English Vocabulary Acquisition through Vocabulary Learning Strategy and Socio-Educational Factors: A Review

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Abstract: English Vocabulary Acquisition is part of language acquisition that aimed by most of language learners. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) are the tools of the acquisition as the media of the acquisition need avid attention of the subsequent phenomena. Vocabulary learning strategy is not only independent factor contribute to the vocabulary acquisition, the socio-educational factors that introduced by Gardner 1985 had been fully proved the contribution of the acquisition process to the successfulness. The paper explores the vocabulary acquisition in the view of vocabulary learning strategies and socio-educational factors in various aspects of research and theory. As of now, the relationship between the VLSs and Socio-educational factors is not exposed widely.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategy; socio-educational factors; vocabulary skill.

1. Introduction

The word vocabulary has long connotated to the word list, and any language in the world either spoken or written relate to the vocabulary. When one learns foreign language, he would first time refer to the word list of the target language. Nevertheless, a language learner is not able speak, read, write, or understand a foreign language without knowing vocabulary. The more he knows the words, the better he could be.

There is a common question to the one who learn a foreign language, what is the basic requirement of the language learner to be able to maximize the language acquisition. Refer to this question some research would address to the vocabulary. The main reason to the answer of the question is due to that words are the basic unit of language use [1]. As affirmed without a sufficient vocabulary, a person cannot communicate effectively. Having a limited vocabulary is also a barrier that prevents students from learning a foreign language [2]. According to Zimmerman as cited in [3] vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to typical language learners. Most scholars have argued that learning new words was one of the most crucial processes in human development and considerable recent research has given attention to the importance of the investigation of foreign language vocabulary acquisition [4]; [5]; [6]; [7]; [8]; [9]; and [10].

Some researchers indicate that the use of vocabulary learning strategies and its effectiveness is one factor affecting the success of foreign vocabulary acquisition to language learner. The success of English learning outcome is much influenced by language learning process, and this learning process is much influenced by learner strategy [11]. Learning strategy epistemologically originates from two main concepts. The first concept is learning, which mean to gain knowledge or a set of cognitive processes that transforms the stimulation from the environment into the several phases of information processing required for acquiring a new capability. Meanwhile the second concept is a strategy which
can be broadly defined as the art of planning operations in war, especially of the movements of armies
and navies into favorable positions for fighting. Thus, learning strategies can be defined as the
deliberate actions that learners select and control to achieve desired goals or academic objectives. This
statement is logical, as it refers to some urgent concepts of any operations, steps, and plans employed
by learners to facilitate the accession, storage, regaining, and use of information to reach the final
learning goals. In more specific definition, [11] stated that learning strategies can be defined as special
ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information.
Thus, learning strategies are useful to acquire language performance successfully because of the
leading of the students to assume more responsibility for their own learning. Learning strategy could
also engage the students with the foreign language material at a deeper cognitive level. Moreover [5]
stated that the proficient use of a variety of vocabulary learning strategies contributes to vocabulary
acquisition.

Learning strategy in the area of vocabulary mastery can be defined as various ways of all
language learners to learn new vocabulary items in accordance with the learners’ needs and their
preferences. The description of vocabulary learning strategy implies that learning strategies can
manifest either observable actions, such as underlining words, practicing patterns or unobservable
mental processes inside in the learner, such as memorization, controlling emotion, imagining, and the
like, [11]. For that reason, the interest in learning strategies grows as language educators who are
aware of some aspects to succeed. This means that as language learners or students need to be aware
how a high language proficiency to acquire due to the strategies they use. It could be possible to elicit
and describe these strategies so that other learners can benefit from their confession and experience of
learning English as the target language.

The attention to the students vocabulary learning strategies are beneficial in term of exploring
deeper their difficulties and offering some innovative ideas in order to improve learning and teaching
vocabulary [12]. Initially, it is to look at the strategies that the students use to learn new English
words. It could be as necessary as to drive students aware that there are some vocabulary learning
strategies could be used in learning new words, or enhance on what they have. In general, the term of
Language Learning Strategies are defined differently by many scholars. As no one similarly alike, the
type of learning strategy that employed by students and the vocabulary instruction by the teacher
could be vary. Nation states the condition as Individual difference [13]. The variation of learning
approach in this is the challenge of students, and their motivation to overcome the difficulty is on their
hand.

In dealing with a difficult learning approach, learners often have to develop and utilize a wide
range of learning strategies to help guarantee success. The effort to develop strategy needs more
energy and time. This is the situation where motivation could play its role. There is still much debate,
however, as to what specific motivation in language learning. It is not yet firm in how motivation
affects a continued interest or success or failure in language learning, especially in a foreign language
setting. There is no firm explanation of how motivation specifically affects the choice of utilization
vocabulary learning strategy. However, in general, [14] stated that language is an integral part of
growing up, which provides motivation in its own right, and is necessary to communicate and
participate in ones’ environment. Often, this is not the case for foreign languages, especially those
learned in school, particularly students who study English in school or university, where English as
one of the subject. There are some advantages to know other languages but those are not absolutely
necessary, and as a consequence, motivation as well as ability could play an important role of learning
a foreign language. Ability of Language can be translated into the level they acquire before they
continue to achieve another higher level and challenging. Motivation could play role in many aspect
of learner psychology of the process of learning.

[14] further stated that there are many things that can affect motivation. The term of socio-
educational that was first introduced since 1985 and even much earlier have been continued to be
proved on the concept of motivation on language learner. In the concept of socio-educational, students
are integratively motivated to be meant that they are motivated to learn language other than their
mother tongue. An individual learning process upon the language can be because of a genuine interest
to communicate with other language community either positive feelings toward that community or a
general interest in other groups. So the students would have attitude favourably toward the language
learning situation. The important of motivation concept which have been proved by a lot of research
could be in line with the important of vocabulary as the core of language learner need to acquire in the earlier steps of the process of their learning the foreign language. Vocabulary learning strategies or mostly be abbreviated as VLSs are among significant issues in English language learning which have been taken into attention to researchers in the last few decades [15]. Hand in hand, with VLSs, motivation is the topic argued and issue of the students as a language learner corpus of recent language research.

**Issues in VLSs and Socio-Educational Factors Research**

The preponderance of research on language acquisition started from vocabulary learning strategy as the very basic of language learning and socio-educational as part of the mental psychology of language learners. The researchers have been searching to know how language acquisition through vocabulary learning strategies is employed. The others explore important issues related to socio-education factors such as motivation, instrumentality, integrativeness, attitude to learning situation, and language anxiety.

This paper explores these two major issues by examining existing research which explain the issues and also suggesting research needed to the issues have not thoroughly explored.

### 2. Related Literature

#### 2.1 Language Acquisition through Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Strategies are communicative procedures that learners use in order to learn and use language. Strategies also involve mental in the learning process [16]. Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that individuals are using to accomplish a learning and language acquisition as goal [17]. [1] declare the effectiveness of the application of certain vocabulary learning strategies provide empirical evidence of the contribution of acquiring new words to language learner. [18] in more specific stated that learning strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Through an appropriate language learning strategies would drive output in a greater self-confidence. The purposes of language learning strategies that taken by learners are to make a learning process easier, faster, more fluent, more enjoyable, more self-directed, self-explanatory instruction, and more transferable to new experience situations [18].

Language learning strategies could be any kinds of actions, tactics, plans, thoughts which language learners have maximized to help them to facilitate the comprehension, storage, retrieval, and also the use of information to their vocabulary learning process. The features of language learning strategies are also worth discussing as they may share some common characteristics with vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategy would still deal with the language learning strategies as the bigger picture of features of language learning process.

[18] proposed the important features of language learning strategies. Language learning strategy contributes to main goal communicative competence, allow learners to be independent, expand the teachers role, problem oriented, more specific action, more than cognitive, not always observable, and to be flexible. The description of language learning strategies features drives to the mind- set that the avid language learners get to have as prerequisite to acquire large vocabulary acquisition.

[18] and [19] reveal that there are variety of language learning strategies that may have the potential to facilitate language learning. As vocabulary has been found as an essential component of Second Language learning classroom [20], and also as a major resource for language use, and one could not learn a language without learning vocabulary [21]. Hence, vocabulary learning is of great importance as vocabulary is an important unit to build up skills and knowledge. Anyhow, learning vocabulary items is not such a simply matter of committing them to memory, but how to use them in appropriate situations as well as how to expand the knowledge of one’s vocabulary is also crucial. This is where vocabulary learning strategy plays role.

As language learners may experience getting new words in a variety of ways in the classroom through the teacher’s language, through the language of other learners, or through learning materials, so vocabulary has long been found as language learners’ big problem that could block their language learning road. [22] highlights the ultimate role of the teacher, besides explaining new words to learners, is to build independence to learners. There are some ways, such as by training them good strategies for vocabulary learning, and build their independency to acquire new words.
Vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies which in turn as a part of general learning strategies [13]. As we are taking about vocabulary would mean language. The definition of vocabulary learning strategy stems from that for language learning strategies [23]. [21] defines vocabulary learning strategies as the actions that learners choose to help them to understand and remember vocabulary items. [23] adopts the definition of vocabulary learning strategies from [18] as the working definition in her study. Vocabulary learning strategies are knowledge about the mechanisms, processes, strategies in order to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students to find out the meaning of unknown words, to retain them in long-term memory, to recall them at will, and to use them in oral or written mode.

To classify learning strategies, scholars have different methods of classifying language learning strategies [4]. These classification systems give such a necessary contribution to the knowledge of vocabulary strategies. The following paragraphs are a brief discussion of vocabulary learning strategies which have been identified in various contexts by some scholars.

[22] proposes to language learner that want to learn new word, able to categorize, and store them in mental lexicon, they need to use a wide range of strategies. Further she suggests two main strategies to learning vocabulary items, they are Cognitive Strategies and metacognitive strategy. Cognitive strategy consist of making associations, learning words in groups, exploring range of meaning, using key words, reading on for evidence in the context of the text, and inference strategy. Metacognitive Strategies are consist of consciously collecting words from authentic contexts, making word cards, categorizing words into lists, reactivating vocabulary in internal dialogue, and making a word-network of vocabulary associated with a particular item.

[24] classified vocabulary learning strategies into two main categories. They are Strategies for getting meaning and strategies for acquiring words. Strategies for getting meaning consist of guessing from situation or context, using a dictionary, making deductions from the word-form, and linking to cognates. Strategies for acquiring words consist of repetition and rote learning, organizing words in the mind, and linking to existing knowledge. [24] then suggested the implication is how teaching could fit the language learners’ ways of learning vocabulary items. Language learners could grasp meaning of vocabulary items by guessing the meaning from context, looking up a dictionary, deducting word form, exploring the words in various contexts, and linking vocabulary items to cognates. They could acquire vocabulary items by repetition and rote learning, organizing words in their mind, linking words to existing knowledge and getting know lexical context.

[25] stated that incidental vocabulary learning would happen when mind is focused elsewhere, such as on understanding a text, or using language for communicative purpose. Incidental learning from exposure to texts would be facilitated greatly only if language learners use vocabulary learning strategies. There are about four vocabulary learning strategies that have been proposed by [25], they are guessing meaning form context, using a mnemonic device or the keyword method, vocabulary notebooks, and the last other learner strategies. [25] defines those are checking for an first language cognate, studying and practicing in peer groups, connecting a word to personal experience or previous learning, saying a new word aloud when studying, using verbal and written repetition, and engaging in extended rehearsal. [25] mentioned that language learners have not been taught the majority of words, this is the fact. Henceforth vocabulary learning is more likely to be mainly implicit or incidentally happen. [25] recommends that strategies should aid both to find the meaning of new word and to consolidate a word once it has been encountered. Thus, language learners should approach independent learning of vocabulary by using a combination of extensive reading and self-study strategies. Any language learners may have their preference.

Another experts in vocabulary learning strategy are [13] and [26]. The kinds of vocabulary learning strategies suggested by [13] and [26] are under three general classes of strategies. They are planning, sources, and process. Planning relates to choosing words, choosing the aspects of word knowledge, choosing strategies; and planning repetition. Sources deals with analyzing the word, using word parts, learning from word cards, using context, using a dictionary, consulting a reference source in 1st language and second language, and using parallels in 1st language and second language. Processes deal with noticing, retrieving, and generating. From the features of all three main categories of vocabulary learning strategies, those could be assumed that vocabulary learning strategies proposed by [13] and [26] involve both cognitive and metacognitive strategies as both include a wide range of strategies of different complexity.
[27] offered two main categories of remembering vocabulary as category one is strategies for learning vocabulary. In this category, the first is memorization. The activity such as say or write the words one is learning, record the words/phrases one is learning on tape, and ask a native or fluent speaker to record target words for one to practice listening. The second one is using words. The activities such as create sentences of one’s own for the words he/she is learning, relating them to his/her own situation, and write a story that includes all the words one has learned. The third is recycling words one has learned. The activities such as follow a news story that is printed or broadcasted daily for some weeks, focus on one type of news story that occurs almost every day, and watch movies or read books on particular topics. Then the category two: Strategies for reducing the ‘forgetting problem’. The activities such as learn words continuously, with increasing intervals between learning sessions, have the words one wants to learn with him/her whenever he/she goes, so that he/she can use any ‘dead’ time. Set aside a regular time for vocabulary learning or memorizing (e.g. just before going to bed, or travelling to and from university), and spend some time on the words that one finds difficult. So what has been classified by [27] seems to be the ways for some solutions to keep words in mind for a long time of period, to learn them as well as they become ‘known’, familiar, and to get fixed in the learner’s memory which then would help them to enhance their language acquisition to the higher steps. These strategies seem to promote language learners to individual exertion in their independent vocabulary learning. The language learner can create their own vocabulary learning through independent learning.

[4] proposed vocabulary learning strategy into three main categories. The first is to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items. The second is to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items. And the third is to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items. What have been described by [4] show some points for implications arising out of the research findings for the teaching and learning of English vocabularies in Thailand in tertiary level. This category has been considered as the main reference for the vocabulary learning strategy measurement which will be explained in detail further in chapter three.

This section has examined vocabulary learning strategies taxonomy by different researchers. To sum up vocabulary acquisition through vocabulary learning strategies can be categorized in terms of knowledge-oriented strategies and skill-oriented strategies. Knowledge-oriented strategies include those for understanding and recognizing a word (which involve receptive skills). Skill-oriented strategies concern the use of words (which concern productive skills). Although, some of the categories have been named differently, and even may overlap one another, they seem to share some common strategies. The most common or notable individual vocabulary learning strategies tend to fall largely in the Memory category. This is followed by Metacognitive, Cognitive, Social and Determination categories. Most vocabulary learning strategies can be applied to a wider range of vocabulary learning, and are benefit to any levels or stages of vocabulary learning. These vocabulary learning strategies are quite important for language learners as they promote language learners to take control of their learning away from the teacher and leave their independency to the classroom situation. In common case of English language learners, either as second or foreign language, where English is not spoken, there are some opportunities of the students interact with the native user of English. Therefore getting the improved and enhance their knowledge is more to the receptive skill context. As the vocabulary learning strategy could be the media to bridge such a needed interaction. Language learners with a various vocabulary learning strategies can make themselves more self-directed learners.

2.1 Socio-educational factors

[14] stated that in socio-educational model in term of second language acquisition and development, there are four stages involved. They are elemental, consolidation, conscious expression, and automaticity and thought. The four stages are comparable to those involved in the development of one’s first language. The steps of language acquisition from the very beginning of a language learner know the language until they are in the maximum level acquisition.

The elemental stage of socio-educational model is learning the basics of the language, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciations [14]. Other expert term this step as vocabulary cluster. [14] further states the development of one’s first language when the toddler learns new words, begins to put words
together, mispronounces some words but corrects them later. But to the second language student, the same process would happen when initial vocabulary is learned, equivalents with the first language are recognized, simple sentences are memorized.

The second stage is consolidation, where the elements of the language are brought together and some degree of familiarity with the language is achieved. In this stage when a young child learns the first language, begin to recognize that language is a system where some elements are correct and others incorrect. The next process is the developing rules for pluralizing, sentence structure, and the understanding of idioms. The similar pattern occurs to students learning a second language. When they find that some of the structures and elements are like those in their native language while others can be very different, or when they learn that some expressions are meaningful, others are not [14].

In the third stage of language acquisition is conscious expression [14]. A language learner can use the language but with a great deal of conscious effort. One can communicate thoughts and ideas, but there is a lot of deliberation about what is being expressed. For the young first language learner, this phase can be recognized by the use of a lot of speech hesitations such as umm, err, uhh, where the individual is actively searching for the right words or form of expression. The learner of a second language can be categorized in the same phenomenon. In most of the cases, language learners get the impression of the first language for help in knowing how to express the idea in the second language as the target language [14].

Automaticity and thought as the fourth stage in language acquisition. This is the ultimate stage language and thought merge and language becomes automatic in most contexts. In this phase, language and self are becoming interconnected. A language learner is no longer thinking about the language, but thinks in the target language. As [14] emphasized that all these steps is not meant to be definitive as to the stages of language acquisition, but it does serve to highlight what is meant by “learning” the language, and to emphasize that it has different meanings at different stages of the learning process. Krashen’s (1988) as cited in [14] indicated the distinction between second and/or foreign language learning versus acquisition. The specific emphasis of language learning in term of development of knowledge and skill, that permits varying degrees of communication with others. Acquisition involves making the language part of the self. It is with this general view where the concept of motivation becomes important, and the distinction between language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation becomes more important.

From the four steps described, there are various stages of language development that end to the question what it is meant as language learning. Learning vocabulary is language learning. Learning structure, communication, and pronunciation are language learning. In the phase of passing into automaticity and thought, it can be considered language learning. Most of scholars have considered the automaticity phase is a favoured term of language acquisition. In the research of socio-educational factors, the basic aspect of second language learning is one of strong factor to be measured. The aspect is varying from simple vocabulary acquisition (in a laboratory setting) to the fluent use of the language in oral communication in term of vocabulary learning strategy. That is, at different ages and stages, learning the language can mean different things. To the specific University student environment, the basic knowledge of students to learn the language is vocabulary and this had been started from the secondary school. In fact motivation in termed as socio educational has been found to be implicated at all stages [14].

2.3 Relationship of Vocabulary learning strategies and Socio-educational factors

As of now, no specific research that correlate socio-educational factors and the Vocabulary Learning Strategies in the foreign language context. In socio-educational model adopted from [28], the role of attitudes towards the learned language, its speakers and the learning situation are all considered parts of the integrative motivation. The integrative aspect of the model appears in three different components: integrative orientation, Integrativeness, and integrative motivation. Language anxiety is measured in the Gardner model to the learning achievement, but in relation to the independent variable to the acquisition, to be included to measure the motivation level. Gardner repeatedly stressed the differences among these components, e.g. [28] & [29] since confusion was often made between orientations and motivations. According to [14], orientations refer to the set of reasons for which an individual studies the language; whereas, motivation refers to the driving force which involves expending effort, expressing desire and feeling enjoyment. These variables have been
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considered as socio-educational factors measured with the language achievement meanwhile vocabulary learning has been measured in factors such as assessment and by means of corpus analysis.

[3] launched the analysis of Vocabulary assessment through a crucial role in the receptive and productive skills associated with effective communication where vocabulary plays its role. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners will experience communication breakdowns or comprehension difficulties when confronted with unknown words or expressions while conversing with English speakers or while reading in the language. Further he is attracted to the attention of investigation that learners are to gain lexical knowledge in order to facilitate effective communication or comprehension, by means of hypermedia. Vocabulary learning strategy is such an infant attempt to imitate the utterance and reading context of its caregivers for the reinforcing feedback which this imitation provides.

Afore-mentioned, by means of corpus analysis, numerous attempts have been made to study vocabulary learning strategies upon vocabulary learning. Oxford’s (1990) in [5] divided into six major categories: memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, social, and affective. It is to capture and organize the wide variety of vocabulary learning strategies identified. The other major contributions of strategy classification that focus on vocabulary include Stoffer (1995), Gu and Johnson (1996), and Schmitt (1997) in [5] the category: strategies involving authentic language use, strategies used for creative activities, strategies used for self-motivation, strategies used to create mental linkages, memory strategies, visual/auditory strategies, strategies involving physical action, strategies used to organize words and strategies used to overcome anxiety.

The relationship of socio-educational factors and VLSs could be dragged from individual learners difference [7]. As humans differ from each other due to conditioned factors (affected by nature) or unconscious forces (affected by past experiences), therefore, many ways in which one learns about the differences are usually similar, through introspection and interaction with other people. In the Socio-educational model, the complex of attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation reflects an integrative motive that would promote vocabulary learning strategy.

3. Conclusion

From the details of the above sections, one can conclude that VLS play a crucial role in the vocabulary acquisition. However, despite the socio-educational factors not yet part of conclusive theory to VLS, success has eluded. The present scientific study of the role of these differences in VLS in term of socio-educational point of view may not be quite advanced and sophisticated. This needs an avid interest and focus to the growing awareness of socio-educational in VLS. The needs of study to the phenomenon of language learners VLS in term of socio-educational level is to be more detailed and empirical manner. Henceforth the analysis of the VLS from individual point of view reiterates the belief that socio-educational may take part. Although, it is now enough just to measure the socio-educational level, but from the VLS point of view which individual differences of students as language learner could be measured upon it. Thus it is hoped that the study of VLS and their socio-educational level would further lead to the new paradigm of how VLS increases in the level of socio-educational factors.

References


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