VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: The Case of Preparatory Year Students at King Faisal University

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Abstract
Vocabulary-learning strategies play an important role in English language learning and acquisition. This study investigates the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) that university students use to learn the meaning of the new English words and the reasons for using and not using the VLSs. It is also an attempt to estimate the university students' vocabulary knowledge size. The study implemented three instruments for data collection—namely, Vocabulary Knowledge Test, VLS-Questionnaire, and a Semi-structured interview. A total of 32 Preparatory Year Deanship Students (PYD students) voluntarily participated in the study. The results showed that the PYD students' estimated vocabulary was 2315 words (used for reading and listening) and 747 words (used for speaking and writing). It also showed that PYD students use determination strategies most frequently. The results indicated that the enrichment of the mental lexicon and autonomy in language learning are the main reasons for using some VLSs. The main reason for not using some VLSs is the unfamiliarity with those strategies.

Keywords: language learning- Vocabulary learning strategies- language testing- university learners.

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, research on language learning and teaching perceived precious knowledge on how learners learn their second or foreign language. The Second Language Acquisition Framework has focused on the learners’ independence in perceiving the additional languages. Language is used to exchange information about the world (Hagoort et al., 2004), and vocabulary knowledge is the key factor for managing communication. Vocabulary acquisition does not require linking meaning to a form only. Instead, it depends on more
complex cognitive processes (Augustyn, 2013) and requires various strategies. These strategies are commonly called Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs).

Vocabulary learning is a part of general language acquisition (Nation, 2001). VLSs are the particular operations that a language learner uses to learn vocabulary in the target language” (Takač, 2008). The investigation of VLSs has been an interest for language researchers and scholars for many years (e.g., Schmitt, 1997; 2000, Oxford, 1990; Catalán, 2003; Al-Qahtani, 2005 and Alyami, 2011). Based on the views of VLSs research (e.g., Oxford, 1990; Catalan, 2003; Alyami, 2005; and Saengpakdeejit, 2014), this study defines VLSs as the set of conscious and unconscious attempts prompted by language learners when they experience vocabulary problems. Language learners use VLSs to cope with the meanings of unknown words, maintain the newly learned words in long-term memory, and induce them when needed.

VLSs investigation drew the attention of many researchers and teachers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, the focus of most previous studies was on the school levels. Studies on vocabulary learning at the university levels have been rare. This study is an attempt to focus on the learners who study English for specific purposes. It investigates the VLSs used by Preparatory Year Students (PYD students). According to their courses’ plans, PYD Students are apt to learn as much English language vocabulary as possible because their curricula are English language reception and production—driven. This study is also an attempt to account for the estimated size of vocabulary that PYD students possess. Further, it investigates the relationship between the students’ actual size of vocabulary knowledge and their VLSs use.

Research Questions

Based on the literature reviewed and the method used, the present work seeks to find answers to the following set of questions:

1. What is the overall estimated vocabulary knowledge size of the Preparatory Year Students?
2. What are the most and least frequent Vocabulary Learning Strategies that the Preparatory Year Students usually use?
3. Is there any significant correlation between the Preparatory Year Students’ use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies and their actual Vocabulary Knowledge Size?
4. What are the reasons behind the use and non-use of certain Vocabulary Learning Strategies?

2. Literature Review

While language is used to exchange information about the world (Hagoort et al., 2004). Vocabulary is an essential factor for communication. Learning them depends on more complex cognitive processes (Augustyn, 2013), and it requires the implementation of various strategies commonly called Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs). According to Nation (2001), VLSs are a part of general language learning strategies. They refer to the particular steps used in the isolated task of learning vocabulary (Takač, 2008). Catalán (2003) declares
that the definition of learning which was proposed by Rubin as “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used” and the extension of this definition by Nation to a vocabulary learning strategy as “vocabulary learning strategies could be any which affect this rather broadly-defined process” are complementary. Therefore, he preferred to define VLSs as the knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) employed for learning vocabulary or steps or actions taken by students to master the meaning of unknown words. However, Alyami (2011) finds this definition insufficient because it focuses on the meaning only and neglects other aspects of the new word. For Alyami, a satisfactory definition of VLSs should contain the steps or actions for grasping the meaning of unfamiliar words, the retention of these words in long-term memory, and retrieval of the words when required, and using the words in oral and written practices.

Schmitt’s (1997) Taxonomy, among other taxonomies, has been implemented in a large number of studies (e.g., Alyami, 2011; Al-Nujaidi, 2000; Askar, 2014; Ghouti, 2014; Liao, 2004); therefore, it used to develop a VLSs questionnaire to collect data from the subjects of this study, too. Schmitt (1997) divided VLSs into discovery and consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies, the first set of strategies, encourage learners to discover the meaning of unknown words using such means as guessing, consulting someone, and structural knowledge. This category is divided further into Determination Strategies (DET) and Social Strategies (SOC). DET Strategies “facilitate gaining knowledge of a new word through guessing from their structural knowledge of the language, guessing from an L1 cognate, guessing from context, using reference materials” (Schmitt (1997:10). SOC strategies, on the other hand, facilitate learning through involving in social interactions such as asking a classmate or the teacher for an L1 equivalent. This type of strategies according to Schmitt is disadvantageous as it requires a teacher who knows the learners’ mother tongues and “though synonyms have similar meanings, students need to know collocational, stylistic, and syntactic differences to use them effectively in a productive mode” (ibid:10). Consolidation strategies, the second group of strategies in Schmitt’s taxonomy, “deal with learner efforts to retain the new word once it has been encountered” (Alyami, 2001:25). It is, in turn, made up of four main sub-strategies, viz. social strategies (SOC), memory strategies (MEM), cognitive strategies (COG), and metacognitive strategies (MET). SOC strategies implicate interaction through group work used to learn or practice vocabulary. Alyami (2011: 11) explains that consolidation SOC strategies “are different from discovery social strategies in the sense that the former cover practice and interaction using previously discovered vocabulary with others like classmates or native speakers of the target language whereas the latter suggests asking for assistance from a classmate, for instance, for the meaning of an L1 translation. In other words, it can be said that discovery social strategies are prerequisites for social consolidation strategies in terms of achieving greater communicative competence”. MEM strategies demand to learn through mental processing by associating background when learning new words. COG strategies include using study aids. MET strategies are means used by learners to control and evaluate their learning for more efficient learning. In other words, they relate to processes of monitoring, decision-making, and progress evaluation.
Vocabulary learning strategies research draws the attention of Arab and non-Arab researchers. In a context similar to this study, Al-Nujaidi (2000) surveyed the use of VLSs by Saudi EFL first-year students under the variables of gender and across institutions. His findings showed that male and female students use various VLSs but differently. While male students rely on more definition and word list strategies, females use more complex contextualization strategies. In contrast to Al Yami’s (2011) findings, the “note-taking strategies” are the most frequently used VLSs. AL-Yami (2011) investigated the VLSs used by 169 Saudi EFL learners. The results showed that the choice and the frequent use of VLSs are affected by some factors such as gender, level of education, and language proficiency. Female students were found using the “guessing the meaning” and “associating the new word with their experience” more frequently than male students did. However, male students used “monolingual dictionary” “more than female students. Regarding the year of study, four-year students showed an interest in using “skipping the new word” and “looking up the word’s grammatical category” more than first-year students did.

In another related study, AL-Fuhaid (2004) examined the use and evaluation of VLSs by Saudi EFL learners majoring in English. A VLS-Q, tape-recorded think-aloud-protocol experiment, and individual interviews were used to collect data. The results showed that the learners prefer using discovery strategies (“dictionary use” strategy) and consolidation Strategies more frequently than the metacognitive strategies. The results also revealed that successful learners use the dictionary more flexibly and select the appropriate meaning more than less successful learners did. AL-qahtani (2005) used three instruments- questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and diary to explore the Saudi school and university student use of VLSs. A total number of 490 male and female students participated in the study. Similar to the other studies of Schmitt (1997), Alyami (2011), and Al-Nujaidi (2000), the results showed that male and female students use different VLSs regarding rate and number. Females used note-taking strategies more frequently than males, but males used the “writing new words in English class notebook” strategy more than females. In addition, Al-qahtani (2005) found that female students used “writing example sentences using the new word”, “writing down the pronunciation of the new words”, “grammatical organization of the new words”, “organizing words according to their grammatical difficulties” and “repeat a sentence in which the word is used” strategies more than the male students did. Generally, it was found that “guessing from the context,” “using a bilingual dictionary,” “guessing from the picture” and “asking for Arabic translation” were the commonly used strategies within the discovery strategies. In the consolidation category, strategies such as “writing down the new word and their Arabic translation,” “repeating English words and their Arabic translation” and “writing the word several times” were the most frequently used among other strategies.

Vocabulary learning strategies investigation was an interest in other Arab counties as well. For example, in Qatar, Al-Buainain’s (2010) results revealed that Arab learners prefer using the MET strategies less commonly use the MEM strategies. In Jordon, Al-Khasawneh (2012) found that the learners use DET strategies most frequently and use the MET strategies less frequently. Askar (2014), in a similar study in Iraq found that Iraqi students usually use the cognitive strategies most frequently; and AL-Gouati (2014) found that Moroccan learners prefer using DET strategies such as “guessing from the context,” “using the dictionary,”
“analyzing the part of speech,” and “analyzing the word’s form” more frequently, and they less-frequently use strategies of the SOC category.

Investigation of vocabulary learning strategies is common in other parts of the world. Schmitt's (1997) survey in Japan showed that DET strategies occupied the first place while MET strategies came last. In Australia, Lawson & Hogben (1996) concluded that second language learners use more than one strategy when learning the meaning of a new word. Gidey (2008) found that Ethiopian learners use a variety of strategies, and there is a strong relationship between VLSs use and learning achievements. Bernard's and Gonzales’ (2009) investigation in the Philippines revealed that the learners prefer using DET strategies more frequently than other strategies, and the MET strategies are less frequently used. In Malaysia, Mokhtar et al. (2009) found that the students employ a limited number of VLSs when learning new words; however, they prefer the use of the DET strategies. In the same context, Sofian and Malakar (2014) found that the learners prefer using the MET strategies. In an Iranian context, Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013) found that DET strategies are most frequent while SOC strategies are less frequent. Thai learners, as reported in the surveys of Saengpakdeejit (2014) and Nirattisai (2014), use DET strategies more frequently than other types of strategies. Liao’s (2004) study in Taiwan revealed that learners prefer using DET strategies, while in India, Zarrin and Khan (2014) found that the MEM strategies are frequent. In China, Gang (2014) found that less proficient students depend on the MEM and COG strategies while more proficient students use DET strategies.

3. Research Method

This work tries to identify the vocabulary learning strategies that Preparatory Year students employ to learn the meanings of the new English word. It also accounts for the students’ actual vocabulary knowledge size. Below is a detailed description of the participants, setting, and the instruments used for data collection.

Participants

Students from the Preparatory Deanship at King Faisal University were invited to participate in this study. A total of 32 (the total students in one class) Male Preparatory Year students were the target group. These students studied the English language to prepare for future courses in different fields such as Engineering and Administration, where the materials are introduced in the English language. The average age of the participants ranged from 18 to 21 years.

Instrument

Preparatory Deanship Students (PYD students) at King Faisal University were invited to participate in this study. A total of 32 (the total students in one class) Male Preparatory Year. This study implemented three tools for data collection. Each tried to find an answer to one of the research questions. The first tool was Nation’s (2001) Vocabulary Knowledge Size test (VKS test). It was used to account for the overall estimated size of the participants’ word knowledge. The second instrument was a Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire.
(VLS-Q) consisting of 55 statements. The VLS-Q was based on Schmitt’s (1997) classification of VLSs. The modal has been classified into five categories: Determination Strategies (9 items); Social Strategies (8 items); Memory Strategies (23 items); Cognitive Strategies (10 items); and Metacognitive Strategies (5 items). The 55 items were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). An Arabic version of the VLS-Q was also introduced to the participants. It was translated by the researchers and approved by the Center of Translation at King Faisal University- KSA. The VLS-Q was used to PYD students’ use of VLSs. The third tool was a semi-structured interview. The participants were given the freedom to choose the interview language, i.e., English or Arabic. The interview was held to figure out the reasons behind using and not using certain VLSs. These students studied the English language to prepare for future courses in different fields such as Engineering and Administration, where the materials are introduced in the English language. The average age of the participants ranged from 18 to 21 years.

Data Analysis

The Nation’s (2001) VKS test consists of two parts: Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) and Vocabulary Size Test of Controlled Productive Ability (CPA). The VLT tests students’ competence receptive skills—listening and reading. It required matching the words with their synonyms or their short definitions and consisted of 30 items. The maximum score is 30 points. The University Word Level (UWL) contains 36 items, and the full answer required 36 points. Numerically the maximum mark for the VLT test was 156. The second part of the VKS test is the CPA. It tests the student’s productive skills—speaking and writing. CPA test maximum score is 90 distributed as 2000- word level = 18; 3000- word level = 18; 5000- word level = 18; UWL = 18; and 10000- word level = 18. Each correct answer awards one point.

The VLS-Q consists of three parts. The first part was to gather the personal information related to participants, such as age, major, and the year of the study. The second part consists of the 55 items related to VLSs. A five-point Likert scale with options ranging from Always=5; Often=4; Sometimes=3; Seldom=2; and Never= 1 was used to obtain the respondent’s answers to the VLS-Q items. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to run the statistical analysis. The last part was a blank page left to the participants to add any other strategies they use and not included within the VLS-Q items.

The interview sessions were in the Arabic language as required by the participants. They were recorded by using a modern smartphone device. The tracks were scripted into the Arabic language and then translated into English.

4. Results and Discussion

The Vocabulary Knowledge Size Tests Scores

The descriptive analysis of Nation’s VKS test scores showed a gap between the PYD learners’ productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge. Table 1 presents a statistical description of the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of each level of the two vocabulary tests (VLT and CPA).
Table 1. Preparatory Year Deanship learners’ (PYD) Scores in Nation’s VKS test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive analysis</th>
<th>Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Vocabulary Size Test of Controlled Productive Ability (CPA)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>UWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAX</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>18.69</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that individual differences among learners in terms of their range of scores exist in the VLT test and the CPA test. For instance, there is a range of 10 points to 30 points at the 2000-level, and the gap between scores increases as we go from the lower frequency word level to the higher ones. Table 9 also shows that, in the CPA test, some students achieved a minimum score of 0 points while the highest score was 12 points out of 18 points at the 2000-word level. However, the learners’ scores decrease as we move from the lowest word level (i.e., 2000) toward the highest word level (i.e., 10000). The ANOVA analysis showed significant differences in the PYD learners’ scores within all word levels (F=19.730, p=.000) following the VLT test except between the academic-word level and the 3000-word level where there was no significant difference in scores (p=.342). It also showed, in the case of the CPA test, a significant difference between the 2000-word level and other word-level (p<.05), and no significant difference between the 3000-word level and the UWL (p=.313) and the 5000-word level and the UWL (p=.249) and the 5000-word level and the 10000-word level (p=.195).

These findings indicate two things. First, there are differences among the participants when they were tested at the same word level. Students differ in their capabilities of learning languages (Dörnyei, 2009). Some participants performed better than others did. These findings indicate the gap is wider that makes it dangerous to compare better participants with poor ones. The second realization is that the participants (either better or poor) can control the meaning of the lowest level of most frequent words (i.e., 2000-word level) better than the highest ones (50000 and 10000-word levels). These results are similar to the previous studies in Saudi Arabia. Al-Fraidan (2010), for example, found that school graduate learners have some words around 2000. Moreover, PYD students are among those students who recently have finished secondary school.

Table 2. PYD Descriptive Statistics for VLT and CPA scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VLT</td>
<td>47.5313</td>
<td>14.18765</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.549</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>8.0938</td>
<td>5.81633</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. PYD students’ VLT and CPA scores correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VLT</th>
<th>CPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VLT</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To compare the VLT scores and the CPA scores, a t-test and Person’s r data analysis were generated. Table 2 above shows the PYD students' descriptive statistics for the VLT and CPA scores. The t-test indicated a significant difference (t=14.549, P<.05) in the scores between the VLT and the CPA test. Such findings again reveal that the PYD learners perform better in the receptive linguistic situation than the productive linguistic ones. In table 3 above, Pearson’s r data analysis showed no significant correlation (r= .31; p˃ .05) between VLT and CPA. It means that the scores in the VLT test are not associated with scores in the CPA.

The figure above shows the decrease of learners’ scores as we move towards the highest level of the word knowledge size. The results reveal the difference in language proficiency among the learners when their receptive and productive proficiency are compared. PYD learners showed that there is no relationship between their scores in the two different types of tests. It is an indication that the PYD students perform well when they use their receptive knowledge to understand what they read or hear. Nevertheless, they are not necessarily good users of the English language when they speak or write. It indicates that there is a difference in the number...
of vocabulary for the productive and receptive skills. PYD learners also have difficulties in using some words for production. This realization reflects the learners’ incapability to speak or write at their first stages of learning the new language and their struggles with speaking and writing tasks. And this is because, perhaps, the learners were focusing on listening and reading at the first stages of their language learning, following the natural way of learning the first language found in childhood.

The main purpose of the Nation’s (2000) VKS test is to estimate the students’ vocabulary knowledge size. In order to calculate the estimated words that PYD students have, this study operates the formula proposed by Scofield (2005). It is one of the best formulas that can be used on Nation’s, (2001) VKS test (Al-Fraidan, 2012). Scofield’s (2005) formula works as follows.

\[
\text{Vocabulary size} = \frac{\text{The mean score at a word level} \times \text{Total of the words sampled at the level and below down to the last level sampled}}{\text{Total items tested at level}}
\]

When applying this formula to the PYD students score in the VLT test, we find that the participants estimated word knowledge in each level of the test as follows:

- The 2000-word level: \((18.69 \times 2000)/30 = 1245.83\)
- The 3000-word level: \((12.41 \times 1000)/30 = 413.54\)
- The 5000-word level: \((4.06 \times 2000)/30 = 270.83\)
- The university level: \((11.53 \times 836)/36 = 267.78\)
- The 10000-word level: \((0.84 \times 4164)/30 = 117.11\)
- The overall estimate level is = 2315.10

And, when we applied the same formula to the CPA test, the PYD students estimated word knowledge in each level of the test as follows:

- The 2000-word level: \((4.97 \times 2000)/18 = 552.08\)
- The 3000-word level: \((1.50 \times 1000)/18 = 83.33\)
- The 5000-word level: \((0.56 \times 2000)/18 = 62.50\)
- The university level: \((1.06 \times 836)/18 = 49.35\)
- The 10000-word level: \((0.00 \times 4164)/18 = 0.00\)
- The overall estimate level is = 747.26

As the results clearly show, there is a difference in the number of vocabulary PYD students use for the reception and production of the English language. While PYD students can read and listen (with an estimation of 2315 English words), they have trouble in writing and speaking (with 747 English words). Language learners need words around 3000 before they can communicate or read texts with a degree of comprehension (e.g., Nation & Waring, 1997; Laufer, 1997; Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997; Schmitt, 2014). Some factors affect the proficiency level of Saudi learners of the English language. First, English in Saudi Arabia is a foreign language (Ministry of Education, KSA). The student only practices the English
language inside the classroom. They do not use English in their daily lives as it is used in the second language contexts (i.e., India). Second, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has set a 2000 word level (probably receptive words) for students exiting from high schools and enrolling in universities (Al-Fraidan, 2010). Third, the effect of age on learning languages. Age plays a role in learning vocabulary. According to the critical period hypothesis, the learners approaching puberty are slower in learning a language (Lenneberg, 1967; Krashen, 1975).

**Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLS-Q)**

The VLS-Q was used to investigate the PYD students’ frequent use of vocabulary learning strategies. Table 4 below shows the average of the VLS-Q scores.

**Table 4. The distribution of the PYD participants scores on the VLS-Q**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLS Category</th>
<th>Determination</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items No.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores mean of 32 s</td>
<td>30.28</td>
<td>26.16</td>
<td>69.56</td>
<td>26.63</td>
<td>16.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>67.29</td>
<td>65.39</td>
<td>60.49</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td>65.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A t-test was used to compare the categories of the VLSs with each other. The t-test analysis showed no significant difference between the determination category and the social category (t= .712, p=.479) and the metacognitive category (t=.721, p=.474). However, there was a significant difference between the determination category and the memory category (t=2.130, p=.008) and the cognitive category (t=4.686, p=.000). The t-test also showed a significant difference in the use of social strategies and the cognitive strategies where t=3.740 and p= .001. But, there was no significant difference between the social category and the memory category (t=1.759, p=.083) and the metacognitive category (t=.045, p=.964). The analysis also showed a significant difference between the frequent use of the memory category strategies and the cognitive category strategies (t=2.333, p=.023). But, the difference in the frequent use of the memory category is not significant in comparison to the metacognitive category (t=1.617, p=.111). Finally, the t-test showed a significant relationship between using the cognitive category strategies and the metacognitive category strategies (t=-3.548, p=.551).
The results in the figure above justify our claim about the diversity of using VLSs among different learners in different/same contexts. And it is similar to the previous research on VLSs (e.g., Schmitt, 1997; Gu, 2003; AL-Qahtani, 2005; Zarrin, S., & Khan, Z., 2014), which revealed that language learners usually use a different number of VLSs and they sometimes prefer some VLSs but not others.

PYD learners prefer the use of Determination strategies such as “Using the internet to check the word’s meaning”, “Guessing the word`s meaning from the text/context”, and “Looking for the word`s meaning in a bilingual dictionary” more frequently than other strategies. Using DET strategies was also found in many studies such as those of Al-Khasawneh (2012), AL-Gouati (2014), Schmitt’s (1997), Berrnads’ and Gonzales’ (2009), Mokhtar et al. (2009), Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013), Nirattisai (2014), and Liao, 2004). PYD learners are found to be less user of COG strategies. The reasons as the learners themselves indicated the unfamiliarity of these types of strategies.

The PYD students always focus on the strategies concerning communicative skills. They have good attitudes towards the importance of the pronunciation and spelling of the new words. In the interview, they experience difficulties using new words in productive situations, and they sometimes quickly forget the meaning when words are learned in isolation. According to McDermott (1999), the word complexity is realized when its multiple meanings need to be understood in texts and paragraphs.

**The Semi-structured Interview**

The 1-to-1 semi-structured interview was used to discover the reasons behind the use and non-use of some VLSs. During meeting with the researchers, the PYD students reported different reasons. The reasons for using certain VLSs vary according to the difference in the learners’ interests and learning background. “Guessing the meaning of the new word” was used due to the unavailability of the dictionaries and to understand the whole meaning of the discourse at once; “Using Arabic cognate” is to ease pronunciation; “Using the internet for translation” is to save time and effort and because of the availability of the network and constant update of the online dictionaries. PYD students revealed that “Using bilingual dictionaries” and “Asking the teacher about the meaning” were used to get the meaning of the new words directly, “using a monolingual dictionary” were used to help the learners master more synonyms and antonyms. Some learners stated that “Asking for the teacher’s translation” gives more trusted and accurate meaning and their reliance on “making a mental image for the new words” assists them to maintain the meaning in the mother tongue and the second/foreign as well. Moreover, the strategies “Practicing the new words with native speakers”, “Using media in learning words”, “Using the new words with the classmate” and “Saying the new word loudly” were all purposefully used to master the meanings of the new words in real situations and then to use them properly as needed. The reason for “associating the meaning with the parts of the speech” was to master the syntactical form of the new language and reduce the effect of mother tongue interference.
The seasons behind the none-use of some strategies were also not predictable. The results revealed that some learners prefer learning the meanings of the new words by themselves to retrieve them whenever needed. They also revealed that “not asking the teacher/classmate for translation” is due to the untruthfulness of the learning source and is due to the tendency towards self-learning. The reasons for “not using media/dictionaries/internet” are the unavailability of the internet and the materials. Unfamiliarity with the strategies such as “writing the new words on pieces of papers and sticking them in the wall”, “analyzing the word affixes”, “using flashcards” and “using Peg, Chi, semantic methods” was the factor for not using these strategies.

Reference

University of Northampton, UK. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.northampton.ac.uk/


