Profile of Vocabulary Learning of Vocabulary Masters of STIMIK Amikom and ABA Sinema Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Vocabulary mastery is one of the goals of language learning. Vocabulary is very important because it is one of the most functional language elements needed to perform communication. This paper reports a case study on vocabulary learning by a group of adult students learning English in two different universities. The objective of this research is to describe the profile of the vocabulary learning of the ten best vocabulary masters in two private universities. The research involved 5 students from STMIK Amikom and 5 students from ABA Sinema; both are in Yogyakarta. Those participants were chosen based three criteria; their cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors. The findings show that the masters develope varying degree of their receptive as well as the productive skills; second, the masters learn from authentic material because it is more effective; third, in order to produce a better translation, the vocabulary masters review results of their internet-based translation due to their lack of grammatical use.

Keywords: criteria; vocabulary learning; vocabulary masters

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1. Background

University graduate is expected to be the future agents for improving the condition of the country. To meet this demand of the learning outcome specified for each educational level, they are supposed to develop their specific competence through reading related literatures pertaining their field of study, including English (Permen No 19, 2015) and to communicate and publish their academic work in a formal forum, such as in the accredited journal (KPT 2015).

Consequently, English is recognized as a compulsory subject in higher education in Indonesia because

A typical description of English class in a non-English department shows that English is offered as general education (GE) which focuses on mastery of general English. A few, however, offer English for specific purposes (ESP) for their students depending on the university policy (Rokhayani and Nurcahyo, 2015:1). In both GE and ESP classes, most attention may be paid to learning vocabulary and grammar.

Recognising the importance of vocabulary learning for language learners is well understood. In most contexts of foreign language learning knowing the meanings of new words are of prime importance. In other contexts, students are also in need to communicate in English in which mastery of vocabulary is a must. In almost every activity in English classes, they use vocabulary in making sentences to express their feeling, share their ideas, request what they want, etc. Without mastering adequate vocabulary, they will experience defectiveness in such communication (Haddad, 2016:785). Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008).

Based on the importance of learning vocabulary in tertiary education, the present paper reports a study which describes the vocabulary learning from ten best vocabulary masters in STMIK Amikom and ABA Sinema, both in Yogyakarta. The main purpose of this research is to provide a detailed description of techniques used by the students to enlarge the vocabulary mastery.

2. Literature Review
Vocabulary Learning

   Vocabulary which is known as the body of words used in a particular language may consist of a single item, phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. It is central to English language teaching because without sufficient mastery of vocabulary students hardly understand language input or express their own ideas clearly. In Lewis's term (1993: 89) "Lexis is the core or heart of language". It is well understood that vocabulary acquisition has become the main task of second language acquisition because it is a means to get meaning expressed and understood (Xia, 2010). Schmitt (2010:4) observes that 'learners carry around dictionaries but not grammar books' which means that for them vocabulary, the content of dictionary, is more useful than grammar.

   In a similar vein, Wilkins (1972: 111-112) exemplifies the importance of vocabulary mastery using the following description "…while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed". This could also be observed that in the early stage of communication, language learners heavily rely on the use of vocabulary and leave grammar in expressing their thoughts and feelings. Along with the learning process and students'

development of greater fluency and expression in English, they acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge based on which they could develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies.

Theories of learning vocabulary can be traced from Krashen's input hypothesis (1987) which claimed that L2 learners can naturally acquire the forms of the L2 as long as they are provided with sufficient language exposure. In this context, the exposure is important because it is the required condition for comprehensible input. With sufficient input at the right level, learners will naturally acquire certain grammatical morphemes in a pre-determined order. " learning is seen as a conscious process that results from the formal study and which can be influenced by the instruction" (Krashen, 1987:5).

Vocabulary teaching has become a very important issue in foreign language learning since the 1980s. Terrel advocated the importance of vocabulary by proposing the Natural Approach which put heavy emphasis on comprehensible and meaning input rather than grammatically correct production. More specifically, Sokmen (1997) proposes explicit vocabulary teaching to the usual inferring activities in the for the language classroom.

Based on literature in teaching vocabulary, Nation offers a model of developing students' mastery of vocabulary. The model includes categories of vocabulary that language learners must possess both receptively and productively in the following order:

1. the spoken and written form of words.
2. the grammatical patterns of the word
3. the collocational behavior of the word
5. how frequent the word is used
6. the appropriateness of a word
7. the conceptual meaning of a word
8. the associations a word has with other related words (Nation,1990:31).

Further, Nation (2001) also states that knowledge of a word can be classified into knowledge concerning its form either in the spoken or written forms, its position in grammatical patterns or collocations, its function in terms of frequency and appropriateness, and its meaning both in concept and associations.

Carter (1992) has also defined similar vocabulary knowledge categories such as pronunciation, spelling, grammatical properties, syntactical features, collocations, associations, and senses, etc. Laufer (1997) categorizes the word-knowledge as the form, the word structure, the syntactic pattern of the word in a phrase or a sentence, meaning, common collocations, and the lexical relations of the word with other words, such as synonym, antonym, and hyponym, and finally common collocations.

Although much literature has classified vocabulary knowledge in different ways, there seems to be a growing consensus that vocabulary knowledge is perceived as a complex system which consists of several types of vocabulary knowledge besides meaning and form. Any research that tends to explore vocabulary acquisition should regard it as its task to study the different types of word knowledge, and most importantly, to explore the links and interrelationships between the different types of word knowledge (Schmmid and Meara, 1997:17-36)

For students in English as a foreign language program, vocabulary plays an essential role in communicating their ideas and thoughts both verbally or in written form. This was stated by Wilkins (1976) that learners could describe many things without grammar, but they could express nothing without vocabulary. In a similar vein, Widdowson (1987) states that native speakers of any language can understand language material with correct vocabulary but not vise-versa. Lewis (1992) believes that vocabulary acquisition is the main task of second/foreign language acquisition and the performance of all language skills as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating will not possible without sufficient vocabulary mastery.

Nation (2001:1) also strongly advocates that vocabulary learning is very important in language learning. Learning vocabulary is a very important part of learning a language because the more words learners know, the more they will be able to understand what they hear and read; and the better they will be able to express what they want to when speaking or writing. Vocabulary affects the way in which people interact as well, as people are often judged socially based on the words that they use and understand. Vocabulary can be learned incidentally or directly through exposure and interaction with increasingly complex and rich oral language and by encountering lots of new words in text, either through their own reading or by being read (Parveen and Rajan, 2012:174), or by means of some learning media (Vela and Rushidi, 2016).

3. Methodology
3.1.Participants

The study belongs to a case study (Stake, 1995) involving students from STMIK Amikom and ABA Sinema in Yogyakarta as the research participants. Out of more than 100 private universities in Yogyakarta Province, both universities belong to so-called 'healthy universities' which possess a good number of students body. Five students were selected from each of the two universities to represent the top best-achieving students in their university context. They were selected from the last semester. This based chosen based on the assumption that they have got sufficient exposure to English in their study programs. They were purposively selected based on the three criteria: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

3.1.1. Cognitive

This category requires that selected students should be able to recognize vocabulary for general purpose, academic purpose, and official purpose to make sentences in the different context of setting as follows.
* The use of vocabulary for the general purpose
  This area deals with the common vocabulary usually used in daily communication.
* The use of vocabulary for the academic purpose
  It concerns with the use of academic vocabulary found in textbooks or academic paper.
* The use of vocabulary for the official purpose
  It refers to the specialized vocabularies found in the working place.

3.1.2. Affective

Students have displayed significant achievement in their contexts which can be observed from the following aspects.

1) Financial Orientation

This indicator refers to students who have been able to use vocabulary in some forms of communication to earn a living. At this consideration, they have gained a significant achievement.

2) Non-financial Orientation

The students who have experienced joining any competitions are categorized to possess significant achievement in non-financial orientation.

3.1.3. Psychomotor

Students are able to engage in both spoken and written forms well. In many cases, there are people who are good at writing but not at speaking, vice versa. It is assumed that the participants are students who can put English into practice in the forms of spoken or written communication.

3.2. Data

The data needed for the research are in forms of phrases and sentences in connection with the process of vocabulary learning obtained from the ten vocabulary masters from the two tertiary institutions namely STMIK Amikom and ABA Sinema Yogyakarta. These two settings were selected based on the availability of the gatekeepers of the institutions for such research so that data gathering will be no problems at all.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through observation, documentation, in-depth interview, and open questionnaire. Triangulation was employed to ensure the validity of the data collected.

The constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the data by categorizing techniques based on the receptive and productive skills to produce the profile of vocabulary learning in. When the number of categorization is more than 12, they are broken down into more detail. This is done in order to obtain a thorough and comprehensive analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

The total data gathered are 122 data items which are categorized into two groups; a receptive category which consists of 41 data items and productive category which consists of 81 data items. Receptive vocabulary use involves perceiving the form of a word like in listening to 20 occurrences and reading and retrieving its meaning with 21 occurrences. Productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express meaning through speaking with 41 frequency of occurrence and writing and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form with 40 occurrences. All this shows that the occurrence of productive vocabulary is twice as much as the receptive aspect.

The data analysis in this research reveals some strategies used by the participants in learning English as follows based on their frequency of occurrence.

1. Some vocabulary masters improve the vocabulary by listening to news and interview programs through television and radio as they want to improve their listening skill as well as to know the current issues in the public.
2. Some vocabulary masters listen to music and films from their private collections such as CD, DVD, cassette or learning from the family member because those media enable them to repeat their actions again and again to get a better understanding.
3. Memorizing new words and guessing the meaning of words in context are evaluated better ways used by some vocabulary masters.
4. Repeating song and dialogues in movies provides a fun to learn for some vocabulary masters to enhance their vocabulary mastery.
5. Taking part in debating activities or competitions motivates some vocabulary masters to improve their vocabulary considerably.
6. Making conversation in the working place or in the organization of some vocabulary masters gives some vocabulary masters the real environment to improve the vocabulary.
7. Some vocabulary masters improve their vocabulary by delivering a speech in order to implement the vocabulary in the real use and also to build the self-confidence. In the effort to improve the writing skill, some vocabulary masters compose the short and long text through writing emails, composing a story, writing articles and writing in a diary.
8. Some vocabulary masters improve their vocabulary by the translation method using internet resources because of the time efficiency.
9. In order to produce a better translation, some vocabulary masters prefer dictionary resources to internet resources to improve their vocabulary because they must analyze it first.

The profile of the vocabulary learning of the ten best vocabulary masters of STMIK Amikom and ABA Sinema Yogyakarta can be classified into two categories. They are the receptive use which is broken down into two activities including listening and reading, and the productive use which is categorized into two activities including speaking and writing.

In terms of the use of listening, some masters listen to the news, interview programs, music and films from TV, radio, private collections such as CD and DVD, and internet resources.

The other receptive use focuses on reading. reading text, novels, books, newspapers, song and film text is the other activities used by some masters to enlarge their vocabulary. Various reading materials can be chosen based on their interest or need. Some vocabulary masters start reading from the easiest level to the more difficult level in accordance with their ability. The data show that some masters started reading loose text when they were still in Senior High School. Some others started from the pocket vocabulary books and moves to a higher level that is reading novel and others.

The productive use focuses on speaking. Some masters choose practicing oral repeating, taking part in debating activities or competition, making conversation and delivering a speech. The oral repeating done by some masters are repeating songs, repeating unfamiliar phrases or expressions in films, repeating words from the internet, or reading aloud from the magazine. Debating and delivering speech are competitions in which some vocabulary masters must

express their idea matching with the topic. Making conversation is classified into 2 purposes, namely financial and non-financial purposes. This is because some of the vocabulary masters have worked and some do not possess any work.

The productive use focuses on writing. Some masters compose a short text to improve their writing skills as well as to extend their vocabulary mastery. The short text here refers to updating status on Facebook and writing short message service (SMS). Composing long text is also done by some other masters, for instance composing a story, writing in a diary, replying emails and writing articles.

To improve the vocabulary, some masters translate text from songs, films, books, novels, newspaper, etc. The media used are dictionary resources including printed dictionary, a pocket dictionary and an electronic dictionary, and internet resources.

5. Conclusion

Based on findings, some conclusion can be formulated as follows:
1. All participants representing the ablest students pay attention to vocabulary because they are aware the importance of vocabulary for them.
2. The participants use several techniques to extend their vocabulary by means of performing some kind of language use, more specifically in reading and watching a movie.
3. To extend their vocabulary mastery, they keep practicing their English.
   They also use some media, especially the information and communication technology (ICT) to help them keep the vocabulary active.

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