

## Students' Strategies in Learning Vocabulary at The Second Semester of Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar

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### Abstract

*English is an international language that can make it easier for students to interact with other people, but in Indonesia English is not a second language but a foreign language. English is not only able to describe an object, but is very crucial in developing four language skills, namely, reading, writing, speaking and listening. When language learners will deepen these four skills, the basic thing that must be done is mastery of vocabulary. For example, studying vocabulary can help students understand phrases and word meanings, which is necessary knowledge for listening comprehension. Therefore, this research examines the strategies used by students to improve their vocabulary. In this research a quantitative approach involves a survey method that uses a questionnaire to obtain data and information from the population through a series of questions. The subjects of this research were students majoring in English Education Department in the second semester at the Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar.*

**Keywords:** Vocabulary, learning vocabulary, Vocabulary Learning Strategies

### INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that can make it easier for students to interact with other people, but in Indonesia English is not a second language but a foreign language. Even though, english is a foreign language but English is taught in the learning curriculum because it is considered quite important for students. McKay (2018) states that professional language users must shift their focus from the native speaker model to gain a real picture of how English can be used for purposes in the various intercultural relationships of English language learners. English is not only an international language, but an alternative is that English is used as a means of communication between cultures.

Riankamol (2008) explains that 'vocabulary is a building element in a language because language can description object, behavior, ideas without which one cannot carry the intended meaning'. English is not only able to describe an object, but is very crucial in developing four language skills, namely, reading, writing, speaking and listening. When language learners will deepen these four skills, the basic thing that must be done is mastery of vocabulary. First, vocabulary development is related to speaking development; The more able to speak, the richer the language skills, and the richer the language skills make students more confident in speaking. Second, listening exercises can be used to teach language. Learning a language has several advantages. For example, studying vocabulary can help students understand phrases and word meanings, which is necessary knowledge for listening comprehension. Additionally, listening can help in understanding word

meaning, and pronunciation. Thus, by engaging in active listening activities, students can enhance their language proficiency and expand their vocabulary. The third is that the higher your vocabulary mastery, the more it will affect your speaking, listening and even writing abilities. On the other hand, inadequate vocabulary mastery will make it difficult for students to convey emotions in ideas conveyed through written or oral exercises as a form of human interaction. Fourth, the ability to understand the use of vocabulary will facilitate the communication process with other people so that there are no misunderstandings of meaning.

Mastery of English depends on understanding the vocabulary used to help understand the ideas conveyed. In line with that, Wilkins (1972) quoted in Al Qahtani (2015) stated that; There is no point in producing grammatical sentences when you are unable to acquire the vocabulary needed to convey the ideas you want to convey. Without grammar a message can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. One of the problems that often occurs with second language learners is when second language learners demand the use of grammar. This strategy used makes second language learners find it difficult to use English. For example, when students try to speak English using grammar, their level of fluency will be different if they speak directly without paying attention to grammatical rules in their sentences. Another learning strategy that is usually used is for students to memorize vocabulary words one by one, which makes students feel bored. Not only strategies like that, but students are inconsistent in memorizing and applying them in everyday life.

If the above problems continue, the stereotype is that vocabulary development is very difficult. Several possible impacts what emerges is ignoring the problem of learning vocabulary, the impact of which is limited understanding, difficult intercultural communication, difficulty in writing, loss of self-confidence. As suggested by Nation (2001) have introduced four new taxonomies on vocabulary learning strategies: Planning, resources, processes, and skills used. Planning strategies refer to the selection of vocabulary used, focus on aspects, as well as the strategies used to remember vocabulary. Source Strategy focuses on students' ability to search for additional information from vocabulary, such as meaning based on context. Process strategies relate to students' ability to use vocabulary and are used naturally. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the skill of using vocabulary in learning four English skills; reading, writing, listening, speaking. This strategy aims to increase students' vocabulary easily so that it can be applied by understanding the meaning of the vocabulary and its context.

## **METHOD**

The best method that can be used in this research is to adopt a quantitative design method. (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000; Babbie, 2010; Ranjit, 2011) The quantitative aspect of the research allows the collection of numerical data from the sample to provide a description of the research results. Therefore, in this research a quantitative approach involves a survey method that uses a questionnaire to obtain data and information from the population through a series of questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). To achieve the objectives of this research, researchers used a survey method. Using this method will make

it easier for researchers to identify the strategies used by students to increase vocabulary knowledge as well as the obstacles students face in the learning process.

In the process of collecting data required by researchers, this study will use one instrument in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be in the form of a written test that will be given to all research subjects. In the process, students will be asked to answer each question according to their experience in learning English vocabulary. This survey was modified from one on vocabulary acquisition techniques created by Kocaman & Cumaoglu (2014). When used as a data collecting method, questionnaires effectively gather information from a large number of students in a comparatively short amount of time. Questionnaires facilitate uniform and comparative data collection by examining student performance on standards pertinent to the research issue. This provides insight into students' viewpoints and learning in connection to the research aims.

#### 1. Preparation

The questionnaire for this survey is based on Rebecca Oxford (1990) for vocabulary learning strategies since it is one of the most comprehensive lists of strategies available and matches the researcher's research goal. However, the researcher modified the lists to suit the learners' grades and competence levels.

#### 2. Detail of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to gather general information about the respondents, including their personal information. Subsequently, there were question lists regarding pupils' methods for learning vocabulary. The inquiry focused on how frequently students used their vocabulary mastery strategies. The frequency of using each method is shown by the following scales. The purpose of adding these parts to the questionnaire is to help the researchers gain a thorough understanding of the vocabulary mastery tactics and usage patterns of the students. This data aided in a more thorough examination of the efficacy and acceptance of various tactics within the student body.

After collecting data, researchers identified the strategies used by students by analyzing data collection through Percentage Statistics. According to Xen (2011) percentage is used to determine the quantitative relationship to the overall response. The process of collecting percentages is to divide the frequency (number of responses) by the number of responses.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### 1. Definition of vocabulary

To master the four skills in English certainly cannot be separated from vocabulary. Dakhi and Fitria (2019) emphasize that nothing can be done without vocabulary, because it is the basis for communication. Vocabulary is said to be a manifestation of the human mind. Therefore, vocabulary is seen as the main communication in expressing thoughts, ideas and even feelings. When compared with other linguistic aspects, it seems that vocabulary is the most urgent thing to learn.

Gardener (2013) views it from a broader perspective where vocabulary does not only include the arrangement of language, but also includes the meaning of words, how words are found, stored/remembered, used, as well as the relationships that exist between phrases and words and their classification. To make it easier for students to understand the context in English, it is necessary to know the meaning of each word and its use. For example, when students are going to speak in English, then in terms of the meaning of the words the students understand, but in terms of the meaning and when a word is used the students do not understand. This will make it difficult for students to use English. Because the use of vocabulary in English requires caution, in this case one word will produce many meanings. Brown, (2001, quoted in Utami, 2014), stated the importance of vocabulary in communication by emphasizing that, in fact, communication will continue well when language users string together words without applying grammatical rules at all. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is very crucial to apply in TEFL training. In assessing students' vocabulary mastery, Schmitt and Mearns (1997) In Setiawan (2010) stated that receptive and productive knowledge is the only realistic way to measure the depth of students' vocabulary knowledge. Receptive knowledge is a group of words that students recognize and understand when the words can be understood in a context that is continuous with the context of productive knowledge, able to pronounce them correctly and use them constructively in writing and speaking. Assessing how students respond is believed to be very important because the language will be received receptively.

## 2. Vocabulary Mastery

Indonesia is a country where English is a foreign language. For example, the implementation of genre-based English teaching (GBA), which is implemented through different reading texts. Students are automatically required to read the text and understand the contents of the text. At this stage students will become an obstacle for students who do not have good vocabulary mastery. This fact was also conveyed by Kweldju (2004) and Priyono (2004) who said that EFL students' limited vocabulary mastery would be the main cause of problems for students in learning English. Therefore, learning English is not as easy as imagined, it takes a long time to be able to speak English fluently. Moreover, there are many components of English that must be mastered, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing and cultural understanding. In this case Wahyudin & Rido, (2020) states that students must adapt their learning techniques when studying vocabulary mastery.

## 3. Types of Vocabulary

Learning different kinds of vocabulary is essential for effective communication, understanding and expression in any language. According to Harmer (2001) there are several types of vocabulary which are divided into:

### a. Synonym

According to Rowe and Levine (2016), synonyms are two or more words that have the same semantic characteristics and have very similar meanings. In English, synonyms are used to avoid repeating the same words so as to make writing or sentences more interesting and dynamic. Examples of synonyms for the word happy; Cheerful, happy, content, and peaceful.

b. Antonym

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning to each other. In English, antonyms are used to show contrast, thereby providing variation in expression.

Examples of Antonyms:

- Happy- Sad
- Smart- Stupid
- Diligent- Lazy
- Beautiful- Ugly

c. Polysemy

Lakoff (1987) discussed this: He said, a word can have at least two related meanings, so polysemy is a type of ambiguity.

d. Homonym

Homonyms are words that have the same pronunciation and spelling but have different meanings. For example, the moon (calendar) and the moon (earth's satellite).

e. Definition

A definition is the explanation given for a word. Meanwhile, according to Widjaja (2002) vocabulary is divided into two types, namely, based on function and based on content.

1) The Functional Words

Functional words are used to express grammatical functions.

2) The Content Words

The content words, which make up the larger portion of vocabulary, are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that are employed to convey cultural substance.

Milton (2009) divides the types of vocabulary into two types, namely passive and active. Using “passives” for receptive vocabulary knowledge. Meanwhile, “active” means productive:

- a. Passive vocabulary is vocabulary that refers to words that can be understood by students. Even though students are able to understand it well, they cannot yet apply it. Passive (receptive) vocabulary can only be used when listening or reading.
- b. Active (productive) vocabulary is vocabulary where students are able to easily understand the vocabulary and are able to use it in language activities. Active vocabulary is used when students are giving a speech or when words automatically come to students' minds when producing spoken or written sentences.

4. Difficulty in Learning Vocabulary

One of the challenges faced by students is that most of them have difficulty memorizing words, finding the right words to write and understand, and identifying various types of written language for a particular word. This is known as “shifting”, and it is one of the main causes of difficulties students face when learning new words. In addition, students have difficulty interpreting written words and phrases accurately. According to Susanto (2021), there are several main problems faced by students, namely

- a. Most of them have difficulty pronouncing words
- b. The way of writing and spelling English is very different
- c. Students have difficulty understanding vocabulary due to differences in grammatical forms or word inflections.
- d. Students have difficulty choosing the right terms to use
- e. They are still unsure about how to use the word in context.
- f. Students have difficulty finding speech or idiomatic aspects.

Apart from that, there are several elements that contribute to students' difficulties in learning vocabulary:

- a. The written and spoken forms of English are very different.
- b. The quantity of vocabulary that children learn is very large
- c. Sources of information related to words are limited
- d. The complexity of word meanings. Intentional use of a term involves more than simply accepting its dictionary definition
- e. Incorrect word inference and incorrect pronunciation, which is often caused by students' lack of knowledge of the sound laws that govern the similarities between English and their native language.

According to Gairns and Redman, Ur (1996), the following things must be taught when teaching vocabulary: Form includes things like pronunciation and spelling, grammar, collocation, Aspect of meaning; denotation, connotation, and appropriateness, aspect of meaning; meaning relationship. Therefore, researchers can conclude that when students want to be fluent in using English, they need to understand all aspects of English. Not only do they learn the meaning of words, but students also have to understand pronunciation, spelling, grammar, use of words in sentence context, and also idioms in English.

## 5. Vocabulary Assessment

The technique for creating vocabulary questions and evaluating student performance on the vocabulary exam is known as the vocabulary assessment approach. According to Tampubolon et al. (2022) Word matching, multiple choice, filling in the blanks, and defining terms are some of the vocabulary evaluation procedures that teachers use during exams. Some of the vocabulary training tools used are memorization, puzzle games, paper forms, word shortening, reading comprehension, asking and answering techniques, dialogues, oral exams, and written assessments.

## 6. Strategy

According to Chandler in Kuncoro (2016) Strategy is determining the long-term goals and objectives of an organization, implementing actions and allocating the resources needed to achieve the goals that have been set. According to Iman Mulyana (2010) Strategy is a science and an art using capabilities together with resources and the environment effectively in the best way, there are four important elements in the definition of strategy, namely: capabilities, resources, environment and goals, these four elements are put together in a rational and beautiful way so that several alternative choices emerge which are then evaluated and the best one is taken , then the results

are announced explicitly as a tactical guide which then applies to the operational environment.

Mintzberg et al. (1998: 9), say that strategy is very broad and large, it is not enough to describe it with just one definition. They provide a definition of 5P, namely strategy as Plan, Pattern, Position, Perspectives, and as Ploy. As a plan, strategy is guidance, direction, a path to the future, a path to get there from here, and so on, all of which look to the future (Intended strategy). As a strategy pattern, it is a consistency of behavior over time in the past that forms a pattern so that it looks back and is a realized strategy. As a positioning strategy, placing certain products in certain markets. It looks down (to the location) and also looks out to the external market. As a strategy perspective, it looks inward (into the company, deeply and into the mind of the strategist) and also looks upwards, namely at the company's grand vision. And as a strategy ploy is a special maneuver intended to deceive or outwit competitors.

#### 7. Learning Vocabulary

Learning vocabulary is an important part that must be passed by every second language learner to gain skills in the use of the language they choose, especially English. Because student vocabulary skills are certainly able to facilitate the smooth and effectiveness of speaking. Among the language skills, vocabulary is recognized as the most important part because without communication vocabulary does not run effectively. Widdowson (1989) and McKeown (2002) argue that knowledge of vocabulary is the most basic knowledge of the use of language. The main point is that the level of smooth language of the second language learner depends on the number of words known.

#### 8. Vocabulary Learning Strategy

Learning vocabulary is one of the processes that students must go through in learning English. Students who have sufficient vocabulary knowledge in an EFL context will definitely be successful in learning. To get maximum results in vocabulary acquisition, the right strategy is needed. In general, strategy can be defined as a plan prepared to achieve targets, especially over a long period of time. In this case, it certainly involves setting a vision and determining actions. Just like English language learners, when they make fluency in using English as a goal, there needs to be a strategy as a pathway for this achievement.

According to Oxford and Schramm (2008) Language learners' strategy is "a plan, action, behavior, step, or specific technique used by individual learners, with a certain level of awareness, to increase their progress in developing skills in a second language or foreign language,". Learners utilize LLS, or proactive learning strategies, to implement learning strategies and track their progress in achieving learning goals. In 1990 Rebecca Oxford introduced the learning strategy of the Taxonomy language, which was classified into three categories. The first category is a cognitive strategy, which also includes memory techniques; The second category is a metacognitive strategy, which is included in the planning and self -assessment; Finally, the social/affective strategy, which includes activities such as seeking help and overcoming emotional elements such as anxiety during the learning process. Since that year there have been many developments in theory that discussed language learning strategies. But in this study, researchers

chose the Oxford's Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies (1990) as the Theoretical Framework.

Due to the significance of vocabulary acquisition approach, Schmitt (1997) and Nation (2001) proposed two distinct taxonomies. Schmitt (1997) divided the vocabulary learning technique into two strategic groups: "consolidation" and "discovery" in his taxonomy.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Main Categories</b>	<b>Secondary Strategy</b>
<b>Discovery strategies</b>	1. Determination Strategies	a. Guess words based on context. b. Look at the pictures. c. Use English dictionary.
	2. Social Strategies	a. Asking questions b. Cooperating with others c. Empathizing with others
<b>Consolidation strategies</b>	1. Social Strategies	a. Asking questions b. Cooperating with others c. Empathizing with others
	d. Cognitive Strategies	a. Keeping vocabulary notebooks b. Receiving c. Receiving and sending messages d. Analyzing and reasoning e. Creating structure for input and output
	e. Memory Strategies	a. Associating words with pictures b. Creating Mental Linkages c. Reviewing Well d. Employing Actions
	f. Metacognitive Strategies	a. Centering your learning b. Arranging and planning your learning c. Evaluating your learning

Consolidation strategy is a strategy that students use to maintain and strengthen previously learned vocabulary. This strategy aims to ensure students' long-term memory to remember previous vocabulary because this is very important for effective communication in English. The consolidation category, which encompasses memory, social, cognitive, and metacognitive techniques.

When students are looking for a new word, the strategy used is discovery strategies. The discovery learning strategy is a technique that emphasizes the methods used by students in acquiring knowledge by taking an active role and having direct



experience. This strategy involves students in exploring and learning from their curiosity about a word. This approach is based on constructivist learning theory which emphasizes students taking an active role in constructing their own knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study on students' strategies in learning vocabulary in the second semester at Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge is indeed very crucial and influential in the use of a second language. So that the strategies used by students also have an impact on the learning process. Because, the process of vocabulary acquisition is interconnected with the strategies used. In this case, students may choose a strategy that is comfortable, easy and enjoyable to use in learning.

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