

## THE EFFECT OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES ON VOCABULARY MASTERY BASED ON GENDER DIFFERENCES

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**Abstract:** There are lots of studies about vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL learners. In this recent study focuses on the effect of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) on learners' vocabulary mastery. Nevertheless, in this study the subject were categorized based on gender (male and female). This study aims to identify the effect of vocabulary learning strategies employed by female and male learner at LBPP LIA Solo in learning new vocabularies on their vocabulary mastery. This qualitative study was a qualitative study proposed by Pawlak (2008). The participants of this research involved 10 male learners and 10 female learners of higher intermediate level at LBPP LIA Solo. The data were collected via vocabulary learning strategy questionnaires (VLSQs), interview and test. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively. The research finding showed that female learner tend to use more vocabulary learning strategies than male did. In addition, the the more vocabulary learning strategies applied, the better effect they got in vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords :** Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Male Learners, Female Learners, Higher Intermediate Level, Vocabulary Mastery Effect.

### INTRODUCTION

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English has taken an important role in learners' study. It can be found in most of school in Indonesia have taught English at their school. Some of them might be only as local content, but the rest of them have made English as one of the most important lesson because it will be tested as national examination. In another word, English is language that the students need to learn.

Since English becomes substantial language that learners need to use, they must have their own idea about learning English. The first thing that comes to people mind when they talk about language must be "words". Words here are vocabularies. Ghazal (2007, p.84) indicates that vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Because of its importance, the learners need to learn vocabulary more. Besides, Ahour and Salamzadeh (2014, p.12) also state that words are the basic building blocks of a language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and the whole texts are formed. It means that learners should know more about English vocabularies if they want to be able to speak and use English. The more vocabularies they know, the better their ability in English.

Wessels (2011, p.46) believes that vocabulary knowledge 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. As Ghazal (2007, p.84) states that vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges foreign language learners face during the process of learning a language. This causes learners need to use their own way to learn vocabularies. This is what they call vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). Those are the tool that can be used by language learners in developing their vocabulary knowledge. Although those are challenging for the students in using strategies in learning vocabularies, but those can help them in developing their vocabulary ability. Moreover, good vocabulary mastery will help learners in understanding about the material given by the teacher easily. This can affect to their performance in teaching and learning activity.

This recent research is conducted in one of popular English institute in Surakarta. It is *Lembaga Bahasa dan Pendidikan Professional LIA Solo* (next will be called LBPP LIA Solo). There are some unique things that take the researcher's attention to conduct a research there. It is because LBPP LIA Solo is different from other language institution exists in Surakarta. What makes it different from other institutions is that LIA Solo has determined the level of their new students based on the result of their placement test. It makes each class seems homogeneous because they have similar ability in learning English.

The placement test is held once in three months to get new students. Besides, LBPP LIA Solo has professional teachers who are given training activities in a month before they are allowed to teach. The quality of the teachers is also always controlled by supervisor and quality control employers. Moreover, the course book that is used in LBPP LIA is corporate with the original Oxford. Based on the interview done in the pre-research, the teachers believe that their students are taught based on integrated skill in English. Although they learn based on integrated skills, the students still need to learn and understand more deeply about the vocabularies they are going to use in each skill. It means that they do not get specific vocabulary session in their teaching and learning process.

Based on this pre-research, the researcher will take the topic about vocabulary learning strategies that the higher intermediate level learners use in learning new vocabulary. Higher intermediate is the level in which requires the learners to use English in every situation. It means that they need to use the suitable vocabulary choices and have more vocabulary size. This makes the learners use certain strategies to learn new vocabulary and recall what they have learned before. Since they are at the same level, they have similar ability in vocabulary mastery. This reasons that attract the researcher to do research at LBPP LIA Solo, especially in the higher intermediate level students.

In relation to the gender difference there have been numerous studies done. Oxford and Nyikos (1989), gender was found to have a great impact on strategy choice. Females were found to use certain strategies more frequently than boys. There are also conflicting results with regard to the use of language learning strategies by males or females. While Green and Oxford (1995) in their study of 374 students found that females used strategies significantly more often than males, in another study by Tran

(1988) females were found to use fewer language learning strategies than men. Considering the diversity and sometimes conflicting results, there is need for further research, including more variables to be investigated. This study focus on how actually gender affects students' vocabulary learning strategies language learning strategies and their vocabulary mastery.

The researcher will explore more deeply about This study is aimed to explore more deeply about:

1. Vocabulary learning strategies are used by the learners
2. The effect of the use of vocabulary learning strategies on their vocabulary mastery.

## **RESEARCH METHODO**

The method of this study is qualitative design that is hoped to give detail and in depth information about certain phenomenon. Thus, qualitative method was selected as the method of this study. Cresswell (2008) identified qualitative research as an investigative method for understanding a phenomenon based on separate methodological traditions of inquiry that elicit human conditions or social problem. In addition, the researcher is the main instrument of analyzing the data. Qualitative designs are divided into some types, but the writer used one of them named case study. This is because case study is the most suitable method to do this research. As Yin (2003) states that case study is the preferred study when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. In this study, the writer investigates the male and female learners' strategies in learning vocabulary and the effect of VLSs used in their vocabulary mastery.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

This study used questionnaires and test to collect the data. McNamara (1999) explains that interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. Those explanations are appealing the researcher to use this technique. The researcher had used this technique in pre-research to find the case in this study. Further, the researcher used this technique to collect the data. In addition, questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns among large populations, qualitative interview data often gather more in-depth insights on participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Kendall, 2008) in Harris (2010, p.1). These questionnaires are one of the main techniques that the researcher used to collect the data. Both malea and female learners received two tests (before and after the instruction process) to check the effect of the vocabulary learning strategies they applied. The data collected were analyzed using Pawlak's framework (2008).

**FINDINGS**

Based on the result of Vocabulary Learning Strategies’ Questionnaires (VLSQs), there was different intensity between male and female learners in using VLS. Although both of male and female learners applied six types of vocabulary learning strategies, but female learners tend to use VLSs more often than male learners did. This finding was based on the mean percentage of VLSs used by the learners. Female learners applied 68,40% vocabulary learning strategies when they learned new vocabularies. On the other hand, male learners applied lesser than the female learners did. Male learners only applied 51,97% vocabulary learning strategies when they learned new vocabularies. This finding was presented on the table below:

<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>	
<b>VLS</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>VLSS</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Dictionary Strategiess	83,06%	Guessing Strategies	80,42%
Activation Strategies	76,00%	Dictionary Strategiess	69,17%
Guessing Strategies	66,67%	Activation Strategies	52,00%
Note-Taking Strategies	63,33%	Memory Startegies: Encoding	48,81%
Memory Startegies: Encoding	61,90%	Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	33,89%
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	59,44%	Note-Taking Strategies	27,50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,40%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>51,97%</b>

Table 1. The different intensity in applying vocabulary learning Strategies

Based on the table above, it could be identified the percentage of VLSs used by male and female learners. The first one was that female learners applied dictionary strategies as the most frequently VLSs used, but male learners made guessing strategies as the most useful VLSs used. The second VLSs used by female learners were activation strategies, while male learners were dictionary strategies. The third VLSs used by female learners were guessing strategies, while male learners were Activation strategies. The next VLSs used by female learners were note-taking strategies, while for male learners were memory strategies: encoding. The fifth VLSs used by female learners were memory strategies: encoding, but male learners made memory strategies: rehearsal as the fifth VLSs used. The last VLSs used by female learners were memory strategies: rehearsal, while male learners had note-taking strategies as the last VLSs used in learning new vocabularies.

The objective of this study is finding out the effect of the use of using VLSs in both female and male learners’ vocabulary mastery. The data collected was conducted to answer this research question about the effect of vocabulary learning strategies used by male and female learners on their vocabulary mastery. To answer this research question, there were pre-test and post-test results got by female and male learners. Those were shown on the table below:

Female				Male			
No	Name	Pre-test	Post-test	No	Name	Pre-test	Post-test
1	R1	88	94	1	R11	91	92
2	R2	83	100	2	R12	70	88
3	R3	88	98	3	R13	61	68
4	R4	86	100	4	R14	63	86
5	R5	91	94	5	R15	58	84
6	R6	65	81	6	R16	46	83
7	R7	64	76	7	R17	48	76
8	R8	71	81	8	R18	56	85
9	R9	74	87	9	R19	64	88
10	R10	78	88	10	R20	69	82
<b>Mean</b>		<b>78,6</b>	<b>89,8</b>	<b>Mean</b>		<b>62,4</b>	<b>83,1</b>

Table 2. Pre-test and post-test result of male and female learners

Based on the result of pre-test and post-test of the learners, it could be identified that they get the effect of VLSs on vocabulary mastery. It could be seen on the fluctuation figure about the mean score of pre-test and post-test they got. However, female learners seemed to be more successful in mastering vocabularies than male learners did. It could be seen from the mean score they got. Female learners' mean score was higher than male learners' mean score. The mean score of both female and male learners on the post-test had increased though. The mean score of female learners in pre-test was 78,6 and increased on the post-test to become 89,8. Male learners also got effect on the pre-test and post-test result. They got 62,4 on the pre-test and 83,1 on the post test.

As seen from figure 1, both male and female learners had significant difference about pre-test and post test results. For female learners, there were 50% of them got excellent score category (81-100). And for the rest 50% got good score category (61-80). The mean score they got in pre-test was 78,8 in which the passing grade determined was

It meant that female learners had not reached it yet. On the other hand, mean score of male learner' pre-test was lower than female learners got. The mean score they got was only 62,6 that was categorized as fair result. However it also had not reached the passing grade. There were only 10% of male learner who got excellent score category. Besides, there were 50% of them got good score category and for the rest 40% got fair score category. It meant that both male and female learners had not reached the passing grade determined before.

To find out the effect of VLSs the learners applied, the researcher conducted a post-test for them a week after she explained about vocabulary learning strategies for them. The figure also showed about the post-test result of female and male learners. Based on the data got, it could be identified that VLSs they applied effected to their vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from the mean score of post-test they got. Female learners got 89,9 as the mean score. The result showed that they got higher mean score on post-test than they got on pre-test. There were 90% of them got excellent score category and the rest 10% of them got good score category. There were 4 female learners who got maximum score. Furthermore, male learners also got higher mean score on post-test than they got on pre-test before. They got 83,2 as the mean score of post-test where 80% of them got excellent score category and the rest 20% of them got good score category with

learner getting maximum score. Here was the figure about pre-test and post-test mean score that learners got:



Figure 1. The fluctuations in the mean score of pre-test and post-test done by female and male learners

The result of this research showed that both male and female learners got effect on vocabulary mastery after applying vocabulary learning strategies. This finding was based on the means score of pre-test and post-test score they got. Female learners were more successful than male learners in vocabulary mastery since female learners had higher mean score than the male learners got.

## DISCUSSION

Based on finding on the third research questions, both male and female learners got better influence in applying vocabulary learning strategies to vocabulary mastery. On the pre-test, both male and female learners had not reached the passing grade determined (80). Female learners' mean score was 78,6 while male learners' mean score was 62,4. This pre-test result showed that they have not reached score standard in

vocabulary test. Those result indicated that female learners mean score was better than male learners' mean score. It meant that female learners were better in vocabulary mastery even before they had not applied vocabulary learning strategies.

On the other hand, there was improvement of mean score in the post-test. Both male and female learners reached the passing grade. Male learners scored 83,1 and female learners scores 89,8. They were categorized as excellent learners in vocabularies since their score were between 80-100. However, female learners were better than male learners because female learners got higher mean score both on the pre-test and on the post-test. Besides, female learners also tend to use more VLSs than male learners did. This affect to vocabulary mastery they had. Although both of male and female learners had increased their mean score from pre-test to post-test, but female learners got higher mean score. It meant that female learners were more successful in mastering vocabulary using vocabulary learning strategies they applied.

This finding was confirmed to some experts. The first one was Gang (2014). She stated that the effective vocabulary learning strategies will help students see the relevance of strategy use in learning L2 vocabulary and introduce them to the strategies used often by proficient vocabulary learners and finally encourage them to develop their own effective learning strategies. Here, female and male learners also had encouraged their vocabulary mastery using VLSs they applied.

This research finding was also in line with Bristi (2015, p.2). She stated that vocabulary learning strategies help learners to cope up with the difficulties of learning new words and to learn the words more effectively. In this case, both male and female learners had success in mastering vocabulary better than before. Besides, It also corresponded with Nelson et all (2014, p.63). They also find that language learning strategies was very effective, in that, females were significantly more successful than males, and that they used more language learning strategies in learning English. Both researchers show that female do use strategies more often than males in learning language. As regard of the use of vocabulary learning strategies, it had been confirmed that there was significant effect on the use of vocabulary learning strategies on learners' vocabulary mastery. This finding was confirmed by Gu (2002) in her research that identified learners reported significantly more use of almost all strategies that were found to be correlated to success s meant that female learners applied more vocabularies learning strategies and they were more successful by applying the suitable vocabulary learning strategies in learning new words. In this case, female learners were better language learners than male learners were as Zoghi et all (2013) that revealed a significant interaction effect of gender on students' achievement test. Moreover, female learners tend to do less error than male learners did in doing the test that effected to their score in vocabulary test. This was confirmed by Chen's 1996 theory in which stated that female students do consistently score lower error rates and show more improvement over time than do their male classmates. These were proved by the result of vocabulary learning test the learners did that showed female learners had higher score than male learners got. Besides, female learners were more active than male learners. This caused them apply more vocabulary strategies in learning. This was relied on

Shakouri and Saligheh (2012, p.5) that stated females will be more active and better in learning language.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

After describing the research finding and discussion of the previous chapter, there were three conclusions can be drawn from this study. There were six strategies applied by male and female learners in learning new vocabularies. Those were guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory strategies rehearsal, memory strategies encoding, and activation strategies. Regarding to these findings, female learners tend to applied most strategies rather than male learners did. Female learners applied dictionary strategies more often rather than other strategies. This effected on their vocabulary mastery. The more the applied vocabulary learning strategies, the better the vocabulary mastery they got.

Based on the results, some implications can be observed. First of all, an advantage of this study is that it will increase the public awareness on the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in second language learning and teaching. Furthermore, because of the existence of vocabulary learning strategies, learners will be able to understand more about the most suitable strategies they need to apply in learning new vocabularies. In this case, the suitable vocabulary learning strategies the learners apply can effect on the vocabulary mastery. It helps them in learning new vocabulary well.

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