A Study of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Among University Students from Non-English Majors

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the strategies that are significantly associated with samples who have superior and limited knowledge of L2 vocabulary. To achieve the objectives that have been selected, this study has used 2 methods to collect information related to this study, namely questionnaires and interviews. A total of 30 students answered the questionnaire provided in the form of Google Form and a total of 6 individuals who came from 3 levels of their English proficiency namely Excellent (2), Average (2), and Poor (2) were interviewed. A questionnaire was used to identify the level of the way those non-English major UMS students learn English vocabulary and their opinions about vocabulary. Interviews were conducted to obtain information related to the strategies used by each of the levels to learn English vocabularies and also to see what they think about learning English vocabularies. Research also shows that English vocabulary can be learned using various methods. The results of the study also proved that strategies given by students were different from the reviewed article because most of them were not linguistically-motivated strategies.

Keyword(s): vocabulary learning strategies, non-major, ESL

INTRODUCTION

To begin with this topic, one must know beforehand the proper interpretation of vocabulary itself. Generally, vocabulary can be interpreted as a lexicon that holds the meaning of it being a list or collection of words and phrases that is alphabetically arranged and defined (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). But what about its specific definition in the linguistic field? According to the linguist Nordquist (2019), he defined vocabulary as all the words of a certain language that were to be understood by a particular person or a group of people. In addition to that, there are two types of vocabulary that are mainly to be focused on, namely the active vocabulary and the passive vocabulary. The former are the words that were understood and often used in everyday speaking and writing whereas the latter is made up of words that can be recognized but not used in the course of normal communication generally.

To dive into the matter a bit deeper, it was understood that the fundamentals of learning a language can be attributed to how much vocabulary one has to use in their everyday life. This is because mastering and remembering the labels of everyday things surrounding us in a certain language can be the key to being able to communicate smoothly with fluency and accuracy. However, Alghamdi (2019) stated that ESL / EFL learners tend to not prioritize much on English vocabulary teaching and learning much. Nonetheless, it is firmly believed that acquiring vocabulary is one of the most central and main criteria to be achieved for second language learners as it is essential for their communicative competence.

Despite this opinion, it still remains a theory that is yet to be considered a solid fact since past research showed questions in regards to its validity remained unsolved (Ali, 2019). One of the questions includes the most effective strategy or method that may be traditional or experiential when acquiring vocabulary knowledge. Thus, we are then proposing in this research to find out the answers while analyzing it in order to get the idea of vocabulary learning strategies of second language learners. As for the strategies of learning vocabulary itself, some researchers have identified and categorized it into four types. The lists are metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation (Goundar, 2019). However, there are also a variety of findings that can be analyzed and seen differently.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

For our group research, we have 1 research question and 3 objectives altogether. All of these are based on the articles that our group has reviewed beforehand. However, there are a few minor alterations being

made to avoid our research being too complex and complicated due to its advanced nature. In the context of this paper's research question, we have come to an agreement on one of them. Thus, our research question is:

1. What are the most to least favorable vocabulary learning strategies that the students experience?

As for the objectives of this research, there are exactly 3 of them that we have decided on. These will be:

1. To understand the perception of Malaysian university students towards vocabulary learning.
2. To identify the difficulties of vocabulary learning faced by Malaysian university students.
3. To determine the strategies that are significantly associated with the students who have superior and limited knowledge of second language vocabulary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally, vocabulary knowledge together with grammatical competence constitutes the linguistic foundation of any of the four language skills, all of which collectively partake in the composite construct of language proficiency (Charkova & Charkova, 2018). This literature review examines the strategies that are significantly associated with samples who have superior and limited knowledge of L2 vocabulary.

Research based on "Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS)" has been done by numerous researchers. While vocabulary learning and teaching was often given a little priority as a Second Language learning in English, (Maftoon, Hamidi, & Sarem, 2012) has stated that there has been renewed interest in the nature of vocabulary and its role in the target language learning. Alghamdi (2019) has published an article on his research titled 'Exploring Second Language Learning in ESL Classes. The purpose of this paper was to investigate vocabulary learning behaviour among ESL learners. This research paper clearly explained how advanced ESL students learn vocabulary and the methods preferred by English language learners. The results showed that students mostly learn their vocabularies through 'reading classes' and through 'group work'. The findings also show that the students learn more vocabulary from outside the classroom than they learn from most basic skills classes (e.g. listening, speaking, and writing). As for the educational settings, students confirmed that they learn most of the vocabulary taught to them in 'reading classes'.

Another research based on 'Vocabulary Learning Strategies' was 'Exploring the connection between second language vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary knowledge' done by Charkova & Charkova (2018). This research journal was posted on 'International Online Journal of Education and Teaching' in 2018. Based on the findings of this study, it was proven that there is a close link between vocabulary learning strategies and learning outcomes. The results suggest that there is a set of strategies shared by effective language learners which contribute to the attainment of a deeper knowledge of the second language lexicon. The findings also have direct implications for teaching practice. Next, in a study conducted by Ali & Zaki (2019), a careful analysis of studies revealed the differences and similarities in the vocabulary learning strategies as well as the approaches among learners from different learning contexts and cultural backgrounds. This study shows that strategies that work for other learners in one learning context might not be appropriate for learners in other contexts (Gu, 2003). Thus this is a great example of the outcomes of this research because our samples have shown different results in terms of their vocabulary skills.

Tahir et al. (2020) published a study based on VLS titled "The Application of Visual Vocabulary for ESL Students' Vocabulary Learning". This study's sample consists of two groups of Form Two students (60 students) from two separate schools in the suburbs of Ipoh and Teluk Intan, Perak. They are English language learners with a poor degree of competency. They are provided with a Visual Vocabulary worksheet to train the target words to the learners in the experimental group. The worksheet includes the target words, drawing area, and explanations of the target terms. According to Phillips (2016), utilizing images in conjunction with words in language lessons has proved to be beneficial, particularly for adult learners. The findings of this study indicate that the use of Visual Vocabulary is beneficial in learning the target words among Form Two learners to a large extent, with the experimental group's overall improvement score being 89% higher than the control group in terms of total improvement score in percentage.

Apart from that, Kohnke & Ting (2014) has done a study titled "ESL students' perceptions of mobile applications for discipline-specific vocabulary acquisition for academic purposes". This study

targets first-year students in a student-teacher mentoring program in a university in Hong Kong. In general, students who enroll in an English-medium institution in Hong Kong realize that their English proficiency—particularly their knowledge, understanding, and vocabulary range—is insufficient to enable academic achievement (Evans & Morrison, 2018). Participants were originally from mainland China and Hong Kong, and English was either a foreign or second language for them, as it is for the majority of Hong Kong's university population. The purpose of this study was to get better knowledge and provide more insights into the usage of the 'Mobile-Assisted Language Learning' app by university students in Hong Kong to build discipline-specific vocabulary. According to the data gained in this study, the samples at Hong Kong tertiary institutions are increasingly using vocabulary applications to help them comprehend subject-specific lectures and course readings. Although dictionary applications allowed access to direct translations of terms, some of them discovered that such apps frequently included just a limited amount of discipline-specific terminology. Based on this study, it was proven that vocabulary learning could be made easier with the existence of technology-based aid and we can see that most students agreed that this method could help them to improve their vocabulary skills.

In summary, based on the previous studies in the literature review, it is proven that studies in vocabulary learning are still lacking, and future research should investigate the effectiveness of vocabulary instructions for the students to learn the target words. Researchers may investigate developing new materials or methods of education in the future to improve learners' capacity to acquire a new language. The research duration can also be modified so that the findings of a long-term study including vocabulary learning can be studied and compared to the efficacy of the short-term study.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 36 people participated in this research of which 30 people came from non-English majors of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) students that were asked to fill the questionnaire on Google Form and 6 more people came from any different level of English fluency (Poor, Average, Excellent) were interviewed using Google Meet. Researchers have selected two people for each level of English fluency, namely Poor, Average and Excellent. All the people interviewed were women between 20 to 22 years old. All six of them come from different backgrounds, levels of education, and levels of English fluency.

Instruments

This research was conducted to understand the perception of Malaysian university students towards vocabulary learning, to identify the difficulties of vocabulary learning faced by Malaysian university students, and to determine the strategies that are significantly associated with the students who have superior and limited knowledge of L2 vocabulary. To investigate all of these objectives, there were two instruments used in this research which are through a questionnaire that was conducted using Google Form and was distributed to 30 non-English majors of UMS students. Other than that, the items inside this questionnaire are based on various reviewed research articles that have used it beforehand, such as Qian and Schedl's (2004) depth of vocabulary test. Overall, there are 20 items being attached in the Google Form for the purpose of getting the data for our research question.

The second method is through an interview of 6 samples that came from different levels of English fluency which came from Poor(2) level, Average(2) level, and also Excellent(2) level. The interview was conducted online, via Google Meet recordings and it was done in separate groups. This is to avoid any bias in the results as we have perceived beforehand that those that are in the inferior group's answers may be affected due to the other participants that may have a superior grasp in their vocabulary knowledge or the English language generally. Nevertheless, all 3 groups of samples will be asked the same set of interview questions. Here are the examples of questions given to those interviewed:
1. How would you describe your vocabulary knowledge?
2. What is your strategy to learn English vocabulary?
3. What is your perception about vocabulary learning?

Data analysis
In terms of the analysis for the interview, we have analyzed it by categorizing the methods used by each group and comparing it with the findings of Charkova and Charkova (2018), whose article we have reviewed beforehand. Here, the difference between the findings of the reviewed article and our findings will be observed and analyzed thoroughly to find the reason for its occurrence.

FINDINGS
Questionnaire

There were exactly 20 items in the survey that had been handed out virtually to 30 UMS students in various courses not pertaining to any non-English related majors. The survey was heavily influenced by Qian and Schedl's (2004) depth of vocabulary knowledge test. The questions were specifically designed to first see Malaysian student's perception towards learning vocabulary and observe their methods on how they choose to learn vocabulary. The following are the results of the survey conducted.

1. Are you motivated when learning English vocabulary?		
Yes	No	Sometimes
17 (56.7%)	11 (36.7%)	2(6.7%)

Table 1 : Results for question 1

We found that over half the participants, 56.7% (17 people) voted to strongly agree to be enthusiastic about learning new vocabulary with the other half mostly voting sometimes 36.7% (11 people) and another 6% (2 people) voting no. Although the number of students who are interested in learning vocabulary is exceeding the half point of what is perceived to be the mean, there is the rivaling number that is almost of equal stature.

2. I use google translate to help translate my first language into English		
Yes	No	Sometimes
12(40%)	1(3.3%)	17 (56.7%)

Table 2 : Results for question 2

As a staple for new gen ESL students, the results that indicated a majority to be neutral in the use of google translate was unexpected by the least 56.7 % (17 people). Although a fair amount of 40%(12 people) voted to indeed use it and only 1 person(3.3%) voted to not.

3. I used a dictionary to help me translate English into my first language		
Always	Sometimes	Never
12(40%)	15(50%)	3(10%)

Table 3 : Results for question 3

Another essential tool for second language learners are dictionaries, which the majority of the respondents voted to only use 'sometimes' while the other 40% (12 people) voted to always use it. The remaining 10% (3 people) voted to have never done so.

4. I write new words into a sentence so I can remember it.		
Always	Sometimes	Never
12(40%)	13(43.3%)	5(6.7%)

Table 4 : Result for question 4

When asked if the respondents often write new words in sentences as a means to remember it the majority of them voted 'sometimes' 43.3% (13 people), but the number of people who do so has a fairly equal number of voters of 40%(12 people). The remaining 6.7% (5 people) have never done so.

5. I learn new words when I work in groups.		
Always	Sometimes	Never
15(50%)	14(46.7%)	1(3.3%)

Table 5: Result for question 5

Group works are inevitable in ESL classes, so it came as no surprise that the respondents' majority 'always' learned new work during those sessions. But there is an overwhelming neutral response to this statement also, indicating that almost half the respondents 14 people (46.7%) voted so. There was one person that objected to never learning a new word during group work.

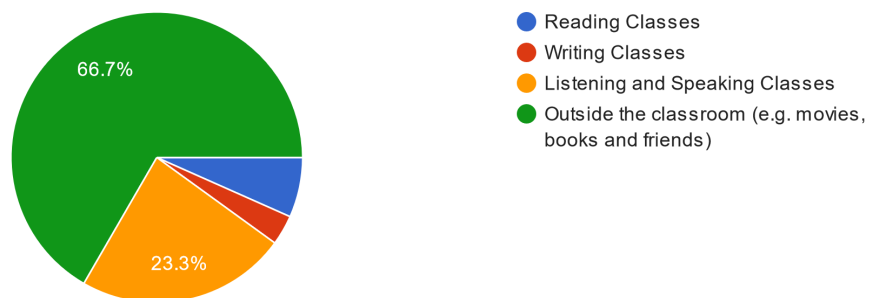I learn vocabulary from...
30 responses

- Reading Classes
- Writing Classes
- Listening and Speaking Classes
- Outside the classroom (e.g. movies, books and friends)

Chart 1: Results for question 6

When the students were asked where they often learn their vocabularies from, it came to no surprise that they do outside the classroom, with the majority of 66.7% (20 people) over two-third of the respondents. This is consistent with how low the number of voters 16.7% (5 people) opted to learn vocabulary from teachers in the question ' favorite way to learn vocabulary'. Only 23.3% of students gain vocabulary knowledge through speaking and listening class. The least favored ways are both in reading and writing classes, both amassing only 6.7% (2 people) and 3.3 % (1 person).

7. I play word games to improve my vocabulary.

Always	Sometimes	Never
5(16.7%)	19 (63.3%)	6 (20%)

Table 6 : Results for question 7

Playing word games has also garnered a majority of neutral voters with over 63.3% (19 people), opting 'sometimes'. Meanwhile, only 16.7%(5 people) enjoy learning vocab from word games and over 20%(6 people) are honest with voting for 'never'.

My favorite way to learn vocabulary is:
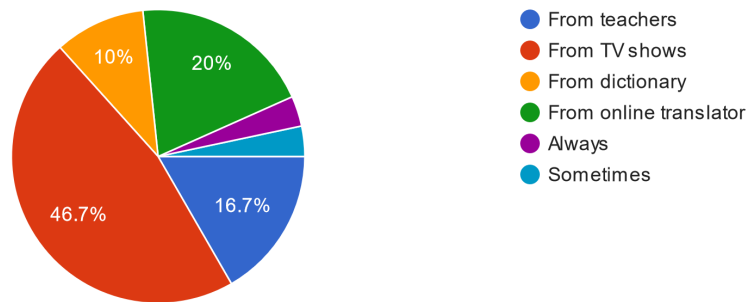
30 responses

Chart 2 : Results for question 8

It is shown that most of the student's favourite way of learning vocabulary is from TV shows, 46.7% (14 people). Their least favourite is directly from a dictionary by 10% (3 people) while they do seem to tolerate more if it is an online translator (virtual dictionary) 20%(6 people). Interestingly, only 16.7% (5 people) seem to prefer learning it from teachers.

8. Were you interested in the topic of English vocabulary in school before?		
yes	No	Maybe
16 (60%)	6(10%)	9(30%)

Table 7 : Result for question 9

To gain further understanding of Malaysian student's perception of vocabulary in school, we quizzed them straightforwardly with the exception of the option 'maybe' being neutral on the matter. Over 60%(16 people) voted to indeed be interested. But rivaling this would be the shocking 10% (6 people) and another 30%(9 people)being neutral in the matter.

How do you feel about learning English vocabulary?
30 responses

Legend:
- Very Hard
- Hard
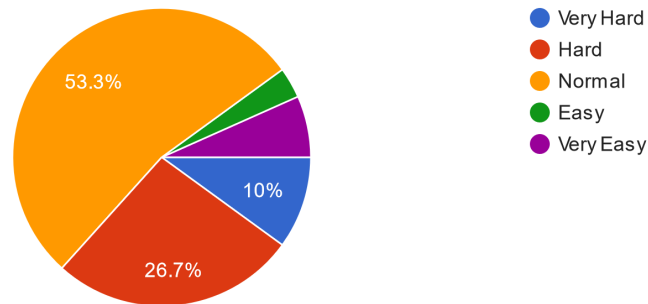- Normal
- Easy
- Very Easy

Chart 3 : Results for question 10

The respondents were asked if they thought learning English vocabulary was hard and over half 53.3% (16 people) said that the experience was a normal thing for them, another 26.7% (8 people) voted the experience to be hard 10% (3 people) voted learning vocabulary to be very hard, 6.7% (2 people) voted to be very easy and only 1 person said it to be easy.

In terms of my knowledge on the second language (English) vocabulary, I consider myself as...
30 responses

Legend:
- Superior
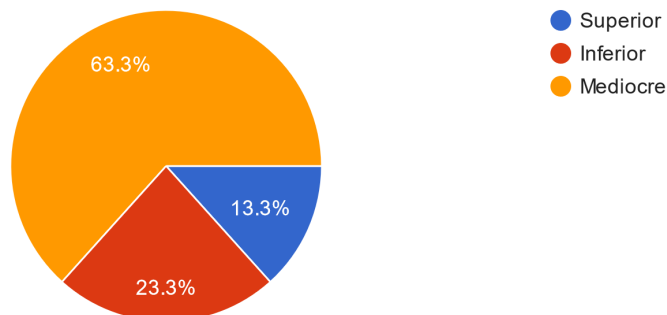- Inferior
- Mediocre

Chart 4 : Results for question 11

The chart above shows the respondents' perception of their own vocabulary skills, 63.3% (19 people), the majority perceive themselves to be mediocre while only 13.3% (4 people) perceive themselves to be superior. The rest 23.3% (7 people) feel that they are inferior.

What is the biggest difficulty I face when learning vocabulary?
30 responses

Legend:
- Limitations of sources of information about words
- Attitude
- Hesitation in speaking
- Problems with grammar
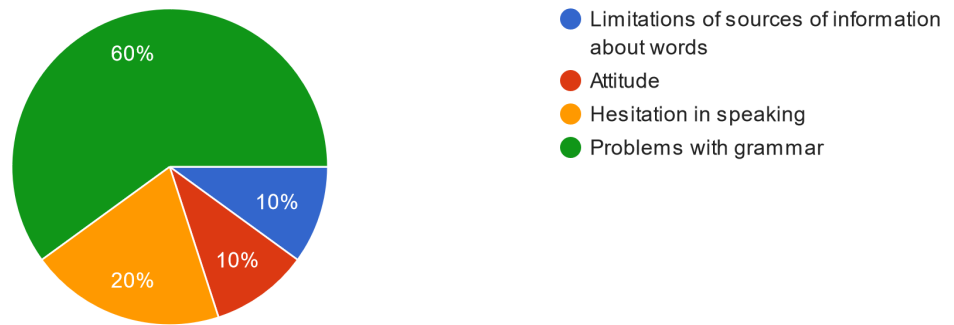
Pie chart values: 60%, 10%, 10%, 20%

Chart 5 : Results for question 12

When asked what is the biggest difficulty they face during learning vocabulary, an astonishing 60% (18 people) had selected 'grammar problems'. This could the contributing factor to the second highest votes that is the 'hesitation to speak' comes in second with 20% (6 people) meanwhile both limitation of sources of information and attitude has gotten equal results of 10%(3 people) each.

What source do you often refer to when learning English vocabulary?
30 responses

Legend:
- Friends
- Teachers
- Social Media
- Dictionary

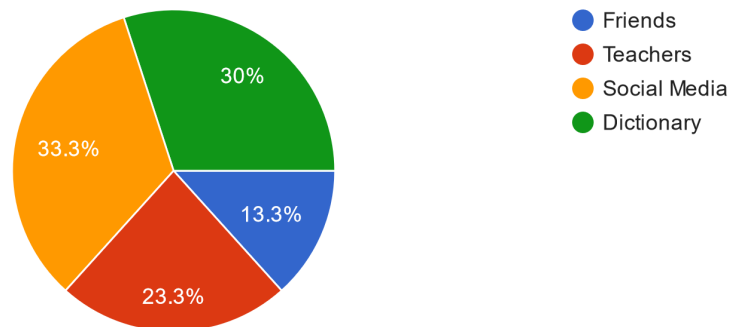Pie chart values: 30%, 13.3%, 23.3%, 33.3%

Chart 6 : Result for question 13

When asked about sources respondents often refer to when learning English vocabulary, the majority voted 33.3% (10 people) and 30% (9 people) used a social media and dictionary while the least favoured method was by friends 13.3% (4 people). A fair amount of voters opted to select through teachers at 23.3% (& people).

I was able to have a wider range of vocabulary by having activities like...
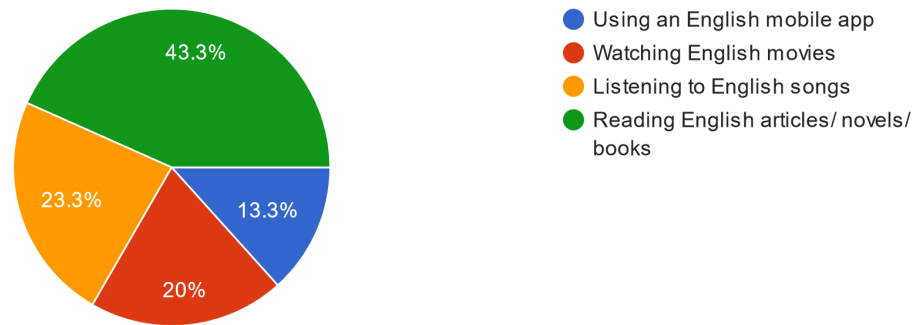
30 responses

- ● Using an English mobile app
- ● Watching English movies
- ● Listening to English songs
- ● Reading English articles/ novels/ books

Chart 7 : Results for question 14

This question beckoned the respondent to select activities they have done that improved their vocabulary unconsciously with the majority 43.3% (13 people) opting to read English articles, novels, and books. Voters watching English movies and listening to English songs both garnered almost the same amount of voters being 23.3%(7 people) and 20%(6 people) each. The least amount of voters curiously is using English mobile apps which only garnered 13.3% (4 people)

What do you think is the most effective way to improve your vocabulary?

30 responses
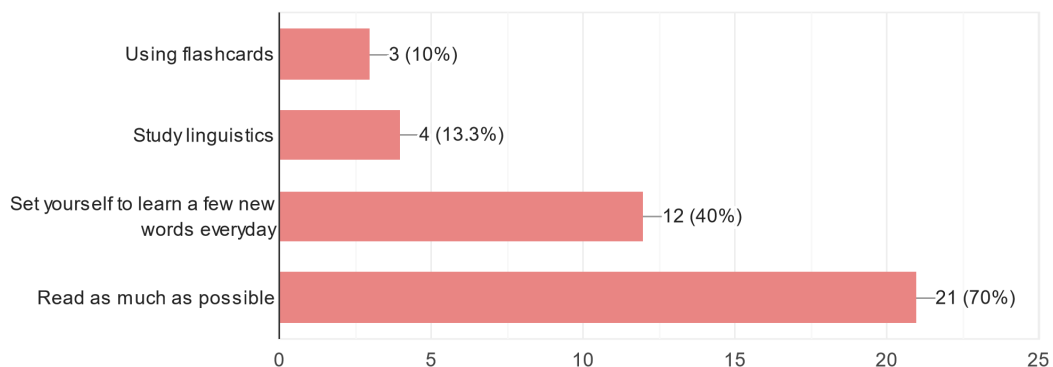
Bar Chart 1: Result for question 15

The question 'what do you think is the most effective way to improve your vocabulary' garnered quite an interesting result. The least favoured way voted was using flashcards of 10% (3 people). Second to that, studying linguistics was also deemed as the least practical vote with only 13% (4 people). The second highest option favoured by students was learning new words every day by 40% (12 people). Quite interestingly, the majority of students opted to vote reading as much as possible as their most favoured vocabulary improvement technique- a method that is quite unpopular in the ensuing question.

What is the best strategy that is applicable to students that are both superior and inferior in terms of second language vocabulary?
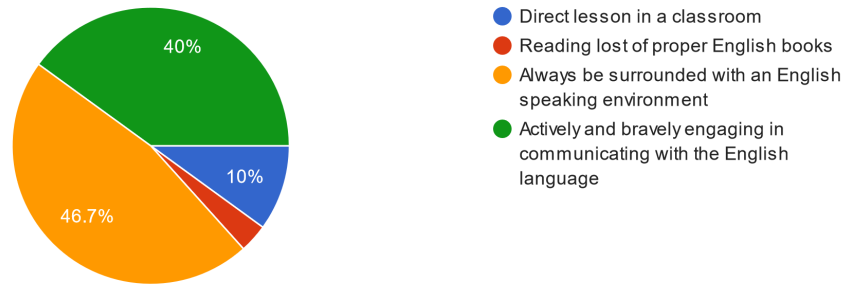
30 responses

● Direct lesson in a classroom
● Reading lost of proper English books
● Always be surrounded with an English speaking environment
● Actively and bravely engaging in communicating with the English language

Chart 8: Result for question 16

The students were asked about their best applicable strategies that are deemed superior and inferior in terms of second language vocabulary. The chart result shows that over 40% (12 people) voted to actively engage and communicate in English. It is shown that 46.7% (14 people) which is the majority voted to be always surrounded by an English-speaking environment. The lesser voted options are direct lessons in classrooms of 10% (3 people) and surprisingly only one person (3.3%) voted to read a lot of English books.

SA= Strongly Agree(1)
A=Agree (2)
Not sure =Not sure (3)
D= Disagree (4)
SD=Strongly disagree (5)

Questions	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Mean	Total Part.
1.Learning vocabulary is very important when learning English.	11	14	3	2	0	1.86	30
2. Vocabulary is not that important when learning English.	0	0	5	16	9	4.1	30
3. It's good to learn vocabulary from other sources aside from teachers.	14	13	2	0	1	1.62	30
4. Student's attitude is crucial when learning English vocabulary	8	15	6	0	1	2.4	30

Table 8 : Showing the individual mean of questions 17-20

According to the table above, these items were targeted to reach our objectives, which is to understand the perception of Malaysian university students towards vocabulary learning as well as to observe the preferred methods they used to learn vocabulary. The item with the highest mean score would be item 2 (vocabulary is not that important when learning English) with the mean of 4.1. The lowest mean on the table would be item 3(It's good to learn vocabulary from other sources aside from teachers) with a mean score of 1.62. From these results, we can conclude that the student's perception of vocabulary is very important to them in terms of progressing their English learning and it is proven that they use a variety

of methods, not exclusive within a classroom to expand their knowledge-therefore fulfilling both our initial objectives.

Interview (BASED ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY)

LOW-PROFICIENCY (POOR) GROUP

To begin with, an analysis for the first group which is the "Poor" ones is conducted. Here, it was found that they answered the first question as being poor due to the fact that [Sample 2] had perceived herself as "...English is quite low." in terms of her mastery towards the language while [Sample 1] reasoning is because she is "...not really sure what vocabulary is.". If we were to look at their way of speaking and answer, it can be concluded that these two samples may truly be really poor in their fluency of the English language, thus it can be theorized that their knowledge of English is indeed lower than the other samples. However, in terms of the second question which requires them to provide their strategy to learn the English vocabulary, two different methods were given. [Sample 1] had answered that she will refer or search for the information on vocabulary learning online, like Google since she stated that "That is how I usually learn English generally…" and that that is what she will most preferably use to find the answer for something she does not know of. But [Sample 2] tends to refer to her teacher for guidance on the topic of vocabulary, as she believes that her teacher will always "...know about things and must be able to explain and teach vocabulary..." easily and clearly. In the final question, it was found that both samples of this group have a negative perception towards vocabulary. The reasons that were accumulated is that constant mistakes may be committed when learning this topic might result in receiving punishments, hence [Sample 1] deems it as "... stressful and not fun…" while [Sample 2] stated it as "...a hard topic…" that will lead her to utter confusion when learning vocabulary.

AVERAGE GROUP

An analysis for the second group which is the "Average" ones is also conducted. For the first question, both [Sample 1] [Sample 2] have said that their English level is on the average level. From the interviews conducted, it is true that the samples were at the average level by looking at the way they answered the questions given. They have difficulty understanding the given questions. For example, [Sample 1] asks for a further explanation related to the questions given. For the second question, [Sample 1] has stated her 3 strategies to learn English vocabulary, namely by reading voraciously, learning one new English word every day, and also learning it by listening. On the other hand, [Sample 2] said that her strategies to learn English vocabulary are searching the meaning in the dictionary for the new English words that she found and she also put the English subtitles when she watched movies. In the final question which is "What is your perception about vocabulary learning?", it was found that both have a different perception on learning English vocabulary. For sample [Sample 1], she had mentioned that learning vocabulary is fun and can help her to think and learn a second language. In contrast to the sample [Sample 2], she thinks that this English vocabulary is important, but she also states that learning English vocabulary is difficult because she rarely uses English in her daily life.

EXCELLENT GROUP

An analysis for the third group is the "Excellent" group. For this analysis, I have no difficulties in explaining the questions to the target as they were able to immediately understand them. For the first question, [Sample 1] and [Sample 2] have stated that their English level is on the 'Excellent' level. For the second question, [Sample 1] stated that she learned most of her English vocabulary through reading and talking to people. She believed that reading is a way for her to learn words and construct sentences while talking to people helped her to use what she has learned in practice. Her perception of vocabulary learning is that she thinks vocabulary learning is important as English is not limited to be in use during studies but also in everyday life whether it is in reading, talking, or just merely using the smartphones. As for [Sample 2], she mentioned that her strategy to English vocabulary is through reading a lot of books, newspapers and watching the news. Her perception in vocabulary learning is that she believed it is crucial in order to convey messages in different ways.

SUMMARY OF DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FACED BY DIFFERENT GROUPS

LEVEL	STRATEGIES
POOR	1. Search for it on Google. Use Google to learn vocabulary and find the meaning of English words that they did not understand. 2. Asking the teacher for help to help them learn vocabulary and words that they did not understand.
AVERAGE	1. Do the regular reading. 2. Try to find a new word every day and find the meaning of that word. 3. Learn by listening. 4. Search the meaning of new words in the dictionary. 5. Watch movies using English subtitles to understand better.
EXCELLENT	1. Use English regularly to talk to others to improve fluency in English. 2. Reading books and newspapers, watching English news.

Discussion

Questionnaire

The purpose of our research is to understand the views of Malaysian college students on vocabulary learning. According to our survey, most people prefer to learn vocabulary in an entertaining and relaxing way. About 60% of people who use vocabulary learning methods like to learn vocabulary easily by listening to music, reading, and playing games. On the other hand, we found that more than 56.7% of the respondents are interested in a second language vocabulary, and their degree of preference for English directly affects their learning efficiency as many refer to themselves as 'mediocre'. Nearly 60% of people believe that the biggest problem in learning English is grammar, because unfamiliarity with words leads to problems such as part of speech errors in the article, it is also perceived that this problem drags onto an ensuing prevalent problem in the impediment of vocabulary improvement that is hesitation to speak when their grammar feels inferior. And about 70% of students think that if they read books and articles related to the second language every day, it can help them learn vocabulary well.

In addition, although most people choose to learn vocabulary in an entertaining and relaxing way, about 23% of students think it is best to learn and practice a second language in class, and about 10% of students like to learn new words through teacher lectures. A very small number of about 3.33% of people choose appropriate English books to read, hoping to learn new vocabulary although they agree that it is an effective vocabulary learning method as proven by question 14 in where the majority voted (46.7%) and question 15 with over (70%) agreed that reading as an effective way to expand their vocabulary range.

In general, 76.6% of the classmates who answered our question were women, and 90% of the respondents were between 20 and 22 years old and were all non-TESL students of UMS. About 16% of people are not sure whether vocabulary is not important when learning English, but Susan Hunston, Gill Francis, and Elizabeth Manning suggested in an article about Grammar and Vocabulary: Showing the Connections that vocabulary is the topic that supports each unit. It is very important for students to learn knowledge, so for students, vocabulary is the most basic knowledge point for learning a second language.

There is the matter of the underused utilization of methods to study vocabulary that is especially prevalent among the students. For example, when asked what method they preferred most to improve their vocabulary, we were met with conflicting reactions based on the results of the survey. Despite the multiple choice question such as 'I was able to have a wider range of vocabulary through..' having garnered the majority votes of 'reading material such as article, books, novels' of 46.7% and the dictionary being one of the majority preferred sources in another multiple choice question for learning vocabulary- they seemed to have voted vehemently against these methods in other similar multiple-choice questions. For instance, when asked when and where they learn the most vocabulary in a question the highest opted answer was 'outside the classroom i.e with friends, movies, non-academic books' which garnered about 66.7% of votes .This occurrence is interesting as it shows the mental dilemma in which ESL students often face in expanding their vocabulary range. It can be theorized perhaps they face

a sort of mixed problems of anxiety and boredom when dealing with ESL learning. Aside from that, there is also a matter of undermining the academic ways to learn vocabulary as a majority of students opted for methods they found to be more enjoyable to do outside the classroom setting as noted earlier in this discussion. It would seem that perhaps they would have gotten their start in their second language in classroom settings but fail to progress under the tension of academic settings and later find solace in dabbling in popular English content outside the classroom on their own accord.It is not uncommon for them to be under such stress as Malaysian youths in university often struggle with academic texts hence the low vocabulary threshold level (Willibrord et al., 2019).

The individual mean of questions has also satisfied and fulfilled both of our initial objectives as the students disagree with the notion that 'vocabulary is not important when learning English' which means they hold the perception that vocabulary is indeed an important aspect of ELS learning. Furthermore, the mean results also showed that students are likely to be delving into sources outside of their sessions with teachers proving our observation that they use a variety of methods (not necessarily academic ones) to learn vocabulary. All of these results of the likert table were consistent with how they responded in the earlier multiple choice questionnaires. Thus, leaving us to believe that the survey for our research was a success.

Rita / Ke Jia Qi

According to this research, the learning attitude affects the progress of students' vocabulary learning. Students who consider vocabulary learning very important will integrate them into daily life in such ways as watching movies, listening to music and the social media content they consume, while students also think it is very difficult and discouraged from doing so because they perceive themselves to have insufficient grammar and hesitate to engage in the language. Therefore, students' views on vocabulary will affect their enthusiasm for vocabulary learning and their methods overall in learning English vocabulary.

Interview

Looking at the findings from the Poor group, one of the categories of answers was indeed aligned with the findings from the reviewed articles. The answer being direct translation. But it is to be taken into account that the translation is being specified as directly using Google translate for it. However, the strategy of asking their teacher was not found in the article. With that being said, the article had proposed other types of strategies, such as writing new words repeatedly, trying to use word lists, referring to bilingual dictionaries, and guessing the context.

As for the Excellent group, the article showed that the strategies that were used significantly by the superior group were more on linguistically-motivated strategies. For example, the samples that are superior are learning through suffixes, monolingual dictionaries, pronunciation check, synonyms, use in sentences, collocations, antonyms, prefixes, and roots. When comparing it with our findings, it is ultimately different. This is due to the fact that our samples are not stating their answers based on linguistically-motivated strategies at all. Rather than that, the strategies from our sample in this group were more on the practical strategies that can be applied in normal situations in daily life.

It was theorized that our samples' answers were affected by their lack of understanding or exposure to linguistic-based terms or strategies when learning the English language, specifically in its vocabulary parts. Even though Malaysia has generally considered English as a second language, the language itself is difficult to learn as there is a diversity in culture from the country. This will lead to people being bilingual or even trilingual, and English itself would still not be among the commonly used languages. Therefore, this had approved that the samples that were taken faced the problems of having a limited learning environment (Ama, 2019). The meaning for this is that they do not have enough environment to actually learn the language by interest, through outside of the classroom. In addition to that, it is more likely that because of this matter, the samples may only put some effort when learning in the classroom if they were under the teacher's direct supervision.

Apart from that, our findings have a neutral category which is the Average group. This is entirely not stated from the reviewed article as it focused only on the general terms of superior and inferior whereas we put in this category to look at those in the middle ground level because this group also exists in terms of Malaysian ESL students. From here, finding 2 can almost be interrelated to the findings from the reviewed article whereby the sample is searching for the meaning words through a dictionary. This act itself can be considered as the strategy of using a monolingual dictionary as the meaning of a word in the language that the learner is learning will be explained in that type of dictionary (Kaufmann, 2018). Yet it can only be to a certain extent as the sample also mentioned other media such as movies. The same goes for finding 1, whereby the sample used the strategy of reading and listening.

Overall, it can be said that our findings are different from the findings of the reviewed articles. This is because it was clearly seen that the strategies that were given by our samples are more prone to be a practical type of strategy rather than a specified and linguistically-motivated strategy altogether.

CONCLUSION

On a final note, the purpose of this research is to find out the answers to the question that we have touched upon which includes the most effective strategy or method that may be traditional or experiential when acquiring vocabulary knowledge and thus analyze them in order to get the idea of vocabulary learning strategies of L2 learners. The study conducted in this research clearly showed the perception of Malaysian university students towards vocabulary learning, the difficulties they faced in vocabulary learning as well as the strategies that are significantly associated with the students who have superior and limited knowledge of L2 vocabulary. Based on the findings, we have concluded that every student has different perceptions in vocabulary learning, and different groups of students use different strategies to help them when having difficulties in vocabulary learning. It can also be seen that each samples' responses were influenced by their lack of knowledge or exposure to linguistic concepts or techniques when learning the English language, particularly in its vocabulary sections. Because vocabulary learning is the cornerstone of learning any language, teachers can use a variety of activities in the classroom to increase students' ability to acquire new words. In the long run, understanding how students learn vocabulary may undoubtedly aid in the achievement of ESL teaching and learning objectives, as well as facilitate the learning experience.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

A. POOR GROUP [SAMPLES: AIVI (1) AND DAPHNE (2)]

1. How would you describe your vocabulary knowledge? Excellent/Average/Poor

Aivi : I guess it is poor a bit because I not really sure what vocabulary is.

Daphne : In my opinion, poor for me as well. Because my English is quite low.

2. What is your strategy to learn English vocabulary?

Aivi : Okay, since I don't know much about vocabulary, maybe I will search online like google for it. That is how I usually learn English generally, so yeah, search online.

Daphne: If me, I think I ask my teacher to help. This is because teacher always know about things and must be able to explain and teach vocabulary.

3. What is your perception about vocabulary learning?

Aivi: I think it is going to be stressful and not fun. Maybe each time I answer is wrong answer. So I maybe going to get punishment.

Daphne: In my opinion, it must be a hard topic. So I get afraid if it is going to be confusing for me. If it is confusing, then it is a big problem to understand it.

B. AVERAGE GROUP [SAMPLES: SYIKIN(1) AND NATALIA(2)]

1. How would you describe your vocabulary knowledge? Excellent/Average/Poor

Syikin: I would say my vocabulary knowledge is in the average stage.

Natalia: I'm at the average level.

2. What is your strategy to learn English vocabulary?

Syikin: My strategy to learn English vocabulary, first is read voraciously. It's undeniable that reading is the most effective way to get new vocabulary. When you read, you see words being used in context and that's what makes it much more effective. For example, memorizing word lists. Second, learn one new word a day. This is because, If we learn just one new word every day, we'll soon notice they add up pretty quickly. Lastly, learn by listening. Therefore, you'll be able to learn useful vocabulary and grammar without even realising or memorising them.

Natalia: In my opinion, I think the strategy that I used to learn English vocabulary is by searching the meaning for the new English words that I found. I will use a dictionary for it. I also like to watch movies with English subtitles on them.

3. What is your perception about vocabulary learning?

Syikin: Learning vocabulary is about expanding our knowledge of words and provides unlimited access to new information. So I think it's fun to learning vocabulary and it helps me to think and learn about other languages too.

Natalia: English vocabulary is indeed important to learn English but i think it's a bit hard to learn too. It's hard for me to understand sometimes because I rarely used English in my daily life.

C. EXCELLENT GROUP [Samples: Mary(1) and Ping(2)]

1.   How would you describe your vocabulary knowledge? Excellent/Average/Poor

Mary : I would rate my vocabulary knowledge as excellent.

Ping : I would describe my vocabulary knowledge as excellent but there are still a lot more that I have, like, to improve on.

2.   What is your strategy to learn English vocabulary?

Mary : I learned most of my English vocabulary through reading and talking to people. Reading is a way for me to learn words and construct sentences while talking to people helps me to use what I have learned into practice.

Ping : My strategy to learn English vocabulary is through readings. Read a lot more books and newspapers, and watch more on the news.

3.   What is your perception about vocabulary learning?

Mary : I think vocabulary learning is important as English is not limited to be in use during studies but also in everyday life, whether it is in reading, talking or just merely using our smartphones.

Ping : My perception about vocabulary learning is that I think vocabulary learning is crucial for us to learn in order for us to convey our message, and in a different way.