

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the research. The findings answer the research questions asking about the students' perceptions of the benefits and also challenges in using vocabulary.com. This chapter presents findings taken from the participants' responses. The responses have been analyzed by the researcher and the narration is elaborated in this chapter. Further, this chapter also put discussion to relate findings and theories.

The Benefits of Using Vocabulary.com as Perceived by The Students

The first research question is to find out the benefits of using vocabulary.com as perceived by participants. There are four findings about the benefits of using vocabulary.com according to the participants. The findings are, enriching new vocabularies, knowing how to construct daily life sentences, storing vocabularies in long-term memory, and establishing self-regulated learning. Those findings are further elaborated in these following paragraphs, and related to some experts' statements.

Storing vocabularies in long-term memory. The first benefit of using vocabulary.com in learning vocabulary according to the participants is storing vocabularies in long-term memory. According to Castellucci, V. F., Goelet, P., Kandel, E. R., et al. (1986) long-term memory lasts for days, weeks, or years. If a word is successfully transferred to long-term memory, it will be remembered for a

long time or it has unlimited capacity. The exercises in vocabulary.com continually bring out the words that the participants have learnt. Those words are unconsciously stored in their long-term memory. The finding also shows that the participant can remember the vocabularies better when he learnt in through the website rather than books.

Taylor stated that “vocabulary.com helps me to have long-term memorization about the vocabulary that I have learnt” (p.1.1). Further, she also added that “vocabulary.com brings out the words that I have learnt continually through the exercise and it stays in my memory for a long time” (p1.2). The benefit of vocabulary.com that store vocabulary in long-term memory is also perceived by Justin. He stated that “By learning vocabulary from vocabulary.com, I can always remember most of words that I have ever learnt from vocabulary.com (p4.1). Justin also emphasized that “I easily forget some words that I got from other sources, but since vocabulary.com repeated to bring out some same words in various types of questions, it leads me to have a long memory about those words” (p4.2)

This finding is relevant to Groot (2000) statement that adds to the list the importance of constructing computer-assisted vocabulary learning environments in accordance with the widely accepted notions of how words are acquired, so that the words learnt are stronger embedded in the memory needed for long term retention. Computer-assisted vocabulary learning, like vocabulary.com, facilitates the students to have long-term memory. Further, according to the website

description, vocabulary.com will reinforce the words that the learners have learnt to make sure that it still fresh in their memory. However, the main goal of the website is not necessarily focus on memorization, but it focuses on words' mastery.

Enriching new vocabularies. The second benefit of learning vocabulary by using the website is that it encourages the students to enrich their vocabulary. Moreover, there are also some participants that also got some new vocabulary specifically on synonyms. The website provides some challenging words in order to increase their vocabulary knowledge. The participant acquired some difficult words from the website that increase their vocabulary knowledge. The more the participants use the website, the harder the words will be. Thus, their vocabulary knowledge does not stop on certain level, but it keeps growing during the time.

This is related to Ariana statement that “vocabulary.com enriches my vocabulary knowledge by giving me some difficult words” (p3.1). According to Ariana, difficult vocabulary is the words that she rarely found in the daily use. Further, she also added that “there are some difficult words that my lecturer taught me and my classmates but I already knew some of them since my vocabulary knowledge is getting wider” (p3.2). Based on her statement, vocabulary.com does not only encourage the learners to learn the regular words but it also facilitates them to learn some difficult words which lead to the vocabulary enrichment.

In line with Ariana's statement, Selena also argued that from vocabulary.com she got some new words that widen her vocabulary knowledge scope. She stated that “I thought that I unconsciously learnt some new words

which enrich my vocabulary scope” (p2.3). Moreover, she stated that were some unfamiliar words that she just found out from the website. She emphasized that “I used to be confident with my vocabulary knowledge at first, but I found out that there were so many unfamiliar words that I never knew before from the website” (p2.4). Both Selena and Ariana had the same perception that vocabulary.com did not only taught them the regular words, but also enrich their vocabulary knowledge by learning the difficult ones.

According to the website description, as the users knowledge is improved, the words are getting more advanced. One of the aims of the website is to grow with the users. As the users’ level is getting higher, the website provides the more challenging words that can enrich their vocabulary knowledge. The website helps the learners to enrich their vocabulary knowledge. The users will not only learn random things with no progress, but the website pushes them to achieve more.

The finding is also related to Cobb, Horst, & Nicolae statement (as cited in Kilickaya, 2010) that ideally, computerized review activities would offer opportunities for expansion by presenting and testing target words in new context. According to their statement, learning vocabulary from computerized activity can expand the learners’ vocabulary by testing them the words in a new context. The website provides various exercises that testing the learners with some different contexts so that they can enrich their vocabulary knowledge. By doing test in a computerized review activities, learners can expand their vocabulary.

Learning synonyms. Some participants perceived that they have learnt some new vocabulary specifically on synonyms. Some questions in the website sometimes ask about synonyms of words. There is no specific feature in the website that teaches about synonym, but it still slips exercise about synonym. Some of the participants believe that vocabulary.com encourages them to learn more about synonym. Taylor states that “one of the benefits of learning vocabulary from vocabulary.com is that I can dig my knowledge about synonym” (p1.3). She explained that “there are some questions in vocabulary.com that asks about synonym of words, it pushes me to learn more about synonym so that she could answer the questions correctly” (p1.4). Based on Taylor’s argument, vocabulary.com encourages the users to not only learn the meaning of a word, but also to know its synonym.

Ariana has the same opinion with Taylor that one of the benefits of vocabulary.com is the users can learn synonym from it. She states that “vocabulary.com enriches her synonym knowledge through the exercises” (p3.3). Taylor and Ariana perceived that the exercise which asking about synonym can increase their vocabulary knowledge. Ariana also added that she never willing to learn about synonym, she just wanted to enrich her vocabulary knowledge by learning the meaning of new words. However, she further added that she unconsciously have learnt about synonym by saying that “I unconsciously learnt about synonym while I was doing the exercise” (p3.4).

Related to the finding above, Hagiwara et.al (2008) stated that since popular current methods for synonym acquisition require no statistical learning, it

seems that supervised machine learning should easily outperform them. Moreover, according to Li (2019) the traditional way of teaching English synonyms cannot meet the needs, and it is urgent to seek a more efficient and effective way. With the development of computer technology in the era of Big Data, corpus plays an increasingly important role in the study of linguistics and language teaching.

Knowing how to construct daily life sentences. It becomes one of the benefits from the website to know how to use the vocabulary that the users have learnt from it. Vocabulary.com does not only facilitate the users to know the meaning of words, but also facilitate them to understand how to use them properly in their daily life. The participants perceived that they could understand how to actually use or apply the vocabulary after learning from the website.

Ariana stated that one of the benefits that she got from the website is she could learn the daily life vocabularies, she mentioned that “knowing how words are actually used in daily life is one of the benefits of learning from vocabulary.com” (p3.5). She also added that “I could understand how to use a word in a sentence according to real-life situation by learning from the examples given by vocabulary.com” (p3.6). In addition, Justin also added that “I hardly understood how to create daily-life sentences if I learnt from books or passages, but I found it easier when I started to use vocabulary.com” (p4.3). He further explained he just found that most of the words that he produced previously in his daily life were not correct, but vocabulary.com help him to fix it.

It is important to know and being able to use the words that they have learnt and not just keeping them in their brains. Based on the website description, it provides the real-world or daily life words examples that make the learners become able to construct or use them in reality. As what Justin stated the website offers a benefit that made him capable in making sentences on daily life which he could not get from the books.

Establishing self-regulated learning. Another benefit of learning vocabulary through vocabulary.com is that it facilitates the students to have self-regulated learning. According to Kizilcec, R. F., Manaldo, J. J. and Sanagustín, M. P. (2017) self-regulated learning is the learners ability to plan, manage and control their learning process. This thing is perceived as an benefit of using vocabulary.com by Taylor who stated that “I am able to control my own learning by checking the progress I have made (p1.5). Taylor’s argument is shown by a feature in vocabulary.com which is called “my progress” that enables the users to monitor their progress.

Selena has a similar statements with the previous participants related to this benefit. She emphasized that “I felt like I became an individual learner that should be responsible with my own progress, which is good for me (p2.1). Further, she also added that “I could also manage the lists of words that I wanted to learn, it was like I could make my own playlist of words (p2.2). As what has been explained in chapter two, the feature that supports Selena to make her own playlist of words is called “vocabulary list”. The users can choose what kind of

words or group of words that they want to specifically learn, and it creates a self-controlled learning for the users.

The user's self-regulated learning is supported by the website's features. According to Kumar (2016) learners can control their own learning by choosing a list in the "featured list". As what Selena experienced, she felt like she could control her own learning by choosing her own words. In addition, vocabulary.com is very flexible learning media. Based to the website description, the users can control everything by choosing the words and so on, but if they have no idea about what they want to learn, vocabulary.com will choose the words that suits them. In addition, the website also has a feature where the users can monitor their progress, the words that they have mastered, and also the words that they have trouble with. It grows a self-awareness for them to manage their own learning.

The Challenges of Using Vocabulary.com as Perceived by The Students

The second research question is aimed to find out the challenges of using vocabulary.com. According to the participants' responses, there are four findings about the challenges of using vocabulary.com. Those findings are lack of internet connection, lack of technology skill, cheating, distraction from other applications, and also no guidance from the teacher. Those findings is being elaborated and discussed on these following paragraphs.

Lack of internet connection. One of the barriers that can be the challenges of learning is lacking of internet connection. Internet connection is one of the most important aspect in vocabulary.com. Similar to other online learning media, vocabulary.com depends a lot of from the internet. It is undeniable that lack of internet connection becomes one of the major challenges. Taylor stated that “I found it annoying when I suddenly lost the internet connection when using the website, it disturbed the learning process (p1.6). She further explained that “ I sometimes just stopped everything when the internet connection was unstable because I cannot focus on what she was learning (p1.7).

Similar with Taylor’s statement, Selena and Ariana were facing the same challenge. She stated that “internet connection could be one of my biggest enemy” (p2.5). She further emphasized that “I needed to find a good internet spot first to able to use the website smoothly” (p2.6). Ariana also shared the same opinion by saying that that “I could not handle it when I was being serious in doing the exercise but suddenly the website stopped because of lacking internet connection” (p3.7).

Some studies also agreed that internet connection can be a challenge for online learning. According to Risasati (2012) internet connection can be one of the barriers in online vocabulary learning. The learning process can be disturbed, or even stopped if the internet connection is weak. It will take more effort for the students to find a good internet connection if they want to learn vocabulary online. They need to move to other spots every time the internet connection is weak. Moreover, when the website is reloading, it will spend more time.

This challenge can affect the learners vocabulary input since they cannot be maximum in learning if the internet is in trouble. It also affects their mood as stated by the participants. When the internet is going slow, everything becomes more difficult and it can decrease their desire in learning. Thus, the vocabulary that they learnt when the internet connection was pour would not be as intense as when the internet connection was good.

Lack of digital technology skills. Sometimes the challenges that learners face in using the website is lacking of technology skills. In online learning, the skills in operating the website is also needed to support the learning process. However, some of the participants that they are lacking of that skill and sometimes it disturbed the learning process. Selena said that “another challenge that I faced while using the website was probably how to operate the website itself cause I am a little bit clueless about digital things ” (p2.9). She emphasized her statement again by saying “at first I had no idea how to use the website properly since the layout is very advance” (p2.10). According to Selena’s statements, she found that she needed to adapt with the website first since the website is very advance but her knowledge in technology is still minimum.

Ariana was also being confused by the features just like what Selena experienced. She stated that “there are so many features in vocabulary.com and sometimes it causes a problem for the people who do not really understand about the digital matters like me” (p3.8). She further explained that “it took a while for me to learn how the website works, and to adapt with everything” (p3.9). According Justin and Selena’s perceptions, they took some time in preparing

themselves to use the website. They needed to adapt their technology skills with the advance features of the website.

Some experts' statements support the findings above. Learning vocabulary from internet requires some knowledge about the technology itself. According Brush and Hew (2007) the lack of technology knowledge and skills is identified as one of the barriers in technology integration. Even if vocabulary.com provides some amazing features, the users will find some troubles in using the website if they are lacking of technology knowledge. In order to maximize the potential of the website, the users need to have enough knowledge to operate it. Besides the lack of internet connection, the lack of technology is also one of the hard challenges that can disturb the learning process. In addition finding time to explore technology options may be especially difficult in districts where a focus on test preparation is a dominant priority (Shamburg, 2004).

This also gives an impact for the users' vocabulary learning result. To access the features, they need to have knowledge or skills to do it. If there are only few features that they can explore, the amount of vocabulary exposure that they get will be limited. Moreover their learning process will also take more time. There is absolutely a different between the users who can explore the features and those who cannot. Thus, the gap of technology knowledge can also impact their learning result.

Cheating. Another challenge that th[e] students perceived in using the website is the desire to cheat. According Sottile and Watson (2010) students in nowadays tend to be dishonest with the assistance of internet and technology. In online learning, there is no instructor who guides them and it makes them become easier to do cheating. Some of them confessed that they did cheating quite a lot while using the website. Selena said that “when I used vocabulary.com, I could not handle myself to open a dictionary to answer the questions” (p2.7). She explained to the researcher that “my intention could be changed from learning vocabulary to collecting score, and somehow it induced me to do cheating” (p2.8). Vocabulary.com gives score for the users every time they answer the questions correctly. The score that keep increasing will also increase the level of the users. Selena was likely to do cheating because sometimes she wanted to achieve the higher level faster.

However, Selena is not the only one who found that avoiding cheating is also a challenge that someone could face while using the website. Justin also perceived the same thing as Selena. He said that “sometimes the words that appeared were very difficult and I was too desperate to find out the answer so I just simply opened a dictionary” (p4.4). Moreover he also added that “I wanted to boost my score, and it will be faster if I could simply open a dictionary” (p4.5). Vocabulary.com actually still gives score every time the users can guess the answer in second or third trial. However, the given score is not as many as if they could answer it on the first trial. Somehow that thing induced Justin to do cheating in order to collect a higher score.

Learning vocabulary from the website does not require a teacher or an instructor. Ariely (2012) it is easy to do cheating in online learning where there is no supervision and the students have control in the internet. He also added that students tend to be cheating in online learning. According to Ariely's statements, the students is very facilitated to do cheating in online learning since there is no teacher or anyone who pay attention to what they actually do. They just do the online stuff by themselves and they have control in everything. Moreover, the students have free access on the internet. They can possibly find the answers in it while doing the exercise. Ariely emphasized that cheating in online learning is easier than the physical learning. Somehow, it induces the students to do cheating.

When the learners do cheating, the scores that they achieve are not valid. It influences their vocabulary mastery since they skip the learning process to get the score and jump to the instant solution. Cheating becomes one of the challenges because their vocabulary knowledge will not be increased. Honesty is needed when learners use the website as the learning media because the final score will suit their proficiency level. Doing cheating will only increase the score but not the learners' proficiency.

Distractions from other applications. The last challenges that the students face while using the vocabulary.com is the distractions that they get from other applications. The notifications from other applications frequently distract their attentions. Taylor stated that always "I access vocabulary.com from my phone, and sometimes I could not handle the distraction from other applications" (p1.8). Taylor also added that "sometimes I stopped the learning because there are

some notifications from instagram and I could not help to open it and spending the rest of the day playing instagram” (p1.9). According to Taylor statement, she felt like the distraction from internet seemed so tempting and it can stopped her learning process. In line with Taylor, Ariana also perceived that the social media notification distracts her intention to learn. She said that “when I took my phone, the only thing that I wanted to do was playing instagram” (p3.10).

Justin is also face the same challenge as Taylor and Selena. However, he did not get distract by the social media but from online games. He stated that “whenever I learnt vocabulary by using vocabulary.com, there were some friends invited me to join them playing online games (p4.6). He added that “I frequently chose to play the online games rather than to continue the learning (p4.7). Justin perceived the same thing as Taylor that they could not help to follow the distraction that seemed very tempting. He also explained that “sometimes I needed to shut off the notifications in order to more focus in learning” (p4.8)

Students nowadays depend a lot on the internet. Their social life, their entertainments, their knowledge are coming from the internet. Geigel (2017) stated that social media is one of the biggest distractions that the online learners face. They need change their habit a little from using the internet as an entertaining tool to a learning tool. It needs a great adaptive skill since the students keep getting distracted by the more interesting things. In order to be focus in using vocabulary.com, a preventing step like stop the notifications off like what Justin have done is necessary.

No guidance from the teachers. Vocabulary.com is designed to encourage the students to be individual learners. However, it can also be a challenge for student who used to learn everything from her teacher. Ariana stated that “it was quite challenging to learn everything by myself and there’s not teacher who guides me, no one warned me if I made a mistake” (p3.11). Ariana also added that “at first I was confused how to use the website properly since there was nobody who guided me specifically” (p3.12). In line with Ariana’s statement, Justin also stated that “I doubt my self-discipline in learning vocabulary by using vocabulary.com since nobody pushed me to learn more” (p4.9). Both Ariana and Justin agreed that self-controlled learning does not only bring a benefit for them but also create a challenge.

According to Betts & Koedel (2007), there are some various qualities in a teacher that contributes to students’ achievements. Some of students will feel lost without the teacher since there is no teacher that is involved in individual learning. The students who are used to be guided by teacher will feel less comfortable with the self-controlled learning. They need to take all the responsibilities by themselves which requires a good self-discipline.

The absence of teacher or instruction can also influence the learners’ performance if they do not use to learn by themselves. When the learners find difficulties they need to solve it by themselves and it takes more time and energy so they cannot just focus on the learning. It can influence their vocabulary knowledge since they cannot use their time specifically for vocabulary learning, but they need to use it to solve their problems alone.