A SURVEY ON ENGLISH VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG KOLEJ PERMATA INSAN STUDENTS

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Abstract*: As English is crucial for academic success and global communication, understanding how learners acquire vocabulary is essential for designing effective language instruction. The purpose of this study was to assess students' vocabulary learning styles. A total of 74 Kolej PERMATA Insan College students, aged between 12 and 17 years old, participated in this quantitative survey. The majority were aged 15 and predominantly female. The survey consisted of questions regarding vocabulary knowledge, self-expression, learning strategies, and beliefs about English grammar and methods for enhancing vocabulary. The results indicate that a significant portion of students perceived themselves as understanding spoken English words and expressing their opinions confidently. Meanwhile, many were aware of the importance of grammar. Encouragingly, most students believed that extensive reading is more effective for vocabulary acquisition and are willing to practice outside class. Common strategies included asking others for meaning and guessing meanings contextually, though fewer students consistently wrote down useful vocabulary. In conclusion, Kolej PERMATA Insan students demonstrate moderate to high awareness of English vocabulary and proactive learning attitudes. However, targeted interventions are necessary to promote the use of higher-level vocabulary and effective note-taking practices. These findings provide valuable insights for English language educators to enhance vocabulary instruction through interactive and learner-centred approaches.*

Keywords*: english vocabulary; english proficiency; language learning style; gifted students; Kolej PERMATA Insan*

Introduction

Gifted schools have been implementing an ongoing curriculum with extracurricular activities that take a more systematic and inclusive approach over the past two decades towards special students from an early stage, which is kindergarten (Resch, C.,2014). However, when involved in teaching gifted students, they often face underachievement based on a few factors such as low motivation, emotional and social difficulties and external influences like an unsupportive environment and peer relationships (Raoof, K., et al., 2024). From 2020 to 2025, education will shift to technology integration. A study by Gómez-León, M. I. G. (2025) states that the use of technology in gifted education improves critical thinking and problem-solving, but there is a tendency to the negative side if it is not used correctly.

Gifted students have unique needs and abilities when learning English. By appropriate guidance and recognition of their specific challenges, as well as support from teachers or peers, they can make effective progress and improve their language achievement (Stanley, T., 2022; Yang, J., et al., 2021). Successful English vocabulary acquisition depends on individual needs and learning environments. Recognising the varying strategies among different learners enables educators to develop more effective vocabulary instruction.

Literature Review

Kolej PERMATA Insan

Kolej PERMATA Insan is one of the gifted students in Malaysia. It is a premier education institution for gifted Muslim students based at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. The curriculum is a STEM education that integrates with Islamic knowledge known as iNaQ to nurture future Muslim leaders who are globally competent and spiritually grounded. Similar to other gifted schools, Kolej PERMATA Insan offers an accelerated and enriched curriculum, allowing students to fast-track to higher education. Kolej PERMATA Insan promoted balanced education which is (i) cognitive development that focuses on STEM subjects, (ii) spiritual growth tends to Quranic memorisation based on theme and also Islamic thought and (iii) personality building that focuses on leadership and community engagement. Kolej PERMATA Insan embodies a daring and creative approach to education for gifted Muslim students. By integrating cutting-edge scientific education with Islamic moral principles, KPI equips learners to become transformative leaders grounded in both faith and knowledge (Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, n.d.).

English Vocabulary Acquisition and Learning Strategies

Vocabulary acquisition is an essential component in English subject. The various strategies have been identified to enhance the vocabulary acquisition among students. Figure 1 illustrates the five main strategies use in learning English vocabulary (Al-Harbi, J., & Ibrahim, E. H. E.,2018; AlBatel, D. A., & Ahmed, S. H. A.,2024; Dodigovic, M., et al., 2023; Husin, M. Z. M., et al., 2022; Kho, S. F. C., et al., 2021; Ortogero, S. P., & Ray, A. B., 2021; Zhang, P., & Wang, F., 2025).
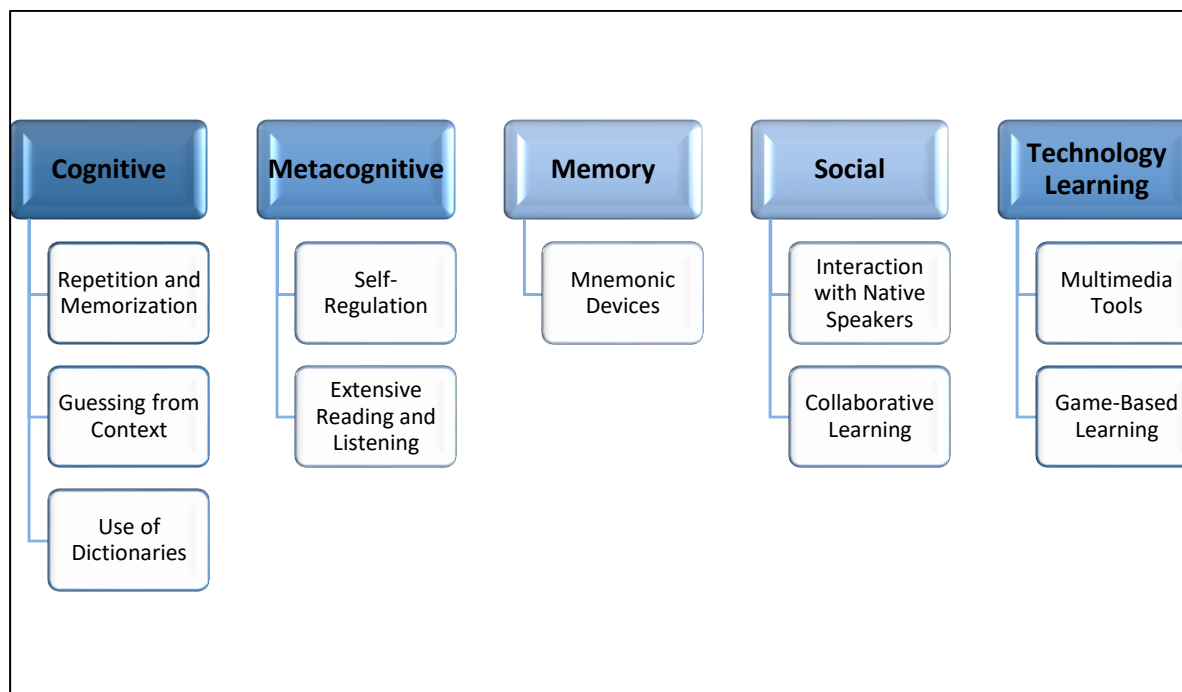
Figure 1: Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Cognitive techniques such as repetition and using a dictionary can be effective for ease, but students may promote superficial learning without a deeper understanding of the context. Metacognitive approaches, although more challenging, encourage learner independence and are especially useful in digital settings. Social and collaborative strategies provide genuine practice but tend to be underused, likely due to a lack of access to native speakers or effective peer learning structures. On the other hand, mnemonic techniques, while highly effective for memory retention, are frequently disregarded, possibly because students demand creativity and effort. Tools enhanced by technology, particularly game-based learning, have significant potential to boost engagement, but students' success relies on careful integration into teaching methods. Therefore, while all methods have their benefits, a balanced and learner-focused approach is crucial for optimising vocabulary acquisition.

Variations in vocabulary learning styles are influenced by factors such as gender, educational level, and cultural background. Research indicates that male students often prefer social strategies, whereas female students tend to adopt cognitive approaches, including memorisation and repetition (Al-Harbi, J., & Ibrahim, E. H. E. 2018; Husin, M. Z. M., et al., 2022). Prevailing social norms and educational expectations may shape these gender differences. Additionally, secondary students commonly depend on dictionaries. At the same time, tertiary-level learners are more likely to employ advanced metacognitive strategies, such as self-regulation, possibly due to heightened academic requirements and greater exposure to independent learning practices (Husin, M. Z. M., et al., 2022). Nevertheless, these observed patterns could also result from systemic constraints or pedagogical biases across different regions, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive and inclusive vocabulary instruction that enables all students to expand and diversify their strategic repertoire (Al Fraidan, A., & Fakhli, I., 2024; Zhang, B., & Li, C., 2011).

Methodology
Figure 2 shows the methodology process that involve three main processes in this study which are (I) Instrument Development, (II) Data Collection and (III) Data Analysis.
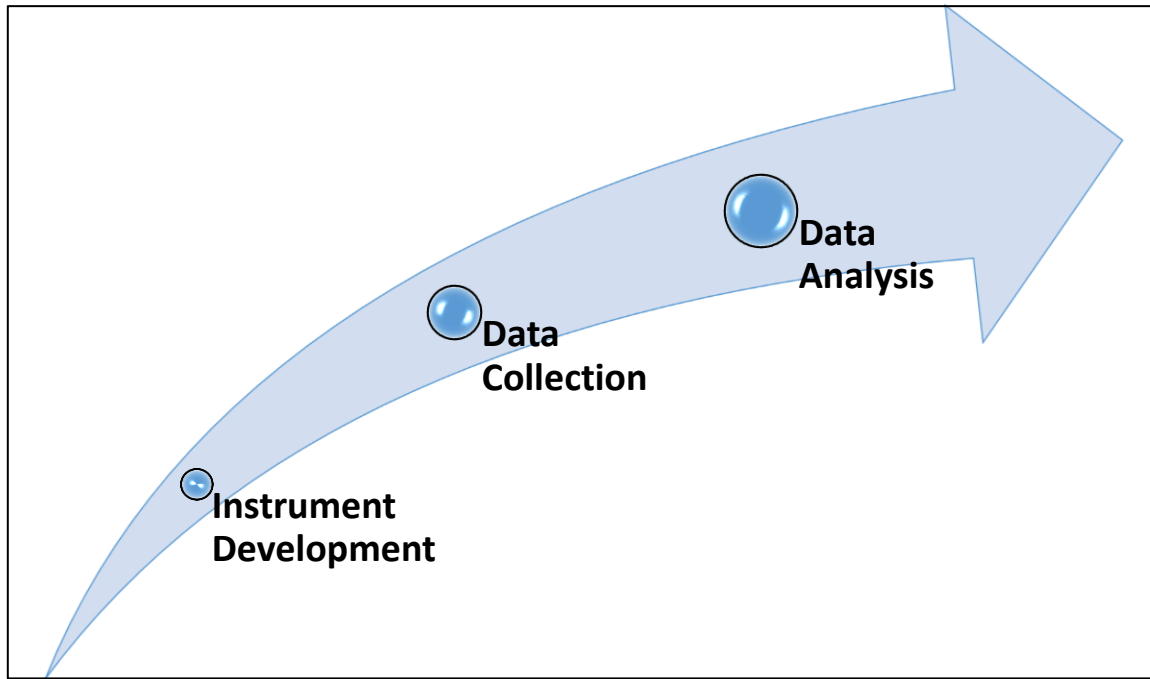

Figure 2: Methodology

Instrument Development
The questionnaire is divided into two main sections. The question is based on the KAP model (Qiquan, Z., 2021) that focuses on knowledge, awareness and perception using a five-point Likert Scale. Table 1 shows categorising the question based on the KAP model.

Table 1: Question Classification Based on KAP Model

Characteristics	Question (Q)
Knowledge (K)	Q1, Q2, Q10
Attitude (A)	Q4, Q5, Q6
Practice (P)	Q3, Q7, Q8, Q9

Data Collection
Data were obtained using an online questionnaire shared via messaging platforms. The survey used purposive sampling, with volunteers completing the questions. Respondent identities were anonymised to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

Data Analysis
The data collected has been analysed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequency and mean have been calculated for each item. The mean score attained from the survey were interpreted based on the satisfaction scale shown in Table 2, which was adapted from (Mohamad Faiz Zainuddin, et al., 2020).

Table 2: Satisfaction Scale Used for Interpretation

Mean Score, M	Level
$1.00 \leq M \leq 1.50$	Extremely Dissatisfied
$1.51 \leq M \leq 2.50$	Dissatisfied
$2.51 \leq M \leq 3.50$	Slightly Satisfied
$3.51 \leq M \leq 4.50$	Satisfied
$4.51 \leq M \leq 5.00$	Extremely Satisfied

Results and Discussion

According to Table 3, scores of 4 and 5 are prevalent across nearly all questions, indicating that most participants provided high ratings. Question 5 received the highest number of responses, reflecting strong agreement or high satisfaction. Question 10, however, presents a unique distribution, with no participants giving a score of 5, and 49 responses for a score of 4, which suggests moderate agreement or satisfaction without complete endorsement. Question 1 has the lowest totals for scores of 1 and 2, indicating fewer low satisfaction responses. Additionally, Questions 5 and 6 are strong indicators of positive sentiment.

Table 3: The Frequency of Score

Score	Question									
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
1	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	10	2	1
2	1	4	20	2	1	2	12	11	2	7
3	19	21	31	7	8	13	16	22	8	17
4	34	26	15	22	14	22	22	14	31	49
5	20	23	5	42	50	37	23	17	31	0

Refer to Table 4, the data indicate that students possess strong comprehension skills in English, particularly in understanding classroom interactions (M = 4.53), suggesting effective listening and contextual grasp. Students also demonstrate a very positive attitude toward learning vocabulary, appreciating reading materials, grammar knowledge, and practice outside of class (M = 4.27–4.50), which implies a high level of motivation. Meanwhile, students' confidence in recognising and utilising vocabulary is moderate (M = 3.92–3.99), students successfully employ strategies such as deducing word meanings from context and requesting assistance (M = 3.73–4.18), showcasing a combination of independent and collaborative learning. However, there are noticeable weaknesses in their productive vocabulary usage, particularly in the application of advanced words in speaking and writing (M = 2.97), and in their consistency with note taking for vocabulary retention (M = 3.23). These issues underscore the necessity for a focused instructional approach to enhance expressive language skills and strategic vocabulary recording.

Table 4. The Mean Score (M) for Each Question

Question	Mean Score (M)	Satisfaction Level
Q1	3.99	Satisfied
Q2	3.92	Satisfied
Q3	2.97	Slightly Satisfied
Q4	4.38	Satisfied
Q5	4.50	Satisfied
Q6	4.27	Satisfied
Q7	3.73	Satisfied
Q8	3.23	Slightly Satisfied
Q9	4.18	Satisfied
Q10	4.53	Extremely Satisfied

Conclusion

In conclusion, to enhance students' vocabulary, students should engage in advanced writing and engaging speaking activities that test their language skills. Students can expand their word knowledge by keeping detailed vocabulary journals or lively digital word collections, where new words are brought to life. Moreover, developing strong reading habits and understanding the complexities of grammar will create a strong base for their language development.

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