UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF FORM SIX STUDENTS OF SMK SUNGAI TAPANG, SAMARAHAN

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the important determinants that enables students to be proficient L2 users. Students' vocabulary size is built up through a variety of learning experiences. VL strategies are classified into 'incidental' and 'intentional' learning strategies that are present in taxonomies of VL learning strategies by Oxford (1990), Schmitt (1997), Sökmen (1997), etc. Notably, researchers have differing views on which strategy is the key to vocabulary acquisition. In recent years, researchers have begun to take into account all the strategies and recognize their influence on vocabulary learning (Gu & Johnson, 1996). In this study, a taxonomy of VL strategies by Gu & Johnson (1996) and Fan (2003) cited in Ming (2007) was used to identify the pattern of VL strategies of Form Six students. The results revealed that the samples had a medium frequency of strategy use with an overall mean of M=3.21 (SD=.45). They had the highest frequency of use for guessing "I guess the meaning of words I don't know" (M=3.80; SD=.94) and the least "I carry a pocket dictionary to look up the words I don't know" (M=2.22; SD= 1.17). Guessing strategy was the most frequently used strategy, followed by perception and encoding strategies. In contrast with previous research by Gu & Johnson (1996) and Ming (2007), management strategy turned out to be the least frequently used strategy. There were significant differences in strategy use by field of study and gender and a moderate positive correlation between attitude towards VL and strategy use, but there was no significant difference in strategy use in terms of self-rated English proficiency and no correlation between perception of problems in VL and strategy use. Thus, the implication is Form Six students should read extensively and practise meaning-focused reading to learn new vocabulary incidentally from context. They should also be made aware of effective strategies to use. Besides, direct instruction or intentional study such as the use of dictionary, activation and management strategies are still beneficial to enhance vocabulary acquisition and should not be neglected.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

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

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

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter presents the purpose of the study, the background, the research objectives, the research questions, the significance of the study and its limitation.

1.0 Introduction

The importance of the English Language continue to gain the attention of all parties - students, parents, teachers, politicians, educators and academicians in all education institutions. Apparently, Malaysians are concerned with the poor standard of English among educated learners, namely graduates. Why does this happen? What is wrong? Is it due to the wrong teaching and learning approaches used by teachers that lead to this problem? Or Students are lacking in interest? Or is it due to other factors. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is seldom associated with students' lack of vocabulary.

Basically, in order to function reasonably well in the second language, learners should at least have 2000 words. Thornbury (2002) asserted that there is a need to equip learners with a core vocabulary of 2000 high frequency words as soon as possible. He also contended that most researchers recommend a basic vocabulary of at least 3000 word families. Hence, without possessing the minimum thresholds of vocabulary learners will face difficulties in all the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Lightbrown & Spada (2006) commented that the