Identifying ESL Learners' Use Of Multiple Resources In Vocabulary Learning.

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Abstract

Knowledge of Vocabulary plays a vital role in the successful acquisition of a language. It is an essential and a fundamental element in language learning since it is considered the basis of any ESL Learners'. Students face tremendous difficulties in learning English vocabulary and show an aversion towards learning vocabulary. The present work highlights the use of multiple methods of teaching resources in learning vocabulary. It shows that learners'' can use a variety of resources to acquire vocabulary in the four major skills. It highlights that learners'' can be open to other resources outside the classroom. The usage of new technology enhances their vocabulary learning and they need not rely solely on teachers.

Key words

Vocabulary, Vocabulary Learning Strategy, Resources, English as Second Language

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition plays an important role in mastering a language. It is important for learners to have sufficient vocabulary to perform well in all aspects of language. ESL students face great problems with learning English vocabulary especially in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The inability to master vocabulary falls short as they have limited knowledge of vocabulary. According to Siyanova (2016), words learned from classroom instruction are limited due to lack of second language input.

One of the most important factors which influence the learning of vocabulary are the resources used by the learners. Learning strategies are critically important as vocabulary learning fails to take place as learners' do not know how to master it. Once the right strategies are identified, imparting lessons will be more successful (Rubin, 1987). The awareness of the students' learning can enhance language learning. Thus, this study is carried out to identify and encourage the use of multiple methods and resources by the students in vocabulary learning in all of the four major skills.

Words are the vehicles of ideas and thoughts, without these words we are unable to communicate. In fact, words are the essential tools in our day today communication. If one has a large vocabulary then he can read with speed, comprehension and prepare notes on the material studied by him. Vocabulary is required to express meaning and using the receptive (listening & reading) and productive (speaking & writing) skills. "If language structures make up the skeleton of the language then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh." (Hammer 1991). Vocabulary is not a syllabus that is a list of words that teachers prepare to their learners to memorize and learnt. Memorizing may be good and useful as a temporary technique for tests, but not for learning a second language. Words do not exist on their own, they live together and they depend upon each other.

LITERATURE REVIEW
VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY

Strategies are communicative procedures that learners' use in order to learn and use language. It also involves mental in learning process (Nunan 1988). Oxford (2003) in more specifically stated that learning strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which are essential for developing communicative competence. He also stressed that the purpose of language learning strategies taken by learners' is to make the learning process easier, more fluent, more enjoyable, self-directed, self-explanatory instruction and more transferable to new experience situations. The development of the strategies is also on the basis that language learners' need to be helped to improve the way they go about learning vocabulary and the ability to develop their own vocabulary learning strategies would become a powerful approach in vocabulary acquisition (Cunningsworth in Ali & Kalajahi, 2012).

Learners' need to be given the independence to try to improve themselves without fully depending on their teacher as there is no best method or teacher in learning vocabulary (Griffiths, 2003). Vocabulary learning strategies are helpful in molding students to take control of their own learning and improve their responsibility for their studies. This is supported by Ranalli (2003), that independence in vocabulary also helps in psychological condition of the learners to recall words more effectively since they decide what to learn by themselves. However, learners' might not be able to implement vocabulary learning strategies on their own and they should be trained and encouraged to use and to acquire new vocabularies by themselves (Cameron, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). This is supported by Ranalli (2003) who advocates that a good knowledge of the strategies and resources and the ability to apply them in appropriate situations will considerably help students simplify.

CLASSIFICATION OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY

Oxford (1990) classified VLS in two major categories, which are direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies consist of cognitive, memory and compensation while indirect strategies consist of affective, metacognitive and social. Gu and Johnson (1996) on the other hand, focused on itemized VLS into 4 strategies which consists of cognitive, metacognitive, memory and activation strategies. According to him, this strategy is more realistic

as a learner n e e d n o t depend on only one strategy to learn.

As for Schmitt (1997), he proposed a strategy which consists of discovery of meaning of the new words and followed by the process of consolidation after discovery. His strategy is a combination of the direct and indirect strategy found in Oxford (1990) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). Seyyed Ali & Akram (2015) in this study revealed that learners' use different resources and reference material to learning English vocabulary. They not only use printed materials to learn but also take advantage of advances in technology in our increasingly multimedia world to expand their English vocabulary. Gebremedhin Ghidey Kidane (2016) in this study, revealed that students learn through dictionary, guessing from context and ask for assistance from their friends. They rarely ask their teachers.

Zhihong Bai (2018) carried out a study on learning strategies used by second grade non-English major students in a university. The findings from the study revealed each method has advantages and disadvantages. Hence, there is a need to do further research on the resources being used by learners' as each learner is different individually.

Finally, a more recent study done by Aravind B. R & Rajasekaran V (2018) was carried out to identify the most and frequent strategies used in vocabulary learning. The findings showed the popular strategies employed are using new words in the sentence, taking notes in the class, studying or spelling of words, spoken repetition and usage of dictionary. English language media is frequently used in learning and media such as songs, video and newscast are of preference. Other methods, such as flash cards, analyzing of parts of speech are not preferred.

There seems to be mutual preferences for more than one strategy used in acquiring certain skill of a language and the need to use various vocabulary learning. Thus, there is a need to find out the multiple resources being used by students in vocabulary learning as it consists of students who are individually different in concepts, attitudes, age, and motivation. This can affect the students on choosing different resources in vocabulary learning.

MEDIA AS A SOURCE

Integrating media such as songs, movies, and newspapers into English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction provides a dynamic and authentic context for vocabulary acquisition. Songs offer repetitive and rhythmical language patterns, enhancing learners'' retention and pronunciation. Movies expose students to conversational language, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances, supporting contextual learning and listening comprehension. Newspapers introduce formal vocabulary and current events, expanding learners'' lexical range and reading skills. These media sources promote incidental learning, where vocabulary is acquired subconsciously through exposure rather than rote memorization. Moreover, they cater to diverse learning styles—auditory, visual, and kinesthetic—making vocabulary learning more engaging and effective. By interacting with real-world language, students not only build a practical vocabulary repertoire but also develop socio-cultural competence. Therefore, incorporating media into ESL education bridges classroom learning with real-life communication, fostering deeper language immersion and long-term vocabulary retention.

TRANSLATION

Requesting translation from the teacher is a practical and effective strategy for vocabulary acquisition among English as a Second Language (ESL) students, particularly in the early stages of language learning. When learners' encounter unfamiliar words, direct translation helps establish immediate comprehension and reduces cognitive overload. This method enables learners' to create connections between their first language (L1) and the target language (L2), facilitating deeper understanding and memory retention. Moreover, teacher-provided translations are generally more accurate and contextually appropriate than digital tools or peer suggestions, reducing the risk of misunderstanding. While reliance on translation may decrease over time as proficiency grows, its strategic use supports vocabulary development and builds learner confidence. However, to maximize effectiveness, translations should be supplemented with context-rich examples, pronunciation guidance, and opportunities for active use. Thus, teacher-assisted translation serves as a scaffolded approach that bridges linguistic gaps and supports progressive language acquisition in ESL settings.

DEVICES

The use of mobile phones, laptops, and the internet has become an essential tool for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' in acquiring new vocabulary. These digital resources offer immediate access to online dictionaries, translation apps, thesauruses, and multimedia content, allowing learners' to independently search for word meanings, usage examples, and pronunciation. This autonomy fosters learner-centered education and supports just-in-time learning, enabling students to engage with vocabulary in real-world contexts. Additionally, many language learning applications integrate spaced repetition and contextual learning, which enhance vocabulary retention and recall. The internet also exposes students to diverse and authentic language sources such as blogs, forums, and videos, encouraging incidental vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, digital devices support multimodal learning by combining text, audio, and visual aids, which is particularly beneficial for different learning styles. Therefore, incorporating technology into vocabulary learning promotes self-directed learning, increases motivation, and accelerates language development for ESL students.

EMAILS

Using email communication with peers and teachers is an effective strategy for vocabulary development among English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Writing and reading emails provide authentic language practice, encouraging learners' to use new vocabulary in meaningful, contextualized ways. Through composing messages, students actively apply words related to academic, social, or professional topics, which reinforces retention and understanding. Reading emails from teachers or peers exposes learners' to varied sentence structures, vocabulary usage, and language registers, enhancing both receptive and productive language skills. Email exchanges also promote feedback opportunities, where teachers can model correct vocabulary use or suggest alternatives, supporting vocabulary refinement. Furthermore, the asynchronous nature of email allows learners' time to process language input and carefully construct responses, fostering accuracy and confidence. Overall, email communication serves not only as a practical writing tool but also as a collaborative learning platform that supports ongoing vocabulary growth in ESL contexts.

GUESSING FROM CONTEXT

Guessing word meanings from context is a valuable strategy for vocabulary acquisition among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners'. This technique involves inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words by analyzing surrounding text, such as definitions, examples, or contrasting information. Contextual guessing encourages learners' to engage in deeper cognitive processing, promoting long-term retention and critical thinking skills. It also fosters reading fluency by allowing students to comprehend general meaning without interrupting the flow of reading to consult dictionaries. As learners' are exposed to repeated patterns and word associations, they gradually develop the ability to recognize word functions and meanings independently. This strategy is particularly effective in content-based lessons, where vocabulary is embedded within meaningful and subject-specific contexts. Moreover, contextual learning mirrors real-life language use, where learners' must often interpret meaning without direct translation. Therefore, training ESL students to infer vocabulary from context enhances their autonomy, comprehension skills, and overall language proficiency.

Methods of Knowing New Words
Types of Vocabulary
Selection and Gradation of English Vocabulary for Teaching

It is impossible to teach all the words of English, the selection of word is made on the basis of well-known principles of frequency, usefulness and teaching ability. These words are selected on the basis of following principles-

- **Usefulness:** The teacher has to see whether the word is useful for the learner and is suitable to his mental level.

- **Frequency and its Popularity:** The teacher can get information about which word will be most useful for learners' of English by looking at the frequency of vocabulary.

- **Structural Value:** The words which are valuable in connecting the content and structure of words should be taught early.

- **Universality:** A word must be useful and applicable to everywhere.

- **Applicability:** It shows in how many different senses a word can be used.

- **Productivity:** Words productivity deals with its value of word building by means of prefixes and suffixes. E.g. Natural, naturally and unnatural.

- **Suitability:** Easy to memorize, ready to spell and easy to utter.

- **Teach ability:** Words which are easily demonstratable and teachable should have high priority with teacher.

- **Simplicity:** Words which are simple, those which are different in pronunciation, spelling and meaning.

GRADATION OF VOCABULARY:

Grading of language material means putting it in a suitable order at the early stages, simple and common words are kept for teaching while the different once are at higher stages. Gradation involves grouping and sequence.

GROUPING:

- **Phonetic Grouping:** this involves grouping according to students, words have similar sounds should be target example- cow, love, cat, rat etc.

- **Lexical Grouping:** Words that can be used in the same situation come under this type of grouping. For example: hospital, doctor, nurse, tablet, tonic etc.

- **Grammatical Grouping:** Sentence patterns which are similar should be taught.

- **Semantic Grouping:** Words that convey similar meaning should be taught. Learners' should have the knowledge of semantics of vocabulary.

SEQUENCE:

TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING VOACBULARY:

- **Lexical Sequence:** Some words may be taught in a lexical sequence order which will be effective. For example, sit, stand, come, go etc.

- **Semantic Sequence:** The various meaning and usage of words are put in order and thought on different occasions. For example:

i)   The table is there. (Which indicates place?)

ii)   These are many stories. (Introduction)

- **Sequence of Structures:** the structures should also be taught simple to complex in sequence. For example: phrases to clauses, sentence to paragraphs.

Thus, the principle of selection and gradation are important for convenient and effective language teaching.

TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING VOCABULARY:

The first step in teaching vocabulary is to determine the nature and relative difficulty of the word. There are many English words, e.g. pen, ball, bag, table etc. which have already entered the pupils' mother tongue. There are other words e.g. father, mother, sun, moon, cat, dog, eat, and drink which have at least in their meanings, exact equivalents in their mother tongue. When we teach the vocabulary to ESL learners' we try to give the meaning in their mother tongue, teach the spelling, meaning in mother tongue, and teach the spelling the forms (singular/plural, past/present etc.in the case of irregular nouns and verbs) and the pronunciation. Figurative and transferred meaning of the words will require special treatment. But there are many other words in English which have their exact translation equivalents. Therefore, these kinds of words would be difficult for the pupils.

Most of the structural words and other high frequency words come under this category. There are some techniques of teaching vocabulary are as follows:

- **Actual objects or models:** In a classroom teacher can teach names of many things by showing actual objects or models.

- **Actions:** The meaning of many words can be made clear by performing simple actions in the classroom e.g. walk, using body gestures.

- **Pictures:** The use of pictures for teaching vocabulary is quite obvious; every good dictionary makes use of them. Learners' can learn any word with the help of suitable picture, e.g. big, eyes, hand, man, woman etc.

- **Blackboard sketches:** Quick blackboard sketches may work in teaching vocabulary. Learners' can easily understand the meaning of the word, it will be helpful to develop the vocabulary.

- **Verbal Context:** There are many abstract words and the meaning of which cannot presented by visual means. Such a technique is creating verbal context with known words, e.g. (a) I like tea more than coffee. I prefer tea to coffee.

- **Illustrative Sentence:** An illustrative sentence is very helpful for showing the usage of word, and every good dictionary makes the use of such kind of sentence and use them after the pupils have grasped the general meaning of the word, e.g. accept. (a)The captain of the team accepted the offer.

- **Synonyms:** If the learners' already know the acceptable synonym, it can be used in a sentence to teach the meaning of the new word, e.g. pretty (a) the girl is pretty.

- **Antonyms:** Antonyms like the synonyms, can also be used in a sentence by pupil, if it is already known them.

- **Translation and Explanation:** These two seem to be the top favorites with teachers. But it will have been clear that they are at least satisfactory means of teaching vocabulary. Translation and explanation in pupils' mother tongue should be attempted only when the other means discussed above have been found inadequate or unnecessarily time consuming.

CONCLUSION

The acquisition of vocabulary is arguably the most critical component of successful language learning. Until recently, however, it has been difficult to determine the most important phrases and words needed to establish a suitable vocabulary for conducting conversation most effectively. The task at hand, therefore, is to take this new information and apply it in the classroom. Since there are so many things to learn about to teach piece of vocabulary (meaning, spoken/written forms, collocations, connotations, grammar etc.) it is important that we as teachers only introduce a little at a time, starting with the most frequent, useful, and less frequent uses of previously learned items. This paper tries to give them some techniques and methods to build ESL learners'' knowledge of vocabulary. The descriptive analysis revealed multiple resources used by learners' to learn new vocabulary. Some strategies were used more than others. It should be obvious, that learners' do not rely

on teachers solely. Students prefer to listen to friends and use full advantage of media, such as mobile phone, laptops, internet and SMS as sources to learn words. Students learn through socializing and this helps them in their listening and speaking skills. This is due to the reason, students feel safe and feel free to use the language with their friends where by trial and error in using the language are common. In addition, students are more open to other resources outside the classroom, such as new and latest technology such as mobile phone, internet and laptop. The advance of technology is gradually influencing students' learning and moving away from traditional approach of learning. Several implications can be drawn for teachers, students and policy makers. Teachers need to be aware of preferred multiple resources used by students. It is indeed essential for teachers as by understanding students' preferred resources; they can plan more meaningful and effective lessons and subsequently use current teaching trends in vocabulary learning to keep abreast in current teaching resources. Policy makers need to act and consider continuous training approaches and resources available provided to teachers on regular basis. This needs to be implemented so t h a t teachers can improve their teaching and expose more current resources to students. Students need to be aware of various resources available apart from depending on the traditional resources of learning vocabulary. Further research can be carried out on the influence of students' gender and personality characteristics to vocabulary learning.

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