English vocabulary learning strategies of university students in Papua

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to look into the vocabulary learning strategies (VSL) used by university students in Papua. It employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. To collect quantitative data, Takač's VLS questionnaire was used, which was then analyzed using Oxford's Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies (LLS). 336 students from the English and non-English departments completed the questionnaire. As qualitative data, twelve students and six English lecturers shared their perspectives on vocabulary acquisition and teaching at their respective institutions. Students majoring in English used a broader range of strategies and used them more frequently than students majoring in other fields of study; high-achieving students used a broader range of strategies and used them more frequently than their low-achieving counterparts; and the majority of students were interested in learning new vocabulary through games, songs, and videos.

Keywords: *English vocabulary; Vocabulary learning; University students*

1. Introduction

The shift in the emphasis of teaching and learning English at formal education institutions in Indonesia as the national curriculum has changed several times during the last five decades have not yet significantly and substantially improved the English

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Language Teaching (ELT) outcomes (Alwasilah, 2001; Marcellino, 2008). In general, Indonesian students are not able to use the English language effectively (Alwasilah, 2001; Marcellino, 2008; Priyono, 2004). Student's lack an adequate vocabulary becomes one of the problems (Nurweni & Read, 1999; Abrar et al., 2018). Students often comment that the main source of difficulties in English language learning is the lack of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 1999). According to Alwasilah (2001), Indonesian students of high school levels should have acquired approximately 3000-5000 English words as specified in the English curricula after completing their study. Nation (2001), asserted a learner needs to know 2,000-3,000 words to use English effectively. However, the study conducted by Nurweni and Read (1999) found that the average English vocabulary size of the university first-semester students was only 1,226, which was not very impressive. Given the Nation's (1999) recommendation, this finding suggests that Indonesian students have an insufficient vocabulary to communicate in English effectively. He, as well as other language scholars, indicated that one of several main factors for the success of vocabulary development is the use of VLS. Therefore, it is reasonable that the inadequate vocabulary of Indonesian students might be caused by a lack of knowledge and ineffective use of VLS.

Learning a large number of new English words and their meaning is not an easy task and it is also impossible for students to learn all words in the classroom. As a consequence, the task of learning new words and their meanings is typically left to the students to undertake primarily outside the classroom. Given this situation, students need to be able to use effective strategies independently. Although vocabulary plays a central role in successful language communication in a foreign language and that the use of VLS is helpful for learning foreign language vocabulary, there has not been much evidence that VLS are taught in classroom settings in Indonesian universities (Cahyono & Widiati, 2008; Ivone, 2005).

2. Literature review

2.1. Vocabulary knowledge and its importance for foreign language learners

English vocabulary consists of three main aspects related to form, meaning, and use, as well as layers of meaning connected to the roots of individual words. To understand individual words, experts classify them in terms of various ways like content words (words carrying meaning like noun, adjective) (Harrington, 2018) vs function words (like preposition, article), high-frequency vs low frequency words, and technical vs academic words (Webb & Nation, 2017). Another classification proposed is spoken vs written words (Crossley & Kyle, 2018). This classification theoretically signifies the contexts of the word usages which learners should know them to better use the word. Linguistically learners should know context words and function words to construct a sentence. In this respect, leaners should make a proper choice of whether the words are frequently used so they are easier for people to grasp the meanings as the words are common, or they should choose less frequent word to indicate the speciality of a certain

meaning like what frequently happen in academic writing. Moreover, the learners should comprehend as well in using spoken words that embodies more contextual clues of intonation, facial expression, pitch, and other facilitating manners that help their communication counterparts understand more vividly the message they deliver (Alsaawi, 2019). On another manner, learners should also learn to express ideas in written forms. They should struggle to express their ideas how to put more emphasis on the certain meaning in certain words in which the learners need to think on how to do it in written ways (Alsaawi, 2019). The above classification conceals that the complexity in establishing vocabulary knowledge that learners must do. To obtain significant vocabulary knowledge, learners, especially English foreign learners, needs to unlock the complexity analysing every element of the classification to gain comprehensive vocabulary knowledge as vocabulary is really paramount in English language learning.

Vocabulary plays a crucial role as it is the basic element of any language that every foreign language learner has to possess to be able to communicate. Wilkins (1972) a British linguist, argued "while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (pp. 111–112).

Vocabulary is the heart of language comprehension and use and becomes the main contributor to comprehension, fluency, and achievement (Nation, 2001; Bromley, 2007). Learners' strong vocabulary improvement has a direct and positive impact on their capacity to build their language proficiency and to develop the four skills in the language - listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Hu & Nation, 2000; Qian, 2002, Allington, 2006; Samuels, 2002; Stæhr, 2009; Wang, 2015; Ibrahim, E.H.E. et al. (2016); Taslim et al., 2019). As is the case for all foreign language learners, mastering an adequate number of English words is crucial for EFL students in Indonesian universities. For students either majoring in English or other disciplines, having adequate vocabulary is necessary to be proficient in all four skills (Laufer, 1992; Nation, 1999). Studies on the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and learners' success in language learning, which are often related to concepts of good/successful and poor/unsuccessful language learners' characteristics (e.g., Gan et al., 2004; Gu, 1994; McGroarty & Oxford & 1990), have revealed that successful language learners use a wider range of strategies than less successful counterparts. Despite the importance of vocabulary learning strategies, there is not much evidence that these strategies are explicitly taught to students in classroom settings (Al-Darayseh, 2014). This is also the case in the Indonesian context (Subekti, 2007).

2.2. VLS and its importance

English learners need to know sufficient words to be able to communicate in the language well. However, learning a large number of English words is not an easy task. It is also impossible for students to learn a lot of words in time-limited classes. Consequently, they should learn them independently outside the class. Different students may use different strategies, and this can influence their vocabulary learning

outcomes. Therefore, they need to use appropriate vocabulary learning strategies to learn and retain English words efficiently and effectively. Many studies have reported that VLSs have a significant relationship with students' learning outcomes (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Seddigh & Shokrpur, 2012; Wong, 2005).

2.3. Classification of VLS

Scholars have categorized VLS differently. For example, Cohen (1990) categorized VLS into three different groups, namely strategies for remembering words, vocabulary learning strategies, and strategies for practicing words. However, the use of the term VLS in this classification is very broad. Besides, these three strategies seem to be used for discovering the meaning of a new word as proposed by Oxford (1990) and Schmitt (2000). Based on Oxford's taxonomy, Schmitt (2000) extended VLS by making a fundamental distinction: 1) strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning which includes "determination", i.e. discovering the meaning of a new word without reference to another person or authority, and "social", i.e. asking others for a definition, paraphrase, synonym or translation; 2) strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered, which include Oxford's grouping, i.e. social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive. However, Schmitt did not include any metacognitive strategies for the discovery of word meanings. Despite several shortcomings, Oxford's taxonomy is still considered the most comprehensive taxonomy and is well respected in the literature (Ellis, 1994; Radwan, 2011; Rao, 2004; Gao, 2019; Habók & Magyar, 2018). It offers a considerable variety of types of strategies, such as memory, cognitive compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, incorporating the learning strategies proposed by Rubin (1987), Bahman (1990), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). Many researchers, such as Ellis (1994), Rao (2004), and Radwan (2011) have confirmed that Oxford's (1990) classification is more comprehensive since it offers a wider range of specific strategies.

2.4. Studies on VLS

Numerous studies on students' VLS have been conducted in many different EFL contexts and purposes in the last decades. Gu and Johnson (1996) investigated VLS used by Chinese university learners and the relationship between their strategies and learning outcomes. They found that most students use a variety of metacognitive VLS. Wen and Johnson (1997) found that students often use memory and cognitive strategies (psycholinguistic strategies) and metacognitive strategies. Wu and Wang (1998) reported their comprehensive investigation of VLS used by Chinese learners. Chinese learners, who were found to be active VLS users, employed a large variety of both metacognitive and psycholinguistic strategies. These findings partially supported the findings of Gu and Johnson (1996). Zhang (2009) investigated the VLS of undergraduate students found that there were significant differences in the use of VLS by grade and major. This finding is similar to the findings reported by Jafari and Ajideh

(2012) at the Ava-ye-Danesh Language Institute of Iran. Significant differences were found in the frequency of use of VLS by proficiency levels among learners. Another study conducted by Asgari and Mustapha (2011) found that learning words through reading, the use of a monolingual dictionary, the use of various English language media, and applying new English words in their daily conversation are common strategies used by learners. Kafipour, Yazdi, Soori, and Shokrpour (2011) found that medium strategy users and memory strategies were the most frequently used by students. Habók and Magyar (2018) demonstrate the complexity of language acquisition strategies, which include cognitive, affective, sociocultural, and meta-approaches. Although a great number of studies on students' VLS have been done in the Asian EFL context, very little research regarding the Indonesian context has been published (e.g.Subekti & Lawson, 2007). Also, despite diligent searches, no published research on VLS of Indonesian university students has been located.

2.5. Vocabulary teaching practice

Vocabulary teaching requires considerable attention in English language instruction to enable learners to understand the concepts of unfamiliar words, acquire a greater number of words, and use words successfully for communicative purposes. The major question concerning vocabulary teaching is how words should be taught. Seal (1991) divided vocabulary teaching into unplanned and planned vocabulary teaching. Unplanned or incidental vocabulary teaching takes place when one or more students face a problem with a word emerging in the lesson or when the teacher thinks that an important word is unknown to the majority of the students. Conversely, planned vocabulary teaching refers to vocabulary being taught systematically either as part of the objective of the lesson or in a specifically designed vocabulary lesson. Similarly, Hunt and Beglar (2002) described three types of vocabulary teaching and learning, i.e. "incidental learning, explicit instruction, and independent strategy development". Incidental learning is learning vocabulary as a by-product of doing other language activities, for example, reading and writing. In contrast, explicit instruction refers to the intentional learning of vocabulary through instruction. Finally, independent vocabulary development deals with equipping learners with strategies for vocabulary learning. Lastly, involving the students in learning through individual participation, collaboration with classmates, and self-reflection, as well as training the students in using different dictionaries and in making vocabulary notebooks or vocabulary cards are example activities of independent learning strategies.

Dakhi and Fitria (2019) stated that the relevance of vocabulary, its types, selection criteria, size and depth, and teaching methodologies lacked clarity. They intend to address such a matter. To achieve the aforementioned goals, they undertook an extensive analysis of relevant publications and theories. The results suggested that the vocabulary was more effective as a communication foundation, a reflection of social reality, a mood booster, and a predictor of academic achievement. It also shown that its

contribution to basic language skills is vary. The concepts of teaching vocabulary, size and depth, and teaching and learning vocabulary materials (TLVMs) were found to be associated with students' vocabulary mastery.

Studies that examine the effectiveness of particular techniques of presenting vocabulary items to students have been conducted. For example, studies conducted by Azar (2012), Rouhani and Pourgharib (2013) revealed that games are effective in helping students to learn and improve their vocabulary-building skills. Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) found that direct instruction was effective for students' vocabulary learning especially in facilitating the deepest level of knowledge. This finding is consistent with a similar study conducted by Mizumoto (2009) who investigated the effectiveness of explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies with Japanese EFL university students. File and Adams (2010), who compared the effectiveness between integrated and isolated form-focused instruction for vocabulary development in ESL reading lessons, found that both types of instructions led to more learning and retention of vocabulary knowledge than incidental exposure alone.

3. Method

3.1. The present study

The ultimate aim of this study was to explore vocabulary learning and teaching practices with a particular focus on VLS used by EFL Indonesian university students in Papua province. The mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach was applied to comprehensively address the following research questions:

(1) *What VLS do EFL students use?*
(2) *Do students majoring in English and non-English differ in VLS use?*
(3) *Do more successful and less successful learners differ in VLS use?*
(4) *How is vocabulary taught and learned in classes?*

3.2. Participant

Three hundred and thirty-six students majoring in English and non-English as well as 12 teachers participated in responding to the questionnaire of this study. A purposeful sampling technique, which is frequently used in qualitative research (Neuman, 2007), was applied to select participants for the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005. Of the 47 students who volunteered to participate in the interview, 12 students were selected, six of whom were more successful, and six were less successful English language learners. Six out of twelve English teachers were invited purposefully for individual interviews.

3.3. Research design

To achieve the main aim of this study, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative research since the nature of the research questions called for comprehensive answers (Morse & Niehaus, 2009), which can provide a better understanding of the

phenomenon of students' vocabulary learning strategies (Bryman, 2012; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A questionnaire - a data collection method commonly used in quantitative research and semi-structured interviews - a data collection method commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012; Greene, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), were used.

3.4. Method of data collection

Two methods were used to collect data for this study, namely survey and interview. Besides, students' grades in English subjects were accessed. A cross-sectional survey design was used by employing a closed-ended paper-based questionnaire adapted from Pavičić Takač's Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ) (Takač, 2008). The questionnaire consisted of 66 questions and used 5 response structure of a Likert-type scale (never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always).

Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data from teachers and students. By using an interview guide (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001) the selected teachers were asked questions about vocabulary teaching practices and VLS that they have introduced to students when teaching new English words in the classrooms.

3.5. Method of data analysis

To perform the quantitative data analysis, several steps were undertaken. Firstly, using the IBM SPSS program, value labels and codes of all items of the questionnaire were created before entering the data obtained from the questionnaire. Secondly, grouping the 66 items of the VLSQ (Takač, 2008) items into six main categories as constructs of interest: direct strategies comprising three sub-strategies, i.e. memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies with three sub-strategies, i.e. metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. To ensure that the process of grouping items has been done appropriately and to measure the validity and reliability of the constructs, exploratory factor analysis was conducted. To analyse the qualitative data, by adopting Corbin's and Strauss's (2007) and Saldana's (2010) steps, three stages of the coding process - open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were undertaken.

4. Findings and discussion

Descriptive analysis was undertaken to examine what VLS students used and how frequently students used these strategies. The percentage of frequency scores, as well as, the means of all strategies were examined. The higher the frequency score or the mean a strategy has the more frequently the students used this strategy. The average mean score of all strategies used indicates whether the students are low, medium, or high strategy users.

It was found that most students had used all four main VLS of Oxford's taxonomy – memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, and metacognitive strategies for learning new words, but with different frequencies. The descriptive statistics for the total mean score for overall strategy use, as displayed in Table 1, revealed that the average mean score of frequency of the strategy usage was 3.0, which means that the students are medium strategy users. This finding was similar to the findings reported by other studies in EFL Indonesian contexts (Annurahman, Kurniawati, & Ramadhiyanti, 2013; Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011; Setiyadi, 2004; Yusuf, 2012). For example, Mistar (2001), who conducted a study in a university in Malang-Indonesia, and Annurahman et al. (2013), who conducted a similar study in Pontianak, Indonesia, found that the average mean scores of frequencies of strategies use were respectively 3.34 and 3.25 which were all considered moderate level. These similar findings are reasonable in that the characteristics and modes of English language teaching and learning process in most Indonesian universities were similar.

Among the four main strategies of Oxford's taxonomy, as displayed in Table 1, this study found that, in general, memory strategies and compensation strategies were the two most dominant strategies and then followed by cognitive strategies, while metacognitive strategies were the least frequently used strategies.

Table 4.1

Frequency of strategy use.

Strategies	N	Mean	SD
1. Memory strategies	336	2.98	1.24
Reviewing well	336	3.14	1.16
Creating mental linkage	336	3.06	1.24
Employing action	336	2.96	1.28
Applying images and sounds	336	2.77	1.27
2. Cognitive Strategies	336	2.93	1.23
Practicing	336	3.05	1.08
Receiving and sending messages	336	3.02	1.38
Analysing and reasoning	336	2.90	1.35
Creating structure for input and output	336	2.77	1.10
3. Compensation Strategies	336	2.98	1.22
Overcoming limitation	336	3.04	1.27
Guessing intelligently	336	2.93	1.17
4. Metacognitive Strategies	336	2.79	1.32
Average	336	3.00	1.25

This finding was similar to those of the studies conducted by Tahriri and Fallah (2013) and Kafipour et al. (2011) which also found that memory and cognitive strategies were two strategies most commonly used by students while metacognitive and social strategies were the least frequently used strategies.

4.1. Do students majoring in English and non-English differ in VLS use?

An *independent-sample t-test* was used to compare the VLS of students majoring in English with those majoring in other fields of study. Since the tests were performed repeatedly on a single data set, *Bonferroni correction* was conducted to adjust *critical P values.* Students majoring in English used all kinds of strategies more frequently than those in other fields of study. An *independent-samples t-test* (see Table 2), indicated that there were significant differences (p < .013) between students majoring in English and those majoring in other disciplines in using memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, and metacognitive strategies, with an indication of relatively small effect size (ŋ2). This significant difference means that students tend to have stronger motivation to learn the main topics in their field of study than other topics (Bernardo & Gonzales, 2009; Siriwan, 2007; Tsai & Chang, 2009; Wei, 2007). It was also discovered that students majoring in English were more highly motivated in English language learning than those of other majors (Boonkongsaen & Intaraprasert, 2014; Kelly, 2005; Liao, 2004; Siriwan, 2007; Tsai & Chang, 2009; Wei, 2007).

Table 4.2

The use of strategies by students majoring in English and non-English.

Strategies	Majors	Mean	SD	t	p	Mean Diff	Effect size
Memory Strategies	English	0.173	0.830	2.452	0.012	0.243	0.019
	Non-English	-0.070	0.818				
Cognitive Strategies	English	0.337	0.623	6.269	0.001	0.474	0.077
	Non-English	-0.136	0.627				
Compensation strategies	English	0.048	0.759	0.675	0.501	0.066	0.006
	Non-English	-0.019	0.837	0.703	0.483	0.066	
Metacognitive strategies	English	0.399	1.038	4.74	0.001	0.557	0.063
	Non-English	-0.158	0.941	4.543	0.000	0.557	

4.2. Do more successful and less successful learners differ in VLS use?

It is commonly believed that successful learners differ from their less successful counterparts in using both LLS and VLS. ANOVA was used to determine if there were differences in the use of VLS between more successful and less successful students. The findings suggest that more successful (upper grade) learners tend to use VLS more frequently than less successful (lower grade) learners. These findings were consistent with the findings of other studies by Zhang (2009), Chang and Tsai (2009), Kafipour et al. (2011), Jafari (2013), and Kirmizi (2014).

4.3. How is vocabulary taught and learned in classes?

Two key findings emerged from the thematic analysis of teacher interviews, namely vocabulary teaching was integrated within the four language skills; and vocabulary was taught both deliberately and incidentally. All teacher respondents agreed that vocabulary should be taught in every lesson regardless of its skill. They believed that this would enable students to improve their vocabulary which eventually help them to listen, speak, read, and write, as shown in the following excerpt:

> You know this semester I teach Grammar Subject … but I always include new words in my lesson … especially when giving examples in sentences … Usually students will ask when they don't understand the meaning of these words.

Similar to teacher 4, teacher 6 also believed that students' language proficiency improves when their vocabulary knowledge increases. For this reason, she always gives new words of any lesson.

> … because in my opinion, vocabulary is an important aspect that must be possessed by every student who is studying English and by giving new words at any lesson it is expected that student's vocabulary will increase … so that the student's proficiency will improve too…

The respondents also argued that giving new words integrated within all skills is more effective than teaching them in isolation. They argued that vocabulary should be taught deliberately, regardless of the subject being taught, for several reasons. Firstly, there is a clear target to achieve: what and how many words and when the words must be taught. Secondly, this will benefit students in a way that they have clear direction about what is to be learned at a particular time. This can also help students to be well-organized learners. Lastly, a planned vocabulary teaching will enable teachers to conduct evaluations easily to find out the students' progress in learning. The excerpt below is one of their arguments:

> … especially when teaching the vocabulary subject, what words will be taught in one semester are planned both in the syllabus and lesson plans. This will benefit not only me but also the students. The target to achieve is obvious and it is very useful in conducting evaluations. Students have clear scope about the words they need to learn and review before an evaluation is carried out … so…

The above excerpt illustrates that intentional vocabulary teaching was employed mostly in teaching vocabulary as a subject in the English department. Intentional vocabulary teaching, as previous studies, such as Zandieh and Jafarigohar (2012), and Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) reported, was effective especially in facilitating the students' vocabulary knowledge.

However, they also stated that new vocabulary was also taught incidentally. The findings indicate that incidental vocabulary teaching sometimes cannot be avoided especially for subjects in which words are not the focus of teaching and learning new

words occurred while intending to learn other things. For example, new words were taught while teaching reading skills. In many cases, students asked about unknown words that they found in the texts. Teachers employed several ways to explain the unknown words such as directing students to guess the meaning of those words using contexts or clues available in the texts, as stated in the excerpt below:

> More often I teach vocabulary incidentally, especially when teaching listening, reading, and writing skills. Students usually ask about words they find in the text that they don't know.

This excerpt illustrates that incidental vocabulary teaching, which often occurred as a result of extensive reading, is also an important approach to building students' vocabulary development. Also, there are always unpredictable words that students may initiate to ask about during the lesson. Many previous studies, such as by Ahmad (2011), Day, et al. (1991) revealed, incidental vocabulary learning is one of the effective strategies and performed significantly.

Employing both approaches may increase the strength and minimize the weaknesses. Therefore, they agreed that teachers would be better to plan or prepare the words which are going to be taught, even if the focus of teaching is not on vocabulary. The statements below reflect their teaching experience:

> …. I agree that vocabulary teaching must be done by plan or good preparation… Also … incidental vocabulary teaching is necessary because we cannot ban or limit students asking words that are not included in the preparation.
> ……in my opinion, we cannot depend only on one way of teaching new words to students … Yes indeed, teaching words by a plan is better but many times students ask words that we do not expect before or the words that the students ask are not included in the plan … in this case incidental vocabulary teaching is needed, so the combination of the two is much better.

In practice, teachers of English in this context combined explicit and incidental approaches, and with good reason, as research has shown that this combination is effective (Sonbul & Schmitt, 2010). Employing a combination of intentional and incidental vocabulary teaching would be better for students to maximize their vocabulary learning and to promote deeper mental processing and better retention than employing only one of them (Nation, 2008; Zandieh & Jafarigohar, 2012).

4.4. *Words were taught by using several techniques such as visual techniques, verbal techniques, translation, guessing strategy and using dictionary*

Some teachers stated that they taught new words by using real objects when possible, such as pictures, photos, drawings, flashcards, slides, mimes, gestures, and actions. They believed teaching vocabulary using visual techniques is an interesting and effective way as well. Unfortunately, however, not all words can be presented in this way. As such, teachers should not rely only on this single approach because there are

still so many words, particularly abstract words, for advanced levels which might more easily and more effectively be presented using other techniques.

> well, …we usually present some new words by using different types of visual aids, such as real objects when available in the classroom. Otherwise, we use pictures or drawings. We also often use flashcards. Sometimes we also use actions, mimes or gestures … but we can't use this technique for all words especially for abstract words … only limited words can be presented with this way……for beginning level I often use objects, pictures, flashcards, actions, and mimes. Unfortunately, so many words especially for the advanced level cannot be explained by using this strategy.

Other ways that some teachers used to teach new words are verbal techniques. Sometimes they used examples or illustrations to explain the meaning of words, as stated in the following excerpt:

> … to explain abstract words and when using pictures or objects are not possible, I try to give as many examples or illustrations as possible to explain the meaning of new words. But this needs extra effort and takes time and … many times I don't want to spend too long, so.

The findings revealed that all teachers used translation into the first language to convey meanings of new words as it is a simple way and saves time. Interestingly, they used this technique as the last alternative or when there was not enough time to explain by using other techniques.

> I give the meaning of new words by translating it into the first language if other ways are difficult to do and I think there is nothing wrong with it as long as it is done carefully and appropriately. I use translation method to check the students' understanding by asking them to translate the words into the Indonesian language.

It was found that students were trained with the written contextual guessing strategy to understand particular unknown words without using a dictionary. This evidence relates to the compensation strategies discussed previously.

> ……. many times, students asked about unknown words that they encountered in the text, and I think this is a good time to train students to guess the meaning of these words through context or using clues available in the text. Of course it is not easy and takes time, but it will help students not to rely on a dictionary too often. Once students get accustomed to this strategy, it will promote an extensive reading habit, which eventually improves their vocabulary as well as reading abili*ty.*

The findings also indicate that the teachers also trained students to use word analysis strategy – a strategy that belongs to one of the sub-strategies of cognitive strategy, by which the students were trained to find out the meaning of a word by analysing it, whether it is a verb, noun, adjective, etc. or whether it contains a prefix or suffix. Recognizing the prefix or suffix of a word can help students find out its meaning since each prefix or suffix has a certain meaning, as pointed out in the excerpt below:

> …. I explained to students in order to find the meaning of a word is by analysing it. We analyse whether it's a verb or a noun also whether it has a prefix or suffix. Often a prefix or suffix determines whether a word is a verb or a noun and by recognising it, its meaning can be found.

This excerpt illustrates that the analysing strategy is also an efficient strategy which can help students to be independent learners and increase their vocabulary knowledge naturally. This type of strategy relates closely with the sub-strategy of cognitive strategies, i.e. analysing and reasoning sub-strategy. Since a lot of English words have been created through the combination of morphemic elements, that is, prefixes and suffixes with base words and word roots, it is essential for English language teachers to help and facilitate the students to understand how such a combinative process works. In this way, they will possess one of the most powerful understandings necessary for vocabulary development.

Lastly, a dictionary was used to learn new words. It is one of the most important and reliable *sources* to search and find the appropriate meaning of a word as it provides a wide range of word definitions following their particular contexts. The findings reveal that all teachers used and trained students how to use a dictionary effectively to learn new words.

> The dictionary is a very important tool for language learners to learn vocabulary. Therefore, it is necessary to train the students how to use a good dictionary appropriately, so that they will be able to apply this skill autonomously outside the classroom.

Additionally, they pointed out that teachers play an important role and have the responsibility to guide students to choose a good dictionary and train them how to use it efficiently and appropriately.

> Knowing a word includes knowing its written and spoken form, its meanings, its derivation, how it is used in different situations, its grammatical aspect, and how it can be used as a verb, noun, adverb, etc. Therefore, as a teacher I have the responsibility to guide students to choose a good dictionary and to train them how to use it effectively.

Being able to use a good dictionary appropriately helps students understand a word *comprehensively* and thus develops their comprehensive vocabulary knowledge. It also helps students to be more autonomous and enhances language learner habits. "Students need to have and use dictionaries to learn vocabulary autonomously because a good dictionary provides *everything about words*".

As the excerpts *above* illustrate, a dictionary is an essential tool for language learners *as* it provides helpful comprehensive information about words. It empowers learners to be self-sufficient in finding the appropriate usage of words to convey a message and encourages them to become responsible for their independent learning.

4.5. Students' views about English vocabulary teaching and learning

The key findings derived from student interviews include students enjoyed learning *vocabulary* through games and role-play, songs, or movies; students learned vocabulary outside the class when teachers gave them home assignments; vocabulary tests and feedbacks motivated students' learning, and speaking and writing tasks challenged students for productive vocabulary learning.

4.5.1. Students enjoyed learning vocabulary in class through games and role-play

For many students of EFL learning English or memorizing new unfamiliar words is often boring and completing many exercises can be frustrating. Students prefer vocabulary lessons as well as English lessons to be presented in interesting and attractive ways. The findings revealed that the majority of students were interested in learning vocabulary through games. They said that games make them enjoy learning, make fun, make relaxation, maintain and increase spirit (Ramadharniati, 2016).

> Honestly learning vocabulary is a difficult and boring activity, but we enjoy the lesson if the teachers make fun activities that make us active …we like activities such as games… for example, word guessing games.

Similar to student 2, student 10 also preferred learning vocabulary in class through games because it is more interesting and because games in which students *interact* with each other can rarely be played outside the class.

> We prefer learning vocabulary in class through games … because it is more interesting especially when we already feel tired and sleepy and it is almost impossible to play games for learning outside the class.

Other advantages of using games: well-chosen games can lower anxiety; they are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class; they are amusing and entertaining and yet highly motivating and challenging. They help students make and sustain the effort of learning; games provide language practice in the various skills of the language; games encourage students to interact and communicate, and games create a meaningful context for language use.

Role-play or simulation is another approach that most students enjoyed. Role-play is an artificial enactment of reality, which requires the students to *speak* properly in line with the contexts and their roles. Thus, role-play is an effective technique to animate the teaching and learning atmosphere, arouses the interests of learners, and makes vocabulary acquisition successful. Although it is more challenging and needs more time and effort for preparation, students are interested in this activity because it enables them to practice the language as if in a real situation.

> Role-play is also good activity, I like it … But it is quite hard … we need to prepare sentences that will be used to construct the dialogue according to the context or situation given ... So, of course, we need to look for suitable words and expressions.

In an EFL setting, it is difficult for learners to find real-world situations outside the classroom where they can practice the language they are learning. Therefore, classroom activities should be created to provide opportunities for students to practice what they have learned. Role-play is a good way of bringing a wide variety of situations from real life into the classroom and provides a model of what learners may use in real life, encouraging and promoting students' fluency (Muhanna, 2012).

4.5.2. *Learning vocabulary through songs or movies*

The majority of students liked listening to songs or watching movies. Teachers of listening as a subject sometimes used songs and movies as sources of teaching and learning vocabulary in the classroom. It was found that students appreciated teachers who used songs and movies for vocabulary learning for several reasons. The following excerpt of student 1 illustrates why she liked listening to songs to learn words: "*I like listening to music very much ... I listen to music everywhere ... and I like it if the teacher plays a song in the class ... It is fun and relaxing*".

On the other hand, student 3 liked learning new words through watching movies. He not only learned new words but also enjoyed the movies.

> I enjoy very much when teacher brings and play movies in the class … not only to enjoy the movies but to learn the language as instructed by the teacher … what words or expressions used … how they are used … it is fun and interesting …not sleepy.

These findings suggest that teachers should aware and use various teaching tools for teaching vocabulary that interests the students. Songs and movies avoided developing a monotonous mood in the class, amused students, helped them feel relaxed, and get rid them of their negative attitudes towards a foreign language. They also provide a comfortable class environment, which can motivate students so that they can develop their linguistic skills more easily.

4.5.3. *Vocabulary cards were used to learn words outside the class*

It was found that students used vocabulary cards as an effective and efficient strategy to learn new words outside the class as suggested by their teachers. The following excerpts are examples of students' responses about the use of vocabulary cards to learn English words:

> I write new words in small cards. At the back of the cards is the meaning or definition of the words and sometimes an example … I can bring and read them anywhere … I read while in a taxi, canteen, or while waiting for the lecture to start.

As the excerpts illustrated, students used cards to learn words outside the class as an effective and efficient strategy. Word cards can be carried and read anywhere and anytime. This strategy closely relates to the sub-strategy of memory strategies, i.e. employing action sub-strategy. Meanwhile, testing vocabulary based on student's word cards, which can be classified as reviewing well sub-strategy of memory strategies, could be motivating.

4.5.4. *Vocabulary tests motivate students' learning*

The findings indicated that students were more serious about learning and reviewing words before the tests, especially when the result score of the tests contributes to their learning achievement grade, as stated by students in the following excerpts:

> I like teachers who give tests regularly because it improves my motivation. Also, I will know my learning progress … Yes, I will study more seriously especially if the result of the test will be used for the final grade.

This finding supports the argument that testing is one important external factor that may improve students' motivation to learn English vocabulary.

4.5.5. *Speaking and writing tasks challenge students for productive vocabulary learning*

Vocabulary might be classified into receptive and productive categories. Speaking and writing tasks encourage and challenge students to pass through the three steps – learning, practicing, and producing language, within one activity. From the analysis, it was found that students were interested in doing speaking and writing tasks, as stated by student in the following excerpts:

> The teacher of the speaking subject usually gives us a task in which we should speak or present about a particular topic in front of the class in a limited time. … I feel this task is quite demanding but … I like it … I have the opportunity to practice the language … also when making preparation I must learn new words related to the given topic.

Other student responded, "writing is the most challenging skill". She found that the difficulty in writing tasks is not only on what appropriate words must be used to convey messages but also on how those words must be constructed into grammatically correct sentences.

5. Conclusion

This study has made several important findings. Firstly, the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy were the memory

strategy and compensation strategy with an average mean of 2.90. With an average mean of 2.79, the metacognitive strategy was the least frequently used vocabulary strategy. In general, there was not any significant difference in using vocabulary strategies between fields of study, and the number of years of studying English in the university. However, more successful and less successful students differed in using vocabulary learning strategies. Secondly, vocabulary was taught similarly either to English Letters study program or non-English Letters study programs. Several approaches were used by the teachers to teach vocabularies, such as using visual and verbal techniques, translation, and dictionaries. Meanwhile, students preferred learning through interesting activities, such as games and role-plays.

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