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PERCEPTIONS OF COVID-19-RELATED NEOLOGISMS IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AMONG INDONESIAN AND THAI GFL-LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe how well Indonesian and Thai students of German as a Foreign Language (GFL) comprehend German neologisms related to COVID-19 and their strategies for comprehending these neologisms. The *yes/no test* format was used to assess vocabulary mastery. This test was created according to four criteria: type, lemma, flemma, and word families. The word selection was based on standard terminology, grammar, abbreviations, and encyclopedic entries. The test was done by 129 students, which consists of 62 Indonesian students and 67 Thai students. The investigation revealed that on average 80.4% of Indonesian and 76.1% of Thai students knew neologisms associated with COVID-19. The most well-known vocabulary contained terms used in, or is similar to, the English counterparts, such as *coronapositiv* and *positivgetestet*, whereas the least-known vocabularies contained abbreviations. It proves that they do not like *Denglisch*, a mashup of several German and English words, such as *boostern*, *zoomen*, *webexen*, and *teamsen*. Based on the average score, Thai students benefitted more from understanding new *Denglisch* vocabulary than Indonesian students. Meanwhile, the Indonesian and Thai students used several strategies to comprehend the new words: including guessing, matching to English, ignoring the word/word combination entirely because other parts of the word are understandable, making use of a translator application, both printed and digital, and asking friends or lecturers questions.

Keywords: Neologisms in German; Indonesian and Thai German learners; COVID-19-related

1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic affected every part of people's lives, including developments in the realm of language that altered how humans communicate. It is indeed fascinating to see the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted language (Dechawongse et al., 2021; Mweri, 2021). Additionally, it is interesting to see what form the new vocabulary is from a linguistics standpoint, and how the new terminology is perceived.

The German-language mass media demonstrate a significant lexical evolution of the German language, as evidenced by the emergence and prevalence of the term "coronavirus" in German internet news (Möhrs, 2020). German-language online newspaper writers utilize a lot of new terminology and recognizable old vocabulary with new connotations when reporting on the Corona pandemic (Müller-Spitzer et al., 2021). There are new lexemes derived from a specific language that developed in response to a specific environment (Klosa-Kückelhaus et al., 2020).

The introduction of these new words can potentially interrupt the process of language learning, particularly vocabulary acquisition (Huei et al., 2021). Meanwhile, vocabulary is a component of foreign language learning which is crucial to develop communication competence. A lack of vocabulary knowledge is a barrier to learning (Hadi, 2017). According to Peña Ruiz (2020), many children struggle with vocabulary assimilation and integration into their hearing, reading, and writing skills. Despite their challenges, Shamsan et al. (2021) demonstrated that pupils do not always seek assistance from professors, classmates, or friends. They do, however, employ multilingual dictionaries, Google Translate, or make assumptions about the meaning of terminology. One of these issues stems from students' inability to comprehend the constituents of the new terminology. In principle, new vocabulary can be easily understood if students understand the process by which the vocabulary is formed. Oktavia and Hayati (2020) analyzed the patterns and characteristics of various language words referring to the COVID-19 pandemic and found that one can comprehend the meaning of a new language by comprehending the patterns and qualities of terminology.

Most of the vocabulary used in the subject of the COVID-19 epidemic is English. According to Redkozubova (2020), English significantly influences the vocabulary of Russian and German COVID-19 pandemic terminology. Numerous countries, however, use the word COVID-19 in their mother tongue. A portion of the new language is expressed as slang in non-standard dictionaries or online pages. In Germany, non-standard terminology is almost exclusively written in *Denglisch* (Deutsch-Englisch), using English words, pseudo-anglicisms, or a combination of English and German in German.

The COVID-19 virus and its associated co-morbidities have resulted in the creation of a new language category. Additionally, numerous collocations have included the coronavirus's name as a structural element and other lexical elements (Krapivnyk, 2020). According to Fitria (2021), new words are created by borrowing, compounding, mixing, acronyms, clipping, and various other processes. Meanwhile, Redkozubowa (2020) notes that word constructions are often composed of composition, mixing, conversion, and affixation. This new vocabulary is referred to as neologism, the process of creating new vocabulary by combining new word constituents with those from other languages (Darwish, 2020).

In Indonesia, at the very least, the COVID-19 pandemic has benefited the evolution of the Indonesian language. For Indonesian, the pandemic enriched the lexicon, which now includes the meanings of free words, words with affixes, lexeme blends, acronyms, and abbreviations (Oktovianny, 2020). Numerous new vocabularies are being employed to express information on the COVID-19 pandemic in both English and Indonesian (Sutarini et al., 2021). They identified at least 22 additional words used in Indonesian society. In Thailand, while people often mix English and Thai words, the English words are always spoken with a Thai accent. From a linguistic point of view, it would be an advantage to use new formative terms in daily conversation (Dechawongse et al., 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the coronavirus pandemic has affected the creation of new Arabic words (Febrianta et al., 2020), but the most noticeable phenomenon is the introduction of new terminology and idioms (Ibrahim et al., 2020). The terms employed are from the English language or specialized epidemiological jargon (Klosa-Kückelhaus, 2020a). The new lexicon draws heavily on and is inspired by foreign languages, mainly English (Sari, 2020).

Since April 2020, the Leibniz Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim has been developing a project application titled "New vocabulary for the corona pandemic," which can be accessed at https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#. There were only 210 entries at the beginning of its construction, each with a definition and description of the data source (Balnat, 2020), but it now incorporates 2,297 lexical units and combinations (accessed on April 10, 2022). Additionally, the new cOWIDplus Viewer app gives statistics about word frequency from thirteen German-language online sources, including ten newspapers and magazines (Balnat, 2020). To this point, unfortunately, neither Indonesia nor Thailand has similar initiative for systematically recording neologisms in the COVID-19 pandemic sector.

It should be emphasized, however, that studies on the emergence of new vocabulary during this pandemic, both in German and other languages, cannot be regarded as conclusive, as the pandemic is still ongoing. As a result, the number of new vocabulary will keep increasing, necessitating additional research. It will be fascinating to see whether new terms or usages arise (Klosa-Kückelhaus, 2020b) and how people master the new vocabulary. For students learning German as a foreign language, both in Indonesia and Thailand, it is critical to be familiar with German neologisms to comprehend the texts they encounter or in communication

situations, as well as to develop the four German language skills. Based on this context, the current paper focusses on answering the following questions:

1. How well can students understand German neologisms related to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Which strategies do students use to understand German neologisms related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. METHOD

A total of 129 students, consisting of 62 Indonesian students and 67 Thai students, participated in this study. They had various ability levels, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' German Mastery Levels

	Indonesian students		Thai students	
Level	**Total**	**Percentage**	**Total**	**Percentage**
A1	17	27	9	13.4
A2	22	35	25	37.3
B1	23	37	23	34.3
B2	0	0	8	11.9
u/i			2	3

*u/i: unidentified

Students took the vocabulary assessment using a *Yes/No test* format. Meara and Buxton pioneered this concept in 1987 (Harrington, 2018). This test style includes a list of target terms, and test takers mark which words they are familiar with and unfamiliar with. The test words are chosen according to four criteria: type (orthographic form); lemma (the root of specific PoS and inflections); flemma (basic form and inflection form beyond PoS); and word families (basic forms, inflectional forms, and derived forms, outside of PoS) (Brown et al., 2020). The selection is based on standard terminology, grammar, abbreviations, and encyclopedias (Setiawan, 2015). Each criterion was represented by several words consisting of several word classes.

The researchers compiled a list of words by quoting a list of new words related to the COVID-19 pandemic available at https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#. The criteria outlined above resulted in the acquisition of 59 words belonging to the following word classes: 25 adjectives, 4 adverbs, 16 nouns, 13 verbs, and 1 prepositional phrase. To collect data on students' mastery of neologisms and their strategies for comprehending the word list under examination, Indonesian students answered the word list via a questionnaire in the Google Form https://bit.um.ac.id/neologisme_COVID19 in Bahasa Indonesia while Thai students used the form https://bit.um.ac.id/neologism_engl in English. To do this task students were required not to use any tools or ask others. Thus, the results of the questionnaire are a pure reflection of students' ability to recognize and understand new vocabulary related to COVID-19. After data collection, it was evaluated descriptively and given as percentages.

3. RESULTS

This section explains the findings of research data based on questionnaires by respondents from both Indonesia and Thailand. The data are visualized with tables and diagrams.

3.1 Students' understanding of German neologisms

The vocabulary tested consisted of 59 words and one open-ended question. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the respondents' answers about the mastery of neologisms in the list of words is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Answers to the Neologisms

Answer	Ind. students (%)	Thai students (%)
yes	49	35.25
no	36	48.61
doubt	15	16.14

According to Table 2, nearly half of the Indonesian respondents indicated that they were familiar with the German neologisms associated with COVID-19, its definitions, and translations, while Thai students showed a lower level of knowledge. Meanwhile, more than a third of Indonesian respondents said they were unfamiliar with the new words, and the remainder expressed reservations regarding their comprehension of this neologism. In contrast, nearly half of the Thai students stated they were unfamiliar with the German neologisms listed in the test. The number of students who answered doubt in both groups was nearly equal. Students' mastery of neologisms varied in terms of single words and phrases and in terms of both primary and constructed words. Indonesian student responses are presented in Table 3. The student responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: The Ten Most Frequent Neologisms Answered by Indonesian Students with Yes, No and Doubt

Yes (%)	Word	No (%)	Word	Doubt (%)	Word
88.7	coronapositiv	95.2	NRGS	29	coronieren
87.1	positivgetestet	75.8	AHA+C+L-Formel	27.4	coronal
83.9	maskenfrei	74.2	webexen	27.4	coronakonform
82.3	pandemiefrei	72.6	aerosollastig	27.4	Coronaimmunitäts-bescheinigung
82.3	Wuhansyndrom	67.7	atemintensiv	25.8	coronisch
80.6	coronafrei	67.7	teamsen	24.2	coronamäßig
77.4	boostern	61.3	coronatauglich	22.6	Krankschreibung per Telefon
75.8	UV-Desinfektion	59.7	ansteckungsarm	21	coronaleer
74.2	Mund-Nasen-Schutz-Maske	59.7	Coronafamilienhärte-ausgleichsfonds	21	Coronafamilienhärte-ausgleichsfonds
72.6	pandemiesicher	58.1	B.1.1.7-Mutante	21	coronarisieren

Table 4: The Ten Most Frequent Neologisms Answered by Thai Students with Yes, No and Doubt

Yes (%)	Word	No (%)	Word	Doubt (%)	Word
92.5	*positivgetestet*	95.5	*NRGS*	26.9	*coronal*
88.1	*coronapositiv*	91	*aerosollastig*	26.9	*coronasicher*
86.6	*gelockdownt*	91	*AHA+C+L+Formel*	26.9	*coronakonform*
77.6	*Youtubeyoga*	88.1	*ansteckungsarm*	25.5	*coronarisieren*
76.1	*downlocken*	86.6	*Coronafamilienhärte-ausgleichsfonds*	23.9	*coronamüde, Arbeitsunfähigkeitsbescheinigung per Telefon overzoomed coronaleer*
74.5	*Lockdownchen*	86.6	*asynchrone Lehrveranstaltung*		
74.6	*boostern*	83.6	*atemintensiv*		
64.2	*coronafrei*	82.1	*webexen*		
64.2	*maskenfrei*	80.6	*Hust-und-Nies-Etikette*	22.4	*systemrelevant, coronieren, coronastill, coronifizieren, overzoomed, coronatauglich*
62.7	*coronamüde*	77.6	*teamsen*		

Based on Table 3 and Table 4, the students' best known used words were *coronapositiv* and *positivgestestet*. This was to be expected as these terms are derived from the English words which are frequently used. These two terms are also widely used in Indonesia and Thailand.

Meanwhile, the most frequently misunderstood term by students was the abbreviation, NRGS. This abbreviation could be read in various ways, including *Nursing Resource Guides* (NRGs). However, it is most emphatically not about the COVID-19 epidemic, but the *Nationale Reserve Gesundheitsschutz* (NRGS), known as the *National Reserve Health Protection* in English. The following are some words that the students were unsure about the meanings: *coronal, coronakonform.*

Interestingly, both Indonesian and Thai students share similarity on the five highest answers for 'yes', which is illustrated in Figure 1.

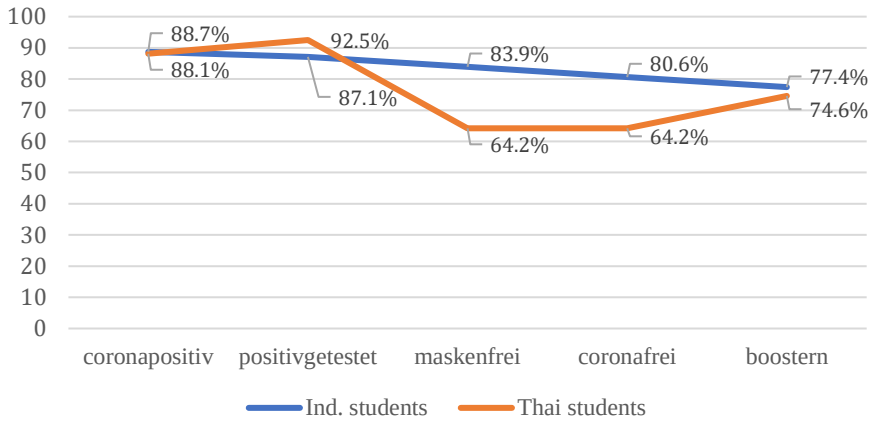

Figure 1: Highest Frequency of the Same Five Words in the 'Yes' Category

The same words for the seven highest answers were also found in the 'no' category, which is depicted in Figure 2.

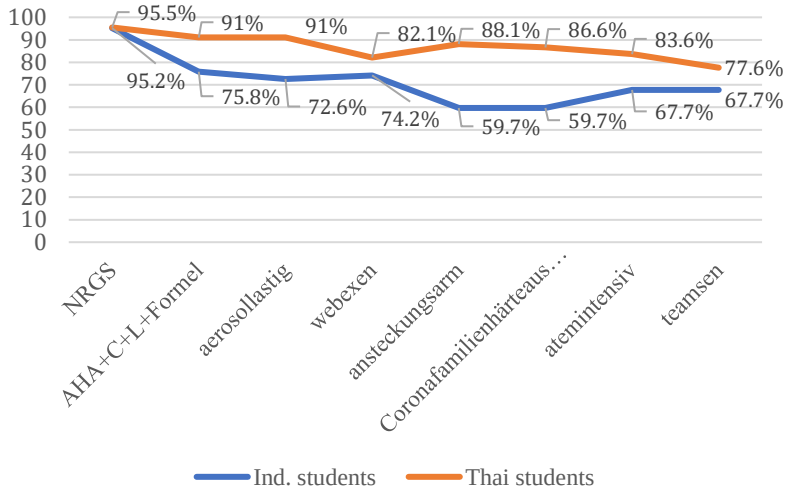

Figure 2: Highest Frequency of the Same Seven Words in the 'No' Category

Indonesian students showed higher percentages in the 'yes' category, and in the 'no' category, the line is always below that of Thai students. Based on the two figures, it can be stated that in comparison to Thai students, Indonesian students know more about terms related to the pandemic. Meanwhile, some words for the three highest answers were also found in the 'doubt' category, which is depicted in Figure 3.

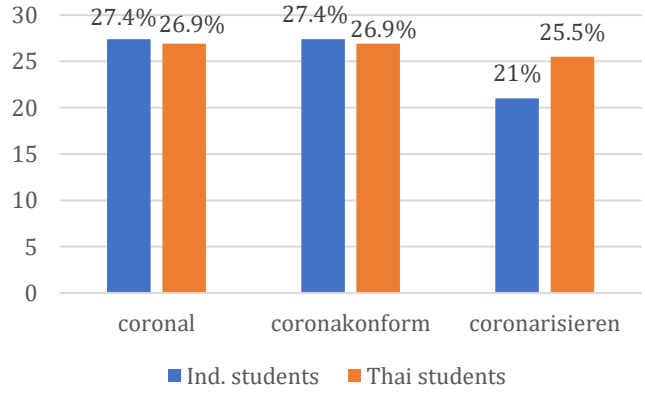

Figure 3: Highest Frequency of the Same Three Words in the 'Doubt' Category

3.2 Indonesian and Thai student strategies in understanding the neologisms of COVID-19 in German

The students who participated in the study were asked to do a word list test and answer a question about their strategies for understanding newly created words (called neologisms). Since the students are allowed to choose more than one strategy, no percentage was calculated. Based on their responses, the most commonly used strategy among Indonesian respondents was to guess the meaning of neologisms, which was used by 55 participants. The second most common strategy was to use a translator application or internet, which was used by 46 participants. Matching neologisms with English or Indonesian was used by 42 and 28 participants. Three least used strategies were asking friends (6), ignoring part of the word as the rest can be understood (2) and asking lecturers (1). This is summarized in Figure 4.

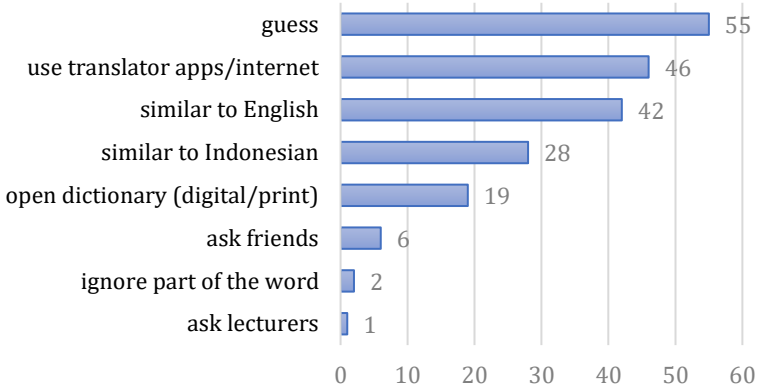

Figure 4: Vocabulary Comprehension Strategies by Indonesian Students

When they do not know or have doubts about the meaning of new vocabulary, the students used various strategies to understand the vocabulary. The Indonesians employed strategies of guessing the intended word, matching the word with Indonesian and English words, ignoring part of the word because the rest could be understood, using a printed and digital dictionary, and asking friends or lecturers. Meanwhile, Thai students apply similar strategies with different frequency. Figure 5 illustrates the strategies Thai students employed.

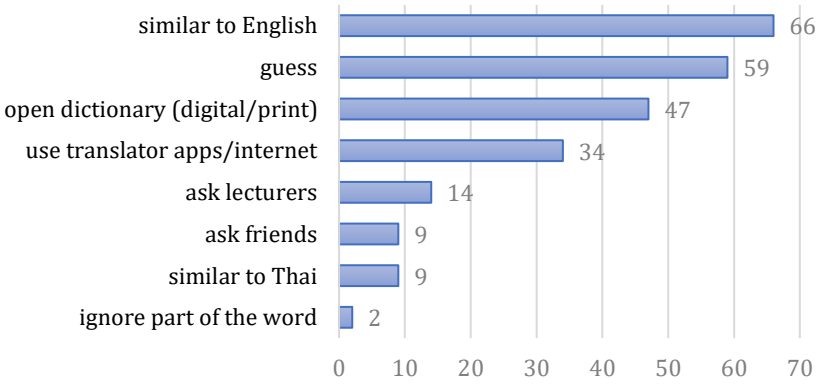

Figure 5: Vocabulary Comprehension Strategies by Thai Students

Based on the responses of Thai students, their most commonly used strategy was to match neologisms with English terms, which was used by 66 of them. The second most common strategy was to guess the meaning of neologisms (59), 47of Thai participants consulted a digital or printed dictionary. On the contrary, the two strategies used the least were asking friends or lecturers both with 9 respondents.

4. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the research findings that are associated with the results of previous relevant studies.

4.1 Students' understanding of German neologisms

The term "vocabulary mastery" refers to two distinct categories. The first is vocabulary breadth mastery (*vocabulary size*) and the second is vocabulary depth, which is defined as the quality of how well the meaning is understood and the word is used. In other words, vocabulary mastery refers to how much vocabulary a person possesses and how effectively he or she employs it in his or her linguistic activities.

What is remarkable is that students are not very fond of *Denglisch* (Deutsch-Englisch) terminology, which refers to English incorporated into German. For instance, the word *boostern* is a pun in German, which originates from the English word *booster*. Along with the word *boostern*, there are the following terms *zoomen*, *webexen, teamsen, coronieren*, and *Lockdownchen*. As is commonly known, German verbs always end in *-n, -en,* or *-ln*. Denglisch's use in German imparts a slangy, modern tone. One goal of employing *Denglisch* is to demonstrate the superiority of German grammar over English (Biriş, 2011). Not all Denglisch words, however, are unknown to students. Many students are quite familiar with them, such as *gelockdownt* and *geshutdownt*. These two terms are English terms, specifically infinitive *lockdown* and *shutdown*, which were renamed *gelockdownt* and *geshutdownt* in German *Partizip II* (English past participle). In German, the affixation *ge+*stem*+t* is a distinctive verb property in the *Partizip II* form. the following is data about some *Denglisch* words known by students (in percent).

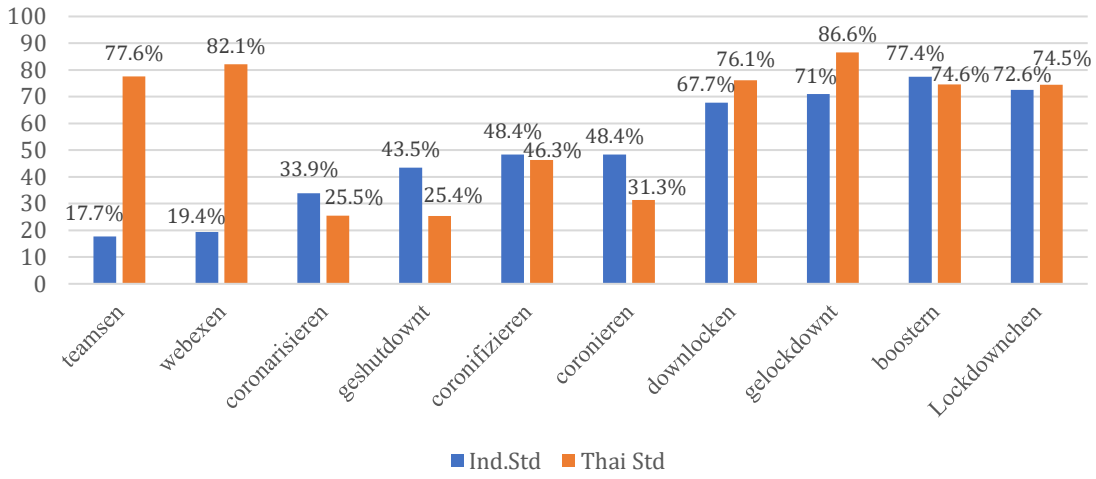

Figure 6: Denglisch Used in the Test

It is interesting to compare this aspect between Indonesian and Thai students. It can be seen in Figure 6 that the group of Thai students benefitted more from being able to understand the new *Denglisch* vocabulary. One reason is that in Thailand, to produce new words with novel meanings, technical terminology and jargon from the English language they tend to be combined with Thai words, generating compound words or hybrid words (Dechawongse et al., 2021). Another predictable factor is that Thai students' English skills are better than Indonesian students'. Several perspectives on vocabulary mastery indicate that vocabulary can affect a person's linguistic competency.

4.2 Strategies for understanding neologisms

Vocabulary and lexicon learning procedures are critical components of language acquisition in general, and hence a preferred vocabulary learning strategy is required. The most frequently used technique is to create a list of tables (Stoeckel & Bennett, 2015). According to Brown et al. (2019), a word list is a less valuable learning instrument than a vocabulary study list. For centuries, word lists have been used in education to enhance vocabulary acquisition, develop topic content, and serve as the foundation for vocabulary examinations (Stoeckel & Bennett, 2015). Vocabulary-building procedures based on word lists are inextricably linked to translation techniques (Joyce, 2018). Word lists are frequently associated with learners' translation of words into their mother tongue. Cards, workbooks, or word tables can be used to keep track of the

vocabulary; however, according to this current research, Indonesian and Thai students typically employed the technique of guessing the meaning, matching the term with Indonesian or Thai and English, utilizing a translator program or internet, and asking friends or lecturers.

Additionally, Mokhtar et al. (2017) devised and evaluated seven ways for vocabulary acquisition: metacognitive management, guessing strategy, dictionary strategy, note-taking strategy, practice strategy, coding strategy, and activation strategy. Mokhtar et al.'s (2017) analysis deconstructed Stoeckel's chart list technique. Meanwhile, Ajayi (2018) emphasized the need for instructor aid when children learn vocabulary. However, mentorship by professors was the least often adopted technique by students in this study. Nonetheless, the primary factor determining the success of vocabulary learning is motivation, particularly the learner's intrinsic desire (Zhang et al., 2017). Numerous aspects affecting student learning outcomes have been explained by research on vocabulary learning strategies. In vocabulary learning, well-researched vocabulary dimensions may include metacognitive, cognitive, and social techniques.

From some of the viewpoints above, it can be inferred that mastering vocabulary requires both independent and organized study assisted by a teacher and the learner's self-motivation. Vocabulary mastery is also associated with metacognitive, cognitive, social skills, and with the learner's view of the vocabulary employed.

Vocabulary formation is influenced by a variety of events occurring in cultural, social, and political life (Sikorska, 1997). According to Schmidt, as cited by Sikorsa (1997), lexicology has three developmental trends: vocabulary increase, vocabulary narrowing, and vocabulary alterations. Additionally, vocabulary can be enriched in a variety of ways, including through the creation of new words using word formation models, the transfer of words from dialects and everyday language, the transfer of words from foreign languages, the revival of old vocabulary, and the development of meaning. *Denglisch* is a current evolution of terminology that has gained popularity among German speakers, even used during the COVID-19 epidemic crisis.

The usage of vocabulary reflects a person's language abilities, as vocabulary mastery could affect overall language skills (Miralpeix & Muoz, 2018; Pellicer-Sánchez, 2019). This might be understood as a saying that the greater a person's command of vocabulary, the more proficient he is with language. Meanwhile, having a large vocabulary is critical for improving language skills (Ibrahim et al., 2016). As a result, it can be argued that vocabulary is a critical component of language abilities and that vocabulary development should continue to increase the quality of language skills. In light of the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students must master neologisms with the theme of COVID-19 to improve their language skills in German, both receptively and productively.

5. CONCLUSION

In practice, neologisms centered on the COVID-19 pandemic are being developed in every language. Numerous new words are emerging and being used in print and online communication, including in the German language. For GFL students, neologisms can be a barrier to their comprehension. Since vocabulary knowledge is critical for the language learners' competencies to support all four language skills, both receptively and productively, GFL learners with a limited vocabulary must expand their vocabulary knowledge to improve their ability to compose meaningful sentences. While the emergence of COVID-19-related vocabulary appears novel, Indonesian and Thai students appear familiar with the meaning and translation of German neologisms associated with COVID-19. The majority of vocabulary that the GFL learners in Indonesia and Thailand were familiar with are loan words from English with widespread usage. As the meaning of some vocabulary was unknown to them, they employed strategies, including guessing the intended word, matching the word with English, ignoring part of the word, and making use of printed and digital dictionaries or translator applications or internet.

The limitation of this study is that the data source was obtained from the word list belonging to the Leibniz Institute for the German Language and the results were based on the students' own perception. Future research is recommended to use online news from the mass media as data sources and a more reliable vocabulary mastery test. With this method, the research will get a more comprehensive portrait of vocabulary mastery by GFL students.

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