
ENGLISH VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MARITIME ENGLISH SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important challenges that the learners have to face during the process of second language learning is learning vocabulary. Vocabulary itself has been recognized as very important to language use in which insufficient vocabulary knowledge of the learners may lead to difficulties in second language learning. In the area of English for Specific Purposes like Bahasa Inggris Maritim, the role of vocabulary becomes even more important. Students need to know and memorize the meaning of fixed and specific terms and instructions in order to be able to perform well on their duties later. The research was conducted in SMKN 36 Jakarta, a vocational high school, with 40 respondents from Maritime major students who study Bahasa Inggris Maritim subject. The implemented instruments were Maritime Vocabulary Proficiency Test and Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire which is derived from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies consisting of determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive. The Maritime Vocabulary Proficiency Test is aimed to check students' knowledge of specific terms and instructions that are used in the Maritime industry, while the questionnaire is not only used to show students' most and least favored strategy, but also to prove which strategy category that most affects students' achievement in the Vocabulary Proficiency Test (VPT). In result, based on the regression analysis of SPSS 22 to analyze the questionnaire and the test, 'Say new word aloud while studying' and 'Bilingual/ Monolingual dictionary' appear to be the two most favored strategies by the students, followed by other 14 strategies from all 5 categories. Metacognitive was proven to be the most and Cognitive was the least frequently used strategy categories. From the analysis, we can see that only Determination Strategies that affects significantly towards students' achievement in Maritime Vocabulary Proficiency Test.

Keyword(s): *Maritime English, vocabulary learning strategies, English for Specific Purposes*

1.1. Background of the Study

Being an indispensable part of language learning, vocabulary is still given little emphasis and might have resulted to unsatisfactory performance of the students. Being aware of vocabulary learning has lead people to understand the term Vocabulary Learning Strategies: 'actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember words' (Cameron, 2001).

Although considerable research has been devoted to identify the vocabulary learning strategies used by L2 learners, rather less attention has been paid to the English for Specific Purposes area. In this case, Maritime English has received very little attention in terms of VLS research. Knowing which strategies contribute most might help to figure out which strategies that needed to be emphasized. It is worthwhile to study VLS used by Maritime students and to see whether there is any contribution from VLS towards students' achievement in mastering maritime vocabulary. The findings of the study would help teachers to design lesson plan and construct practical instructions in order to effectively support students' competence in English language, especially *Bahasa Inggris Maritim*.

1.2. Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most and least frequently used categories of VLS by maritime school students in *Bahasa Inggris Maritim* subject?
2. Do VLS contribute to the students' level of vocabulary proficiency?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

In general, this study is aimed to provide baseline data for further research on VLS of EFL in Indonesia and to accommodate insights for EFL classrooms especially in *Bahasa Inggris Maritim* subject. Besides that, the following objectives can also be proposed:

1. To discover which strategy categories that most and least favored by the students
2. To find out whether the use of VLS contributes to students' achievement in *Bahasa Inggris Maritim* subject.

2.1. Previous Works Related to the Vocabulary Learning Strategies

There has been a high interest in finding out what strategies applied by students when they are learning vocabulary. Nosidlak (2013) investigated the VLS used by 102 advanced students who were also the successful language learners and found that advanced students use diverse and multiple sources of new words. They view internet as the most popular source of new vocabulary as well as traditional sources of vocabulary such as English books, dictionaries, vocabulary books and materials, and TV/ radio.. Meanwhile, Safian, et al (2014) found out that Metacognitive Strategies were employed very frequently, probably because university students are good in planning and monitoring in their own learning process. On the other side, social strategies were the least preferred ones because most of the curriculum design does not promote collaborative and social learning.

Many researches have been dedicated to find out whether there is relationship between VLS and level of comprehension in certain skills. The study conducted by Kalajahi and Pourshahian (2012) tried to explore the relationship between VLS and vocabulary size of 125 undergraduate ELT students. It resulted that most of the ELT students operated psycholinguistics and metacognitive strategies with average vocabulary size to manage with the advanced studies at the university level. However, the study reported no relationships

between the psycholinguistics strategy and participants' vocabulary size. Meanwhile, the relationship between metacognitive strategy and the vocabulary size were negligible.

2.2. The Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Schmitt (1997, pp. 207 – 208) presents a taxonomy of VLS which is classified into two big groups: strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning and strategies for consolidating a word after it has been encountered. This categorization is partly based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies. Schmitt's VLS questionnaire was the basis for this study.

Strategy for the discovery of a new word's meaning	
DET	Analyse part of speech
DET	Analyse affixes and roots
DET	Check for L1 cognate
DET	Analyse any available pictures or gestures
DET	Guess from textual context
DET	Bilingual dictionary
DET	Monolingual dictionary
DET	Word lists
DET	Flash cards
SOC	Ask teacher for an L1 translation
SOC	Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word
SOC	Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word
SOC	Ask classmates for meaning
SOC	Discover new meaning through group work activity
Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered	
SOC	Study and practice meaning in a group
SOC	Teacher checks students' flash cards or words for accuracy
SOC	Interact with native-speakers
MEM	Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning
MEM	Image word's meaning
MEM	Connect word to a personal experience
MEM	Associate the word with its coordinates
MEM	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms
MEM	Use semantic maps
MEM	Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives
MEM	Peg Method
MEM	Loci Method
MEM	Group words together to study them
MEM	Group words together spatially on a page

MEM	Use new word in sentences
MEM	Group words together within a storyline
MEM	Study the spelling of a word
MEM	Study the sound of a word
MEM	Say new word aloud when studying
MEM	Image word form
MEM	Underline initial letter of the word
MEM	Configuration
MEM	Use Keyword Method
MEM	Affixes and roots (remembering)
MEM	Part of speech (remembering)
MEM	Paraphrase the word's meaning
MEM	Use cognates in the study
MEM	Learn the words of an idiom together
MEM	Use physical action when learning a word
MEM	Use semantic feature guide
COG	Verbal repetition
COG	Written repetition
COG	Word lists
COG	Flash cards
COG	Take notes in class
COG	Use the vocabulary section in your textbook
COG	Listen to tape of word lists
COG	Put English labels on physical objects
COG	Keep a vocabulary notebook
MET	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newcasts, etc)
MET	Testing oneself with word tests
MET	Use spaced word practice
MET	Skip or pass new word
MET	Continue to study word over time

2.3. Maritime English

Bahasa Inggris Maritim is put as one of the obligatory productive subjects in vocational high school especially those which have maritime majors. As stated in the syllabus of *Bahasa Inggris Maritim untuk SMK*, students are asked to fulfill the basic competences that include analyzing and performing maritime English in on-board communication (Appendix A). The subject matters include names of ship's parts in English, on-board communication in English, and maritime terms in English. fishery terms that are taught in *Maritim dan Perikanan* major (Appendix B).

Since maritime English involves fixed terms and phrases, the learning source is SMCP, STCW, and IMO. Standard Maritime Communication Phrases (SMCP) has 2 parts: Part A that covers phrases applicable in external communication and Part B includes on-board communication phrases. The SMCP was made in order to make a simplified version of Maritime English to reduce grammatical, lexical, and idiomatic varieties to a tolerable minimum, using standardized structures for the sake of its function aspects, i.e. avoiding misunderstanding in safety related verbal communication. When communicating from ship to shore or ship to ship, phrases for use in emergency use a block language in SMCP. Further communicative features of SMCP also avoid synonyms and contracted forms, provide fully worded answers to 'yes/no' questions and basic alternative answers to sentence questions, and provide one phrase for one event.

The fixed phrases and terms that students need to memorize make the learning becomes even more difficult. A word can have different meanings between general English and Maritime English. One of the meanings of the word 'target', for instance is 'an object shot at during shooting practice, often a circle with a pattern of rings, or any object or place at which bullets, bombs, etc. are aimed' (Cambridge Online Dictionary). On the other hand, 'target' means 'the echo generated e.g. by a vessel on a radar screen' in the Maritime English. But, there are also words which have similar meaning, like 'embark' which means 'To go aboard a vessel' in Maritime English and General English as well.

There are eight message markers used in communication between shore-to-ship or ship-to-shore by using radio communication: instruction, advice, warning, information, question, answer, request, and intention.

3.1. Research Participants

The subjects in this study were fifty nine grade X students from Maritime major (*Nautika Kapal Penangkap Ikan* and *Teknika Kapal Penangkap Ikan*) at SMKN 36 Jakarta during the academic year 2015 – 2016. The subjects' age is ranging from 15 to 18 years old. The participants of the study were classified as novice students in the vocational high school, who were low-achiever English learners, due to their score in General English subject (below 70).

3.2. Research Instruments

The method that was employed to collect the data in this study is survey. Using survey method is not an uncommon way of gathering data in terms of learning strategies' field of research. The first instrument is VLS questionnaire, built based on Schmitt's taxonomy for VLS with needed modifications, such as changing the language to Bahasa Indonesia and omitting certain strategies in order to adjust with the level of the participants. From 58 items in the six categories described by Schmitt, there were only 29 strategies that were adapted in the questionnaire due to some limitations. A four-point rating scale, which 'never' is scored as 1, 'sometimes' is scored as '2', 'often' is scored as 3, and 'always' is scored as 4, is employed to collect the data. The next instrument is Maritime VPT, constructed by the researcher herself. The Maritime VPT was built to test the students' vocabulary levels on several topics: parts of the ship, cargo handling in seaspeak, manifest, emergency report and terms.

3.3. Research Procedure

Taking place at SMKN 36 Jakarta during the academic year of 2015 – 2016, This school has eight majors, two of them are maritime majors (nautica and technical for fishing vessels). Nautica for fishing vessel is designed for students who are interested in working on the Deck part of the ship, while Technical for fishing vessel is for the students who are interested in being mechanic on the ship.

The research was conducted by firstly sorted 29 items out of 58 items based on Schmitt's Taxonomy (1997). The questionnaire was distributed for a pre-test with 10 students as sample. It resulted that the students preferred to read the questionnaire in Bahasa Indonesia with the English version in another paper. After that, the subjects of the research were exposed to Maritime vocabulary during 3 regular teaching lessons by their regular teacher. Then, students were asked to fill in the VLS questionnaire to show which strategies that most and least favored and also Maritime Vocabulary Proficiency Test to know their achievement in vocabulary learning.

To find out whether VLS contribute significantly towards students' score or not, a regression analysis was used for each category by using SPSS 22. The regression analysis was performed to see the effect of independent variable (strategy categories) towards students' score in Maritime Vocabulary Proficiency Test as the dependent variable.

The hypothesis for each category is as follows:

- H0: Independent variable does not affect significantly towards students' score
- H1: Independent variable affects significantly towards students' score
- H0 is accepted and H1 is declined if $t\text{-value} < t\text{-table}$ or if $\text{Sig} > 0,05$.
- H0 is declined and H1 is accepted if $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ or if $\text{Sig} < 0,05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result for Research Question One

To address this question, the researcher performed a simple descriptive statistic to calculate the mean score and standard deviation of each category and rank them from the highest to the lowest one. From five categories, only Metacognitive (mean=2,73, SD=0,85) and Determination (mean=2,71, SD=0,70) show medium strategy use, while the other three strategies: Social Strategies (mean=2,44, SD=0,86), Memory Strategies (mean=2,47, SD=0,91), and Cognitive Strategies (mean=2,30, SD=0,94) show low strategy use. According to the results, it can be concluded that students are not really aware of VLS.

The characteristics of *Bahasa Inggris Maritim* subject that require the students to learn specific vocabulary, such as names of ship parts, fixed terms of instructions while on board, etc., make students are forced to employ another strategy when dictionary is not around: guessing the meaning of a word from context.

The least frequently used category is Cognitive Strategy which might be because the students were not really familiar with Cognitive Strategies, such as written repetition. If they do not know how to use the strategy, it is almost impossible to expect them employing the strategy or even get benefits from it.

4.2. Result for Research Question Two

Regression analysis with Enter method on each category has showed a result that out of five categories, only Determination strategies that affects significantly towards students' score. Yet, the effect of Determination Strategies as predictor for students' score only at the number of 10,2%. Meanwhile, the other strategies show the effects from 0,1% to 1,6%.

4.3. Discussion

After analyzing the result from the questionnaire data, Metacognitive and Determination are the top two categories used in a medium level by the students, while for the other three (Memory, Cognitive, and Social), students show low strategy use. Metacognitive seems like the most favorable strategy categories used in learning vocabulary (Riankamol, 2008; Kalajahi & Pourshahian, 2012). In this category, using English-language media (songs, movies, newcasts, etc) is placed as the highest frequency mean of all. This situation should be responded by creating comfortable teaching-learning process which includes the use of movie or song in the classroom. Meanwhile, Determination Strategies are also popular among the L2 learners. This category also includes the highest frequency mean of all strategies: bilingual or monolingual dictionary. Students choose to refer to dictionaries each time they find the new words. Yet, only bilingual dictionary is available at school, which leaves the students to almost no choice. Under the Cognitive strategy category, another strategy that needs to be seriously employed by students is flash cards. In this research, the use of flash cards is the least favored strategy (mean=1,90) by the students.

By conducting an SPSS analysis, it is discovered that out of five categories, only Determination Strategies that shows positive contribution towards students' achievement in learning Maritime vocabulary. Among other strategies which show only little impact, Determination Strategies which is placed as the second most favorable one can be considered seriously in the teaching-learning process. Teachers need to emphasize the use of dictionary, train the students to use dictionary strategies (Gu, 2003), direct the students to choose monolingual over the bilingual dictionary, and many more. To make the dictionary strategies become even more effective, the lesson should be designed in such way where students are asked to write and use the word that they look up in the dictionary. As this study revealed that Cognitive placed the least frequently used strategy category by maritime school students, curriculum designers should provide more materials in the book which acknowledge the students with other VLS.

Since only Determination Strategies affected students' achievement in maritime vocabulary proficiency test, it raises a need to study why students only get benefit from one strategy category. There are factors affecting the use of VLS, such as gender, years of language study, motivation, and language proficiency. It needs further advancing research to figure out the relationship from these categories towards' students' vocabulary level.

CONCLUSION

The students who study Maritime major at vocational high school are expected to master the specific words and terms that they would use in the industry later. Based on the findings,

the most frequently used strategy categories are the Metacognitive and Determination strategies. In Metacognitive, the students favor using English-language media, such as movies, songs, newscasts, etc., and also testing themselves with word test. While in Determination Strategies, the students prefer using bilingual or monolingual dictionary and guessing meaning from context. The specific vocabulary that they need to learn is quite difficult to find in the regular bilingual or monolingual dictionary. Furthermore, by knowing which strategy favored most and contributes positively, there is a chance of improving the teaching learning process in the classroom. More research is also needed to find out which strategies used by successful and unsuccessful students. Knowing how successful students learn and which strategies they have been using is great information for improving the teaching and learning process. Lastly, strategy training should also be used as a part of vocabulary development program to benefit the students' learning process.

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