

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PVN (PERSONAL VOCABULARY NOTES) AS A VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

One of the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies is keeping PVN (Personal Vocabulary Notes). The students apply the PVN strategy to record and organize the words they come across, along with their meanings and any additional information. The primary objective of this study is to find out how students perceive the utilization of the PVN (Personal Vocabulary Notes) as a vocabulary learning strategy based on three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. This study was conducted in a junior high school located in Surabaya. The researchers employed a qualitative descriptive method in this study, which involved nine eighth-grade students in the academic year 2022/2023. The research was carried out in four phases: preliminary study, data collection, data interpretation and analysis, and data presentation. Data was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 18 items using a four-point Likert Scale, and a semi-structured interview comprising 9 questions. The research findings from both instruments showed that the majority of students held positive responses. Thus, it can be concluded that EFL students have strongly positive perceptions toward using PVN as a vocabulary learning strategy to improve vocabulary in terms of cognitive, affective, and conative components.

Keywords: vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategy, PVN, student's perception

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, it is undeniable that proficiency in English is very important because English is used in many aspects. Learning any language, including English cannot be separated from the vocabulary. According to Hatch & Brown (1995), vocabulary refers to the specific set of words and phrases an individual has learned and used in a particular language or subject matter. Richards & Renandya (2002) also revealed that vocabulary is a core component of English language learning that supports language proficiency and provides the foundation for developing other skills like speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Even though it is not explicitly stated in the Indonesian curriculum, learning English for EFL students requires mastery of four skills,

and vocabulary plays the most significant role as the basis for mastering those language skills. The quality of EFL students' English skills is directly influenced by the quantity of vocabulary they have. The more vocabulary students possess, the better their language proficiency becomes. Furthermore, the importance of vocabulary is exemplified by Wilkins (1972), who expressed that "Without grammar, little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." It showed that even if someone has good grammar, it will be useless if they do not have a lot of vocabulary.

However, as one of the fundamental aspects of language learning, vocabulary comprehension faces several problems (Zhi-liang, 2010). Although English has been taught at various levels in Indonesian schools, many EFL students still experience

difficulties when learning and applying the language, orally and in writing. This inability is caused by the lack of vocabulary they have. Vocabulary knowledge is the most common source of problems for students (Alhatmi, 2019). The low ability of students in mastering vocabulary is a problem that must be adequately solved. EFL students cannot solely depend on their teachers. It is crucial for them to develop their own strategies to discover the meanings of unfamiliar or challenging words independently. By doing so, they can enhance their English vocabulary and retain newly acquired words in their long-term memory. Nevertheless, the teachers also have a role to assist students if there are difficulties and obstacles experienced by students during the vocabulary learning process.

For EFL students, Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) helps facilitate their vocabulary learning. Enhancing vocabulary items can be obtained with the help of VLS. The term VLS refers to the conscious effort taken by students to organize and control their vocabulary acquisition to increase its effectiveness and efficiency (Gu, 2019). If the EFL students are equipped with the right vocabulary learning strategy, they may be able to handle new or unfamiliar vocabulary items easily. Among the various vocabulary learning strategies, keeping Personal Vocabulary Notes (PVN) is recommended in the vocabulary learning process. It is considered an easy and straightforward strategy to increase the vocabulary of EFL students as Walters & Bozkurt (2009) said that one way for improving students' vocabulary acquisition is through the utilization of vocabulary notes. In personal vocabulary notes, which is a kind of personal dictionary for language learners, students record the words they come across along with their meanings and any additional information about the aspect of words, such as their parts of speech, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and possible context sentences (Walters & Bozkurt, 2009; Uzun, 2013). EFL students can write anything in their personal vocabulary notes according to their needs and desires such as the PVN sample presented in a study written by Chien (2013). Also, EFL students have the flexibility of writing down their vocabulary on paper or keeping it on

their smartphone because there are 2 types of vocabulary notes; paper-based and mobile-based.

Several studies have been carried out in connection with this research topic. However, there is still a scarcity of research exploring EFL students' perceptions of utilizing the PVN strategy. Qiong (2017) defined perception as the way a person thinks or sees something by using the five senses organs, as well as one's innate ability to know and comprehend information from their surroundings. EFL students have different perceptions of an object. It is important to note that if one student thinks something is good, it does not necessarily mean that other students will see it the same way. It is because each student brings a unique perspective to the situation or particular object, and their perception may not align with their peers. There is no right or wrong perception because it depends on how students perceive the intended object. Thus, according to Irwanto (2002), there are two categories of perceptions: positive perceptions and negative perceptions.

Moreover, perception is created from various aspects. It is known as perception components. Walgito (2010) divided perception into three components; cognitive, affective, and conative component. The cognitive component involves a person's thoughts and beliefs, specifically their ability to understand an object or situation. The affective component, on the other hand, pertains to the feelings or emotional responses towards an object (like/dislike, pleasure/displeasure). Lastly, the conative or behavioral component of perception refers to the tendencies or inclinations towards the object. It reflects both the cognitive and affective components and influences how a person acts or behaves toward the perceived object.

Vela & Rushidi (2016) conducted a study examining the impact of maintaining vocabulary notes on vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy. Other relevant studies on personal vocabulary notes were conducted by Hanh & Hanh (2019) and Tiabarte et al. (2020), with the objective of investigating the effects of PVN on the vocabulary teaching and learning process. The findings demonstrated that PVN had a positive contribution to

students' mastery of vocabulary. Also, Utama & Qomariyah (2022) conducted similar research on the impact of vocabulary notes during online learning, specifically focusing on the vocabulary acquisition of EFL students. The study revealed that vocabulary notes had a positive outcome since students find it easier to remember the vocabulary they have recorded in their notes.

Based on several studies mentioned earlier, similarities and differences were found. The similarity is this research and previous studies both discuss vocabulary notes as a vocabulary learning strategy. The differences obtained from this comparison are research method, research subject, and place of research. Most of the previous studies employed a quantitative approach, as their primary focus was on the implementation or effect of PVN on students' vocabulary acquisition. The topic of students' perception of using PVN is still rarely discussed. Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative approach due to the limited discussion on students' perceptions regarding the utilization of the PVN strategy. It is uncommon for students to be asked about their perceptions when they use PVN. This study focused to answer the research question "How do the EFL students perceive the utilization of PVN as a vocabulary learning strategy?" by exploring three components proposed by Walgito (2010): cognitive, affective, and conative components.

METHOD

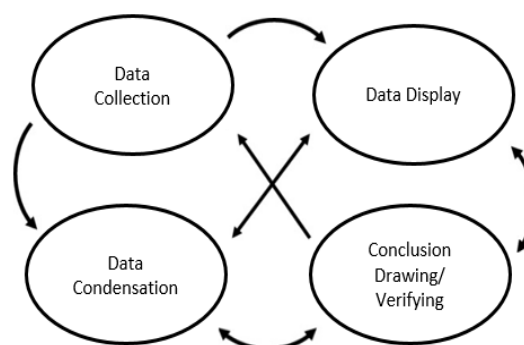
This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how EFL students perceived the utilization of PVN as their vocabulary learning strategy. According to Ary et al. (2010), qualitative research is research used to examine phenomena as they are in detail and that is done by analyzing in the form of words, not numbers or statistics.

Among the 49 students who were divided into two classes, only 9 were chosen to participate in this study. These 9 students were selected because they faced vocabulary difficulties and had experience using PVN to improve their vocabulary both in and outside the classroom. The decision to include these students was based on a preliminary study conducted by the researchers before the actual research. The researchers collected initial

information about the students' familiarity and consistency in using PVN by administering a preliminary questionnaire to 49 students. Based on the results of the preliminary study, it was confirmed that 9 EFL students qualified to respond to the research questions because they actively utilized PVN for handling new vocabulary. Therefore, the researchers decided to further investigate their perception.

Furthermore, two research instruments were utilized to collect data in this study. A closed-ended questionnaire was distributed, which was adapted from Khothori & Suzanne (2020) and consisted of 18 questions divided into three categories: cognitive, affective, and conative. The researchers made necessary modifications to the statements to suit the study's objectives. To simplify the evaluation of participant agreement or disagreement with the statements, Likert scales with four options were used in the questionnaire. Meanwhile, a semi-structured interview was conducted using nine questions adapted from Audina (2022) to complement the findings from the questionnaire. The researchers chose a semi-structured interview format as it allowed both the interviewees and the interviewer to freely express their thoughts and opinions. During the interviews, the researchers recorded each conversation using a smartphone recorder and took notes to capture key points of the discussion.

After collecting data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, both data need to be analyzed. All the gathered data is carefully studied and categorized based on three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. Therefore, the researchers analyzed by using the interactive model by Miles et al. (2014).



Source: Miles et al. (2014)

Figure 1. the interactive model by Miles et al. (2014).

- a. Data Condensation
The analysis of questionnaire results focused on categorizing and comparing participants' answers to observe any trends in their levels of agreement. Then, for the interview data, the researchers concentrated on deciding which details to add to the interview transcript and eliminated information that is irrelevant to the research question.
- b. Data Display
In this study, the questionnaire results were entered into a table and summarized in a chart. The researchers interpreted the chart using good and coherent sentences. On the other hand, the interview data were presented in a narrative form.
- c. Conclusion or Verification
After displaying the data, the researchers obtained clear information and made conclusions from these results. They were able to determine whether students' perceptions of the use of PVN were positive or negative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting data from the questionnaire and the interview, the researchers proceeded to analyze the responses provided by the 9 participants. The questionnaire contained 18 items, including a cognitive component (7 items), an affective component (4 items), and a conative component (7 items). The participants rated each item on a four-point scale by giving a checkmark in the corresponding box: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Besides, there were 9 questions in the interview consisting of 4 cognitive questions, 2 affective questions, and 3 questions related to the conative component. The findings of the study revealed that a significant majority of participants held positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of PVN as a strategy for enhancing their vocabulary skills. The following is an in-depth exploration of students' perceptions, which are further categorized into three components: cognitive, affective, and conative.

Cognitive Component

The cognitive component is a perceptual aspect that contains information about what is believed and thought about the intended object. According to Ahmadi (2003), the cognitive component is knowledge, belief, views, or speculation based on an object or situation. There are seven statements regarding this component.

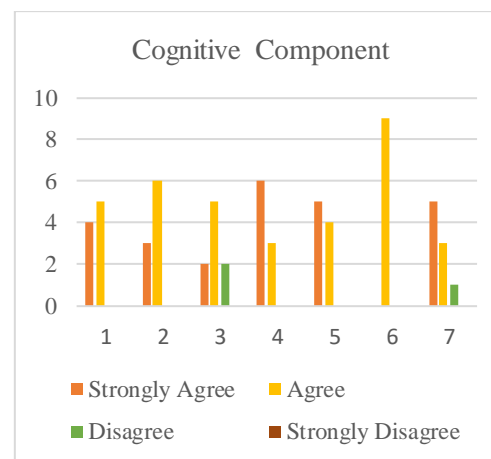


Figure 2. Result on students perception regarding cognitive component

Based on the data presented in the chart above, the majority of students expressed a positive view of the PVN strategy. The first statement in the questionnaire discussed the students' knowledge of using PVN. Each student was already familiar with Personal Vocabulary Notes (PVN). According to the students, this strategy involved making notes on new, useful, or challenging English words they had encountered during various activities, such as classroom learning, reading books, watching movies, listening to music, or participating in social media activities. The results indicated that almost all students have a clear understanding of using PVN as a strategy to expand their vocabulary. Additionally, the findings also demonstrated that all nine students reported numerous benefits derived from using PVN. This observation is further supported by the students' responses during the interview section, wherein they elaborated on the advantages they experienced.

"Karena dengan mencatat kosakata, pengetahuan kosakata kita jadi bertambah"

dan dapat lebih mudah untuk mendengar, membaca, menulis, dan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris.” (Student 2)

“By taking vocabulary notes, our vocabulary knowledge increases and it becomes easier for us to listen, read, write, and speak in English.”

The subsequent statement aimed to assess the ease and practicality of utilizing the PVN strategy, and it revealed that more than half of the participants exhibited a positive perception regarding the easiness and flexibility of the PVN strategy for acquiring new vocabulary, both inside and outside the classroom. Moving on to the fourth statement, all students unanimously agreed that maintaining well-organized personal vocabulary notes assists them in learning and reviewing vocabulary with enhanced effectiveness. They reported that the implementation of the PVN strategy enabled them to grasp new words at a faster pace and retain them in their memory for prolonged durations. Furthermore, all students expressed that PVN also facilitated their comprehension of English more rapidly and efficiently. This statement is reinforced by EFL students' responses to item number 6 in the chart above, where they specifically highlighted the positive impact of PVN on their language understanding. They also emphasized that PVN played a vital role in assisting them in completing assignments and exams successfully. They highlighted how the use of PVN helped them consolidate their knowledge, access relevant vocabulary swiftly, and effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas.

“PVN atau mencatat tadi itu bisa bikin kita lebih mengingat kosakata gitu, soalnya kan kita nulis, jadi lebih masuk ke otak, jadi mengingatnya lebih gampang.” (Student 4)

“PVN or taking vocabulary notes can help us remember the words better because when we write them down, they are more deeply ingrained in our minds, making it easier to recall them.”

In addition, the researchers wanted to know the students' perspectives on why they

use the PVN strategy by asking the question: "Why do you choose personal vocabulary notes to learn and improve your vocabulary?" The students eagerly shared their individual reasons and motivations, revealing a diverse range of factors that influenced their decision to incorporate PVN into their language learning process. Among the various responses, the most important reason is they want to enhance vocabulary proficiency. Recognizing that a sufficient vocabulary is an essential asset in effectively communicating and comprehending the English language.

Moreover, the researchers investigated whether the participants observed any enhancements in their vocabulary since the implementation of the PVN strategy. Interestingly, all nine students who took part in this study affirmed that the implementation of the PVN strategy had yielded significant improvements in their vocabulary. This result emphasized the PVN's beneficial effects and underlined its potential as an effective strategy for speeding up vocabulary acquisition. They mentioned that the PVN aided in improving their vocabulary skills, not only receptive vocabulary but also productive vocabulary. By making notes on new words encountered during various activities, students have a handy reference tool that they can easily access and review at any time. The integration of PVN into language learning routines offered EFL students a tangible strategy for expanding their vocabulary skills and cultivating a deep understanding of the words they encounter.

To sum up, the results of the cognitive component demonstrated that most students have a good perception regarding the use of PVN. This is evidenced by the number of students who expressed their agreement about the use of PVN in the questionnaire and the interview. The EFL students comprehended that PVN had the potential to be effective and successful for language learners, particularly for those who encountered difficulties in memorizing vocabulary. All of the participants stated that they felt a significant improvement after using PVN. This finding aligns with the study by Weng in Chien (2013), which indicated that keeping vocabulary notes led to a significant improvement in vocabulary learning. The similar findings were also found in the

previous studies conducted by Kömür & Özdemir (2015) and Dubiner (2017). They discovered that PVN had positive outcomes on students' target vocabulary knowledge. The favorable result discussed in both the present study and the previous study underscored the effectiveness and benefits of utilizing PVN in language learning. It provides further support for the integration of PVN as a practical and valuable way to enhance vocabulary mastery among students.

Affective Component

The affective component pertains closely to the emotional aspect that encompasses someone's feelings. It comprises an individual's sense of like or dislike, pleasure or displeasure, as well as their preferences towards an object. Pleasure reflects positive perceptions, while displeasure signifies negative perceptions.

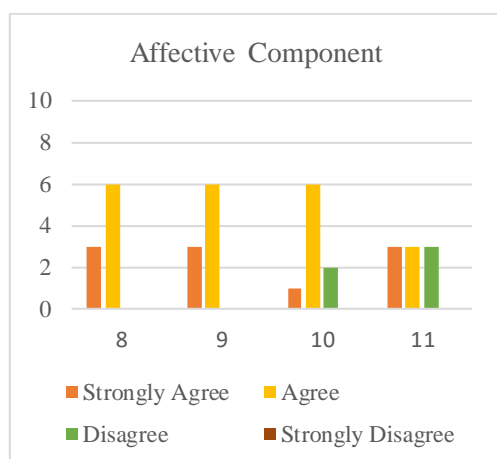


Figure 3. Result on students perception regarding conative component affective component

The affective component of the questionnaire consisted of a 4-item statement designed to gauge the student's emotional responses towards the utilization of personal vocabulary notes (PVN) as a vocabulary learning strategy. The participants were asked to express their feelings regarding the effectiveness of PVN in acquiring new vocabulary words. Specifically, they were inquired about their level of liking or disliking and the degree of happiness or unhappiness experienced when employing PVN to learn new words. It found that almost all students love using PVN as their vocabulary learning

strategy. Students reported a genuine liking for the PVN strategy due to its demonstrable efficacy in expanding their vocabulary knowledge. Those who previously had limited knowledge now acquire new words, while those who were previously confused now gain a better understanding.

In addition, the students expressed feelings of happiness and comfort while utilizing PVN to enhance their English language skills. None of the students reported feeling unhappy or uncomfortable when using PVN, suggesting that the strategy is generally well-received and engaging for EFL students. Nonetheless, on occasion, a few of the participants preferred memorizing vocabulary lists already provided in their textbooks or by their teacher. This indicated that although PVN is widely appreciated, individual learning styles and preferences may vary among students.

“Seneng banget, karena bisa nyatet dan ngereview apa yang sudah pernah dicatet atau dipelajari.” (Student 1)

“It is really fun, I can write down and review what I have written or learned before.”

Next, the researchers proceeded to conduct an in-depth exploration of the participants' preferences, aiming to uncover the underlying factors that influenced their positive emotional responses toward PVN. By posing the question, "What are the reasons that make you like using personal vocabulary notes?", the participants offered a range of insightful responses. In their responses, the majority of participants highlighted the numerous advantages, with the simplicity of the PVN strategy emerging as the primary factor. They explained how maintaining personal vocabulary notes during different activities allowed them to gradually expand their vocabulary knowledge over time. Below are some selected excerpts:

“Karena dari catatan kosakata itu kita bisa lebih tahu kata-kata baru dan ngga bingung lagi kalau denger atau lihat kata itu lagi.” (Student 5)

“Because through vocabulary notes, we can become more acquainted with new words

and no longer be confused when hearing or seeing those words again.”

“Mudah digunakan gitu, terus ya kosakata kita jadi bertambah.” (Student 7)

“It is easy to use, and our vocabulary increases.”

In summary, the students' responses to questionnaire statements and interview questions linked to the affective component were perceived fairly positively. Despite the different opinions, the findings showed that the majority of students not only recognized the benefits of PVN but also genuinely enjoyed using this strategy. They didn't feel bored participating in the vocabulary learning process with their personal vocabulary notes (Hasanah & Ali, 2022). Also, the positive emotions and sentiments described in this study match with the previous research conducted by Walters & Bozkurt (2009), where students reported finding enjoyment in incorporating personal vocabulary notes into their classroom activities. Such positive emotional responses towards PVN are indicative of the students' satisfaction with the strategy, which kept them motivated and interested in learning new words.

Conative Component

The behavioral or action component is commonly referred to as the conative component (Ahmadi, 2003). This component manifests in people's attitudes and behaviors in daily life based on how they perceive particular objects or situations. It focuses on how a stimulus is organized and interpreted so that people respond to it by acting in a certain way.

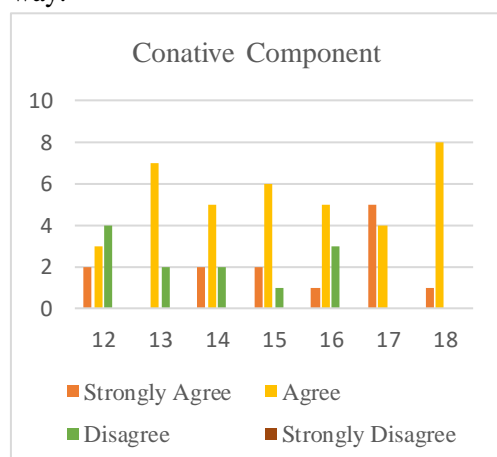


Figure 4. Result on students perception regarding conative component

In the third component of this study, the researchers focused on assessing the EFL students' perceptions related to their behaviors in response to the PVN strategy. It is noteworthy that there was a higher prevalence of negative perceptions in this component compared to the cognitive and affective components. It can be seen in the questionnaire statements 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, where some students disagreed with the statements. However, it is important to emphasize that despite these negative perceptions, the overall perception of EFL students towards the conative component remained positive. The following is a detailed explanation.

To collect data for this component, a set of 7 questionnaire statements was utilized. The findings revealed that some students encountered issues or difficulties when using PVN. This specific statement received the highest number of disagreements compared to the other 17 statements in the questionnaire. These results align with the insights gathered from the interview session, where students shared various problems they faced while utilizing PVN. Some of the problems mentioned by the students included unclear writing, unfamiliarity with vocabulary meanings, difficulty in determining word usage, forgetting where to record vocabulary, and struggling with the correct pronunciation. These findings indicate that while PVN may be perceived as easy to use by some students, there is a subgroup of students who require additional guidance and support to maximize the benefits of this strategy.

Furthermore, the EFL students demonstrated an active eagerness to explore and add new words into their personal vocabulary notes. The students' engagement with personal vocabulary notes highlights their growing independence in enhancing their English vocabulary. By maintaining these personalized resources, they were able to take ownership of their language learning journey. The findings indicated that the majority of students displayed a proactive willingness to explore new words and incorporate them into their PVN. They also engaged in a regular practice of reviewing and

studying their PVN. Based on the students' responses during the interview phase, it was found that some of them stored their notes on their mobile phones, while others preferred writing them down on paper or in a notebook. Furthermore, a few students went beyond recording the word and its meaning, as they included supplementary information such as synonyms and example sentences in their vocabulary notes to enhance their understanding of the word's various aspects.

"Biasanya menulis kata dan artinya di buku, tapi kadang-kadang juga menuliskan sinonim atau contoh kalimat untuk lebih memahami penggunaannya." (Student 4)

"Usually, I write the word and its meaning in a book, but sometimes I also write down synonyms or example sentences to better understand its usage."

In addition, all participants stated that they had employed the use of the PVN strategy in their learning process. However, the frequency of their usage varied among the students, with some using it frequently, some using it occasionally, and some using it rarely. This indicated that while PVN was a popular strategy among students, not all of them used it consistently or with the same frequency. This variation could be attributed to personal preference, learning style, or the complexity of the materials being studied. The variation in the frequency of usage could also be attributed to the difficulty level of the words encountered in their learning materials, as some students may have felt the need to record and review new vocabulary more often than others. Students who frequently used PVN in their learning process indicated that they had a positive perception of PVN. Moreover, considering the various benefits provided by PVN, it is not surprising that the participants recommended the PVN strategy to their friends. They encouraged their classmates or study partners to create and utilize their own personal vocabulary notes. By employing this strategy, students were better able to personalize their learning experience and tailor it to their individual needs and preferences.

"Sering banget pas pelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas jadi nyatetnya di buku tulis bahasa Inggris." (Student 1)

"Very often, when I study English in class, I write it down in an English notebook."

"Aku sering mencatat kata yang nggatau artinya. Biasanya menemukannya dalam lirik lagu yang sulit dan langsung mencatatnya di HP." (Student 3)

"I often write down unfamiliar words. I usually find them in difficult song lyrics and I write them on my phone."

In conclusion, the students exhibited a proactive approach when it comes to utilizing the PVN strategy, as evidenced by their positive behavior and actions. They showed a great eagerness to expand their vocabulary by actively seeking out new words, recording them in their PVN, and regularly reviewing their notes. This proactive behavior empowered them to become more independent and autonomous learners, as they actively engaged with the language and took ownership of their own learning process. Instead of solely relying on prescribed vocabulary lists or classroom instruction, students took the initiative to explore and incorporate new words they encountered in various contexts. This finding is in line with several previous studies that have revealed that PVN not only facilitates students' vocabulary learning but also encourages them to become autonomous learners. (Fowle, 2002; Lai, 2013; Vela & Rushidi, 2016).

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the results of a questionnaire and an interview, the researchers drew conclusions for each component of perception. The data obtained from the closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were consistent, demonstrating positive perceptions in three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. The findings indicated that the majority of the 9 EFL students who had utilized or frequently used the Personal Vocabulary Notes (PVN) strategy held favorable perceptions. It highlights the pivotal role played by the PVN

strategy in facilitating the process of learning the English language, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition.

In terms of the cognitive component, the respondents' beliefs, views, and thoughts regarding the use of PVN were highly positive. The students believed that PVN was useful for them. Regarding the affective component, the emotional reactions and feelings of the respondents toward using PVN were also very positive. This implied that integrating PVN into the language learning process offered benefits beyond efficiency; it also enhanced the overall enjoyment of the learning experience. In terms of conative, the

respondents' behavior, action, and willingness to act in the use of PVN were perceived positively. This indicated that students actively utilized PVN to enhance their vocabulary, showing their eagerness to improve their language skills. Therefore, this research on students' perceptions highlighted the importance of incorporating engaging, interactive, and effective vocabulary learning strategies into the language learning process. By doing so, EFL students could foster interest and motivation, leading to more productive and successful vocabulary learning outcomes.

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