

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY AND  
VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY IN 6<sup>th</sup> SEMESTER OF  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT IN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF  
KALIMANTAN**

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***ABSTRACT***

The objectives of this research were to investigate the relationship between critical thinking and vocabulary learning strategies for the 6th semester of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan and to identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies the learners employ.

The population of this research was the 6th semester students of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan. The total number of population was 40 students. Instruments in collecting data were 20 items questionnaire of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ) to identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by the learners and 34 questions test of California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) to determine the learners' critical thinking ability. Those instruments were distributed by using Google Form through WhatsApp group. To analyze the data, quantitative descriptive design was used to identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by 6th semester of English Department and Pearson Moment Correlation was performed to examine the relationship between critical thinking ability and vocabulary learning strategies.

The result of the study revealed that determination strategies were most frequently used followed by memory, metacognitive, and determination; while social strategies and memory were found as the least frequently used strategies. On the other hand, Pearson Moment Correlation demonstrated that there was a relationship between learners' critical thinking ability and vocabulary learning strategies.

***Keyword:*** *vocabulary learning strategies, critical thinking*

## INTRODUCTION

English is an international language which used by people to communicate and interact to each other. Anyone can communicate by using the English language, but they often cannot communicate decently. It happens because of some problems such as confidence, grammar, and also the vocabulary which can be the crucial one for them to speak in English. Therefore, it is really needed to master the English for better communication. In secondary school, it is one of compulsory subject that must be learned. That is why to support the mastery of the English skills, students should learn vocabulary as the first step to another skill of acquiring English language mastery.

Indeed, teaching English language is truly different from the other subjects. It must include the four skills which there are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We can see it from the daily teaching activities which gives much attention to the teaching of grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and the most importantly is vocabulary itself in order to complete those skills mastery.

The teacher has responsibility to establish learning strategy during the teaching. Vocabulary learning strategies are part of language learning strategies that are considered as a subcategory of learning strategies in general (Nation, 2001). As for teaching vocabulary, it is not only teaching single words, but the focus should be on strategies that learners' can equip themselves with in order to learn the necessary vocabulary (Hulstijn, 1993). However, learners' choices of language learning strategies might be affected by a number of factors such as motivation, gender, age, learning style and critical thinking (Nikoopour, Amini Farsani, & Nasiri, 2011). Among all those factors that might affect language learning strategies, critical thinking may be one of the factors that influence vocabulary learning strategies.

Through this research, researcher not only focus on vocabulary mastery, but also to students' ability in critical thinking to understand the meaning of the word by conveying it orally with their own words. Critical thinking has an important role in enhancing student learning outcomes (Baker, Rudd, & Pomeroy, 2001; Noone & Hogan, 2016; Kumar & James, 2015; Song, 2016). Critical thinking is organized for the students to take responsibility for their own learning, to become active learners, and seek to enhance their own individual characteristics (Cırık, Çolak, & Rich, 2015; Marlowe & Page, 2005; Tuncel & Bahtiyar, 2015). It means critical thinking is important for students. Related to the English learning process, students can deliver their ideas of vocabulary through critical thinking both in oral and written form confidently.

The role of critical thinking is emphasized in the domain of language learning, where the reasons behind the success and failure of EFL learners have provoked researchers to examine different aspects of the process. Therefore, enhancing learners' critical thinking ability and managing their way of thinking may have significant impact on the learners' overall in language learning. Furthermore, improving learners' autonomy and critical thinking ability in the course of learning will enable them to rely on their own decisions and thoughts regarding the strategies and techniques that they would want to employ in learning a language. However, in most cases, at the beginning stages of learning, due to students' unfamiliarity with the strategies and approaches to language learning they are mostly dependent on their teacher and try to avoid applying their own thoughts.

## METHOD

### *Research Design and Setting*

In this research, the researcher used quantitative method in descriptive quantitative design for each

critical thinking and vocabulary learning strategies. At the end of the research, the researcher used Pearson Moment correlational research in order to determine the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and critical thinking using statistical data.

This research was conducted through online by using Google Form Questionnaires. It means the participants can fill the Google Form anywhere and anytime. This research was held within a month in April 2020.

#### *Population and Sample*

The population of this research is among the students of English Department in UNISKA Banjarmasin. Therefore, the sample of this research is the students of 6th semester from English Department of UNISKA Banjarmasin.

#### *Instrument*

##### 1. California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)

California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) was used to determine the critical thinking ability. The test was adapted from the work of the Delphi definition of critical thinking (Facione, 1990) and it achieves a reliability reading of 0.68 to 0.70 (P.A. Facione, 1992). The test is already standard which has been used in a wide range of education field. The test consists 34 questions of multiple-choice measuring the five cognitive skills: analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and interpretation based on some general background level (Facione, 1990).

This test has 9 questions for analysis, 11 questions for inference, and 14 questions for evaluation. CT test (1 question = 1 point)

- Analysis (9 questions)  
Simple analysis sentence or word where the participant choose the option that “mean the same as” or “is the best interpretation of”.
- Inference (11 questions)

Identification of the role of various sentences in a short paragraph or passage in order to determine the main claim or conclusion.

- Evaluation (14 questions)  
It provides short passages and ask the participant to decide whether the reasons offered present certainty of the conclusion drawn.

In this research, the researcher used complete sentences or fill in the blank of sentences as a type of test. The students were asked to answer 20 items of sentences in 45 minutes.

##### 2. Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ)

Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire is based on Schmitt’s (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies adapted from Kafipour and Hosseini Naveh (2011), with a reliability coeficient of 0.73. The questionnaire has two major categories of discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used for this research that is consisted 20 items to measure the frequency strategy use ranging from ‘never’ to ‘always’

#### *Data Analysis*

The two instruments of data collection, the researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to code the VLS questionnaire and CCTST for the analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### 1. *Frequency of Used Strategies*

What are the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by 6th semester of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan?

Most Frequently Used Strategies				
Item	Category	Strategies	Mean	SD
12	MEM	Study the sound of a word	4,025	1,074
18	MET	Use English language media such as songs, movies, internet, etc	3,925	1,118
4	DET	Use an English-Indonesian dictionary	3,775	1,271
14	MEM	Make their own definition of word	3,725	0,716
20	MET	Pay attention to English words when someone is speaking English	3,575	1,196

Based on the descriptive analysis showed that 5 strategies were used at the most frequently level. The most generally used strategies among the participants is “study the sound of a word” in the category memory with the mean score of 4,025 and standard deviation of 1,074.

## 2. *The Relationship between Critical Thinking Ability and Vocabulary Learning Strategies*

To what extent are the students of 6th Semester of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan in using vocabulary learning strategies related to their critical thinking ability?

As the researcher computed the data above to SPSS, the result of the correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and critical thinking ability reveal 0.272406682. It showed the correlation between two variable of this research is low degree. The researcher concluded there is a relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and critical thinking ability.

Basic Decision Making in Correlation Coefficient Test

- 1) If the significance value  $< 0.05$ , then correlated
- 2) If the significance value  $> 0.05$ , then it does not correlate

## **CLOSING**

### *Conclusion*

Findings and discussion in chapter 4, the researcher concluded the first research question “What are the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by 6th semester of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan?” as follows:

Descriptive analysis which based on the frequency of learners’ strategy from Oxford (1990) showed that students of 6th semester in UNISKA used 5 most frequently strategies which concluded: firstly, most of the student used the strategy of studying the sound of a word in the

category of memory. It seems students find it important strategy in learning vocabulary since word may be stored based on their pronunciation, learners can learn the words with a similar pronunciations together. Learning the words with similar sound pattern will be much easier than those with different sound patterns.

Secondly, students used the strategy of using English language media such as songs, movies, internet, etc; in the category of metacognitive. They find this strategy as an interesting way in acquiring vocabulary learning because listening to English songs can make them learn new word through the lyrics, watching movies are able in learning words through subtitles, and many articles in English language can be found through internet.

Third, students used the strategy of using an English-Indonesian dictionary in the category of determination. It is truly important for students in learning the English vocabulary by acquiring meaning of each word in order to expand their vocabulary mastery.

Fourth, students used the strategy of making their own definition of a word in the category of memory. Students make it as another most frequently learning strategy because when they find new word and check the meaning then they make their own definition in order to ease them remembering the word with the meaning.

Lastly, students used the strategy of paying attention to English words when someone is speaking English in the category of metacognitive.

Next, the researcher concluded the second research question “To what extent are the students of 6th Semester of English Department in Islamic University of Kalimantan in using vocabulary learning strategies related to their critical thinking ability?” as follows:

For the hypothesis is known that the Pearson Moment correlation between students’ critical thinking

ability and vocabulary learning strategies have no relationship because the analysis revealed the number of correlation is 0.272. Therefore, the researcher concluded the second research question that there is a relationship between learners' critical thinking ability and vocabulary learning strategy.

#### *Suggestion*

As for pedagogical implications which this study shows the importance of strategies in learning vocabulary by providing reasons for learners' choices of certain strategies which they find important in enhancing their knowledge of vocabulary. Furthermore, the English lecturers should provide learners with the necessary learning strategies and assist them in becoming more responsible to achieve their language learning objectives. As a result, lecturers will be able to train students to choose the appropriate strategies that best suits their language needs. In addition, lecturers should design useful activities and assign relevant tasks for students to improve their vocabulary. Thus, learning objectives can be gained when students are provided with strategy based training. Eventually, learners will gain independence in dealing with the target language.

Moreover, the results indicated no significant relationship between critical thinking and vocabulary learning strategies since the educational system in countries like Indonesia are mostly teacher-centered around memorization of the taught materials. Thus, such traditional teaching methods need to be replaced by the learner-centered approaches in order for these approaches to develop students' critical thinking skills. In this regard, curriculum designers are recommended to constantly review educational curricula to make sure that different skills of critical thinking are incorporated into the language instruction programs. This is to ensure that students are able to evaluate and question their ways of learning a

language and choose the best technique that fits their language learning objectives.

In addition to suggestion for the other researcher dealing with the same title, the researcher hopes that the future study will conduct a better research about critical thinking ability and vocabulary learning strategies. The issues about critical thinking ability are still need to be discussed in order to improve the learner-centered method in learning.

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