



VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES: EXPANSION OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. It is also essential to language teaching and is of paramount importance to a language learner. Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about best practice in vocabulary teaching. In this research paper, the strategies for expanding the knowledge of learned vocabulary are discussed and explained some techniques to expand ample of vocabulary by using different strategies.

KEYWORDS : vocabulary, teaching, strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. Vocabulary addresses single lexical items—words with specific meaning(s)—but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks.

1.1 Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Wilkins (1972) wrote that "... while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (pp. 111–112). This point reflects one's experience with different languages; even without grammar, with some useful words and expressions, one can manage to communicate. Lewis (1993) went further to argue, "lexis is the core or heart of language" (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies.

2. Literature Survey

Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning. As Schmitt (2010) noted, "learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books" (p. 4). Teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English. Voltaire purportedly said, "Language is very difficult to put into words." English language students generally would concur, yet learning vocabulary also helps students master English for their purposes.

The concept of a word can be defined in various ways, but three significant aspects teachers need to be aware of and focus on are form, meaning, and use. According to Nation (2001), the form of a word involves its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and any word parts that make up this particular item (such as a prefix, root, and suffix). An example for word parts can be seen with the word uncommunicative, where the prefix un- means negative or opposite, communicate is the root word, and -ive is a suffix denoting that someone or something is able to do something. Here, they all go together to refer to someone or something that is not able to communicate, hence uncommunicative.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study is to examine the use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) by ESL students at college level to better understand the ways that they applied to

expand new words in English.

It was decided that the best method for this investigation to better understand the use of VLSs by these particular students is to adopt the qualitative research design. Cresswell (2008) identified qualitative research as an investigative method for understanding a phenomenon based on separate methodological traditions of inquiry that elicit human conditions or social problem. In addition, the researcher is the main instrument of analyzing the data.

Personally, the researcher is interested in this topic because he has been teaching in an EFL (English as a foreign language) context where it was very difficult to gain access to teaching and learning materials of the English language. The study is conducted in different engineering colleges.

As Merriam (1988) explained, interview utilization is one of the major sources to obtain qualitative data from subjects. Hence, the method of conducting an interview is one of the most popular means to investigate, research and to inquire data from the one phenomenon. The interviews were conducted individually with 105 students who are randomly selected to gain a deep understanding of the subjects' varied backgrounds in vocabulary learning, the strategies that they used to learn new words in English.

As a whole, the semi-structured interview was used in this phase for data collection. Everything was conducted as planned and scheduled, and thus most of the things worked quite smoothly. The next process was to analyse data obtained after translation in order to discover vocabulary learning behaviours reported to be employed by the students.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

4.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies to Expand the Knowledge of Vocabulary Items (BNV)

The vocabulary learning strategies under this main category are the strategies that 105 students reported employing in order to build new vocabulary items, especially when in class. However, some strategies were reported employing both when in or outside class so that one can achieve some particular goals of his/her vocabulary learning. Below are 14 individual strategies reported employing by the interviewees in order to Expand the Knowledge of Vocabulary items (EKV) that include:
 EKV 1: Semantic feature grids
 EKV 2: Semantic maps
 EKV 3: A new word to its same meaning / opposite meaning

EKV 4: Associating a new word with its coordinates
EKV 5: Drawing pictures /imagery
EKV 6: Employing the keyword method
EKV 7: Graddable words
EKV 8: Study multi-word units
EKV 9: Noting a word into a sentence
EKV 10: The spelling of new words
EKV 11: The pronunciation
EKV 12: Connecting a word to personal experience
EKV 13: Sort out new words from text book by unit or lesson
EKV 14: Organizing into their grammatical category
EKV 15: Note down words in an order
EKV 16: Highlighting the words
EKV 17: Using cards or small pieces of paper

4.2 USING SEMANTICS

It is a visual strategy which is used for teaching and expanding vocabulary in which students categorize words related to other words. Semantic mapping is one way to explain how to categorize word meanings. It remains essential to identify key attributes distinguishing one word from another. It can also be used in teaching other skills such as reading comprehension and writing because it displays the interrelationships among ideas.

4.3 Using synonyms / antonyms

One excellent technique for improving vocabulary is to learn synonyms and antonyms together. One can create a chart listing both synonyms and antonyms. Synonyms and antonyms can be learned in categories such as adjectives, adverbs, and adverbs. It's good to begin building vocabulary by learning categories of English synonyms and antonyms.

4.4 Keyword Method

The keyword mnemonic is undoubtedly an effective means of learning the words of a foreign language. The keyword mnemonic requires individual instruction and practice, to use effectively. Using a verbal (sentence) link is at least as effective as an image, and is easier for many people. The keyword method is undeniably an effective method for accelerating learning of suitable material. The quality of the keyword mnemonic may affect its durability. Mnemonics that emphasize distinctiveness, that increase the vividness and concreteness of the word to be learned, are remembered less well over time than mnemonics that emphasize relational and semantic information.

4.5 Multi-word Units

To learn vocabulary in faster way, the strategy is that make lists based on topics. For example, Food, Cooking, Ingredients, Groceries, are all separate topics, not one topic. It is better not to write in alphabetical order.

4.6 Writing in own sentences

After learning new vocabulary, one can practise in writing own sentences or stories. By that, he could not forget the learned vocabulary. One can improve vocabulary Not only writing in sentences but also connecting that word to his personal experience.

4.7 Using Cards or Pieces of Paper

Learning vocabulary is vital for any language. There are various methods that students use to expand their vocabulary. Some prefer the flashcard method, which is incredibly useful because one can learn a large number of words in a fairly short period of time. By using this method, one can revise the vocabulary very easily.

4.8 Organizing in grammatical order

By practising this method, one can learn more number of words. For example, explain is the verb, explanation is the noun. It is just like adding prefixes or suffixes.

4.9 Sort out Words from Text Book Lessons

Generally, in every class, students read text books. They can expand their vocabulary by sorting out the words from lessons. This is easy and very quick method to acquire more number of words.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study has discovered that the ESL students notice the substance of vocabulary as a branch of language learning. There are some strategies, semantic feature grids, study multi-word units, noting a word into a sentence, a new word to its same meaning / opposite meaning, note down words in an order and using cards or small pieces of paper, by which one can expand the vocabulary at their own. When teaching new vocabulary, teachers should also provide many opportunities to interact with new words on a regular basis across a variety of contexts so its meaning can be automatically accessed during reading. Based on the results, some implications can be observed. First of all, an advantage of this study is that it will increase the public awareness on the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in second language learning and teaching. As Oxford (2003) mentioned "Vocabulary is not explicitly taught in most language classes". The results of the current study can assist language teachers to improve their teaching methods. Second, teachers who are interested in their students' performance in learn the English vocabulary can introduce the vocabulary learning strategies and techniques to their students by designing useful tasks and giving relevant assignments. Future studies on vocabulary learning strategies can be carried out from two viewpoints. Studies on the individuals' differences of language learners from primary to university level can be conducted both in qualitative and quantitative approaches

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