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VOCABULARY JOURNAL: A VOYAGE TO SUCCESSFUL WRITING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

The importance of vocabulary competency has been long established as it serves as a crucial element in learning English as a second language. It is however more prominent in writing as the breadth and depth of students' vocabulary are reflected in the general quality of their writing. By utilising Stufflebeam's (2003) Product Evaluation model, this paper reports the impacts of the study on keeping vocabulary journal towards 71 students' writing performance at one of the secondary schools in Sabah. It evaluated their attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal, identified positive, negative, intended and unintended outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal and aimed to find out whether there is any difference in the students' writing scores prior to and after keeping vocabulary journal. A mixed-method was employed into the study. Self-reported survey and class discussion were employed in the qualitative approach, whereas the quantitative part of this study involved only the writing scores from the results of pre-test and post-test. The results indicated positive students' attitudes towards vocabulary journal. It also highlighted four outcomes of the study; positive and negative outcomes, as well as intended and unintended outcomes. Although the pre-test and post-test writing scores were insignificant enough to make any difference, the introduction of vocabulary journal into writing classroom has surely made an impact on the students. This study added empirical support onto the claims on the benefits of vocabulary journals.

Keywords:

Vocabulary Journal, Product Evaluation Model, Second Language Learning, Writing, Secondary Schools

Introduction

Vocabulary which is defined as knowledge of words and the ability to use them in the creation and comprehension of sentences, is frequently regarded as a crucial component for language

acquisition and development and is acknowledged as a necessary factor for success in school and achievement in society (Susanto, 2017). Vocabulary knowledge and writing are closely related since the breadth and depth of a student's vocabulary immediately affect their writing's descriptiveness, accuracy and general quality (Nor et al., 2019). According to Fletcher (1993), rich vocabulary helps writers convey their depth of thoughts onto paper and often, individuals who have large vocabulary are cognitively prepared for the writing process than individuals with poor vocabulary.

Aisyah (2017) and Susanto (2017) avouch for the importance of vocabulary acquisition in second language learning. Gu (2003) believes that students who desire to learn new words must be aware of and attentive to unfamiliar words. The way that new words are processed also affects how well they are remembered; more in-depth and sophisticated processing yields higher word retention. However, despite the extensive vocabulary taught in the curriculum, students frequently struggle to learn and retain it (Chong & Kee, 2019). Consequently, keeping vocabulary journal may be a beneficial strategy in fostering vocabulary learning as it ensures cognitive efforts and helps better retention. In fact, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies includes keeping a vocabulary journal as one of the vocabulary learning tools.

The majority of previously published researches have concentrated on vocabulary acquisition techniques and the impacts of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension. To date, however, little is known about the effectiveness of vocabulary knowledge on writing. It is undisputable fact that having a limited vocabulary knowledge (Chong & Kee, 2019) hinders students' ability to produce good writing. Improvement in vocabulary might result in better writing performance in students. With severe deficits in vocabulary knowledge, it is therefore crucial for the students to start keeping vocabulary journal as this journal provides learners with the chance to expand their repertoire of vocabulary and encourage autonomous learning, the effectiveness of vocabulary journal should be investigated.

This paper reports the impacts of the study on keeping vocabulary journal towards students' writing performance at one of the secondary schools in Sabah. It evaluated students' attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal, identified positive, negative, intended and unintended outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal and aimed to find out whether there is any difference in the students' writing scores prior to and after keeping vocabulary journal. By utilising Stufflebeam's (2003) Product Evaluation from the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model to determine the impact of keeping vocabulary journal towards students' vocabulary knowledge and its relationship to their writing performance, the following research questions were formulated.

RQ1: What are students' attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal?
RQ2: What are the positive and negative outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal and their effects on students?
RQ3: What are the intended and unintended outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal and their effects on students?
RQ4: To what extent does keeping vocabulary journal improve students' writing scores?

Literature Review

The four points discussed in this section are as follows:

Definition and Concepts of Vocabulary

Alfaki (2015) and Alqahtani (2015) defines vocabulary as the words, either as single items or phrases, used to convey concepts and intended meaning. An indication on the importance of vocabulary is highlighted by Wilkins (1972) 'without grammar, very little can be conveyed. Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed' (p.111). Language is nothing without its vocabulary. Speakers of that particular language cannot communicate orally and meaning cannot be transmitted if they lack vocabulary (Laufer, 1986). Similarly, Afzar (2019) pointed out that communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful ways without words to represent a wide range of meanings, no matter how well the students learn grammar or how accurate they can pronounce certain words.

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed a communicative competence model that comprises linguistic competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence, actional competence and discourse competence. Among these five competences, vocabulary is more pertinent to linguistic competence, which calls for understanding on how to use grammar, syntax and vocabulary. In another word, a person must possess the essential vocabulary knowledge of the target language to be considered linguistically competent. Additionally, Arikan and Alemdari (2012) stated that complete vocabulary knowledge also necessitates understanding of the spelling, pronunciation, word category, antonyms, synonym, contextual use, connotative and denotative meanings and register.

Vocabulary Learning Principles and Strategies

Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) outlined four main principles in vocabulary instruction. The first principle emphasises the necessity of students' active participation in the process of creating their own understanding of words and strategies for learning them. According to this principle, students can use semantic mapping to relate words to concepts, and semantic feature analysis to classify words. Additionally, the use of contextual and morphological cues can also be applied as learning strategies.

The second principle as suggested by Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) focused on how students can tailor their word learning experiences by selecting the words and using mnemonics to retain the new word meanings. Immersing students in words was the third principle of vocabulary instruction. The hypothesis of incidental word learning through listening or reading (Benati, 2020) forms the foundation of this particular principle. Even though the extent and nature of learning through this indirect approach to vocabulary instruction are debated, the fact that learning occurs is undisputed.

Learning through repeated exposures was the final principle of vocabulary instruction outlined by Blachowicz and Fisher's (2000). Instruction that combines definitional information with other active processing, such as adding contextual information (Rapaport, 2003), writing (Duin & Graves, 1987), or rich manipulation of words (Beck & McKeown, 1983) was consistently more effective than definitional instruction alone. According to Ryder and Slater (1988), repeated exposures to a word were also discovered to be a crucial part of word learning. Moreover, several researchers have also emphasised the importance of exposing a word in different contexts (Stanley & Ginther, 1991).

Using Vocabulary to Improve Writing

A great deal of literature revealed that vocabulary serves as the foundation for developing and mastering English skills; writing, reading, listening and speaking (Aisyah, 2017; Lestariningsih, 2008; Iriyana, 2007). The inability to acquire vocabulary competence hinders one's mastery of the language (Nor et al., 2019; Marlina & Nurdini; 2017). Specifically, while improved vocabulary can enhance students' writing skills, there is no guarantee that this will happen automatically. According to Corona et al. (1998), improvement in vocabulary will result in improved writing skills only if the writing environment is conducive to the students.

These are strategies that can be utilised in creating a writing-focused classroom. Firstly, sharing vocabulary-rich literature. Sloane (1996) recounts how she sourced books as the best writing role models to assist her students become better writers. Teachers can introduce new words and provide a venue for discussion by assigning students to read books, poems and stories.

Another strategy in using vocabulary to improve students' writing is to encourage them to search for and become aware of interesting words. These can be done in a variety of ways. Students could, for instance, work in pairs to search through novels for words that catch their attention before making a list of possible replacements. Other suggested strategies include having students write the words they encounter on an "Interesting Word Wall" (Sloane, 1996. P. 268); create a word bank through words-of-the day that are taken from classroom literature (Corona et al., 1998, p.25); record or act out energetic verbs; or write unfamiliar words in "literature-response journals" for later exploration (Manning, 1999, p.3).

Vocabulary Journal and Its Effects on Writing

Hall (2004) characterises a vocabulary journal as a student-made notebook that is entirely non-pictorial and mainly focuses on definitions, along with other information from a dictionary. He simply refers to vocabulary journal as a "notebook with definitions". Similarly, Turnuk (2018) who illustrated vocabulary journal in the form of notebooks, leaflets binders, single pages, or digital notebooks, describes vocabulary journal as an ongoing personal collection of recently learned vocabularies filled with additional information that could be helpful for subsequent language practises. Marlina and Nurdini (2017), on the other hand, define vocabulary journal as a record of vocabularies acquired from reading activities and meanings gained these activities.

Several benefits have been ascribed to the use of vocabulary journal. Researchers believe that keeping a vocabulary journal is an effective technique for students to increase their awareness of the vocabulary acquisition (Chong & Kee, 2019; Lai, 2019). According to Schmitt and Schmitt (1995), vocabulary journal can enhance vocabulary knowledge. Students who keep vocabulary journal must write down unfamiliar words together with their definitions and any relevant details such as synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and sample sentences. Chong and Kee (2019) concluded that a vocabulary journal is potentially beneficial means for vocabulary acquisition as it is an accessible tool to all students that is not too dependent on high technology or expensive resources (McCrostie, 2007) but students need more guidance and training on creating their own vocabulary journal. Consequently, keeping a vocabulary notebook activates a complicated mental process that is carried out during the action of recording words.

Besides, vocabulary journal also enables learners to revisit each word and make full use of the new words they have just learned (Lewis, 2000). Many students learn new words relatively quickly but they also forget them quickly too (Pinter, 2004). Vocabulary journal however can help to alleviate this problem by enabling the learners to review the material any time.

Both Nation (1990) and Fowle (2002) abstain that keeping vocabulary journal promotes students' autonomy. They maintained that learners may employ tactics such as using dictionaries, guessing from context, or consulting their peers or teachers when learning the meaning and other details of an unknown word. Besides, the application of various cognitive strategies and opportunities for the development of self-management strategies foster learning autonomy. As stipulated by Oxford (1990) and Benson (2003), students who think and work strategically are more motivated to learn and have a higher sense of self-efficacy or confidence in their own learning ability. Conclusively, vocabulary journal benefits independent learners by enabling their growth in self-assurance, participation and proficiency.

Another benefit of vocabulary journal is it provides multiple learning strategies. Since learners are individuals and have different learning styles, the best teaching plan may be to introduce students to a variety of learning strategies. Besides, vocabulary journal is also beneficial for the teachers. The vocabulary journal keeps teachers informed about learners' progress (Fowle, 2002; Nation, 1990). Therefore, Fowle (2002) advocates for the use of a vocabulary notebook as a supplemental teaching tool that aids in enhancing lexical competence, thus argues for making vocabulary a key component of writing classroom instruction.

Methodology

This study utilised Stufflebeam's (2003) product evaluation model to evaluate the impacts of keeping vocabulary journal towards students' writing performance, thus unfolding positive and negative outcomes as well as the intended and unintended outcomes of the study. This study employed purposive sampling method. A total of 71 students who have completed the three-month vocabulary project were selected to participate in this study. Out of these 71 participants, 36 of them were male students. All these students were of intermediate level in their language proficiency.

As this was an evaluation study, all the participants received the same treatment of vocabulary input. No control groups were involved in this study. The participants were informed on the rationales to increase their vocabulary knowledge and ways to keep their vocabulary journal. They have all the freedom to choose the types of words to be entered into their vocabulary journal. The pace of obtaining vocabulary knowledge was set by the teacher by making it compulsory for the participants to keep at least 100 words a month in their vocabulary journal. The use of bilingual dictionary and bilingual entries in their journal were also allowed.

Besides, quantitative and qualitative research approaches were applied into this evaluation. In qualitative approach, self-reported survey and class discussion were employed in consecutive phases with the result of self-reported survey influencing the process and application of the class discussion and product analysis. The quantitative part of this study involved only the writing scores from the results of pre-test and post-test. Both thematic interpretations and descriptive statistics were used to report the findings of the qualitative data whereas inferential statistics was used to report the findings of the pre-test and post-test writing scores.

Results and Findings

This section reports the findings of the study based on Stufflebeam's (2003) product evaluation model, thus only focused on the impacts and outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal on participants' writing performance. The discussion begins with the presentation of findings for each research question and continues with the discussion of the findings.

RQ1: What Are Students' Attitudes Towards Keeping Vocabulary Journal?

The first open-ended question in the self-reported survey focused on participants' attitudes toward keeping vocabulary journal. Based on the self-reported survey, 87.3% of the participants were reported to have positive attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal. They reported that they like keeping vocabulary journal and were happy with it. They also reported that vocabulary journal is a very good and encouraging idea. The reasons for this positive attitude were further elaborated in Table 3 and Table 5.

In Table 1, a total of 12.7% of the participants shown negative comments towards keeping vocabulary journal. According to them, keeping vocabulary journal was a very tedious task as it is stressful to keep 100 words per month in the journal. This resulted in their laziness to do the journal. These reasons were also highlighted in Table 4.

Table 1: Students' Attitudes towards Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Self-Reported Survey	
Positive Attitudes	**Negative Attitudes**
87.3% (62 students)	12.7% (9 students)
- Like the vocabulary journal	- Tedious task for them
- Happy with vocabulary journal	- Stressful to keep 100 words per month in the journal
- Very good idea	- Lazy to do the journal
- Encouraging idea	

In order to triangulate the comments given by the participants regarding their attitudes toward keeping vocabulary journal, product analysis was conducted (Table 2). The checking indicated that at the end of March, 95.8% of the participants managed to enter at least 100 words into their journal. However, there were only three students who did not manage to reach the 100 words. April and May saw very satisfying results with all the participants managed to enter at least 200 words in April and 300 words in May.

Table 2: Product Analysis of Vocabulary Journal

Product Analysis (Vocabulary Journal)		
March	**April**	**May**
• 100 words	• 200 words	• 300 words
• (95.8%) 68 students managed to enter at least 100 words in their journal.	• (100%) All the 71 students managed to enter at least 200 words in their journal.	• (100%) All the 71 students managed to enter 300 words in their journal
• (4.2%) 3 students did not manage to reach 100 words	• (25%) 18 students managed to exceed 200 words	• (35%) 25 students managed to exceed 300 words
• (21%) 15 students managed to exceed 100 words		

The product analysis also found out that there were a small group of participants who exceeded the required number of words needed each month. There was also an increase in the number of participants within that three months. In March, 21% of the participants exceeded the 100 words. The number of participants increased slightly to 25% in April and 35% in May. When questioned on their reasons for exceeding the required number of words, they reported:

- *I love the idea…I learned many new words.*
- *I get excited when I know many new words so I keep on looking for more words.*
- *I feel happy because I learned many new words….so I want to learn more.*
- *I have time to do this in the holiday.*
- *I can do more during the holiday…so that I can do less next month.*
- *More free time during holiday so use the time.*
- *I like the idea that I can choose the words I want to learn.*
- *It is exciting to learn new words and I enjoy searching for the words.*

RQ2: What Are The Positive And Negative Outcomes Of Keeping Vocabulary Journal And Their Effects On The Students?

Positive Outcomes Of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

The most common positive outcome gathered from 84.5% of the participants is keeping vocabulary journal enables them to learn new words. 9.9% of the participants reported that the project improves their writing whereas another 5.6% mentioned that the project improves their writing (Table 3).

Table 3: Positive Outcomes of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Positive Outcomes	
Learn new words	84.5% (60 participants)
Improve their writing/essays	9.9% (7 participants)
Improve their English	5.6% (4 participants)

During classroom discussion, the participants were questioned on how this project helped to improve their writing performance and English, they reported that:

- *I can use the new words that I learned in my essays.*
- *I found many new adjectives…so I used them in my essays to describe something…or someone.*
- *I feel that the words in my essays now are better words…and I have so many words now…of course I want to show off a bit when I write.*

Negative Outcomes Of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Table 4 highlights the four areas of negative outcomes reported by the participants. Majority of them (45%) reported that keeping vocabulary journal was a tedious and burdening task for them. They are unable to handle 100 words entry per month (Table 4). When they were questioned on this aspect, their responses were:

- *100 words are too many. I need few days to finish this.*
- *I cannot cope with 100 words a month….just too much for me.*
- *I need to do homework on Monday to Friday…can only do this on Saturday…Sunday I want to rest.*
- *Too many words…I just cannot cope.*

A total of 41% of the participants reported that they were unable to memorise or use all the words they keep in the vocabulary journal. During classroom discussion, they reported that:
- *100 words are just too many words for me to remember. I really cannot handle them.*
- *I cannot remember all the words. Until now, I have more than 100 words in the journal but I still don't know how to use all of them.*
- *Not all the words I chose can be used.*
- *I just write the meanings but I don't really understand them…so cannot use.*
- *Don't know how to use the words.*

There were 8 students who remarked that this project was taking too much of their time and effort that they were unable to focus on other subjects. Their responses during classroom discussion were:
- *I haven't done my other projects because I have to do this.*
- *I don't have time to do revision now because I have to do this. If I don't do, I'm scared later teacher will be angry.*
- *I like this vocabulary journal…but I have many things to do. I cannot focus on other things because I keep on doing this.*

The two students who reported that keeping vocabulary journal demotivated them in learning reported that:
- *So difficult…have to so many things. I'm lazy to learn.*
- *So many new words… I cannot remember all the words…so don't have the mood to learn…*

Table 4: Negative Outcomes of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Negative Outcomes	
Tedious and burdening task for them. 100 words per month is too much for them to handle	45% (32 participants)
Unable to remember or use all the words they keep in the vocabulary journal	41% (29 participants)
Unable to focus on other subjects as they spent too much time on keeping vocabulary journal	11% (8 participants)
Demotivate the students to learn	3% (2 participants)

RQ3: What Are The Intended And Unintended Outcomes Keeping Vocabulary Journal And Their Effects On The Students?

The Intended Outcomes Of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

The two intended outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal are an increase in their vocabulary journal and increase in their writing performance. Table 5 shows that 70% of the participants agreed that the vocabulary journal helped to increase their vocabulary knowledge whereas only 30% of the participants reported that they were able to write their essays better with the increase in the vocabulary knowledge.

Table 5: Intended Outcomes of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Intended Outcomes	
Increase their vocabulary knowledge	70% (20 participants)
Write better	30% (21 participants)

During classroom discussion, they reported that:

- *Easier to write now because can explain...learn many new words.*
- *The words that I didn't know before…I know now.*
- *The words I use now are more bombastic…example…before this, like 'muntah'…is puke…now I know can use vomit…sound better and more suitable for essay.*

During the discussion of this aspect, the researcher dwelt deeper into the topic by asking the students the type of dictionaries they used to locate the meanings of the words. About 45% of the participants used bilingual dictionary for this project. They also recorded the meaning in Malay language just to help them to remember the meaning of the words in L1. They reported that the bilingual translations only helped them in memorizing the meanings of the words. They will also check the meanings of the words using monolingual dictionaries as they have encountered problems in translated words.

- *I used English-BM dictionary because I want to understand the meaning in BM.*
- *Sometimes, the meanings given in the English-BM dictionary are inaccurate.*
- *English-BM dictionary is not really helpful. Sometimes the translated words are wrong. I have to double-check with English-English dictionary.*

The rest of the participants reported that they prefer monolingual dictionary as they can duplicate the uses of words in context as they recorded the examples of the sentence patterns provided in the dictionary.

The Unintended Outcomes Of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Table 6 lists five main unintended outcomes of keeping vocabulary journal elicited from the participants during the two sessions of classroom discussion.

Table 6: Unintended Outcomes of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Unintended Outcomes
Advanced learners:
• Intrinsic motivation to learn more new words through reading
• Read dictionary
• Continue to keep vocabulary journal in the future
Low proficiency learners:
• More confident to use English
Autonomous learning: negotiate the numbers of words
• 30 words: 24% (17 students)
• 50 words: 35% (25 students)
• 100 words: 41% (29 students)

Participants with better language proficiency reported that there saw an increase in their reading activities as they were eager to locate and learn more new words. They also started to read dictionary as they were motivated to learn more new words when they saw an increase in their vocabulary power. Majority of them reported that they will still continue to do the vocabulary

journal in the future as they saw the benefits of vocabulary knowledge. Participants with lower language proficiency reported that they feel more confident in using English when they learned more words.

The most unintended outcome of this project is the switch of learners' role in taking care of their learning. From passive learners, they started to be more involved and to take care of their learning through negotiations in the density of task given. Only 41% of the participants agreed to continue with the present practice of 100 words. 35% of the participants tried to negotiate for 50 words per month and 24% of them would like to focus on 30 words only per month.

When questioned on their rationales, the responses given were in line with the negative outcomes tabulated in Table 5. Apart from being tedious and burdening task for them, the major drawback in recording 100 words per month is due to their inability to memorize and use all the words they recorded, thus defect the purpose of recording them.

RQ4: To What Extent Does Keeping Vocabulary Journal Improve Students' Writing Scores?
Based on Table 7, although there was an increase in the mean for writing scores of pre-test and post-test, the difference is not significance enough to record any difference in the effect size of the data. This result is understandable as the intervention just took place within the period of less than two months.

Table 7: Effect Size of Pre-test and Post-test Writing Scores

	Mean	SD	Effect Size	Difference
Pre-test	28.85	14.06		
Post-test	31.85	17.34		
Pool		15.80	0.19	Nil

Discussion of the Results
The aim of this study is to evaluate the impacts of keeping vocabulary journal using Stufflebeam's (2003) Product Evaluation. The first research question focuses on the attitudes of students towards vocabulary notebooks. The findings revealed positive attitudes about the usefulness of the vocabulary journal, even though they found the time and effort required to maintain the journal was quite challenging. They also appeared to enjoy using the journal in classroom activities.

The positive attitudes observed in this study mirror the findings of Fowle (2002) in his study that students were positive about vocabulary journal. It might also be said that the students acquired valuable training in, and appreciation for, the use of an effective vocabulary learning strategy. This, coupled with the positive attitudes towards the vocabulary journal project is a beneficial aspect that may impact language learning in general.

It is interesting to note that in this study, the fact that the students actually invested the time and effort into the vocabulary journal to the extent that they were able to benefit from it, appeared to be due to their regard and affection for their teacher's passion in vocabulary learning. It seems that teachers can provide their students with a reason for learning in the classroom, but the motivation for continuing that learning beyond the classroom probably needs to spring from a different source.

Apart from examining students' attitudes towards the project, the four outcomes; positive, negative, intended and unintended outcomes were also brought forward. Table 8 concludes the strengths and weaknesses of keeping vocabulary journal from students' perspectives.

Table 8: Strengths and Weaknesses of Keeping Vocabulary Journal

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Positive attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal • Learn new words • Improve their writing/essays • Increase their level of language proficiency • More confident to use the language • Autonomous learners: willing to invest their time and effort in learning when they understand the needs for vocabulary knowledge • Benefits in other areas: • Reading and speaking • Dictionary skills	• Inability to sustain students' interests in gaining vocabulary knowledge • Other commitments • Tedious task for low proficiency learners • Inability to remember and use all the words they keep in the vocabulary journal • Increase in the vocabulary knowledge is not parallel with the improvement in students' writing performance • More to writing than just vocabulary

The strengths of this vocabulary project lie mainly on students' positive attitudes towards keeping vocabulary journal. As they perceived this task as positive, they were more intrinsically motivated to learn new words and be more competence in the language as well as be more confident in using the language. This is in line with Schmitt and Schmitt's (1995) claim that vocabulary journal can enhance vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, as stated by Benson (2003), keeping vocabulary journal enables the students to think and work strategically, hence making them more motivated to learn and will result in higher self-efficacy and confidence in using the language.

Another positive outcome of keeping vocabulary journal is autonomous learning. Once the students engaged themselves fully in the project, they will be more willing to invest their time and effort to learn the vocabulary, hence producing autonomous learners. Fowle (2002) in his study has been arguing for this. Thus, it appears that implicit advantages of vocabulary journal, that of enhancing vocabulary and increase in self-motivation and confidence in using the language have been empirically confirmed by this study. However, this does not conform to Walter and Bozkurt's (2009) findings on autonomous learning.

Furthermore, other positive outcomes highlighted from the findings of the study are the improvement in other skills such as dictionary skills as well as reading and speaking skills. Ledbury (n.d) indicates that keeping vocabulary journal increases students' ability to use the dictionary and to guess from the context. Both these skills were elicited from students' responses in this study. Fowle (2002) proposes that vocabulary should be the central focus in language teaching due to the reason that apart from autonomous learning, vocabulary learning also indirectly improve other skills. This is shown in the present study when the participants reported an indirect improvement in their speaking, reading and writing skills. These findings

were in line with Lai's (2013) study on the effects of vocabulary journal towards students. The improvement of other skills was also observed in his study.

The data analyses also identified some negative effects of vocabulary journal. The most highlighted negative outcome is the inability to sustain students' interest to keep vocabulary journal. This could probably due to the reason that the task was tedious and burdening for low proficiency students. However, the four principles of vocabulary instruction suggested by Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) can help to rectify this negative effect. As these principles guided the implementation of the project, they were put to test when the project was implemented. The researcher observed that when students are active in developing their own understanding of words and know ways to learn those words as well as able to personalize word learning in terms of words selection and use mnemonics to learn new word meanings, they will be more motivated to invest their time and effort in vocabulary learning at their own pace. Hence, teachers should play their roles in making sure that students are immersed in words through listening and reading as well as be in word-rich environments, where they would be able to build knowledge of a particular word through repeated exposures and from multiple sources of information. It is therefore safe to claim that Blachowicz and Fisher's (2000) four principles of vocabulary instruction might result in positive attitudes towards vocabulary learning.

Another weakness of keeping vocabulary journal that has been identified was the inability of the students to remember the new words they have learned. This is also put forth by Pinter (2004) who stated that many students learn quickly but also forget quickly. This point was also being discussed in Uzun's (2013) study on vocabulary learning and retention. The results revealed that extra information related to the unknown words and regular feedback provided by the teacher has positive effect on vocabulary acquisition.

The pretest and posttest writing scores revealed that there was a slight increase in the students' writing performance after the intervention of vocabulary journal. The increase, however was not significant enough to make any difference. However, this is predictable as the intervention took place in less than three months, major transformation would be impossible and unrealistic, as there are more to writing than just vocabulary. This point was also highlighted by numerous researchers (Iriyana, 2007; Lestariningsih, 2008; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Specifically, while improved vocabulary can enhance students' writing skills, there is no guarantee that it will do so automatically. Therefore, teachers have to create conducive writing environment for the students in order to ensure improvement in writing skills (Corona et al., 1998).

Conclusion

The study has few pedagogical implications. First, incorporating a vocabulary journal project into the curriculum right from the start of a term would give students the chance to develop a useful vocabulary learning habit, and perhaps increase the chances of its being used throughout the language learning process. In this study, it has been demonstrated that the use of vocabulary journal was effective in enhancing vocabulary development, and students had positive attitudes to its use, as well as to its inclusion in classroom activities. However, in this setting, it appears that students will only use vocabulary journal if they were required to do so. In addition, it was found that the implementation of vocabulary journal requires sufficient time be set aside in the curriculum to allow vocabulary learning to be incorporated into classroom activities. Inclusion of the vocabulary journal in the curriculum, such as making time available for its

implementation, would answer to the concerns of the teachers regarding students' lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Secondly, if the teachers want their students to be able to recognize and use the words taught, vocabulary journal is a useful addition to the language classroom, particularly for motivated students. However, if students are not motivated, inclusion of the vocabulary journal as a graded part of the syllabus might be useful. As eloquently stated by the students, vocabulary journal is a personal thing. Hence, students should be allowed to choose the words that they want to include in their journal, structure the journal themselves, and choose what information should be included (McCarthy, 1990; Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995).

Conclusively, vocabulary journals have been advocated for many years, yet their benefits have been largely descriptive or speculative. This study has demonstrated empirical support for those claims on the benefits of vocabulary journals in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, students have exhibited positive attitudes not only towards vocabulary journal themselves, but also towards its inclusion into activities in the language classroom, nurturing the students to become autonomous learners and helping them develop other skills as well.

Acknowledgment

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