

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL REVIEW

#### A. The Definition of Vocabulary

One of the most important aspects in comprehending lesson materials, especially when learning a foreign language is vocabulary. There are many definitions of vocabulary stated by some experts. Heidari et al. (2012) state that vocabulary is the core of language and the cornerstone of language learning. Read (2000) related vocabulary to words. He stated, “words are the basic building blocks of a language, the units of meaning from which larger structure such as sentences, paragraphs, and the whole texts are formed”. Meanwhile, Ahour & Salamzadeh (2014:1) mentioned that vocabulary is central to language and language learning and vocabulary learning is crucial to the language learners. In the domain of second language learning, it is widely known that vocabulary is necessary part of the four language skills. Vocabulary is one of the important language elements that support the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing Carranza et. al (2015). Yang and Dai (2012) define that vocabulary is the most sizable and uncontrollable component in the learning of any language, whether first language or second language. No language acquisition can take place without the acquisition of word. In addition, Hiebert and Kamil (2005) stated vocabulary as knowledge of words and words meaning in both oral and written and in productive and receptive forms. More particularly, learners

must know kinds of words that will increasingly their comprehension in reading a text.

From the opinions by some expert above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is a set of all words used by the people or groups to produce language. It is about the words in a language used to express meaning. Therefore, learning vocabulary is a crucial matter in developing their English. Moreover, vocabulary is one of the language aspects that should be learned. The process of learning English vocabulary determines how much and how well the level of mastery of vocabulary in the foreign language itself. Vocabulary cannot be separated from English, because without vocabulary, English foreign language learners cannot communicate anything in that language. This is very different from grammar, English foreign language learners can still communicate with people even with limited grammar knowledge.

## **B. Kinds of Vocabulary**

There are several types of vocabulary by some experts. According to Nation (2001), there are two kinds of vocabulary. They are receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words that native speakers and foreign learners recognize and understand but hardly ever use, it is used passively in either listening or reading. Productive vocabulary is utilized actively either in speaking or writing. One's listening vocabulary is generally larger than his speaking vocabulary while his reading vocabulary

is relatively larger than his writing vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that vocabulary can be presented in four units namely reading vocabulary, listening vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, and writing vocabulary. Reading vocabulary consists of the word found by people when they are reading. While listening vocabulary is the words that people hear and understand when they are talking to others or listening to radio and television. Speaking vocabulary includes the words people used in their daily life and conversation. The last writing vocabulary that consists of the word people use in writing essays, reports, letter, etc.

In relation to kinds of vocabulary, Nation (2001:11) distinguishes kinds of vocabulary into four kinds, they are high-frequency vocabulary, academic vocabulary, low-frequency vocabulary, and technical vocabulary.

#### 1. High-frequency words

The vocabulary that frequently appears in a written text or words in speaking. It covers a very large proposition of the running words in spoken and written texts and occurs in all kinds of uses of the language. High-frequency words are evidence of almost 80% until 95% in the written or spoken form. For example, do, make, say, live, etc.

#### 2. Academic vocabulary

Academic vocabulary is variously known as generally useful scientific vocabulary. Typically, the academic vocabulary list includes words like accumulate, achieve, compound, complex, and proportion which are common in academic texts and not so common elsewhere. Academic

vocabulary makes up about 9% of the running words in the text. It is very important for anyone using English for academic purposes. Examples of academic vocabulary are: perceive, role, available, etc.

### 3. Low-frequency vocabulary

There is a very large group of words that occur very infrequently and cover only a small proportion of any text. It makes up over 5% of the words in the text. The kinds of low-frequency vocabulary they are some low-frequency vocabularies are words of moderate frequency that did not manage to get into the high-frequency list, such as, curious, wing, gate, etc.

### 4. Technical vocabulary

Technical vocabulary is vocabulary that is very closely related to the topic and subject area of the text. These vocabularies include indigenous, regeneration, and timber. These vocabularies are reasonably common in a topic area but not so common elsewhere.

### C. The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays important roles in language learning. The more students know the vocabulary, the more they develop their four language skills; speaking, reading, writing and listening. Wessels (2011:46) believes that knowledge of vocabulary is essential to students' academic success. "if students do not understand the meaning of the words in the text, they will have difficulty understanding the content".

Therefore, comprehension of the meaning of words can help students understand the materials and the reading texts. However, as one of the core elements of language learning, vocabulary comprehension presents various obstacles Zhi-liang (2010). Students tend to be passive during English classes because they lack vocabulary, which affects their behaviour in learning English. Fan (2003) notes that vocabulary is neglected in language learning in Asia because vocabulary is given little priority and learned incidentally. In addition, Goulden (1990) as cited in Olmos (2009) explains that the measurement of vocabulary size, particularly the size of academic vocabulary, is an important indicator of the ability of second language learners to achieve academic success.

A person with a limited vocabulary will never be able to speak, write, read or understand a language effectively. In second or foreign language learning in particular, vocabulary plays a significant role serving to become the prerequisite for communication; for both receptive and productive skills.

A receptive skill means a form of communication which focuses on vocabulary inputs via listening and reading. In other words, learners need to have an adequate vocabulary to comprehend the input. Fijin (2009) mentioned in order to gain reasonable comprehension of a text and to be able to guess the meaning of unknown words from a context, learners need to know at least 95% of the running words in the input (as suggested by Nation I. S., 2001). Thus, vocabulary learners who possess limited vocabulary would also yield a limited comprehension of the text.

On the other hand, a productive skill is when learners use words to convey meaning. As cited by Mart (2012) referring to what Wilkins (1972)

emphasized, "without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed". This means that vocabulary is used productively through speaking and writing which in turn can be effective if learners have enough vocabulary.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is one of the most important element for mastery of a language. vocabulary also has an important role in learning English, because it appears in every language skill, generally four basic English skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) can be obtained properly if supported by good acquisition in vocabulary. Without mastering grammar, it is still possible to be able to communicate if you have enough vocabulary. We can conclude that without grammar, we still can speak English even there are not perfect. But if we have a lot of vocabularies we can do it well.

#### **D. Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

##### **1. The Definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies.**

There are many explanations of vocabulary learning strategies stated by some experts. Schmitt (2000) explains that vocabulary learning strategies can empower learners and attract learners' attention in learning language in a way that will improve the learners' vocabulary development. Schmitt (1997) also mentions that in vocabulary acquisition, emphasizing high exposure to the language is critical. Furthermore, vocabulary learning strategies are important in second language learning to maximize the productivity of language acquisition. According to Takac (2008), vocabulary learning strategies are specific strategies utilized in vocabulary learning activities in the target language. Moreover, vocabulary learning strategies are the methods for learning vocabulary that facilitate expedient language learning (Amiryousefi & Ketabi, 2011). For this reason, vocabulary learning strategies can assist learners in figuring out the meaning of terms in the target language to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Hulstjin,1993, as cited in Morin & Goebel, 2001).

In addition, Asgari and Mustapha (2011) define vocabulary learning strategies as stages taken by learners when learning new words. When students encounter new English words in their learning process, they need to take actions to comprehend the words in order to help them understand the materials. However, vocabulary learning strategies do not only focus on how learners learn new vocabulary, but also on how they store the words in their long-term memories as well as use and produce the words in the appropriate contexts as stated by Ruutments (2005) as cited in Jurcovi  (2006).

Vocabulary learning strategies help EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to achieve their learning goals and to make them become independent learners. Ghazal (2007) states that vocabulary learning strategies are methods of assisting learners in improving their knowledge of target language vocabularies. Through mastery of vocabulary, learners will be able to successfully engage with materials and tasks given in the target language (Ghazal, 2007). Based on Ghazal's idea, using strategies for learning vocabulary can help the students to achieve their learning goals, as by comprehending the vocabulary, the learners will be able to understand the materials given. Moreover, vocabulary is considered to be the basic element of language. Without a thorough understanding of vocabulary, students cannot identify objects, concepts, and so forth. As stated by Ghazal (2007: 84), "Vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning". Vocabulary learning strategies do not only help the learners to achieve their learning goals, but also to encourage the students to become independent learners. As explained by Nation (2001), by applying vocabulary learning strategies, students can manage and monitor their own learning process without having to depend entirely on the teachers' help. In other words, independent learning encourages students to be more responsible for their own success in language learning.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are designed to assist learners in facilitating and streamlining their vocabulary learning to achieve optimal goals. With the existence of vocabulary learning strategies, students are expected to be able to overcome the difficulties that they face when learning vocabulary and then overcome it with the right strategy. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are the methods or strategies used by students in learning their vocabulary to achieve optimal goals.

## **2. Types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

Many classifications of vocabulary learning strategies have been proposed by scholars (e.g., Oxford, 1990; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997). Among these classifications, one of the well-known and well-accepted among researchers (e.g., Hamzah and Kafipour and Abdulla, 2009; Sripetpun, 2000) is that by Schmitt (1997) who divides vocabulary learning strategies into 5 sub-categories: (1) memory strategies – connecting a new word with formerly learned knowledge, (2) cognitive strategies – similar to memory strategies but focusing on manipulative mechanical process, (3) metacognitive strategies – processes of learning and making decisions about planning, monitoring, and evaluating the best way to study, (4) determination strategies – used by individual to discover a word's meaning without consulting other people, and (5) social strategies – a way to learn a new word by interacting with other people.

There have been several attempts to develop the taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) based on the strategies used by learners to understand their target language. Some of the experts who have developed taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies are Nation (1990, 2001), Gu and Johnson (1996), and Schmitt (1997). This study adopts Schmitt's taxonomy as the basic, and is supported by a secondary theory.



Schmitt's theory (1997) is well known and is used as the basic theory for many researchers of vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt (2000) classifies strategies into several specific groups:

1. Determination strategies (DET)

According to Schmitt (1997), determination strategies are used when students discover the meaning of a new word without using the experience of another person.

Determination strategies (DET) are individual strategies used to understand the meaning of words without any help from others, such as guessing context, guessing from L1 (first language) cognates, using reference materials such as dictionaries, analysing affixes and roots, and using dictionaries to convey particular words. Strategies belonging to this group are commonly used to find the meaning of new words rather than recalling words that have already been learned.

2. Social strategies (SOC)

Strategies belonging to this group involve interaction with others in learning new words, such as asking the teacher or classmates. Social strategies are not only used to discover new vocabulary, but are also used to remember words that students have previously been exposed to. Thus, the foundations of these strategies are social interaction and engagement. Eventually, the strategies can act in specific ways to foster certain aspects of that competence, such as grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic elements (Oxford, 1990, as cited in *The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies*, 2017).

3. Memory strategies (MEM)

According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies reflect principles such as arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing. In learning a new language, the arrangement and associations should have personal meaning to the learner. Memory strategies help language learners to cope with the difficulty of remembering large amounts of

vocabulary and enable learners to store verbal material and then retrieve it when needed for communication.

These strategies are also commonly known as mnemonic strategies. They are used to recall vocabulary that has already been studied. Through these strategies, learners will relate their prior knowledge with the target words by grouping the words according to their form or topic, forming imaginary links, using physical actions, connecting new words to past experiences, studying the spelling of the words, and speaking the words out loud while studying them.

#### 4. Cognitive Strategies (COG)

Cognitive strategies deal with text-manipulating processes or making connections (Oxford, 1989); they range from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing, and are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners (Oxford, 1990). Examples of cognitive strategies include memorization, repetition (i.e. imitating a model), writing things down, and inferencing (i.e. making guesses about the form or meaning of a new language item). Nation (2001, p. 232) has suggested that meaning-inference is “the most important of all sources of vocabulary learning.” In the study of Hamada & Park (2011), it was mentioned that one of the often discussed issues regarding strategy use and inference accuracy is the utilization of local strategies (use of morphological analysis, word-analogy, and grammatical analysis) vs. global strategies (involving more contextually-based analysis). They concluded that “learners with higher inference accuracy used fewer strategy types consistently, while learners with lower inference accuracy used a wider range of strategy types more frequently” (p. 23). For Carton (Rubin, 1987), language learning is a kind of problem-solving in which the student can bring to mind his or her prior experience and knowledge in the processing of language.

These strategies are similar to memory strategies, but they do not focus as much on the mental process. Cognitive strategies emphasize the mechanical means of comprehending known words. Thus, cognitive strategies utilize repetition and specific tools to learn vocabulary. Strategies belonging to cognitive strategies (COG) include repeating words verbally and on paper, making lists of words, and labelling physical objects with their meanings in the target language.

#### 5. Metacognitive Strategies (MET)

Metacognitive strategies are used for monitoring one's mistakes or improvement, or making an attentive effort to explore practice opportunities (Hedge, 2001; Oxford-Carpenter, 1989); they are used to oversee, regulate, or self-direct language learning. Metacognitive strategies involve planning for learning, thinking about learning, and how to make it effective, self-monitoring during learning, and evaluation of how successful learning has been after working on language in some way (Hedge, 2001).

Metacognitive strategies (MET) are strategies in which learners consciously determine the best way to plan, monitor, and evaluate their strategies of studying vocabulary. Learners who use metacognitive strategies decide on their own which words they will focus on and examine further. Learners also check their understanding by doing word tests. Examples of metacognitive strategies include using English-language media, skipping or passing new words, constantly studying new words, and testing oneself by using word tests or games.

### E. The Previous Research Studies

#### a. The Students' Strategies in Learning Vocabulary of The X Year Students Boarding Schools at Aceh Besar by Ridha Ikhsan. (2017)

This research were to find out the students' strategies in learning vocabulary in various boarding schools and to find out the dominant strategies used by senior high school of the X year students

in various boarding schools. This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. The differences between this research and my upcoming research is the instrument. This research used open questionnaire as instrument in collecting the data, while the researcher upcoming thesis use questionnaire and interview results based on Schmitt's taxonomy. The result of the data showed that many students employed more than one strategies in learning vocabulary. Those strategies were determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. The most dominant strategy was determination strategies. Based on those findings, the researcher concludes that students try to guess and discover the meaning of the new words with the help of context, structural knowledge and reference material. It means that students find the meaning of the words on their own.

b. A Case Study of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Used by Male and Female Students of English Department in IAIN Salatiga by Dwi Erna Susanti (2018)

The aims of this study were to describe the vocabulary learning strategy used by male and female students of IAIN Salatiga, and to describe the gender difference pattern in the application of vocabulary learning strategy done by students of English department of IAIN Salatiga. This study was a qualitative case study research design. The differences between this research and the researcher upcoming research are in the method and the goals. The researcher will use survey method which is descriptive qualitative data and the goals are to investigate the strategies that Thai students use in learning vocabulary, to find out the dominant strategy used mostly by Thai students in learning vocabulary, and also to find out the distribution level of Thai students related the most used strategy. The finding revealed that the gender difference was only existed in the application

of social strategies for discovery, cognitive strategy for consolidation and metacognitive strategy for consolidation. The other strategy namely determination, social strategy for consolidation and memory strategy was indicated no difference in term of gender.

c. Thai Students' Strategies in Learning English Vocabulary at English Language Education Department of IAIN Salatiga in The Academic Year 2018/2019 by Tuan Fatonah Guma (2018)

This study aimed to identify Thai students' problems and strategies in learning English vocabulary at English Language Education Department at IAIN Salatiga. This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research. The researcher used interview to collect the data. The differences between this research and the reseracher upcoming thesis are in the goals and instrument. The goals of this research were to describe the strategies used by Thai students and also to know the problem faced by them, while the goals of my upcoming research are to investigate the strategies that Thai students use in learning vocabulary, to find out the dominant strategy used mostly by Thai students in learning vocabulary, and also to find out the distribution level of Thai students related the most used strategy. In this research, The researcher used interview to collect the data. Meanwhile the researcher upcoming thesis use questionnaire and interview items are adapted from Schmitt taxonomy (2000) which is in English version. The findings is 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.