



STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH NEW WORDS

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Vocabulary is at the core part of every language and is of great importance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of language and represent objects, actions, and ideas, without which people cannot convey intended meanings. The crucial role of vocabulary knowledge in learning a second or foreign language has recently been recognized by theorists and researchers in the field. Therefore, numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises, and drills have been introduced into the field of vocabulary teaching (Hatch & Brown, 1995). It has been proposed that teaching vocabulary should not consist only of teaching specific words, but should also aim to equip learners with the strategies necessary to expand their knowledge of vocabulary. (Morin & Goebel, 2001).

Currently, there is a lot of discussion if implicit or explicit approach is better for teaching Vocabulary to English language learners. Although it seems undeniable that extensive reading and intensive exposure to the target language to improve vocabulary, both approaches are unrealistically time-consuming for most language learners. In most cases, students tend to waste great amount of time reading for reading additional literatures, books and references with the hope of enhancing lexical source. Also, communication with native speakers together with finding a proper partner to improve the language skills is another trouble for learners as well. Still, research which was done by several linguists including Coady (1997), Nation (2001) and Oxford and Scarcella (1994) highlights that vocabulary learning can be reinforced when the student's attention is directed consciously to vocabulary items or strategies. The paper contends that there is no apparent justification for promoting any method in isolation. Therefore, it advocates for directly instructing strategies while also emphasizing the importance of extensive student reading. Given that advanced adult learners are presumed to have surpassed the "high-frequency word threshold," any additional vocabulary they acquire is expected to consist predominantly of low-frequency words. Especially, students are supposed to come across and perceive a great majority of words by the time they reach the advanced level of learning the target language since each level beginning with beginner till intermediate level requires special lexical acquirement and grammar knowledge from students. Considering the vast array of words accessible to learners, it's evident that it's impossible for them to learn every single one. Books, textbooks and learning materials provide millions of words available to learners which means they are not able to learn by heart every and each single of these words.

Consequently, it would be more beneficial to impart strategies for managing unfamiliar words to learners. A strategy itself, as stated in dictionary of Collins, is a general plan or set of plans intended to achieve something, especially over a long period, as well as, it is the art of planning the best way to gain an advantage or achieve success, especially in war or in a long-term process. The significance of strategies in learning vocabulary lies in their ability to empower learners to effectively navigate and comprehend unfamiliar words. By employing various strategies, such as context clues, word analysis, and mnemonic devices, learners can enhance their vocabulary acquisition skills, thereby facilitating better understanding and retention of new words. These strategies provide learners with tools to independently tackle unfamiliar vocabulary encountered in reading, writing, and communication, ultimately fostering overall language proficiency and academic success.

Moreover, as the majority of vocabulary acquisition occurs beyond the classroom environment and typically involves solitary efforts at home, it would be advantageous to provide students with



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instructions on the most effective ways to tackle this task independently. If our goal is for students to sustain effective learning beyond the classroom and confidently handle tasks without relying on teacher support, it is essential to provide them with the necessary skills for independent learning. As it is stated in the research of Cohen(1998) and Oxford (1990), providing direct instruction to students in vocabulary learning strategies is acknowledged as a means to empower them, enabling them to assume control of and responsibility for their own learning. The significance of employing strategies in individual vocabulary learning, without the guidance of a teacher, lies in the ability of these strategies to facilitate autonomous and effective learning. By utilizing various techniques such as contextual inference, word analysis, mnemonic devices, and spaced repetition, learners can navigate unfamiliar words and concepts independently. These strategies empower learners to take ownership of their learning process, enabling them to expand their vocabulary repertoire, improve comprehension, and enhance language proficiency without constant supervision or direction from a teacher. In addition to this, mastering effective vocabulary learning strategies fosters self-reliance and lifelong learning skills, enabling individuals to continue expanding their linguistic abilities beyond formal educational settings. From my own perspective, employing effective vocabulary learning strategies independently cultivates self-confidence and resilience in learners. When individuals develop the ability to decode and understand new words on their own, they feel more empowered and motivated in their learning journey. These strategies enable learners to adapt to various learning environments and circumstances, enhancing their overall language proficiency and academic success.

From a cognitive perspective, the utilization of vocabulary learning strategies in an autonomous context is crucial for enhancing metacognitive skills. When individuals engage in strategic, self-directed approaches, they activate cognitive processes involved in memory, attention, and problem-solving. The deliberate selection and application of specific strategies contribute to more efficient cognitive processing, facilitating the encoding and retrieval of lexical information. This not only reinforces the retention of new vocabulary but also promotes the development of metacognitive awareness, enabling learners to monitor and regulate their cognitive processes effectively. In essence, autonomous vocabulary learning strategies align with cognitive principles, optimizing the cognitive mechanisms involved in lexical acquisition.

Based on the aforementioned principles, we will now provide illustrative instances elucidating vocabulary acquisition methodologies:

1. Contextual Learning: learning new words within a context rather than in isolation (this helps to understand how the word is used in different situations)
2. Word Families: exploring word families, understanding the root word, prefixes, and suffixes (this can help to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words)
3. Using Mnemonics: creating associations or mnemonic devices to remember the meaning of a word (this can involve creating a mental image, linking the word to a similar-sounding word, or forming an acronym)
4. Visual Aids: using visual aids like flashcards, charts, or mind maps to reinforce the association between the word and its meaning.
5. Multiple Exposures: encountering new words multiple times through reading, listening, and speaking and repetition helps reinforce the memory.
6. Practicing in Different Contexts: application of the new words in various contexts – spoken and written (this helps solidify the understanding and usage of the words).
7. Keeping a Vocabulary Journal: keeping a vocabulary journal to put down new words, their meanings, and example sentences and reviewing this journal regularly to reinforce the learning process
8. Using Technology: leveraging language-learning apps, online dictionaries, and other digital resources to explore and practice new words. Many apps offer interactive exercises and quizzes.



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9. Engaging in Conversations: active participation in conversations with native speakers or language exchange partners (this real-world application can help to become more comfortable using new words)
10. Reading Widely: reading a variety of materials, including newspapers, books, articles, and online content. Exposure to diverse vocabulary in different contexts is invaluable.
11. Word Games: playing word games like Scrabble, crossword puzzles, or online word quizzes. These activities make learning fun and reinforce learner's understanding of words.
12. Pronunciation Practice: paying attention to the correct pronunciation of new words, listening to native speakers, using pronunciation guides, and practicing saying the words aloud.
13. Group Study: study with peers and engaging in discussions, teaching each other new words can enhance students understanding and retention.
14. Setting Realistic Goals: breaking down your vocabulary learning into smaller, manageable goals, celebrating your achievements as you progress.

Nevertheless, maintaining consistency proves pivotal in language acquisition, and integrating these strategies into a daily regimen can enhance the overall effectiveness and enjoyment of the learning process.

Debatably, certain students may employ strategies, albeit often unconsciously. The efficacy of vocabulary learning strategies is heightened when their application is intentional and purposeful, rather than being carried out inadvertently. It is commonly admitted that language learners may have been using any type of vocabulary learning strategies even without realizing it in the process, while lacking the possibility of defining and improving the learning efficiency at the same time. The learning process throughout the years gives the opportunity to acquire certain types of strategies which then becomes a crucial and inevitable part of the vocabulary learning.

Another research work by Ahmed (1989) points out that some strategies do not possess inherent effectiveness, and even those acknowledged as beneficial require deliberate practice for efficient utilization. The acquisition of an extensive lexicon is a cognitive endeavor intricately linked to neuroplasticity and memory consolidation. Scientific literature consistently underscores the pivotal role of practice and repetition in optimizing vocabulary learning outcomes. Repetitive exposure to linguistic stimuli facilitates the establishment of robust neural connections, promoting the encoding of lexical information into long-term memory reservoirs. Employing strategic methodologies, such as spaced repetition and mnemonic devices, augments the efficiency of vocabulary acquisition by capitalizing on cognitive mechanisms like the spacing effect and associative memory. This empirical synthesis underscores the neuroscientific underpinnings of language learning, elucidating the significance of deliberate, repetitive practice in the intricate tapestry of vocabulary expansion.

Finally, learners frequently lack awareness of alternative strategies beyond those already employed. As we have mentioned above, years of learning new words and grammar structures can assist in forming certain useful principles which are effective and useful for the current student and after some time they get accustomed to utilizing them without even thinking of other options and strategy choice becomes unconsciously on the same one over and over again. Accordingly, it is sanguinely anticipated that the provision of direct pedagogy on strategic utilization will redound favorably upon students, cultivating their metacognitive acumen vis-à-vis a myriad of strategies. This didactic intervention aspires not only to elucidate the adept application of strategies but also to augment the panorama of stratagems accessible to students, thereby affording them a more nuanced spectrum from which to discern and select.

As it is claimed in the work of Wenden (1986), "in order to be self-sufficient, learners must know how to learn". In other words, students, when they are performing self-study at home or independently, should be able to decide which vocabulary learning strategy is the best suitable for their own case and make a choice of the required principles in the complicated learning situations without the guidance of



a teacher. The overarching goal is to promote self-sufficiency among learners by facilitating their discernment of contextual scenarios conducive to strategic application. This involves cultivating an awareness of strategies tailored to individual proclivities, empowering learners to deploy these strategies judiciously and with efficacy in the pursuit of cognitive objectives.

In light of the myriad variables intricately interwoven with strategic deployment, the reductionist classification of individuals into dichotomous categories as "proficient" or "inept" learners proves overly simplistic. The heterogeneity of cognitive profiles and educational contexts precludes the establishment of a universally efficacious repertoire of strategies applicable to all. As a matter of fact, Rees-Miller (1988) and others declared the rather prescriptive approach taken by earlier linguists of strategy instruction. A prescriptive approach means placing emphasis on planned and logical thought processes. It proposes the best way to develop and implement strategies whereas the descriptive approach focuses on the need for students to examine the real-life realization of their language learning strategies. The prescriptive approach to language is primarily concerned with the formal aspects of a linguistic system, encompassing both word structures and syntax. Prescriptive grammar adopts a normative stance, dictating the grammatical rules that individuals ought to adhere to, rather than providing a descriptive account of the rules inherent in natural language usage. In practical terms, when an adult endeavors to acquire proficiency in a new language, the prescriptive approach becomes pertinent, as it involves the explicit direction and imposition of grammatical norms for effective language acquisition. While the descriptive approach to language elucidates linguistic phenomena by endeavoring to explicate their actual occurrences. This methodological stance seeks a comprehensive, accurate, and systematic understanding of how language is authentically employed. In contrast to the prescriptive approach, which mandates adherence to specific grammatical rules, the descriptive approach aims to unveil the inherent patterns and structures in language as observed in natural usage by its speakers. The dichotomy between these approaches lies in their respective orientations one toward normative guidance and the other toward empirical analysis of linguistic behavior. Hence, the objective is not to impart a uniform set of strategies purportedly employed by "proficient" learners or to showcase ostensibly "superior" strategies. Instead, the focus is on assisting students as distinct individuals in cultivating an awareness of their personal strategy utilization and acquainting them with the diverse array of potential strategies applicable to vocabulary acquisition. The profound significance of discerning individualized vocabulary strategies lies in the bespoke nature of cognitive processes and linguistic aptitudes inherent in each learner. Acknowledging and understanding one's unique approach to vocabulary acquisition fosters metacognitive awareness, enabling learners to optimize their cognitive resources effectively. Moreover, as language proficiency is a highly personalized journey, awareness of tailored strategies empowers learners to navigate their linguistic landscape with efficacy. This discernment not only enhances the efficiency of vocabulary retention but also promotes a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the language itself. In essence, recognizing and honing one's unique vocabulary strategies stands as a pivotal cornerstone in the construction of linguistic proficiency, aligning the learning process with individual cognitive strengths and propelling learners toward linguistic mastery.

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