

**Thai Students' Strategies in Learning English Vocabulary at  
English Language Education Department of  
a Private University in Yogyakarta**

*A Skripsi*

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## Abstract

Thai students at English Language Education Department (ELED) still have difficulties in learning English vocabulary. This makes them struggle in their reading, writing, speaking as well as listening. Knowing their problems and strategies will help them solve their difficulties. This research aimed to identify the general strategies of Thai students in learning English vocabulary. Then, it also aimed to find out the problems faced by Thai students as well as their strategies specifically used to solve their problems in Learning English vocabulary at ELED at a private university of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research. The participants of this research were four Thai students who had learned English for four to six semesters, and had problems related to vocabulary. The researcher used interview to collect the data. The findings showed that generally Thai students used various strategies in learning English vocabulary. The findings also revealed that students had problems in learning English vocabulary namely: advanced lexicon, forgetfulness, synonym of a word, pronunciation, British or America lexicon, and feeling lazy. To overcome these particular problems the participants used some strategies. The certain strategies are using dictionary, memorizing word, practicing and repeating, writing down the word, making a sentence, using the Internet and listening to music or video of native speaker. Most of the strategies they used were the strategies they already know and felt useful.

*Keyword:* Thai students, vocabulary learning strategies, difficulties in learning English vocabulary

## **Background of the Study**

Vocabulary as one of the components in learning a language, Yang and Dai (2012) defined that vocabulary is the most important component of a language. Further, the more learners know the meaning of vocabulary the easier to learn that language (Yang & Dai, 2012). Vocabulary learning strategy is defined as what the learner do to reach the meaning of the new words, hold these words in long term memory, recall them when comprehension is used in producing language (Ruutemets, 2005). Vocabulary is like keyword to learn a language to be successful and learners can improve their language competence by developing their ability to use Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs).

For second language learners, generally they encounter problems or difficulties in learning English language, except those who join the international class where English is used as the language of instruction (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). To deal with vocabulary learning problems especially, there are strategies to learn English vocabulary to enhance language learners' effectiveness. According to Saengpakdeejit (2014), learners can increase the effectiveness of their English language learning through the use of vocabulary learning strategy. It is essential for students to be conscious of the basic vocabulary learning strategies which help them in learning vocabulary and apply the strategies effectively.

With regards to the Thai students studying English at ELED, they still have difficulties in learning English vocabulary. This makes them struggle in their reading, writing, speaking as well as listening. To know their problems and strategies will help them solve their difficulties. This research aimed to identify the general strategies of Thai students in learning English vocabulary. Then, it also aimed to find out the problems faced by Thai students as well as their strategies specifically used to solve their problems in learning English vocabulary at ELED at a private university of Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

## **Research Methodology**

In this research, the researcher chose qualitative method. This is because the researcher wanted to know the students' difficulties and strategies in learning vocabulary as deeply and clearly as possible. A qualitative method is a method of research which uses descriptive data such as written word, oral words from someone and someone's behavior which can be observed (Creswell, 2012). Further, Creswell (2012) also stated that the qualitative method focused on the words rather than numbers, no statistical procedure. The source of data can be taken through research object. In this research, the researcher looked at the reality of the fact focused on words, described and explained the subject and the object of the research deeply.

The researcher conducted this research in English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. The participants of this research were four Thai students who had learned English for four to six semesters at ELED, and had problems related to vocabulary. The researcher used interview to collect the data. It was used to ask the participants deeply and clearly. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), an interview is a qualitative instrument that is a flexible tool to the data collection. From the interview, a researcher can observe the participants' body language and words. The interview question used Thai language because this is the first language of both researcher and participants.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### **The Strategies of Thai students in Learning English Vocabulary**

The first objective of this research is to find out the kinds of general strategies used by Thai Students. The findings show that four Thai students generally have various strategies in learning English vocabulary. The strategies are using dictionary, memorizing vocabulary,

writing down the word, listening to music/news, watching a movie/ video, using English application, repeating and practicing, reading books or novels, and translating.

### **Thai Students' Problems in Learning English Vocabulary**

The second research question is to explore Thai students' problems in learning English vocabulary. Basically, the main problem of learning vocabulary is not knowing the meaning of a word. It is supported by Harmer (1991) who said that the problematic issue of learning vocabulary is meaning. Students do not know the meaning of a word. There are many aspects which make students not know the meaning of word. According to the research finding, it was revealed that among four Thai students, there are six problems that the students faced. Every student had difficulties in learning English vocabulary. The problems dealt with advanced lexicon, forgetfulness, synonym of a word, pronunciation, British or American lexicon, and unmotivated.

### **Thai Students' Strategies used to solve the Problems in Learning English Vocabulary.**

Related to the certain strategies used to solve the problems in learning English vocabulary. Every student has their own strategies to solve such problems based on their feeling of the appropriate use. The common strategies they used to solve the problems related to an advanced lexicon are by using dictionary, memorizing word, practicing and writing down the word. The strategies to solve the problems related to the forgetfulness are by writing down the word and repeating. The next problem related to the synonym of a word was solved by making sentences, using the internet and memorizing words. The pronunciations' problem was solved by listening to music or video of native speaker. Then, the strategy they use to solve unmotivated is writing down a word. The strategy used to solve the problem related to British or American lexicon is by using the internet. From the finding, it can be concluded that the same strategies are used to solve different problems in learning

vocabulary by Thai students meanwhile the different strategies might be used by Thai students to solve the same problems.

### **Conclusion**

Thai students at ELED have various strategies in learning English vocabulary and most of them do not used the existing theory in this research. There are six problems that students faced in learning English vocabulary. To solve their specific problems, they also used the strategies generally used. It can be conclude that the same strategies are used to solve different problems in learning vocabulary meanwhile the different strategies might be used to solve the same problems.

### **Recommendation**

**Students.** Students are suggested to search more new strategies in learning English vocabulary to make them easy to acquire new word as well as solve the problems they faced. In addition, they are encouraged to use the appropriate strategy to overcome each problem they faced in learning English vocabulary.

**Teachers.** He/she could show the students more strategies and convince the students of their usefulness. Besides, teachers should support their students in acquiring new words in order to help students gain more vocabulary in learning English, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning vocabulary process.

**Other researchers.** There are many Thai students studying English or other majors in several universities in Yogyakarta. The researcher would like to suggest other researchers to conduct a research about problems and strategies in learning English vocabulary involving more Thai students who learn English major or involving Thai students who are in other majors.

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