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Effective Vocabulary Learning Strategies for English Language learners

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**Abstract**

Vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning. The prominent role of vocabulary knowledge in second or foreign language learning has been recently recognized by theorists and researchers in the field. According to increased literature by those native and non-native English speaking teachers, researchers and theorists illustrate that there are lots of strategies involved in vocabulary learning and teaching of which many of them are very affective, affective, and less affective. All are not affective for every student in all circumstances. Some strategies are affective for some students in some contexts, others not. It has been suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge examining various characteristics of the words in relation to listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Hence, on the basis of the significance attributed to vocabulary learning strategies in the process of vocabulary learning and enhancements, my paper will discuss the affective means of strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching.

**Introduction**

A learning strategy is a person's approach to learning and using information. The main benefit of all learning strategies including strategies for vocabulary learning is the fact that they enable learners to take control of their own learning so that students can take more responsibility for their studies (Lee 2003). Learning strategies are used by students to help them understand information and solve problems. Students who do not know or use good learning strategies often learn passively and ultimately fail in school. So, learning strategy focuses on making the students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to solve problems and be successful. Research shows that “successful students not only used more strategies on average but also employed a wide variety of procedures and used the more consistently than their less successful peers” (Sabo, 1999, p. 177).

Vocabulary Learning Strategies is likewise considered as a “subset of general learning strategies” (Nation 2001, p.217) in second language acquisition as affective vocabulary learning strategies play a significant role in second language learning. Equipped with a range of different vocabulary learning strategies students can decide upon how exactly they would like to deal with unknown words. A good knowledge of the strategies and the ability to apply them in suitable situations might considerably simplify the learning process of new vocabulary for students for instance, independence in selecting which words to study results in better recall of the words than when the words are chosen by someone else.

 O’Malley and Chamot (1990) interested in learning strategies and characteristics of good language learner defined learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information” (p.1).Similarly, Williams and Burden (1997) define language learning strategies as “techniques used by learners to help make language learning more effective and increase their independence and autonomy as learners” (p. 145 - 149). Strategies can be employed by learners to assist with storage of information, to help with the construction of language rules and to help with appropriate attitude towards the learning situation. Oxford (2001) also defines learning strategies as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, most enjoyable, and more self – directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. Citing Rubin (1987), Schmitt (1997) claims learning is “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved and used. So, vocabulary learning strategies could be any which affects this broadly defined process” (p. 203). Process strategies for learning how to paraphrase critical information, picture information to promote understanding and remembering, ask questions and make predictions about text information, and identify unknown words in text and strategies for developing mnemonics and other devices to aid memorization of facts as well as strategies for learning new vocabulary. These strategies help prepare students for tests.

 Therefore, vocabulary learning strategies have great contribution to learn language successfully. They are the means that students use to develop their vocabulary knowledge to solve their problems in language learning (Gidey, 2008).

Fan (2003) emphasized that “the successful learners are those who develop techniques and disciplines for learning vocabulary”. It might just be a question of keeping a notebook, or using a dictionary properly or perhaps disciplining yourself to look over your notes or to read a lot outside of class. The more independent you become as a learner, the better and stronger your vocabulary becomes. That is why Schimitt (1997), Oxford (1990) and Nation (2001) developed systematic structure of Vocabulary Learning Strategies based on several factors. Taking account of their learning strategies, my paper will focus on effective vocabulary learning strategies which played significant role in vocabulary acquisition irrespective of “person” (individual learners), “context’ (situation in which vocabulary is learnt and used) and “task” ( means of learning words through specific activities by each individual in different situations).

**Importance of Vocabulary**

In order to live in the world, we must know things, objects; we need to recognize, identify and finally differentiate from each other. So, we must name those to let things known to people. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling. Actually naming is the means whereby we attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass. By assigning names we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world” (Taylor 1990, p. 1), termed as word ensures an effective communication. This is to say that words are the basic unit of a language form without which one cannot communicate effectively or express ideas and will be unable to participate in the conversation unless they recognize the meanings of the key words used by those who address them. And if they wish to express some ideas or ask for information, they must be able to “produce lexical items to convey their meaning” (Krashen 1998, p. 82- 85).

Similarly, Wilkins (1982) writes “without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed” (p. 134). This is to mean that if someone knows the morphology and syntax of an utterance addressed to him/her, but does not know the meanings of the key lexical items, he/she will not be able to participate in the communication, (Krashen, et al., 1998), Carther et al., 1988).

 Language learning, therefore, depends crucially on the development of a strong vocabulary, involves the manipulation of four main skills; speaking, writing, listening and reading which lead to effective communication (Lee, 2003). That is why, Michael McCarthy nicely summed up by saying that “vocabulary forms the biggest part of the meaning of any language, and vocabulary is the biggest problem for most learners. So I’ve always been interested in ways of helping learners in building up a big vocabulary as fast and as efficiently as possible” (Fan 2003). Because “no matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (Gidey, 2008).

So, vocabulary is very indispensable for the acquisition process, Cameron (2001) states “Vocabulary has been considered as a major resource for language use” (p. 82). In view of this, vocabulary acquisition is currently receiving attention in second language pedagogy and research. Since the 1970’s, their investigation has advanced our understanding of the process learners use to develop their skills in a second or foreign language (Lee, 2003).

**Vocabulary Learning a Challenging Task for Learners**

Vocabulary learning is a very challenging task which teachers, educators and researchers have been studying since long ago. When a person approaches a relatively challenging task, s/he adopts certain strategies to solve the problem. This problem-solving process is constrained by the learning context where the problem is being tackled. Language learning in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular are such problem-solving tasks at different levels of complexity. The strategies a learner uses and the effectiveness of these strategies very much depend on the learner him/herself (e.g., attitudes, motivation, prior knowledge), the learning task at hand (e.g., type, complexity, difficulty, and generality), and the learning environment (e.g., the learning culture, the richness of input and output opportunities).

A learning task can be as broad as mastering a second language or as specific as remembering one meaning of a word. Broadly speaking, this conception of the learning task includes the materials being learned (such as the genre of a piece of reading) as well as the goal the learner is trying to achieve by using these materials (such as remembering, comprehending, or using language). In other words, the purpose of vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises. In fact, evidence Gu (2003) pointed out referring Ellis’ (1994) suggestion that the “knowledge aspect (both breadth and depth)” requires more conscious and explicit learning mechanisms whereas the “skill aspect” involves mostly implicit learning and memory**.** Furthermore, Read (1993) described depth of word knowledge as “the quality of the learner’s vocabulary” (p. 357). Many researchers like Gass (1988) have stressed the complex and dynamic nature of this knowledge where “various distinctions to be taken into consideration, e.g. *reception* vs *production* and *knowledge* vs *control*” (p. 92-106), whereas breadth aspect largely depends on how much vocabulary does a learner need (Nation and Waring 2010, p. 6)? Vocabulary learning strategies, therefore, should include strategies for "using" as well as "knowing" a word.

It should be noted that the conception of "task" is in line with the traditional, broader understanding of task is different from the more recent and narrower definition of "task" in "task-based" approaches to language teaching and learning ( Gu 2003**)**. Different types of task materials, task purposes, tasks and sub tasks at various difficulty levels demand different learner strategies which are the subject matter of the study. And each strategy a learner uses will determine to a large extent how, how well a new word and how many words are learned.

**Knowing a Word**

The question of what it means to know a word has fascinated many psychologists, educators and researchers, sometimes with consequences of considerable practical value to the science. There are two answers to this question. If the word is to be learned only for receptive use (listening or reading) and productive use (listening, speaking, reading and writing) which involves form (spoken, written), position (grammatical patterns, collocation), morphology, register, function (frequency and appropriateness), and Meaning (concept and associations). In addition, productive knowledge also involves not using the word too often if it is typically a low-frequency word, and using it in suitable situations. It involves using the word to stand for the meaning it represents and being able to think of suitable substitutes for the word if there are any in the context what Miller (1990) states Learner’s “ability to use context to determine meanings and to resolve potential ambiguities”. Whenever experience is meaningful, contextualizing is involved. People object to being quoted out of context, but nothing can be out of context; the objection is to being quoted in the wrong context. Contextualization is not exclusively linguistic, of course; using context to determine linguistic meaning is simply a special case of a general cognitive ability. But the easiest place to study contextualization is surely in the relation between words and their contexts of use. So, what does a person who knows a word know? A ready answer is that a person who knows a word must know its meaning in context (Miller, 1990) and purpose of communication comes true due to the diverse semantic and structural properties of words that they can be combined into more complex utterances, thus accounting for speech acts.

**How much vocabulary does a second language learner need?**

There are three ways of answering this question. One way is to ask "How many words are there in the target language?" Another way is to ask "How many words do native speakers know?" A third way is to ask "How many words are needed to do the things that a language user needs to do?" We will look at answers to each of these questions.

 According two separate studies (Dupuy, 1974; Goulden, nation and read, 1990), when compound words, archaic words, abbreviations, proper names, alternative spellings and dialect forms are excluded, and when words are classified into word families consisting of a base word, inflected forms, and transparent derivations, Webster’s 3rd has a vocabulary of around 54,000 word families. This is learning goal far beyond the reaches of second language learners and, as we shall see, most native speakers (Nation & Waring, n.d.).
 There is a lack of well – conducted research in this area. Once again their figures are very ambitious for a learning program. Recent unpublished research by trialing a test of vocabulary size with highly educated non-native speakers of English who are studying advanced degrees through the medium of English indicates that their receptive English vocabulary size is around 8,000 to 9,000 word-families. For adult learners of English as a foreign language, the gap between their vocabulary size and that of native speakers is usually very large, with many adult foreign learners of English having a vocabulary size of much less than 5000 word families in spite of having studies English for several years (Nation et al., 2001; Nation & Waring, n.d.).

Hirsh and Nation’s estimate that there are well over 54,000 word families in English, and although educated adult native speakers know around 20,000 of these word families, a much smaller number of words, say between 3,000 to 5,000 word families is needed to provide a basis for comprehension. It is possible to make use of a smaller number, around 2,000 to 3,000 for productive use in speaking and writing (Nation et al., 2001; , Nation et al., 2006; Nation & Waring et al., n. d.).

**How much Vocabulary and Which Words do students need to know?**

Although language makes use of a large number of words, not all of these words are equally useful. One measure of usefulness is word frequency, that is, how often the word occurs in normal language use. From the point of view of frequency, the vocabulary that students need to use in academic work, particularly in reading and writing is different from what they may use for everyday interactions. For everyday interactions, students at any level can probably get by with about 2000 words and a learner knows 80% of the words in a text which means that 1 word in every 5 (approximately 2 words in every line) are unknown. This group word is often referred to as high – frequency vocabulary. Research by Liu Na and Nation (1985) has shown that this ration of unknown to know words is not sufficient to allow reasonably successful guessing of the meaning of the unknown words. “At least 95% coverage is needed’ (Nation & Waring, n.d. and “How many Words,” n. d.).

On the basis of frequency of use and fields of learning and teaching Nation et al., (1995) distinguish general, academic, specialized/technical and low frequency vocabulary:

**High Frequency Words**

There is a small group of high – frequency words noted earlier which are very important because these words cover a very large proportion of the running words in spoken and written texts and occur in all kinds of uses of the language. The high frequency words includes function words (in, for, the, of, a, etc) and many content words (government, forests, production, adoption, represent, boundary) (Nation, 2006).

The classic list of high-frequency words is Michael West’s (1953a) *A General Service List of English words* which contains around 2,000 family words. In any one text, such as a novel or a text book, around 400 to 550 of the second 1000 words from GSL actually occurred. When a mixture of texts was looked at however around 700 to 800 of the second 1000 words occurred (Hirsh et al., 1992; Sutarsyah et al., 1994). That is their occurrence is more closely related to the topic or subject area of a text than the wide ranging more general purpose words in the first 1000.

**Academic Words**

After the 2000 high frequency words of the GSL, what vocabulary does a second language learner need? If the learner intends to go on to academic study in upper high school or at university, then there is a clear need for general academic vocabulary, such as: policy, phase, adjusted, sustained. Typically these words make up about 9% of the running words in the text. The best list until this day is the Academic Word List of Coxhead 1998 (Nation et al., 2001; Nation & Waring, n. d.).

**Specialized / Technical Vocabulary**

Specialized vocabularies provide good coverage for certain kinds of texts which contain some words that are very closely related to the topic and subject area of the text. So, technical vocabulary is also specialized vocabulary. Though there has been no survey Special vocabularies are made by systematically restricting the range of topics or language used. The special vocabulary lists can be made based on the Academic Word List which was made by deciding on the high – frequency words of English and then examining a range of academic texts to find what words were not in the high – frequency words but had wide range and reasonable frequency of occurrence. One way of making a technical vocabulary is to compare the frequency of words in a specialized text with their frequency in a general corpus. For example, what is similar between a cell wall and other less specialized uses of wall (Nation 2001, p. 6-22)?

**Low – Frequency Word**

According to Nation (2001), there is a large group of words that occur very infrequently and cover only a small proportion of any text. Some low frequency words are words of moderate frequency that did not manage to get into the high frequency list. It is important to remember that the boundary between high-frequency and low-frequency vocabulary is an arbitrary one. Many low-frequency words are proper names. One person’s technical vocabulary is another person’s low frequency word. Again, some low frequency words are simply low frequency words. That is, they are words that almost every language user rarely uses.

**Eliciting**

1. This can be done by the teacher and the students by either calling out or writing out the words. Eliciting can take the form of giving a definition, reminding the students of a context where they met the word, giving an opposite or near synonym, suggesting a rhyme, leading in to a lexical field (e.g. “It’s not a carrot, but a….?). With a monolingual class perhaps a translation could be the cue.

2. If the eliciting is done by students then they are simultaneously practicing expressing meanings and exploring their knowledge of the word more deeply: part of speech, exactly what it means maybe other meaning of the word.

a. This can involve one student sitting in a “hot seat” with their back to the board, the teacher writes a word on the board and the rest of the class call out clues to help him or her guess.

b. Alternatively it can be made more competitive by having two or more groups each with a “hot seat” and they race to get their team member to guess the word.

c. A variation on this is to get one member of each group to come to the teacher to see a lexical item, then they have to elicit from their teams.

d. Whichever way, you could say that the “elicitors” can only use pictures or mime or say one word each to elicit the item for a change.

e. Eliciting can also be done in pairs, each student being given a small pile of words to elicit form their partner. Students often become very involved in this, even outside class time.

**Task –dependent Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

**Guessing from Context/ Contextualization**

Context clues are clues to the meaning of a word that are contained in the text and illustrations that surround it. They can be definitions, examples, restatements, charts, and pictures, general knowledge, related information, example, comparison and contrast (Na, 2009). A study by Baumann et. al (2003) shows that middle school students who were taught to identify and use specific types of both linguistic information such as words, phrases, and sentences and non-linguistic information such as illustrations and typographic features were then able to use this information to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words in text.

Teaching students to use context clues to develop vocabulary is an extended process that involves: modeling the strategy; providing direct explanations of how, why, and when to use it, providing guided practice; gradually holding students accountable for independently using the strategy, and then providing constant reminders to apply it to reading across content area (Na, 2009).

**Using Dictionary**

According to Nation (2003), the skills required to use a dictionary differ according to whether the dictionary is used in conjunction with listening and reading (receptive use), or with speaking and writing (productive use). Each requires a different set of steps. For receptive use, briefly, the steps involve getting information from the context where the word occurred, finding the dictionary entry, choosing the right sub-entry, and relating the meaning to the context and deciding if it fits. As for productive use, the steps are finding the wanted word form, checking that there are no unwanted constraints on the use of the word, working out the grammar and collocations of the word, and checking the spelling or pronunciation of the word before using it.

Identifying and using contextual clues (Gu, 2003; Rahimi et al., 2008)

Reviewing research about the choice between bilingual and monolingual dictionaries reveals that a combination of good features of both types of dictionaries is the best choice. There has been considerable interest in the last twenty years in so called “new bilingualised compromise dictionaries”. These hybrid dictionaries provide translation in addition to the good features of monolingual dictionaries such as full semantic, grammatical, and stylistic information, examples, and usage notes that are not available in traditional bilingual dictionaries (Gu, 2003; Rahimi et al., 2008)

Recent developments in computers have triggered a new line of interest in electronic dictionaries (E-dictionaries). Online vocabulary glosses offer the learner a quick access to the information a student needs, which in turn might encourage more dictionary use. Like traditional dictionaries, electronic dictionaries that contain little more than L1 equivalents are not quite helpful (Gu 2003; Rahimi et al., 2008).

**Note Taking**

After getting information about a new word, learners may take notes, in the form of vocabulary notebooks, vocabulary cards, or simply notes along the margins or between the lines. However, learners differ in what they do in note-taking, when they take notes, and how they take notes (McCarthy, 1990). Learners can organize colored cards according to categories they find useful. Color coding according to the place where the words are found can also help memory, for example, blue for the textbook, green for computer-lab programs (Rahimi et al., 2008; Gu et al., 2003).

**Using word part Information/ Word Formation**

Vocabulary items, whether one word or multi-word, can often be broken down into their component bits. Exactly how these bits are put together is another piece of useful information. Similarly, *Morphology* or *structural analysis* refers to the study of word parts. *Structural analysis* draws students’ attention to the morphemes, the meaningful word parts, that readers can identify and put together to determine the meaning of unfamiliar word. Knowledge of morphemes and morphology plays a valuable role in word learning from context because readers can use such knowledge to examine unfamiliar words and figure out their meanings (Carlisle, 2004). It is estimated that more than “60 percent” of the new words that readers encounter have easily identifiable morphological structure (Nagy et al., 1989). In addition, Nagy and Anderson’s (1984) analysis of printed school English materials also made clear that a large number of words that students encounter in reading are derivatives or inflections of familiar root words. Thus, they can be broken into parts namely root words, prefixes, and suffixes. To be most effective, word-part instructions should teach students the meanings of particular word parts as well as a strategy for when and why to use them. Successful instructions do not require students to recite the meanings of word parts they encounter. Rather, they involve having the students read texts with words that use the word parts and give them opportunities to learn about word origins, derivations, and usage. Such a concept towards word learning can stir students’ interest in learning more about language and building word consciousness (Baumann et al., 2003, Mokhtar et al., 2010).

**Making Associations**

“Illustrate and associate” is a strategy to introduce associations among words, including synonyms, antonyms and analogies. Listing the vocabulary word, writing a brief definition, drawing a picture to illustrate the meaning, and identifying an antonym for the word in the primary language if possible is to make associations. This triggers the associative networks of the memory in various ways. Celce-Marcia (2001) states “words appear to be organized into semantically related sets in the mind, and thus the associations attached to a word will affect the way that it is stored” (p. 288). Readers will recall that it was a hot afternoon when they read a particular poem and from there they remember some of the words they encountered for the first time in that poem. It seems that even seemingly irrelevant details can be useful (Rahimi et al., 2008; Algozzine et al., 2010).

**Mnemonics**

Mnemonics work by developing retrieval plan during encoding so that a word can be recalled through verbal and visual clues. Learners need to test different kinds of mnemonic techniques to see which ones work best for them (Goll, 2004):

**(a)Keyword Method (Linguistics Mnemonics)**

The keyword of foreign vocabulary learning involves linking one English word to another English word which sounds similar to the foreign word that is to be learned. According to Atkinson, the keyword learning should be in two stages. In the first stage, the learner selects a native language word or phrase, preferably a concrete one that is acoustically similar to the FL word. This stage is referred to as the acoustic link. In the second stage, the learner creates a mental image that associates the keyword referent with the native-language translation of the FL word. This second stage is referred to as imagery link. For example, a native English speaker could learn that the Spanish word *pato* means duck, using the English word *pot* as the keyword and creating an interactive image of a duck sitting in a pot. This interactive image will help students to remember that the English word will give the image of native language translation of *duck* instead of Spanish *pato*.(Brown et al., 1991, Beaton, et al., 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2000, & Gruneberg et al., 1998).

**(b) Pictures and Visualization (Visual Mnemonics)**

Learners can learn pair pictures with the words they need to learn. Flashcards with pictures or symbols they are a good way of memorizing words. As soon as a one sees a particular picture, they remember the word that goes with it. Sometimes instead of using real pictures, learners visualize the word they need to remember (Jones, 2004).

**Grouping**

Learners can group the words they need to remember by color, size, function, likes/dislikes, good/bad, or any other features that makes sense to them. Psychologically if the material to be memorized is organized in some fashion, learners can learn the material better.

**Semantic Mapping**

Using class time to get students to group and regroup words is very valuable.

1. You could either give criteria for groups, e.g. stress patterns, topic, parts of speech, formality, or get them to make their own decisions about groupings and their classmates can then guess what criteria they used.

2. Regrouping could involve drawing or completing spider grams (Gu, 2003, Rahimi et al., 2008, Rosenbaum, 2001).

**Review and spaced practice**

Human beings tend to forget over time. Therefore, learners should regularly review previously learned material. Also learners should have short and frequent studyperiods. Spaced practice leads to better long –term recall.

**Real – Life Practice**

Learners must have participation in real life communicative situations during language training. They should seek out as many opportunities for real-life practice as they can. Learners should try to use the material that they have learned in real life situations.

**Teaching Dependent Vocabulary Learning Tasks**

According to Baker (2003) teaching vocabulary has different stages of formal instruction from which students can learn vocabulary. Some of them are already discussed in task related vocabulary learning, as teaching and learning happens simultaneously and one is related to other. Sahragard has divided teaching dependent vocabulary in to three parts – namely; (a) ***presentation***which includes pictures and visualization (visual technique), and ***verbal explanation*** (definitions, situations, synonyms, antonyms, and providing clues to meaning through using dictionary and word association activities); (b) ***practice*** that can be held in different ways by teachers in classroom setting and can have various activities which can help learners to be successful learners and (c) **Consolidation** in which the teacher consolidates and try to get the students to relate the word to their personal experience, and use it in context .

(c) ***Practice and Production:*** A central task for teachers at this stage is to do everything they can to help learners turn input into intake; to help learners get the most out of any language they meet. Having shown the meaning of a word, the teacher should provide students with enough practice on that word. Students need lots of practice with new vocabulary in order to remember and use the new words. Recently, many teachers use games in the classrooms and they are recommended by methodologists. The use of games during the lessons motivate students to work more on the vocabulary items on their own, so the games are good stimulus for extra work. Games should be an integral part of a lesson since they provide the possibility of extensive practice. Uberman (1998) showed that those students who practiced vocabulary activity with games felt more motivated and interested in what they were doing. The time they spend working on the words was usually long; therefore, this may suggest that more time devoted to activities leads to better results. A fun and relaxed atmosphere accompanying the activities facilitates students learning. Wealand (1999) suggested the following games:

1. **Back to the board:** Divide the class into two teams (A and B). Choose a student from each team while the other students have their backs to the board, facing their teammate. The teacher writes a word or phrase on the board and the students chosen from both teams try to describe it to their teammates at the same time. The first to correctly reproduce what is on the board gets a point. Insist on passable pronunciation. Erase the word and put another one up. Rotate the students periodically so that everyone gets a chance.

2. **Board Run**: Put students in teams of two, three, or four, depending on class size, and line them up facing the board. Give the first student in each line a board pen.

The teacher describes a word or phrase. The first student who runs to the board and writes the word legibly scores a point. The word or phrase must be written correctly.

3. **Chain Story:** Teacher writes a list of vocabulary items on the board, and uses the first item in a sentence to start off a story. Students continue the story around the class using vocabulary from the board, in (or out of) sequence.

4. **The Best Sentence:** Divide the students into two teams. Write a word to be revised on the board. Each team has a secretary who writes a sentence constructed by the team using the word on the board. The best sentence scores a point.

5. **Team Vocabulary Race:** Divide the students into groups of three, four or five depending on class size. Appoint a group secretary. Establish a vocabulary category and a number of words, e.g. ‘20 words connected to sport’. Shout ‘go’. When a team claims to have finished, check their list for spelling and suitability of words without stopping the other groups.

6. **What’s this called in English?** Cut out pictures, stick those on card and on the other side write the word (and phonetic translation if you like). Students mingle and hold up cards asking, “What’s this called in English?” Students can’t sit down again unless they can name all the items on the cards.

7. **Where Are You Going?** Using pictures of everyday objects to improvise a dialogue

A: Where are you going?

B: To the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A: Why?

B: To get \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E.g. if you flash a picture of aspirin, the dialogue should be:-

A: Where are you going?

B: To the chemist’s

A: Why?

A: To get some aspirin.

Flash a magazine and hope for…..

A: Where are you going?

B: To the newsagent’s

A: Why?

B: To get a magazine.

**Same, opposite or different dictation:** Rahimi (2008) mentioned thatthis is an activity for advanced or, at least, upper intermediate students suggested by Ana Paola Reginatto (2002). Dictate pairs of words to the students (e.g. hold/embrace, high/tall) and ask them to classify the pairs as Same, Opposite or Different. Once you have finished dictating the pairs of words, the students should compare their choices with their partner and explain their reasons, especially the pairs classified as different (why are they different?) or same (are they always synonyms? Are there slight differences in meaning and connotation? Are there differences in collocation)? If you wanted, students could use dictionaries to check ideas. After the students have discussed the words, elicit the pairs to the board and deal with spelling, pronunciation and meaning.

**Consolidation**

The teacher should consolidate and try to get the students to relate the word to their personal experience. There are some activities, which can be done at this age.

**Matching Games**

As per Thanh, Huyen, & Nguyen, Thi. (2003, December), games are useful and effective tools that should be applied in vocabulary classes. As suggested by Baker (2003) at lower levels students can play different matching games with cards; for example, they can match words and pictures, or match the word in their first language and the word in English, or match words to their definition (Thanh et al., 2003; Rahimi et al., 2008; YYoshimoto, Magraw& Seneff).

**Vocabulary Box**

According to Gillie Cunningham (2002) the students can also prepare a class vocabulary box. A small box, such as a shoebox, is a very useful tool in the classroom - it can become a vocabulary box. The teacher also needs some small blank cards or pieces of paper. At the end of each vocabulary lesson - for example 'Houses and Homes' - either the teacher or the students should write words from the lesson on different cards. So, the teacher may end up with ten words on ten cards - bedroom, kitchen, roof, window…- and these cards are then placed in the vocabulary box.

If you have time, and better classes, the teacher, or the students, may write a definition of the word on the reverse of each card. This vocabulary box can then be used at any time to review the vocabulary studied over the weeks. The teacher could simply pick words from the box at random, give the definition and ask for the word.

**Word Wizard**

Word Wizard, a research based strategy, encourages students to actively tune in to new words used in various contexts. After learning new words in class, students take note of their use outside class; students take note of their use outside class in different contexts such as conversation, television, radio magazine, or newspapers. Students then report on their findings when they next meet in class. In sharing their reports, students are encouraged to explain the different ways in which the word was used (Peregoy et al., 2008).

**Vocabulary Puzzles**

This strategy is to introduce new words to the students through puzzles. Deciphering crossword puzzles requires exact spelling, which for students may mean practicing dictionary skills. Students can expand their vocabulary through playing with words. Studies have shown that word play makes students more active and they enjoy learning. In this strategy the mind is entangled. The learners improve their memory, orthography, reasoning, and spelling as well as increase their problem solving skills (James, 2009).

To solve any crossword puzzle, a person must be able to identify and understand the terms being used. This often involves acquiring new vocabulary. Puzzle solving is a kind of active form of learning. Crossword puzzles have endured as a favorite worldwide pastime because they appeal to all ages, they can be completed in a rather brief period of time, and solving them provides a sense of accomplishment. For all these reasons, crosswords make a terrific educational tool, and teachers will probably continue to use them for many years to come (James, 2009).

**Repetition**

Repetition is very important to consolidate words. In general, results show that, if remembering word pairs is the aim, a surprising amount can be learned within a relatively short time and Many repetitions are needed before the L2 – L1 word pairs can be remembered. Empirical results on this issue are also relatively unanimous, that repeating words aloud helps retention far better than silent repletion (Gu, 2003).

**Audio and Oral Activities**

Students can develop vocabulary through listening and speaking. Videos are one avenue. After viewing a video teachers engage the students in discussion. Specifically, students can use a single word or phrase that is reflective of what they learned. Once a list is generated, students can then combine the concepts together and categorize them.

Another avenue is listening-centers. Students could engage in group discussions following listening to a book. Results could then be recorded in journals or class charts for all to see. Along the same lines would be story time where the teacher reads to the students and leads class discussions. Other listening and speaking activities include interest centers, oral reports, storytelling, guest speakers, and computers.

**Reading and Writing Activities**

Reading and writing are at the core of learning, along with students engaging regularly in activities. The key is to develop a variety of activities that promote vocabulary development and maintain a maximum of interest.

A quality spelling program is a must. As pupils’ practice correct spelling they become involved in vocabulary development and reading. Ample emphasis should be placed upon students doing as much writing as possible. Activities include journals, diaries, logs, book reports, and outlines, poems, developing a dictionary, proofreading, editing, and subject reports. Reinforcement activities may consist of matching exercises, multiple-choice exercises, word puzzles, writing activities, classification or categorizing activities, analogies, games, demonstrations or performance-types of activities, and projects that require use of vocabulary words (Cubukcu et al., 2008; Horst et al., 2005, Huang et al., 2005 & Liou et al., 2007).

**Expansion**

When students come across a new word, they are likely to be interested in learning other related words, and this presents a natural opportunity for vocabulary development. There are different techniques for introducing sets of related words as suggested by Ur (1996):

1. Write a single word in the center of the board, and ask students to brainstorm all the words they can think of that are connected with it. This activity is mainly for revising words the class already knows, but new ones may be introduced, by the teacher or by the students.

2. The teacher can talk about the new words, introducing them, and writing them on the board.

3. The teacher can try to elicit the new words from the students and then write them on the board.

4. A useful way of expanding vocabulary of higher level students is that the teacher can break up the word into its prefix, suffix, and stem then ask the students to think about other words which are made by those prefixes and suffixes.

5. Another useful method of expanding the vocabulary of higher level students has the teacher ask students to think about and find other words, which collocate with the new word by using a dictionary, a list of collocations, etc.

Acquiring and retaining vocabulary in a foreign language is a continuing challenge, but by using methods based on the research presented here, it does not have to be like being thrown in a briar patch. Students can have fun with their learning activities and make progress.

**Conclusion**

 The use of a wide variety of strategies has been found to be characteristic of successful learners which have been discussed. Schimitt and McCarthy (1997) in their studies indicate that a language learning strategies are not inherently ‘good’, but depend on the context in which they are used, their combination with the other strategies, frequency of use, and the learners’ proficiency level. From scholars’ point of view, it is possible to say that student’s problem in learning second or foreign language in general and their vocabularies in particular are not because students lack appropriate vocabulary learning strategies. One way to help learners to enhance their knowledge of vocabulary learning is through equipping with a variety of learning strategies.

Teacher should think of ways to provide less successful learners with vocabulary learning strategies. This is to be done by making them aware of the need to become independent learners by recognizing the effective strategies they possess and those they lack. Learner’s attention should also be directed toward the strategies successful learners benefit from as discussed above discussed strategies. EFL teachers should make learners practice a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies ranging from de-contextualization to contextualization ones. This enables learners to deal with any unknown words they may encounter both in and out of class context. Teachers need to bear in mind that individual learners may vary on the basis of which strategies they consider more useful and they apply more frequently.

To sum up, learning new vocabulary is a great challenge to language learners which can be overcome by having a good knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies as stated above, and the ability to apply them in suitable situations might considerably simplify the learning of new vocabularies. Thus, learner strategy research has for students focused on studying what learners’ strategies are and how they use in learning vocabulary effectively.

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