EFL STUDENTS' STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THEIR VOCABULARIES IN CRITICAL READING CLASS

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Abstract

This research attempts to find out students' strategies to improve vocabularies size in Critical Reading class of second semester students at English Education Program of STKIP SoE. A descriptive qualitative method was used in this research. There were 21 students involved as the research participants and willing to be interviewed. The result of this research showed that students applied strategies, such as listening to the songs, watching movie, reading, and listing difficult words to improve their vocabularies. By applying those four strategies, students were able to understand vocabularies in context without any assistantship, understand the words in foreign language, repeat the words several times, describe the conversation in mother tongue, pick some words when reading books, remember the words that they get, and write down some difficult words.

Keywords: critical reading, reading strategies, vocabularies

INTRODUCTION

English is one of foreign languages that is used in conversation. Communication needs correct vocabulary to send messages and make meaning. English vocabulary is important for English education department students because in teaching and learning process, students need to have broad vocabulary repertoire to understand the lessons. According to Fahmiati (2016), vocabulary is very important to be mastered first as it is an essential means in engaging in communication. Hong (2017) stated that when learning strategies were identified, students would be able to improve their language learning. Without reading strategies in acquiring new vocabulary, students might find some challenges in achieving their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them.

To improve students' vocabulary, they need to find strategies as specific action to make the lesson and learning easier, faster, more effective, and more interesting. There are two kinds of vocabulary knowledge, namely vocabulary size and vocabulary depth. Nacera (2010) states that the students with higher vocabulary size use specific strategies more often than students with lower vocabulary size. Vocabulary size is a way that is commonly used to measure how many vocabularies that students have. In the other hand, Schmitt (2014), said that vocabulary depth could be seen as mastery of all word knowledge aspects. Vocabulary size refers to how many vocabularies students have mastered. Vocabulary depth refers to students' knowledge in using synonym and antonym of words in contexts. In this research, the researcher implemented four strategies to find which strategies the students mostly used to improve their vocabularies. Those four strategies were reading, listening to the songs, listing difficult words, and watching movie.

There have been some studies about reading strategies to improve students' vocabularies. A study conducted by Halimah (2017) in SMP Ta'mirul Islam Surakarta discussed story telling as media to improve students' vocabularies in English class. The study showed that by using story telling in teaching and learning process, students were able to remember new vocabularies and comprehend the lesson materials well. Hajis (2014) conducted a study about the use of visual media such as pictures, cartoon, and posters to teach and learn vocabulary in SMP Negeri 10 Makasar. Four issues were identified in this study, i.e., difficulties to understand and remember vocabulary, lack of media, less attractive lessons, and low learning motivation. Through the use of visual media, students were expected be more interested and more active in the process of learning vocabulary. The result of this study showed there was a significant development of students' vocabulary after using visual media.

In relation to previously conducted research about strategies to improve vocabularies, researcher investigated the strategies implemented by the second semester students of English Education Department of STKIP Soe to improve their vocabularies. The researcher attempted to find out about students' strategies to improve their vocabularies. In this study the researcher tried to answer the following research question "What are students' strategies to improve their vocabularies size in critical reading class?"

METHODS
Methodologically, this study used a descriptive qualitative to describe students' strategies to improve their vocabularies. According to Sinaga (2014) qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. By descriptive qualitative method, the researcher would be able to investigate reasons, problem, and motivation from the participants being studied.

This study was conducted in English Education Program of *Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (STKIP) SoE*. There were 21 participants who were the second semester students attending Critical Reading Class. The reason why the researcher chose the participants was because they had different background, problems in learning, and strategies to learn English vocabulary in reading class.

In order to get comprehensive data of this study, the researcher used a list of interview questions as the research instrument. The researcher made a list of questions or statements for the participants to investigate the strategies that was being used. The list of interview questions was

adopted from Sa'd's interview statements (2018). From 27 statements, there were 20 statements used in the interview.

There were two steps employed in data analysis. The first was reducing the data. In this step, the data were selected and chosen based on the relevance. The second step was displaying the data by using short explanation, diagram, and flowchart.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The students had their own strategies that might have been different from one another in reading. They applied strategies to as a way to understand the lesson. The discussion below is classified based on the four strategies used by the students.

Listening to songs

Listening to songs is one of the strategies to improve vocabularies. By listening to songs, students would be able to repeat the words and memorize them. Based on the data showed in Figure 1 below, listening to songs is a suitable strategy for students to improve their vocabulary. The statement above was supported by the result interview, "I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the word" (Extract 1).
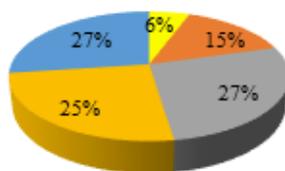

Figure 1. Listening to the songs

Listening to songs in English helped students to understand the massage from the songs and led to in-depth understanding of the songs as stated by one of the participants, "I imagine a context in which a word could be used in order to remember it" (Extract 2). This statement showed that students connected words in the song by imagining the contexts. By doing so, students easily understood and memorized the meaning the words. Some students repeated the words in their mind to memorize them. By doing so, they mentioned that they easily memorized them as stated by one of the participants being interviewed, "I repeat the words mentally in order to remember it" (Extract 3). From the findings, students connected the words with physical objects in order to remember them, as stated by one of the participants, "I connect word to physical objects to remember them" (Extract 4). Some students also mentioned that they reviewed the words to better understand the meaning of them, as in "I review word regularly to understand" (Extract 5).

Watching movies

Figure 2 showed that watching movies was one of the strategies that helped students to improve their vocabulary. Most students used this strategy to improve their vocabulary. By watching movies, students memorized the words and understood how to use them in daily life. Watching movies strategy was found to be a significant role to motivate students to learn vocabulary. By

doing so, they were able to translate the conversation and understand the conversation. Watching movies helped students improve their vocabularies as stated by one of the participants, "I pick up words from movie and TV program I watch" (Extract 6).
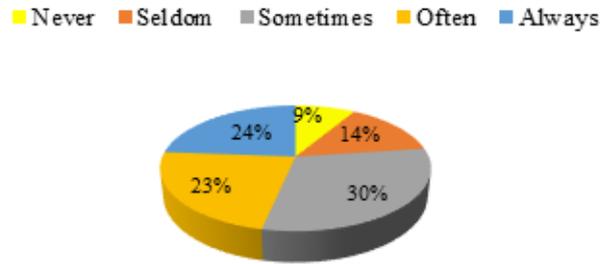

Figure 2. Watching movie

By watching movies, students learned new words from the conversation and learned how to pronounce the words, as in "If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with similar meaning" (Extract 7). Some students wrote down the words they found in the movies to better understand the words and to memorize the words, as in "I write down words when I watch movies" (Extract 8). Some students translated the words they heard in the movies to understand the words in their mother tongue and to understand the meaning in contexts, as in "I translate words into my mother tongue to understand them" (Extract 9).

Reading

By using this strategy, students used their background knowledge to understand the text. Figure 3 showed that some students used reading to increase their vocabularies. When students read, they got new vocabularies. While reading books and magazines, students recognized some new words and got information through it. Furthermore, they were able to use the words in the contexts, as in "I write down words while I read books and magazines for pleasure" (Extract 10). Some students mentioned that they remembered words easily when they wrote them down, "I remember a word if I see it written down" (Extract 11). Meanwhile, some students remembered words by grouping them. They said that it was easier for them to write and make simple conversation with words that they grouped, "I group words together in order to remember them" (Extract 12). For some students, they read or said the words out loud to improve their vocabularies, "I say a word out loud repeatedly in order to remember it" (Extract 13).
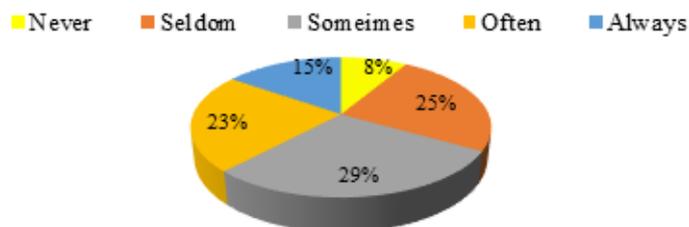

Figure 3. Reading

Listing difficult words

Figure 4 showed that, 23% students listed difficult words to help them improve vocabulary. The students wrote down difficult words to remember them, as in "I write down difficult word repeatedly to remember them" (Extract 14). Based on statement, some students did not use this strategy as their best strategy to improve their vocabularies. The strategy could not be used for students to improve their vocabularies because the repetition of words made students bored, "I connect an imagine with a word meaning in order to remember it" (Extract 15). Some students did some vocabulary tests to check if they remembered and understood the words, "I test myself with word list to check if I remember the word" (Extract 16). They used a dictionary to find out the meaning of words. This strategy also showed that students in classroom commonly used this strategy to improve their vocabularies. When students read and used dictionary to find out words, it helped them remember the words, "I read and look at a dictionary to learn some new words" (Extract 17). Some students made a list of pictures to remember the words and their meaning, "I make a list picture of a word's written from in order to remember it" (Extract 18).
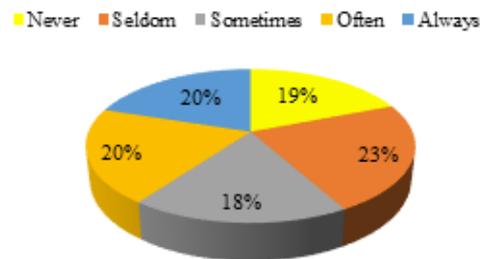

Figure 4. Listing Difficult Words

CONCLUSION

In improving vocabularies, especially vocabularies size, students implemented different strategies to improve their vocabularies. There were suitable and interesting strategies the students used to improve their vocabularies. Those strategies were watching movies, reading, listing difficult words, and listening to the songs. Through the strategies, students obtained vocabularies and understood the meanings. By listening to songs, students improved their vocabularies through understanding English words, describing the contexts, and connecting the physical object to remember the words. The students also improved their vocabularies through watching movies. By watching movie, students understood the words and were able to connect them with similar meanings. In reading strategy students improved their vocabularies by reading books, remembering the word, and understanding the new words. By listing difficult word, students improved their vocabularies though writing down difficult words, associating the words with their meaning, looking up the words in a dictionary, and remembering the word by making word lists.

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APPENDIX

No	Statement	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1.	I pick up words from movie and TV programs I watch.					
2.	If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning.					
3.	I write down words when I watch Movies					
4.	If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.					
5.	I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them.					
6.	I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language.					
7.	I write down words while I read books and magazines for pleasure.					
8.	I remember a word if I see it written down.					
9.	I group words together in order to remember them.					
10.	I say a word out loud repeatedly in order to remember it.					
11.	I write down difficult words repeatedly to remember them.					

12.	I connect an image with a word meaning in order to remember it.
13.	I test myself with word lists to check if I remember the words.
14.	I read and look at a dictionary to learn some new words.
15.	I make a list picture of a word's written form in order to remember it.
16.	I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.
17.	I imagine a context in which a word could be used in order to remember it.
18.	I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.
19.	I connect words to physical objects to remember them.
20.	I review words regularly outside the classroom.

Adopted from Sa'd et al. (2018)