess. As a result, communication is ineffective since their communicate based on their own preferences.

To clarify their responses to all statements in the questionnaire, the researcher interviewed two students who served as class representatives.

- a. Student A: This first student is a boy; he stated that he frequently used some learning strategies in learning vocabulary but rarely applied them, and when tested on some simple vocabulary, he stated that he forgot the meaning of each vocabulary given, for example, vocabulary in the category of objects in class for the word how to say “*meja*” in English, but this child does not know what he wants to answer and states that he forgot what English of “*meja*”, And this demonstrates that this child only learns it but does not retain it, and most of them practise without understanding what they are doing, making it difficult to recall what they learn.
- b. Student B: The second student is a girl, she is also not much different from the first student, she often does some strategies but also applies them rarely and mostly she just relies on direct communication and it is indeed less effective because it is done without learning these things to the most basic. This student also did not remember much of the vocabulary he learnt and the researcher also tried to ask for some vocabulary and many he could not answer with the reason he forgot.

4. DISCUSSION

This research it is to know about students' strategies when learning vocabulary by analyzing comprehensive data collected using questionnaire created by researcher then share to students, which were consist of previous research. According to the findings of this research, most students engage in private learning by communicating with those around them, but this strategy is ineffective because it involves more playing games or word play, and implementing this type of learning strategy requires the teacher's full attention. However, we know that doing demands more effort and makes people lethargic, therefore they tend to avoid. It indicates that the most preferred social strategy among students. Social strategy demands more effort because it involves hands-on practice, so what they learn is sometimes soon forgotten as they acquire hands-on experience, and they begin without mastering the fundamentals first. We can see its application in the scope of schooling:

- a) Collaborative learning activities:

Pair work: Form pairs of students with different learning styles or abilities. Ask them to explain new words to each other, write sentences using the words, or create a short dialogue. This encourages peer interaction and clarification of understanding.

Group discussions: Divide the class into small groups and assign them a set of vocabulary words. Encourage them to discuss the meaning, and usage, and even create scenarios where the words could be used. This fosters collective learning and diverse perspectives.

b) Partner quizzes: Create small quizzes based on the recently learned vocabulary. Students can take turns asking and answering questions from their partners. This promotes active recall and reinforces understanding in a less stressful environment.

c) Role-playing: provide students with situations where they need to use the target vocabulary. They can role-play these scenarios in pairs or small groups, practicing their use of the new words in a contextualized setting. This makes learning more engaging and improves communication skills.

d) Class debates: choose a topic related to the vocabulary being learned and organize a class debate. Students can research and prepare arguments using the target vocabulary. This encourages deeper understanding and active language use.

e) Utilizing technology: students create short videos explaining new words to each other, using online tools or presentation platforms. This fosters creativity, technology integration, and peer learning.

We can see that from this application above, there is a lot more effort and to do all of that, it is necessary to apply everything in the social strategy. This social strategy can also be the end or final in all strategies from determination, memory, cognitive, and finally metacognitive strategies.

On the other hand, we can infer that students rarely employ different strategies, so they are unsure which one is the most effective. Keeping this potential in mind, a teacher cannot afford to overlook any strategies when training his students. A teacher's job is to make intermediate-level students familiar with as many strategies as possible. Knowing a broader selection of learning methodologies, students should select the one they believe is more effective.

However, the information gathered during this study may be valuable for deciding which vocabulary-learning strategies to provide to students on advanced level. Using these strategies helps participants better understand the topic being presented. In Schmitt numerous ways, one of which is tough to get students to learn vocabulary even though they utilize it to help them deal with problems. And, of the five-strategy, it is not a choice for learning vocabulary, but rather a stage in learning vocabulary, and if it is utilized as a social strategy, the strategy is the last one because it is material for turning around what they should have acquired at the start. The basis for proceeding to the next stage. Nation (2008: 12) also explains that "some words are commonly found in a certain area but rarely found in Other areas". As a result, knowing the fundamentals is essential for improving vocabulary usage. And to prove it, an interview was conducted with student representatives who mostly said "always" on various statements in the questionnaire and when the researcher tested them with a few simple vocabulary examples, they could not answer, and they gave the excuse of forgetting. In essence, they lack motivation to learn vocabulary especially using various kinds of simple learning strategies.

Students at MTs Ash-Shalihin are all quite active, so it's not unexpected that they ask a lot of questions about what they want to know, and that most of them always learn something through social means. According to Falchikov (2001), peer contact can enhance learning and comprehension. Discussing new words with peers might help participants gain knowledge and understanding. Most of the students found that talking with peers helped them understand and recall the content. Discussing terminology with peers improves students' retention and comprehension of the material.

This also demonstrates to researchers that, even though some words in English are straightforward to understand, individuals still struggle with them and are afraid to assume what

they imply. As a result, they rely mostly on direct communication, which is not always considered effective because it is gained only briefly by hearing rather than seeing or writing.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of research conducted at MTs Ash-Shalihin, specifically in second grade, students use social strategies. All strategies involve learning while embedding what they have learned in vocabulary such as communicating and learning while playing. This is useful for learning, but learning vocabulary needs basic things are required to master vocabulary such as reading many dictionaries, where reading dictionaries is included in determining strategies, this strategy is effective in enriching vocabulary, but the factor of minimally literate students will assist them in learning basic book-related things. In addition, a way to this problem is simply to improve students' enthusiasm to learn and review more reading, particularly dictionaries, to learn vocabulary.

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