



## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR VOCABULARY TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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### ABSTRACT

*The article highlights a comprehensive account of the research of the problems of identifying vocabulary learning strategies. The paper has a lot of information about useful vocabulary strategies and ways to teach them effectively. In addition, it focuses on topics such as individual differences of students, such as learning styles, language levels, motivation, and so on. The research subjects were classes 8-A and 8-B, which were the experimental groups of the school № 5. In addition, the vocabulary strategies that can be applied in such lessons and the barriers in the lessons that have different preferences for possible teaching methods are described.*

**Key words:** vocabulary, teaching, secondary, learning, method, technique

### INTRODUCTION

The chief reason of choosing this topic for a research is that a wide range of methods of teaching vocabulary have been proven to be effective in enriching and expanding students' vocabulary competence. However, for teachers the question of which method is better in the process of teaching vocabulary is an open question.

It is complicated for language learners to communicate with a limited vocabulary. Many studies show that lexical resource helps students better understand. The more students know the vocabulary, the better they can understand and use it effectively. To develop students' communicative competence, language teachers should encourage them to learn as many words as possible. Students need to understand the importance of language learning strategies and be taught to use them correctly. Although there are many ways to learn new words, the question arises as to which methods and approaches are most useful or important for young language learners. Therefore, I aimed to identify the most appropriate ways to teach vocabulary to young students, especially in the classroom in this proposal. The following questions will be answered at the end of the paper: "How can I help



students expand their vocabulary?", "How can teenagers be involved in the lesson?", "How can they be retained?" "Are they active?" and so on. Learning about the most useful strategies in a dictionary can be obviously useful for teachers who teach young students, especially in secondary schools.

## **MATERIALS**

Vocabulary competence is one of the key aspects of learning and communicating in the target language. One of the most common problems in language is teaching and learning new vocabulary and allowing students to use these words in written or oral speech. This is a very difficult task, especially when teenagers are taught the English language as a second language. Based on my experience as a language learner, there is no single best strategy for teaching vocabulary.

Before concerning the strategies of vocabulary teaching, we should define the term "vocabulary". "Vocabulary is knowing words and their meanings" can be a definition or an explanation of the term.

A monolingual dictionary defines it more precisely. It means:

1. All words in a particular language;
2. All words known to a person or used in any book, subject, etc. ;
3. All the words people use when talking about a particular topic;
4. A list of words that have their meaning, especially in a book for learning a foreign language;

(A. S. Hornby, Oxford University Press, 1995)

Zimmerman points out that a vocabulary is a set of words that are the basics used to make up and understand sentences. However, according to Adgerstates, vocabulary is not limited to the meaning of words, but also includes how vocabulary is structured in a language: how people use and store words, how they are used. (Graves, 1990)

Herrel in his book titled "Fifty Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners" points out that there are different types of vocabulary:

- ❖ Reading vocabulary - this means all the words you can recognize while reading the text.



- ❖ Listening vocabulary - this means all the words that a person can recognize when listening to a speech.
- ❖ Writing vocabulary - this includes all the words you can use in writing.
- ❖ Verbal vocabulary - this means all the words a person can use in speech.

In 1980, Paul Meara characterized vocabulary learning as a “neglected aspect of language learning” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:96). Now, more than twenty years later, the scenario looks quite different. Today, the studies being carried out on vocabulary acquisition are extensive and there are constantly new approaches evolving on how to improve and maximize students’ learning abilities.

“The English language is estimated to have anywhere from 100.000 to one million words, depending on how words are counted” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 96) but in order to communicate in a language effectively the learner only has to master 20 000 words (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

In order to obtain these 20 000 words, teachers and learners have to make a choice, deciding which method/methods to use in the word acquisition process. There are various methods available for language teachers to work with, in order to increase and develop the students’ vocabulary. Therefore, it is of interest to study students’ views, thoughts and ideas on vocabulary acquisition, in order to know how teachers can contribute to optimizing their students’ learning experience.

One of the theories as to why words are not studied is that “information is not used unless it is regularly activated” (Gairns & Redman, 1986: 89). In other words, we need to put into practice what we have learned, otherwise the newly acquired information will gradually disappear from our memory and eventually disappear. Consequently, it is important that teachers create multifaceted experiences in order for students to master new words and increase the depth of vocabulary already learned (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). The National Reading Panel has released a list of different guidelines that teachers should pay attention to to create a multifaceted environment:

1. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.
2. Repetition and multiple exposure of dictionary sections are vital.



3. Learning in a rich context is valuable for learning vocabulary.
4. If necessary, dictionary functions should be restructured.
5. Vocabulary learning should involve active involvement in learning tasks.
6. Computer technology can be used to teach vocabulary.
7. Vocabulary can be acquired through random study.
8. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have a differential impact on education.
9. Dependence on a single vocabulary teaching method does not lead to optimal learning.

## **METHODS**

This research pays attention to the effective methods of teaching vocabulary in secondary schools. The major purpose of the practical work is to identify whether the strategies presented in the theoretical part and used in the lessons are effective to expand learners' vocabulary on a particular topic. Another main goal of the research is to provide effective strategies for dealing with adolescents in the process of teaching vocabulary to help teachers who teach vocabulary lessons prove their effectiveness using selected methods. At last but not least, one of the main objectives of the study is to learn how teaching can help enrich their vocabulary competence, taking into account each student's learning style, level of knowledge, and motivation. Additionally, research has focused on whether actions such as learning vocabulary through songs, games, and pictures allow students to remember and use new words efficiently.

A wide variety of teaching methods can be used for different purposes. Some of them may be suitable for students with different learning styles, some for beginners, while others for advanced students. In general, the choice of which methods depends on the age, interests, and levels of the learners. Some effective strategies and methods of teaching vocabulary used in the practical part of the research are the followings:

**Observation.** At the first week of the internship period, we spent our entire time at school for observing teachers and students as well. This period helped a lot to know students' level, interest, learning styles.



**Questionnaires.** Two questionnaires were taken in this period. The first one was at the beginning of the research in order to get information about the learners' preference on teaching ways and methods.

**Using pictures.** At the beginning of the lesson the subjects were introduced new words through pictures as a warm up activity or the main one. This technique was cordially met by them as it was seen from their behavior. They looked motivated in involved in the whole process of the lesson.

**Songs.** This strategy is effective to all ages especially for those who like singing. During collecting the data a majority of the subjects showed their willingness to sing songs. Taking this into consideration, the researcher motivated them to compose any rhymes consisting of two lines or to sing the text providing the essential vocabulary. Nevertheless, it was a hard job to find a text or rhyme involving the active vocabulary.

**Games.** Games were welcomed by learners with great enthusiasm. Nearly all of them were eager to participate and involved in the process. The games included the activities like: "Who will find faster?", "What is it", "Who will tell or write more words associated with the picture" and many others which were carried out by group, pair and individual work.

The practical part is based on the following research methods:

**Qualitative method** explores why, where, and when, and how decisions are made. These methods attempt to present information from the perspective of learners or observed groups so that the researcher does not interfere with the collection, interpretation, and presentation of the data. Qualitative research usually relies on the following methods of data collection: Observation of participants, structured interview, and analysis of documents and materials.

**Descriptive researchmethod** answers people's questions about how it happens and using a set of techniques to get a detailed profile of an event, situation, or situation.

**Quasi-experimental method** is a type of assessment aimed at determining the impact of a program on students. The most common form of quasi-experimental research involves a pre-test design that includes experimental group. This method was intended to identify any differences between student outcomes compared with students who were not research participants. This accuracy was obtained by comparing the results of the two



groups - control and experimental groups, where the effectiveness of the vocabulary teaching methodology can be seen.

Each method and research technique used in this research has its own strengths.

For example, the strategy acquiring vocabulary through songs has been very effective in terms of their motivation to sing. Through singing they learned new words, what is successful the subjects tended to sing the songs outside the classroom. As the results of questionnaire showed, the majority of the subjects enjoyed learning new words through songs.

Using pictures was also welcomed not only by the pupils of the experimental group but also by the pupils of the control group. It was easier for them to remember through words pictures. Especially, it was effective for those who could draw as they drew the pictures of the words by themselves. Those who drew the pictures by themselves gave better results than those who did not draw.

As for the strategy involving games, was the most effective one in making the lesson more productive. As the subjects were teenagers, they cordially welcomed this strategy: they had fun, enjoyed themselves and were highly motivated. Besides, it was one of the techniques in order to vary the lessons from each other.

### **Timetable**

This research carried out at school as an internship during a two month period, when I was a senior student in my Bachelor's degree.

The initial step in carrying out the research was the analysis. This analysis enables to gather information concerning students' level of English, interests and learning styles in order to make effective lesson plans and use appropriate methods and techniques in the process of teaching vocabulary. In order to achieve this, pre-test designed to check their knowledge of vocabulary of the previous themes was given. Besides, the subjects were questioned on their preference of activities for working in class.

Having been gathered all the information about the group was taken, the researcher began to make the lesson plans. The activities which each lesson covered were based on the chosen techniques, which were aimed to be effective for pupils in acquiring new vocabulary.



Form 8th A was willing to work in groups, while majority of pupils in Form 8th B preferred to work individually or in pairs. The themes of the lessons were the same whereas the ways of conducting the lessons were different.

At the end of the research, the subjects are taken a post-test aimed to show if the used teaching techniques could improve the pupils' acceptance of the new vocabulary better.

The final step of the research is to compare each class's pre-test results with their post-test ones in order to see to what extent they have made progress during these two months of research.

## **RESULTS**

In the study and analysis of the data collected, it was shown that all participating students found it mandatory to learn new words to improve their language skills. In addition, the data collected show that in the student's experience, the words taught in class and homework are not fully remembered. Some students noted that "words only remain until the end of the exams, then I forget them". According to the data, the number of words that multiple students have to learn is very large and so they only learn words for the test. In addition, there is no repetition of newly learned words after vocabulary tests. In addition, students note that in their current English courses, they have not been given the opportunity to actively use and practice the new vocabulary.

The students who participated in this study believed that if they used different media, their vocabulary would increase more effectively because the computer could provide a different choice of oral and written texts.

One of the methods most students preferred was learning through movies/computers and books, all of which showed that research was an excellent source of input. It is also important for language teachers to recognize that visual learning needs to be supplemented with transcripts and preparatory work.

One of the additional activities that students emphasize plays an important role in enriching vocabulary is reading a wide range of subjects, particularly fiction. Consequently, L2 students effectively master not only vocabulary but also spelling correctly by receiving comprehensive information.



## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study was conducted to analyze the attitudes of secondary school students towards vocabulary teaching. In addition, the initial goal was to highlight similarities between the two participating respondent-groups and to see if any conclusions could be drawn about the role of gender. To find the answers in both categories, a qualitative analysis was conducted using data from a survey distributed to high school students.

The data collected showed that the majority of students surveyed were satisfied with the current forms of vocabulary teaching. However, respondents noted that they prefer a more contextual type of assimilation, as they stressed the need to use words in the right context. In addition, students studying in vocational education areas stressed the importance of learning a dictionary related to their future careers, which they ignore in their current courses.

The data also showed conflicting views on the importance of context-based education. Students claimed to support a more context-based learning approach throughout the lessons, but later stressed that assessments should be conducted using written tests that had no context. The conclusion to be drawn from this conclusion is that students may know that the best ways to learn new words is through different input and context-based learning. However, they know that learning strategies, including context-based learning, take more time and require more effort on their part.

In addition, students' preferred vocabulary teaching methods include the use of modern sources such as the Internet, movies, or music. In addition to repetition and word listing, modern media has reportedly been the preferred method of learning a new vocabulary.





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