

Significance of Vocabulary in Achieving Efficient Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the importance of vocabulary learning as an essential part in foreign language learning. Lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language and a lack of vocabulary knowledge is an obstacle to learning. An attempt is made to review the trends in the area of teaching vocabulary through various techniques teachers use when teaching.

Key words: vocabulary; academic vocabulary; context; Jzan University.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the first and foremost important step in language acquisition. In a classroom where students are not finding themselves comfortable with second language, language learning can be made interactive and interesting with the introduction of appropriate vocabulary exercises.

This paper is an attempt to study and explore the various methodologies that can be incorporated in the teaching and developing of vocabulary items in a language classroom.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Second language learners used various strategies to determine how well a new word is learned. For instance when learners first encounter a new word, they might guess its meaning and usage from available clues. Some learners might proceed to look it up in the dictionary.

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Others might take down notes along the margins, between the lines, or on separate vocabulary notebooks. Some would even try to use the word actively. Each of these task stages demands metacognitive judgment, choice, and deployment of cognitive strategies for vocabulary learning. And each strategy a learner uses will determine how well a new word is learned successfully.

1.2 significance of the study

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Lexis is the core or heart of language, 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. Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning. English Learners always carry around dictionaries and not grammar books, so that teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English in a very successful way.

1.3 objective of the study

1. To recognize the importance of vocabulary for the second language learner in order to communicate successfully.
2. To develop English vocabulary through idioms, and expressions to understand their meanings in context.

1.4 questions of the study

1. To what extent that English vocabulary has an important role in second language learning?
2. Are students learn more vocabulary when they encounter them in meaningful context?

1.5 hypotheses of the study

1. Vocabulary building is an important technique in the field of second language teaching and learning.
2. A very effective strategy to develop vocabulary is to encounter words in meaningful context.

1.6 methodology

This study concerned with English vocabulary development among university students to recognize the degree of students' achievement in learning vocabulary. So the researcher uses the descriptive analytical approach to handle the study using some statistical analysis. This thought is an appropriate approach, because it helps to describe, analyze, and then to discuss the collected data.

1.7 tools of data collection

The population of this study is English language lecturers at university level “University of Jazan KSA”. The researcher used the questionnaire as a tool to collect the required data.

1.8 The limitations

The sample for this study represented in English lecturers at Jazan University (Saudi Arabia) at different colleges who have a long experience in the field of teaching English language in the academic year 2016 - 2017.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

For a large majority of learners, the ultimate goal of studying is to be able to communicate in a new language. If learners do not wish to lean completely on non-verbal skills, mastering vocabulary is not just important, but crucial in a foreign language learning. Vocabulary is learned through focused, conscious study, but even more commonly in an indirect manner through listening and reading, using context clues to figure out the meaning. However, this kind of incidental learning is only possible if the amount of unknown words remains low. That is, learners must have a significant vocabulary to be able to learn new words from the context in which they appear.

2.2 The importance of learning vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt [1] emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” p. 55). Nation [2] further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.

The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers such as [1,2,3] have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing Nation,[2] Research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for L2 readers to overcome. Krashen, as cited in Lewis, 1993, p25 Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important-if not the most important-components in learning a foreign language, and foreign language curricula must reflect this. Krashen states many reasons for devoting attention to vocabulary. “First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem”. On the other hand, vocabulary has been acknowledged as L2 learners’ greatest single source of problems Meara [5]. This remark may possibly reflect that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is perceived to be a cause of difficulty by learners. Another

possible reason is that, unlike syntax and phonology, vocabulary does not have ruled the learners may follow to acquire and develop their knowledge. In other words, it is not clear in L2 vocabulary learning what rules apply or which vocabulary items should be learned first. Oxford [6] also claims that vocabulary is “by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one’s mother tongue, because of tens of thousands of different meanings” Despite these difficulties that language learners face in L2 vocabulary, they still have to deal with it in their examinations as “‘vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests’” Schmitt [7]. Furthermore, many learners see second language acquisition (SLA) as essentially a matter of learning vocabulary and therefore they spend a great deal of time on memorizing lists of L2 words and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of this research takes the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically for vocabulary (VLS), which is our focus of attention.

2.3 Teaching vocabulary

Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning. Teaching words is a crucial aspect in learning a language as languages are based on words Thornbury [8]. It is almost impossible to learn a language without words; even communication between human beings is based on words. Both teachers and students agree that acquisition of the vocabulary is a central factor in teaching a language Walters [9]. Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to be able to master the material in order to be understood by students, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student’s native language. They also have to take into account that teaching English for young learners is different from adults. The teachers have to know the characteristics of his\her learners. They more over need to prepare good techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching.

2.4 Teaching Vocabulary in English Language: Effective Methodologies

It is noteworthy to mention here that vocabulary items are imparted mostly by translation: either a list of words with their translation at the beginning of the lesson or the translation of the content having new words or glossaries at the very end. This is an erroneous practice as it leads to a state of confusion for the learners. On the teaching skills of vocabulary items, Frisby [10] commented that “While the teacher is not, himself, concerned with the actual selection of vocabulary for text book purposes since practically all the books are based on limited vocabularies, it is important that, the teacher) should know the principles, which underlie vocabulary selection”. Thus it signifies that a language teacher should be innovative and proficient in the application of

methodologies pertaining to teaching vocabulary items in a classroom situation. Following are the main methodologies for teaching vocabulary items in an English language classroom.

2.5.1 Listening Carefully

Careful listening to the words may be a good option in teaching vocabulary items in a heterogenic classroom. "Let the students hear the word in isolation and in a sentence. If the sounds of the word have been mastered, the students will hear it correctly with two or three repetitions." Robert [11] noted that, Slow pronunciation without distortion will help. Breaking the word into parts and building up to the whole word will also be helpful.

2.5.2 Pronouncing the Word

Pronouncing the word enables the students to remember it longer and identify it more readily when they hear or see it.

2.5.3 Methods of Grasping the Meaning

The teacher should try to get the meaning to the class without using translation. This is not preferable on the ground that translation may or may not provide the meaning of the word accurately and precisely. It is advocated as it enables the class to go without grasping the meaning of a word that they have learned to pronounce rather than to depend upon the translation.

2.6 Key Strategies in Teaching Vocabulary

Some of the key strategies to unfold the information and meaning of a new word to a class are as follows:

2.6.1 Definitions

Definitions in the target language may be very handy if they are expressed in terms that are better known or more easily guessed than the word that is defined. In this direction teachers and students can refer to authentic and reliable dictionaries.

2.6.2 Self-defining Context

The context makes the situation clear, and this in turn illuminates the meaning of the new word. This practice saves time and develops an intensive reading habit and better understanding.

2.6.3 Antonyms

When one member of a pair of opposites is understood, the meaning of the other can be easily comprehended. This helps the student to understand the different shades of meanings of a word.

2.6.4 Synonyms

A synonym may be used to help the student to understand the different shades of meaning if the synonym is better known than the word being taught. Synonyms help to enrich a student's vocabulary bank and provide alternative words instantly.

2.6.5 Dramatization

This method can be practiced at ease. It can win the favour of the students as learners like dramatizations and can easily learn through them. Many situations can be dramatized or demonstrated.

2.6.6 Pictures and Drawings

Pictures of many types and colours can be used successfully to show the meaning of words and sentence. Handmade pictures can also be used as there is no need to be very artistic. Drawings can be used to explain the meaning of things, actions, qualities, and relations. A line drawing of a head, for example, provides many useful nouns and verbs.

2.6.7 Realia

Real objects or models of real objects are very effective and meaningful in showing meanings but in handling of real objects, a teacher must be practical and should not be superfluous.

2.6.8 Illustrative Sentences

Most words have a variety of restrictions on their use. Systematic descriptions of these restrictions and idiomatic uses would be laborious and not very effective in teaching. It is better to give appropriate examples that elucidate the range and variation of usage.

2.7 Practice from Meaning to Expression

This is controlled practice in which the class does not create new uses or new contexts but simply recalls the ones presented. There are many types of practices for this purpose. Pictures, realia, context, and dramatization can be used. Series and systems can also be used

2.7.1 Reading the Word

Reading words aloud is also very beneficial. It makes a learner familiar with the word and also improves pronunciations of the learners.

2.7.2 Writing the Word

It will enable the class to write the new word while the auditory memory is fresh, even if the objective is only to read. Writing or copying the word from the blackboard will give the student a chance to understand the grammatical aspect of the word such as noun, verb, adverb, adjective etc.

2.8 Strategy for Special Types of Words

Specific techniques or special combinations of the above techniques may be applicable for particular groups of words.

2.8.1 Words That Are Easy to Learn

It has been seen that the words that are similar in form and meaning to the first language are easy to understand and comprehend. They should be taught for listening and reading rather than for speaking and writing.

2.8.2 Words of Normal Difficulty

Words of normal difficulty are best taught in contextual realms, such as food, clothing, sports, work, and so on. There are advantages to using a connected context illustrating the words that are to be taught. Additional words can be taught as alternatives to those chosen in the connected context. Practice can be controlled in varying situations by changing a key word or phrase.

2.8.3 Difficult Words

Some words and sets of words are especially difficult to understand. They have to be taught as special problems with the strategy determined by the particular problem in each case.

2.9 Effective ways to build vocabulary

Learning how to build a better vocabulary can be a pleasurable and profitable investment of both your time and effort. At least fifteen minutes a day of concentrated study on a regular basis can bring about a rapid improvement in your vocabulary skills, which in turn can increase your ability to communicate by writing, conversing, or making speeches. Acquiring a large vocabulary can benefit you in school, at work, and socially. It will enable you to understand others' ideas better and to have the satisfaction of getting your thoughts and ideas across more effectively. Johnson [12]

Of course, you already know thousands of words, and you will continue to learn more whether you work at it or not. The fact is that many of the words you know were probably learned simply by coming across them often enough in your reading, in conversation, and even while watching television. But increasing the pace of your learning requires a consistent, dedicated approach. If you learned only one new word a day for the next three years, you would have over a thousand new words in your vocabulary. However, if you decided right now to learn ten new words a day, in one year you would have added over three thousand to what you already know, and probably have established a lifetime habit of learning and self-improvement.

2.10 Four basic steps to a better vocabulary

While there are not any magic shortcuts to learning words, the larger your vocabulary becomes, the easier it will

be to connect a new word with words you already know, and thus remember its meaning. So your learning speed, or pace, should increase as your vocabulary grows. There are four basic steps to building your vocabulary:

2.10.1 Be Aware of Words

Many people are surprised when they are told they have small vocabularies. "But I read all the time!" they protest. This shows that reading alone may not be enough to make you learn new words. When we read a novel, for instance, there is usually a strong urge to get on with the story and skip over unfamiliar or perhaps vaguely known words. But while it is obvious when a word is totally unknown to you, you have to be especially aware of words that seem familiar to you but whose precise meanings you may not really know. Instead of avoiding these words, you will need to take a closer look at them. First, try to guess at a word's meaning from its context—that is, the sense of the passage in which it appears; second, if you have a dictionary on hand, look up the word's meaning immediately. This may slow down your reading somewhat, but your improved understanding of each new word will eventually speed your learning of other words, making reading easier. Make a daily practice of noting words of interest to you for further study whenever you are reading, listening to the radio, talking to friends, or watching television. Johnson [12].

2.10.2 Read

When you have become more aware of words, reading is the next important step to increasing your knowledge of words, because that is how you will find most of the words you should be learning. It is also the best way to check on words you have already learned. When you come across a word you have recently studied, and you understand it, that proves you have learned its meaning. Often people with very low vocabularies don't enjoy reading at all. It's more of a chore for them than a pleasure because they don't understand many of the words. If this is the way you feel about reading, try reading easier things. Newspapers are usually easier than magazines; a magazine like *Reader's Digest* is easier to read than *The Atlantic Monthly*. There is no point in trying to read something you simply are not able to understand or are not interested in. The important idea is to find things to read you can enjoy, and to read as often and as much as possible with the idea of learning new words always in mind. Johnson [12].

2.10.3 Use a Dictionary

Most people know how to use a dictionary to look up a word's meaning. Here are some pointers on how to do this as a part of a vocabulary-building program:

Have your own dictionary: Keep it where you usually do your reading at home. You are more likely to use it if you do not have to get it from another room. At work, there may be a good dictionary available for your use. At home, most people do not have a big, unabridged dictionary; however, one of the smaller collegiate dictionaries would be fine to start with.

Circle the words you look up: After you have done this for a while, your eye will naturally move to the words

you have circled whenever you flip through the dictionary. This will give you a quick form of review.

Read the entire entry for the word you look up: Remember, words can have more than one meaning, and the meaning you need for the word you are looking up may not be the first one given in your dictionary. Even if it is, the other meanings of the word will help you understand the different ways the word is used. Also, the word's history, usually given near the beginning of the entry, can often give a fascinating picture of the way the word has developed its current meaning. This will add to the pleasure of learning the word as well as help you remember it. Johnson [12].

2.10.4 Study and Review Regularly

Once you have begun looking up words and you know which ones to study, vocabulary building is simply a matter of reviewing the words regularly until you fix them in your memory. This is best done by setting aside a specific amount of time each day for vocabulary study. During that time you can look up new words you have noted during the day and review old words you are in the process of learning. Set a goal for the number of words you would like to learn and by what date, and arrange your schedule accordingly. Fifteen minutes a day will bring better results than half an hour once a week or so. However, if half an hour a week is all the time you have to spare, start with that. You may find more time later on, and you will be moving in the right direction. In order to review words effectively, all the information on a word should be kept in one place—in a notebook, for example, or on an index card. Index cards are convenient because the words can be placed in alphabetical order, which makes them easy to find when reviewing; and the cards can be carried around with you, so you can study them anywhere. You should try to be systematic about studying, so that you are sure to review each word at least once every couple of weeks. Do not throw cards away, though; you can get a great feeling of accomplishment by looking at the growing stack of words you have learned and by occasionally glancing at an old card and thinking, “Once I actually didn't know the meaning of this word!” Johnson [12]

3. Methodology

3.1 introduction

The current study entitled “Significance of Vocabulary in Achieving Efficient Learning”. The following chapter will be devoted to the methodology to investigate the collected data; the researcher has adopted the descriptive method, because it has great value in providing facts on which professional judgment can be based. The researcher identified the hypothesis of the study and selected the data instrument which is represented in a questionnaire; first the data has been collected, second analyzed and discussed.

3.2 Population of the study

The researcher attempts to generalize the results of the study through a group of English lecturers at Jazan University. The population number is [30] lecturers, males and females. All of them are teaching English language at Jazan University in different colleges in the academic year 2016 - 2017.

3.3 Sample

The sample of this study is represented by [30] English language lecturers, who teach English language in different colleges and their experience ranges from (2 - 24) years, however, some of them are 'Ma.' holders and others have PhD in ELT.

3.4 Tools of Data collection

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains [20] items with five options [agree – disagree – strongly agree - strongly disagree and neither], it is designed to investigate two dimensions. The items from 1-10 were designed to investigate the importance of vocabulary in learning English. The items from 11-20 were designed to provide the teachers with the different strategies to improve and develop vocabulary for efficient learning. Moreover, the prepared questionnaire instructed lecturers to write their [gender – qualifications – graduating college – experience years – English lectures per a week] to enrich the analytical process.

3.4.2 The Questionnaire Validity

Validity is the most important quality to be considered in the development process. Therefore, to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, certain procedures were followed and the prepared version of the questionnaire presented to specialize people, second the questionnaire modified in regard of wording, the number of items and restatement of certain items. Finally the questionnaire collected, analyzed, scored and tabulated.

3.5 The Questionnaire Reliability

Students' performance may be affected by different factors in testing conditions such as fatigue, anxiety and carelessness, thus, they may obtain scores, which are inconsistent from one occasion to the next. Reliable questionnaire should have the same scores if it is given in a future time to the same group of subjects.

3.6 Procedures

To prepare the questionnaire certain procedures were followed. First, the prepared version of the questionnaire was presented to specialized people who have long experience in the field of English language teaching and syllabus designing. Second, this questionnaire which consists of twenty items were designed and used according to the syllabus contents. Then, it was distributed among English language lecturers at Jazan University. The questionnaire was constructed through the following steps:

1. The proposed questionnaire was design first.
2. The questionnaire is presented to experts' people to check face validity.
3. The corrections were made according to the recommendations for the final version of the questionnaire.
4. The questionnaire consists of five options for each item, so a respondent has to tick the suitable one.

5. The questionnaire was distributed among [30] lecturers of English at Jazan University.
6. Finally, the questionnaire was collected analyzed and tabulated.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 introduction

The following chapter will be devoted to present, analyze and discuss the results of the collected data using the questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The results of the presented questionnaire will be discussed and interpreted in details. The following table is a general statistics for English language lecturers at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia who teach English language at different colleges with different qualifications.

4.2 Table No (1)

T- test is used for one group, the results showed that the level of significance is less than the calculated level it is ,000 positive significance on both dimensions or less than ,05, therefore the result is statistically significant.

Table 1: T- test one group statistic

Dimension	No	Mean	Std	T- Value	Df	Sig.	Result
First	30	47.5	3.8	18	29	.000	Sig. +
Second	30	41.1	4.2	14.3	29	.000	Sig. +

4.3 Table No (2)

T- test is used for the (gender) in order to see if there are differences between males and females groups and the results showed that, there are no differences between both groups. The calculated level is (,3) is above than the significance level (,05)., the results are presented in details in the following table.

Table 2: T- test gender statistic

Gender	No	Mean	Std	T- Value	Df	Sig.	Result
Male	20	58.0	4.9	.95	28	,3	Not significant
Female	10	84.6	3.8				No difference

4.4 Table No (3)

T- test is used for the (qualifications) in order to see if there are differences between 'MA and PhD holders' and the results showed that, there are no differences between both groups. The calculated level is (,12) is above than the significance level (,05)., the results are presented in details in the following table.

Table 3: T- test qualification statistic

Qualification	No	Mean	Std	T- Value	Df	Sig.	Result
MA	20	84.1	4.7	.41	28	,12	Not significant
PhD	10	82.3	4.6				No difference

4.5 Table No (4)

Mon- variation analysis is used for (weekly lectures) in order to see if there are differences between groups and the results showed that, there are no differences between both groups. The calculated level is (,16) is above than the significance level (,05)., the results are presented in details in the following table.

Table 4: T- test lectures per week statistic

Number	squires	Df	Sq. Medium	F- Value	Sig.	Result
Among groups	390.9	2	195.5	1.2	,16	Not significant
Inside groups	357.8	27	13.3			No difference
Total	748.7	29				

4.6 Table No (5)

The calculated data for the subjects (experiences) showed that there are no differences between groups. The calculated level is (,17) is above than the significance level (,05)., the results are presented in details in the following table.

Table 5: T- test subjects experiences statistic

Number	squires	Df	Sq. Medium	F- Value	Sig.	Result
Among groups	268.5	2	134.2	.89	,17	Not significant
Inside groups	480.3	27	17.8			No difference
Total	748.8	29				

Finally, and with reference to the above tables it is clearly seen that the questionnaire has achieved high validity for the thirty subjects and all questionnaire items were designed to satisfy the respondents' needs. So, the two

dimensions are positively significant and the (T-tailed of both dimensions is .000 or less than .05 level).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The renewed importance of vocabulary instruction will continue to interest and be a fertile area for the efforts of second language researchers, materials writers, and instructors. The first challenge is to systematize the vocabulary of English. Advances in technology will help to collect and analyze current and specialized corpora, such as ESP, spoken English, and academic English, and to develop better descriptions of collocations and lexical phrases. In this experimental study the questionnaire is used as an instrument for collecting the required data. The sample is taken systematically from thirty English language lecturers from different colleges at Jazan University. The researchers used different statistical methods were used to reach the following findings.

5.2 The main findings

- 1- Appropriate vocabulary exercises are effective activities in the field of second language learning.
- 2- Sufficient vocabulary learning helps students understand and communicate easily and successfully.
- 3- The importance of vocabulary knowledge is recognized in the development of reading skills.
- 4- The best way to develop vocabulary is to read simplified books and guess meanings from the context.
- 5- The best way to teach vocabulary is to present semantically related words 'central concept'.
- 6- Vocabulary develops much better when teachers discuss the meaning during loud reading inside classrooms.
- 7- Translation has been found ineffective in vocabulary building particularly in advanced classes.
- 8- Students learn more words when they encounter them in meaningful context.

5.3 Recommendations

- 1- Teachers need to notice the type of the vocabulary, the students' level and characteristics.
- 2- Students' age, level of education as well as English proficiency may affect their learning,
- 3- Teachers need to be aware of these differences when applying their teaching techniques.
- 4- Teachers can further provide their students with vocabulary learning strategies with opportunities to encounter words repeatedly and in more than one context

- 5- Teach the effective, efficient, realistic use of dictionaries, thesauruses, and other reference.
- 6- Language teachers should teach, model, and encourage the application of a word-learning strategy.
- 7- Teachers should provide direct instruction in the meanings of clusters of words and individual words.
- 8- Teacher training programs will be better able to prepare L2 instructors to teach vocabulary in a principled and systematic way.
- 9- More research on the effectiveness of methods of vocabulary instruction is necessary.
- 10- Crucial areas are semantic elaboration, ways to productively learn collocations and lexical phrases, and computer-assisted vocabulary activities.
- 11- Computer-assisted learning, by creating software which is based on sound principles of vocabulary acquisition theory.
- 12- There is a need for programs which specialize on a useful corpus, provide the expanded rehearsal, and engage the learner on deeper levels and in a variety of ways as they practice vocabulary.

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