# UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

# VOCABULARY LEARNING BELIEFS, STRATEGIES AND SIZE: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE LEARNERS OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNICAL COURSES IN PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN PAHANG

## RASHIDAH BINTI ABDUL KADIR

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
**Master of Education (TESL)**

**Faculty of Education**

August 2014

# AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This topic has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree of qualification.

In the event that my dissertation be bound to be violate the conditions mentioned above, I voluntarily waive the right of conferment of my degree and agree to be subjected to the disciplinary rules and regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Name of Candidate        :    Rashidah binti Abdul Kadir

Candidate I.D. No.         :    2011153309

Programme                :    Master of Education (TESL)

Faculty                    :    Education

Thesis Title               :    Vocabulary Learning Beliefs, Strategies and Size: A study of Undergraduate Learners of Engineering and Technical Courses in Pahang

Signature of Candidate    :    ……………………………………

Date                      :    11 August 2014

**Abstract**

Most of public higher institutions in the field of Engineering and Technology have chosen English as medium of instruction in their teaching and learning. As the language still retains a significant role in the profession, more steps need to be taken as to improve learners' chances for employment. Unquestionably, language proficiency demand a wide array of English vocabulary as to perform better in all its four skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening. Thus, the aim of the present study is to capture the beliefs and strategies as well as establish a relationship between beliefs and strategies and strategies with vocabulary size of learners. Furthermore, this study tries to find out whether learners' reported vocabulary learning beliefs and strategies comparable with what their lecturers perceived. As to achieve these objectives, a questionnaire, a vocabulary test and a semi-structured interview were used for data collection. 165 learners completed the questionnaire and the vocabulary test. Follow up interview were conducted with two lecturers from the participating classes involved. The descriptive analysis and two types of correlation coefficient analysis were used to answers the research questions. Subsequently, transcriptions of the interview were coded and themed accordingly. Analysis of the data revealed that learners generally have positive beliefs about vocabulary learning. They believed that acquisition and motivation is important to their success in learning the skill. Moreover, the analysis also suggests that metacognitive strategies is commonly used by learners while cognitive strategies are the least used strategies by learning vocabulary although it is reported that most learners used dictionary to find meaning of new words. Furthermore, synthesis on these two results revealed the significant correlation between learners' beliefs and strategies used. Whereas weak or negative correlation was found between learners' frequency used strategies with their vocabulary size. On the other hand, several similarities found between learners reported beliefs and strategies used in learning vocabulary with what the lecturers perceived. Nonetheless, few discrepancies especially in metacognitive regulation were found between what reported by learners with what their lecturers perceived. Generally, this study shows that most learners still rely on dictionary in learning vocabulary. Very few learners were familiar with more concrete strategies which would lend more success in vocabulary learning. Hence, it is hoped that the present study may induce more strategies for learners and is compatible with the approach used by their lecturers; which would improve the effectiveness of English Language teaching and learning.

**Abstrak**

Kebanyakan institusi pengajian tinggi awam yang menawarkan bidang Kejuruteraan dan Teknologi memilih bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa pengantara dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Memandangkan kepentingan bahasa Inggeris dalam kedua-dua bidang tersebut, pelbagai langkah telah diambil bagi meningkatkan kemahiran pelajar dalam bahasa Inggeris yang mana akan membuka peluang pekerjaan kepada mereka. Pelbagai perbendaharaan kata dalam bahasa Inggeris diperlukan untuk menguasai semua kemahiran, iaitu membaca, menulis, bercakap dan mendengar. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenalpasti kepercayaan dan strategi serta melihat hubungkait di antara kepercayaan dan strategi serta strategi dengan saiz perbendaharaan kata pelajar. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga cuba untuk mengesahkan sama ada kepercayaan dan strategi pembelajaran yang dilaporkan oleh pelajar adalah sama dengan apa yang dilihat oleh pensyarah mereka. Bagi mencapai objektif ini, borang soal selidik, ujian perbendaharaan kata dan temu bual separa berstruktur telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. 165 pelajar melengkapkan soal selidik dan ujian perbendaharaan kata. Manakala temu bual telah diadakan dengan dua orang pensyarah dari kelas yang mengambil bahagian dalam menjawab soal selidik dan juga ujian perbendaharaan kata. Analisis secara deskriptif dan dua jenis analisis hubung kait digunakan untuk menjawab soalan kajian. Selain itu, rekod temu bual telah dikodkan dan ditemakan sewajarnya. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan pelajar mempunyai kepercayaan yang positif terhadap pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata. Mereka percaya penggunaan perbendaharaan kata dan motivasi adalah penting untuk kejayaan mereka dalam pembelajaran kemahiran. Selain itu, analisis juga menunjukkan bahawa strategi metakognif sering digunakan oleh pelajar. Manakala strategi kognitif kurang digunakan oleh mereka walaupun penggunaan kamus secara meluas telah dilaporkan. Sintesis ke atas dua keputusan antara kepercayaan pelajar dan strategi yang digunakan oleh mereka menunjukkan pertalian yang signifikan. Manakala korelasi yang lemah atau negatif didapati antara kekerapan penggunaan strategi oleh pelajar dengan saiz perbendaharaan kata yang mereka ada. Namun begitu, beberapa persamaan dilaporkan antara kepercayaan dan strategi yang digunakan pelajar dalam pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata dengan apa yang pensyarah dilihat. Namun demikian, beberapa percanggahan terutamanya dalam peraturan metakognitif turut ditemui antara apa yang dilaporkan oleh pelajar dengan pandangan pensyarah mereka. Secara umumnya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan pelajar masih bergantung kepada kamus dalam pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata. Hanya sesetengah daripada mereka menggunakan strategi yang lebih konkrit semestinya memberi lebih banyak kejayaan dalam pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata. Oleh itu, adalah diharapkan kajian ini mendedahkan lebih banyak strategi untuk pelajar amalkan dan serasi dengan pendekatan yang digunakan oleh pensyarah mereka dan seterusnya membuktikan keberkesanan pembelajaran dan pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

**Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, I wish to send my gratitude to Allah s.w.t. for granting me everything that I needed in finishing this study. May all of these efforts are count as 'ibadah' and rewarded by Him.

I am thankful to many people for their various contributions to this study. Heartfelt thanks go to participating lecturers in the institution, without whose aid, this research would have been impossible. Sincere thanks go to them for their help in data collection in this study.

I am very grateful to the wonderful learners for their participation and cooperation in the study. Of course, my sincere appreciation goes to the Dean of the Faculty who permitted the study at the Institution.

Thanks goes to friends whose interest in this study has been a source of encouragement.

Last but not least, this dissertation would not have been completed without the understanding and emotional support from my mother. Her love and understanding have been part of my academic pursuit in this field. To her, I am most indebted.