NOTIONS OF VOCABULARY LEARNING AMONG THE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF SARGODHA

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ABSTRACT

The major challenge faced by many ESL (English as second language) learners is vocabulary learning. One reason behind this is their insufficient knowledge about vocabulary. Because of it they skip the words or even sentences that are not understandable for them. In this paper the researchers investigated the use of vocabulary learning strategies by the students of University of Sargodha in the 3rd semester of the academic year 2013. The data collection instrument was a 43-item questionnaire. This survey research investigated the use of 43 common vocabulary learning strategies by 250 baccalaureate students across five disciplines Mass communication, Economics, Urdu, English, and sociology at the University of Sargodha in Pakistan. The data were surveyed via the Vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire. There were eight different categories in the questionnaire regarding the notions of vocabulary learning of students. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentages and means.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Learning strategies, Metacognitive, Survey study, Language.

INTRODUCTION

The role and importance of vocabulary in language learning had become increase in recent years. A time when it was considered that phonological structure and grammatical rules are more important than vocabulary, learners can choose words according to their need when they learned structure frames and grammatical rules. According to a report presented by Hymes in 1972, vocabulary is considered secondary in language learning. According to McCarthy (1990) sufficient vocabulary knowledge is necessary for communication and he regarded vocabulary a breadth in communicative competence. While reading the second language text various problems occur regarding the learner's attitudes, behaviours and perception to reading at a university level. Reading fluently needs correct and automatic word recognition skill because complete comprehension of text impossible without a thorough understanding of vocabulary.

Anderson (1990) claims that reading is "suffocatingly a slow process" for many EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. For example reader cannot get the idea if there are unknown words included in the text. Some learners during study skip the words that they could not understand this thing also increases problems. So because of slow reading and lack of comprehension, university students cannot accommodate their reading demand of new academic environment. Thus, this research not only examined the strategies used by learners but also focus on the difficulties that students face while reading.

This paper would explore the strategies which are used by UOS (university of Sargodha) students. This paper will also investigate that which strategy is most frequently used and which strategy is least frequently used.

Objectives

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the strategies frequently used by ESL (English as a second language) learners. This research also aimed to report how students of University Of Sargodha learn English vocabulary. The following research questions were posed to achieve the objectives:

Q # 1: What are the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by ESL (English as a second language) learners?
Q # 2: What are the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by ESL (English as a second language) learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Whether designing a language course it is useful to set learning goals and strategies so that we may use the language according to our choice. We must keep in mind three kind of information while planning the vocabulary learning goals for a long term course of study, the words which are known by the native speakers, the words used in the language and the words that actually needed to use in the language. Despite having suffered past neglect in applied linguistics, vocabulary is currently enjoying a revival. A number of researchers have noted the urgent need for learners to quickly acquire 3,000 most common words of English so they can comprehend basic spoken and written text and communicate in everyday situation. Scholarship in the field of both psychological linguistics and corpus linguistics suggests that lexical items, particularly multi-word chunks, play a key role in both productive and receptive fluency as well as native.

The most common and serious errors made by language learners are lexical in nature. Learners of English vocabulary need to develop large, functional vocabularies quickly, so that they can easily understand what they read or hear and also express fluently and appropriately by themselves. Rivers (1983) says that lexical is personal matter both in content items themselves and in the individuals professional, academic needs and so on. In reviewing contemporary trends in vocabulary teaching, argues that teacher need to foster independent learning because it is impossible for the students that they learn all the vocabulary which is use in the class. Atkinson (1972) reports that mostly those students are successful that learned the new words themselves than the students who remain dependent and learn those words which are chosen by others. MC Donough (1995) reports that through training there are fewer improvements which are mostly dependent and could only apply in limited measures. So in the process of vocabulary learning strategies it is more suitable that we give instructions about vocabulary learning strategies.

Nation (2001) reports that the strategy guessing meaning from context remains successful in learning vocabulary. Some guidelines have been proposed both for the strategies of language learning in general and for vocabulary learning in particular. An explicit focus is necessary so that students can transfer strategies to new tasks and situations for success in vocabulary

acquisition lies with the learners' own efforts, it makes sense to discuss the role learning strategies in facilitating these efforts. O'Mally and Chamot (1990) defined vocabulary learning strategies as the special thought or behaviour that students adopt in order to retain or learn new information. Most of the researches in vocabulary learning strategies are descriptive in purpose. Many students use correlated patterns of strategy and their variables are such as achievement level, vocabulary size, gender, course level, tertiary level field of study.

Importantly, the training must address not only cognitive strategies i.e. guessing means from context, but also meta-cognitive strategies to avoid leaving learners. Such guidelines have been used to evaluate how successfully commercial ESL course book authors support learning strategy development in their public works. Course books are increasingly likely to include material for learners training appropriate focus on metacognitive development, or an explicit learner training approach vocabulary learning strategies in upper level commercial course books. In so far as these studies can be said to represent the state of strategy training in conventional instructional materials, it seems fair to say learner training is insufficiency addressed.

METHODOLOGY

The participant in this study was 250 students doing the post-graduate program at the University of Sargodha in Pakistan. An adopted version about the vocabulary learning strategies is used in this research which was proposed by Gu & Johnson. There are eight different categories in the questionnaire regarding the notions of vocabulary learning strategies of university students. For example: note-taking, guessing, dictionary, metacognitive etc. The questionnaire *(Appendix 1)* was given to the students in different departments. The participant answered the questionnaire according to their beliefs about vocabulary learning strategies. Through frequency, percentages and means the data of this study is analysed.

RESULTS

 Table 1: Number of Sample

	N	**Department**
Valid	210	05
Missing	0	0

A total sample of 210 students was taken from five departments.

Table 2: Gender Frequency

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**
Male	72	34.3	34.3
Female	138	65.7	65.7
Total	210	100.0	100.0

A total sample of 210 was taken consisting of 72 male and 138 female.

Table 3: Number of Departments and Students Frequency

Departments	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
English	50	23.8	23.8
Economics	23	11.0	11.0
Mass Com	50	23.8	23.8
Sociology	50	23.8	23.8
Urdu	37	17.6	17.6
Total	210	100.0	100.0

Table 3 shows name of departments in University of Sargodha from where the sample is taken and number of students taken from each department.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t values for Male and Female Students about learning vocabulary strategies (n=210)

Strategies	N=210 M	N=210 SD	95%CI t	P	LL	UL
Metacognition	28.257	3.890	.008	0.05	-1.206	2.630
Guessing	26.719	4.218	.306	0.05	-1.511	1.216
Dictionary	27.452	5.897	-551	0.05	-1.511	1.956
Note taking	18.844	3.623	1.347	0/05	-328	1.744
Repetition	16.644	4.114	.619	0.05	-276	.850
Activation	8.833	1.406	2.751	0.05	.433	.530

Table 4 shows mean standard deviation and *t*-values for male and female students in vocabulary learning strategies. Results indicate significant mean on Metacognition*[t (.008,)p<0.05.*Finding also indicates that all other strategies have non-significant mean value.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The finding of this study showed that students have different beliefs and achievements about clearing vocabulary strategies. Our findings indicate that most students are having problematic strategies about learning vocabulary. The students who have no appropriate and suitable strategies they are not able to enhance vocabulary in a proper way. They are effective negatively due to their disability in learning vocabulary. The results of this study also indicated that most students used effective strategies for learning vocabulary i.e. metacognition regulation, guessing strategies, dictionary strategies note-taking, repetition and activation strategies etc. But these strategies are also choosing according to the taste of students. Every student has his own belief about learning vocabulary strategies.

The basic objective of this research is to explore the strategy which is most useful for learning vocabulary. The study showed that all the strategies on the questionnaire used frequently by the students of the University of Sargodha.

Another inquiry in this study is to investigate the problems, hurdles and obstacles in the way of learning vocabulary. While learning second language various problems occur regarding the learning attitude and perception to reading at a university level. Reading fluently needs correct and automatic word recognition skill. Meta-cognition strategy is also used by students while learning. The purpose of our research is to investigate which strategy is the most effective strategy while learning vocabulary and which is most frequently used by university of Sargodha students. We found evidence that metacognition strategy is mostly used by students of Sargodha University. It has a strong position with f508, t20751iqual variances assumed. So it is indicated and investigated in the research that students are using effective vocabulary learning strategies according to their taste, need and requirements. Meta cognition is frequently used strategy and least used strategy is dictionary strategy.

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Appendix 1

Table 1: Beliefs about vocabulary learning

Sr. no	Statements	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 Unsure	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree
1	The best way to remember words is to memorize word lists.					
2	Repetition is the best way to remember words.					
3	It is only necessary to remember one dictionary definition.					
4	I can acquire a large vocabulary by memory of individual words.					

5	I can identify the meaning of most words through reading.					
6	I can expand my vocabulary through reading a lot.					
7	Guessing words in context is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary.					
8	I revise the new words I have learned.					
9	I use the words that I have learned.					
10	When I learned the word I pay close attention to its new usage and meaning.					
11	When I learned the word, I will recall the meaning to help me understand the context.					

Table 2: Metacognition Regulation

Sr.no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	I think about my progress in vocabulary learning.					
13	I try to find out all I can about the new words I learn.					
14	I only focus on the things that are related to examination.					
15	I know which words are important for me to learn.					
16	I look up words that I'm interested in.					
17	I make a note of words that seem important to me.					
18	I know what cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.					

Table 3: Guessing Strategies

Sr. no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19	I skip words I don't understand.					
20	I use my experience and common sense to guess.					
21	I guess the meaning and then look at the dictionary (when I meet the					

	new words.					
22	I use alternative clues and try again if I fail to guess the meaning of a word.					
23	I make use of my knowledge of the topic to guess the meaning of word.					
24	I look at the part of speech of the new words (to guess the meaning of the new word).					
25	I analyse the word structure (prefix, root and suffix) when guessing the meaning of word.					

Table 4: Dictionary Strategies

Sr.no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26	I use an English dictionary.					
27	I use a bilingual dictionary.					
28	I use the dictionary to find out the pronunciation of the word.					
29	I use dictionary to find only the meaning of the word.					
30	I look in the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word.					
31	I look in the dictionary for collocation patterns.					
32	I use the dictionary to find the appropriate usage (example sentence) of the word.					

Table 5: Note Taking Strategies

Sr.no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
33	I have a vocabulary note book to list down new word.					
34	I write down the English word and Arabic / Malay translation of word.					
35	I only take note the meaning of word.					
36	I take note of the usage of the word (example sentence, part of speech, etc.)					

| 37 | I take note of the synonym or antonym of the word. | | | | | |

Table 6: Memory/ Repetition Strategies

Sr.no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38	To remember a word, I repeat it aloud to myself.					
39	To remember a word, I write it repeatedly.					
40	I create a mental image of the new word to help me remember the word.					
41	To remember a word, I analyse the word by breaking it into different parts.					

Table 7: Activation Strategy

Sr.no	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
42	I make use of the words I learned in speaking and writing.					
43	I make use of the words I learned in everyday situation.					