

Learning Strategies Used by the Fifth Grade Students in Improving Vocabulary at SDN Kebraon II Surabaya

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the kinds of strategies and the application of the strategies which are used by the fifth grade students at SDN Kebraon II Surabaya in improving vocabulary. In this research, a qualitative descriptive design is used to describe the objective of the research. The techniques of data collection were used in this research were observation and questionnaire. The data analysis used in this research was the interactive model analysis from Miles and Huberman that consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion. In the results of this research, it is found that there are twenty one kinds of strategies which are used by the fifth grade students in improving vocabulary. The strategies that were employed by the students mostly were influenced by the teacher's teaching techniques. The orders of the teacher seemingly become a habit for the student to be conducted automatically in the process of language learning.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, improving vocabulary.

English is one of languages in this world. With its spreading around the world, English develops into a global language and a means of international communication. English becomes a challenge for students because it is different from their mother tongue that they are accustomed to applying in spoken language every day. Because of that, English is probably hard to be learnt, especially for students in the lower level that is elementary school students in understanding the meaning of certain vocabulary.

Wilkins in Thornbury (2002:13) explains about the importance of vocabulary learning. Based on the theory, the first thing that must be first learnt for lower level students in language learning is vocabulary. Lacking vocabulary, students cannot tell anything that existed in their mind. And the result is they tend to be bored and make a noise in the process of learning. Therefore, it requires some strategies for students in language learning in order to master it, especially in learning vocabulary.

Language learning strategies require steps that are applied in gaining knowledge of language. Since language learning strategies involve four skills in language learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), it makes the area of language learning strategies is wide. There is a particular strategy that is needed by students in improving vocabulary that is vocabulary learning strategies which known as VLS. Nation (2001:217) states that "vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies which in turn are a part of general learning strategies". It could be noted that vocabulary learning strategies are part of language learning strategies because its range and usage are more specific than language learning strategies.

Those strategies would seem appropriate to be applied in the following schools since they have uniqueness in the learning process such as SDN Kebraon II Surabaya. SDN Kebraon II Surabaya is a state elementary school that is placed in the Kebraon Surabaya area. The implementation of learning and teaching process that is shown in the school is interesting by providing kinds of display items in each classroom to support the students in gaining the knowledge of language learning. The students of SDN Kebraon II Surabaya felt comfortable in language learning process in the classroom, especially the fifth grade students.

By the existence of the great score in the examination, it shows that the fifth grade students in the school have experienced improvement in vocabulary learning. Based on the fact, this research is aimed at finding out what kinds of strategies that are used by the fifth grade students of SDN Kebranon II Surabaya in improving vocabulary. And then, it is also intended to describe how the students employ the strategies in improving their vocabulary.

The Classifications of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies are particular strategies that are employed by the students only to acquire vocabulary. There are many classifications that are created by researchers on vocabulary learning strategies. Mostly the classification of vocabulary learning strategies is generally taken from language learning strategies despite there are some additions in the list of the strategies. It is empowered by statement of Pacivic Takac (2008:59) that is lists of vocabulary learning strategies are usually a part of general strategies classifications which show that many multi-propose strategies may be used in vocabulary learning.

The first classification is proposed by Gu and Johnson as cited in Fithriyah (2012:23). Gu and Johnson employ strategies that are existed in Oxford's language learning strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive, and memory strategies. Then, Gu and Johnson create one strategy, namely activation strategies, to be added in their taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. It means there are four strategies that are proposed by Gu and Johnson.

The second classification is recommended by Nation (2001:217). Nation creates his own classification of vocabulary learning strategies into three groups: planning, sources, and processes. *Planning* vocabulary learning strategies involve deciding on where to focus attention, how to focus the attention, and how often to give attention to the item (Nation, 2001:218). *Sources* necessitate the students to get information about the vocabulary (*ibid*, 219). And *processes* involve ways of making vocabulary knowledge be remembered and be available for use (*ibid*, 221).

The last classification is recommended by Schmitt in Schmitt (2000:133). Schmitt (2000:132) states that commonly used VLS seem to be simple memorization, repetition, and taking notes on vocabulary. The three of the used VLS are existed in the Oxford's classification of language learning strategies as well. In other words, the classification that is proposed by Schmitt refers to Oxford's taxonomy despite there is a new category of specific strategies that is added in the list of vocabulary learning strategies, namely determination strategies.

Schmitt (2000:133) concludes Schmitt's classification of vocabulary learning from fifty-eight strategies into thirty-one strategies. All of the strategies are divided into two main groups. The first group is the strategies that are used to find the meaning of a new word when detecting it at first time (*ibid*, 134). These strategies consist of determination strategies and social strategies. And, the second group is the strategies that are used to empower knowledge of the new word when detecting it again (*ibid*). These strategies contains of social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Because of the Schmitt's taxonomy are more complete categorization and the easiest to be understood, the researcher uses the theory as a basis of this research to be presented.

Table 1: Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Strategy Group	Strategy
<i>Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning</i>	
Determination Strategies	1. Analyze part of speech
	2. Analyze affixes and roots
	3. Check for L1 cognate
	4. Analyze any available pictures or gestures

	5. Guess meaning from textual context
	6. Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)
Social Strategies	1. Ask teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word
	2. Ask classmates for meaning
<i>Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered</i>	
Social Strategies	1. Study and practice meaning in a group
	2. Interact with native speakers
Memory Strategies	1. Connect word to a previous personal experience
	2. Associate the word with its coordinates
	3. Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms
	4. Use semantic maps
	5. Image word form
	6. Image word's meaning
	7. Use Keyword Method
	8. Group words together to study them
	9. Study the spelling of a word
	10. Say new word aloud when studying
	11. Use physical action when learning a word
Cognitive Strategies	1. Verbal repetition
	2. Written repetition
	3. Word lists
	4. Put English labels on physical objects
	5. Keep a vocabulary notebook
Metacognitive Strategies	1. Use English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)
	2. Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal)
	3. Test oneself with other

	tests
	4. Skip or pass new word
	5. Continue to study word over time

Source: Schmitt (2000:134).

Method of the Research

This research applies descriptive qualitative design which aims to describe the objective of the research. The subjects of the research are students of fifth grade at SDN Kebraon II Surabaya which consist of seventeen female and eleven male students. Meanwhile, the object of this research is any information relate to kinds of learning strategies and the application of them. The techniques of data collection were used in this research were observation and questionnaire. Observation which was used in this research is passive participation observation. The observation was conducted by note taking in the classroom. During the observation, questionnaire was conducting. The questions were adopted from Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (1990:283), and were modified to achieve data were needed in this research. The questionnaire was conducted by translating the questions in subjects' mother tongue, namely Bahasa Indonesia. The data analysis used in this research was the interactive model analysis from Myles and Huberman that consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

Discussion

In this research, it is found from both of the observation and the questionnaire that there are twenty one strategies from thirty one strategies of Schmitt's which used by the fifth grade students at SDN Kebraon II Surabaya. The findings in this research are concluded in two tables. Table 2 aims to show the kind of strategies which are used by the students in improving vocabulary and table 3 aims to show the rank of the strategies which are used by the students in vocabulary learning.

Table 2: Kinds of strategies are used by fifth grade students

No.	The Kinds of Strategies Used
1	Analyzing part of speech
2	Analyzing any available pictures
3	Guessing meaning from textual context
4	Using a dictionary
5	Asking teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word
6	Asking classmates for meaning
7	Studying and practicing meaning in a group
8	Connecting word to a previous personal experience
9	Connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms
10	Image word form
11	Image word's meaning
12	Studying the spelling of a word
13	Saying new word aloud when studying
14	Using physical action when learning a word
15	Verbal repetition
16	Written repetition

17	Keeping a vocabulary notebook
18	Using English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)
19	Testing oneself with other tests
20	Skipping or passing new word
21	Continuing to study word over time

Table 2 indicates that among those twenty one strategies, the most used by the students is Memory strategies. In order to ease in analyzing the kinds of strategies are used by the students, it is created a rank of the strategy used from the most used to the least used (see Table 3.2). There were some strategies which employed by the whole of students in the fifth grade, namely *analyzing part of speech*, *analyzing picture*, *using dictionary*, *studying the spelling of word*, *verbal repetition*, *keeping a vocabulary notebook*, and *using physical action*. And there is a strategy is employed by a few students, namely *connecting a word to its synonyms and antonyms*.

Table 3: Rank of strategies are used by the students

Strategy Used	Number of Users
1. Analyzing part of speech	28
2. Analyzing any available pictures	28
3. Guessing meaning	25
4. Using a dictionary	28
5. Asking teacher	26
6. Asking classmates for meaning	25
7. Studying and practicing in a group	6
8. Connecting word to a previous personal experience	12
9. Connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms	4
10. Image word form	22
11. Image word's meaning	22
12. Studying the spelling of a word	28
13. Saying new word aloud when studying	23
14. Using physical action	28
15. Verbal repetition	28
16. Written repetition	8
17. Keep a vocabulary notebook	28
18. Using English-language media	23
19. Testing oneself with other tests	18
20. Skipping or passing new word	10

21. Continuous to study word over time

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Most strategies are used repeatedly by the students until the strategies become a habit for them in the learning process. *Analyzing part of speech, analyzing picture, using a dictionary, spelling of word, using physical action, verbal repetition, and keep a vocabulary notebook* are kinds of strategies which were employed by the students in almost of each meeting of English subject. The teacher regarded that these strategies as drilling for the students to improve their vocabularies in language learning.

As be known, there are twenty one kinds of strategies are identified through the observation and the questionnaire. These strategies are divided by two parts, namely observable strategies and unobservable strategies. The questionnaire is needed to find out the kind of strategies which are unobservable in the classroom. The application of *analyzing part of speech, analyzing pictures, using a dictionary, asking teacher, asking classmates, studying and practicing in group, connecting word to synonyms and antonyms, studying the spelling word, saying word aloud, using physical action, verbal repetition, and keep a vocabulary notebook* is included in the observable strategies, and the rest of the application of the strategies is unobservable strategies. Oxford (1990:194) states that “there are many language learning strategies that cannot be observed”. *Guessing meaning, connecting word to previous experience, image word form, image word’s meaning, written repetition, using English-language media, testing oneself with other tests, skipping or passing new word, and continuing to study over time* are included as kinds of unobservable strategies in this research because they refer to mental process and are invisible.

Conclusion

There are twenty one kinds of strategies are used by the fifth grade students at SDN Kebraon II Surabaya. The most of strategies are employed by all of the students in the classroom because the teacher made the strategies as a habit for the students in improving their vocabularies in English subject.

Both instruments in this research (observation and questionnaire) are effective tools to gather information on learning strategies in improving vocabulary of the students. Based on the observation, however, the students’ learning is influenced by the teacher’s teaching techniques. If the teacher asked the students to note an unfamiliar word, they would note it immediately. The students also tended to repeat the teacher when she asked to. The orders of the teacher seemingly become a habit for the student to be conducted automatically.

Based on the discussions, it could be found some unobservable strategies which are used by the students in improving vocabulary, namely *guessing meaning, connecting word to previous experience, imaging word form, imaging word’s meaning, written repetition, using English-language media, testing oneself with other tests, skipping or passing new word, and continue to study the word over time*. These strategies are unobservable because they refer to mental process and invisible. The application of *using English-language media* actually could be observed but this strategy was not found during observation in the classroom so that it is included in unobservable strategy in this research. In addition, the factors which influence the learning process in this research were variables and could not be avoided. The factors of teaching and learning setting, environment, culture, learning style, and motivation which used by each student in this research are greatly influenced the strategy used and strategy choice of the students in vocabulary learning.

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