Some Strategies Used in Teaching English Vocabulary in the EFL Classrooms- A case study conducted at the Faculty of Education, University of Misurata, Libya

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Abstract:

This study is written to investigate the vocabulary teaching strategies adopted by four English teachers in English Department-Faculty of Education- University of Misurata. This study tries to answer two basic questions: What are the vocabulary teaching strategies used in English Department? Do these strategies subsume the various methods of teaching vocabulary in modern literature? Analysis and discussions are based on the data collected from interview, observation, and post-observation interview. The participating teachers are four EFL teachers with different experiences. The data analysis is based on the constant comparison method to establish semantic themes or categories. The findings show that the strategies used by the participating teachers to teach vocabulary items are miming, book/sheet images, drawing, definition and the translation method. The participants report that they do not teach their students strategies to learn vocabulary outside of class, contrary to the norms posited in the literature for teaching vocabulary.

Keywords: *Vocabulary, Strategies to Vocabulary Teaching.*

الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في تدريس مهارة المفردات للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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قسم اللغة الإنجليزية– كلية التربية– جامعة مصراتة

الملخص:

أجريت هده الدراسة للبحث في استراتيجيات تدريس المفردات للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، جمعت فيها البيانات من خلال مقابلات وملاحظات أجريت داخل قاعات دراسية، وكان المشاركون في هذه الدراسة أربع أعضاء هيئة تدريس بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية ذوي تجارب مختلفة وتدريس مستويات مختلفة، استندت هده الدراسة إلى تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها عن طريقة المقارنة المستمرة للتحليل من أجل تحديد المواضيع الدلالية والفئات، وأظهر التحليل أن الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها المشاركون

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لتدريس المفردات هي التمثيل الصامت، استخدام صور الشيب المطبوع للمقرر، الرسوم، المرادفات والترجمة، وأفاد المشاركون أنهم لا يعلمون الطلاب استراتيجيات لتعلم المفردات خارج القاعات الدراسية، والتي تتجاهل المعايير المنصوص عليها في المؤلفات العصرية لتعليم المفردات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات– استراتيجيات وطرق تدريس مفردات اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Introduction:

Many papers have been produced to address the different facets of vocabulary as the main component of a language. Some of these papers talk about the essential role that vocabulary takes in a communicative situation, and how it can impede comprehension when it is misunderstood. Others address and clarify the need to set well planned lessons to teach vocabulary throughout a language course. Yet there are other studies that tackle the effect of vocabulary on the different skills of a language and how learners' performance improves when they have a good vocabulary knowledge. In addition there are studies which deal with the various strategies that can be used to teach and learn vocabulary, and what characteristics an educator needs to choose a class strategy.

Statement of the Problem:

As an EFL lecturer at Misurata University-faculty of Education- English Department, it has been noticed that many of the students are unable to understand simple sentences which are constructed of high frequency words although some of the students have been learning the English language for several years. Therefore, it can be argued that the low level proficiency of EFL learners in English department may be partially attributed to the methods of vocabulary instruction being used in classrooms.

Objectives of the study:

This study investigates whether or not EFL lecturers in English department-Faculty of Education are indeed aware of the significant role of vocabulary strategies in their classrooms. The other goal of the study is to compare the findings of this work to the effective vocabulary teaching strategies to teach vocabulary in EFL classroom.

Research questions:

This study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1- What are the vocabulary teaching strategies used in English department by four EFL teachers?

2- How far the strategies used in their classrooms relate to various methods of teaching vocabulary in modern literature?

Background of the study:

Vocabulary is the raw material from which we construct what we intend to communicate. It is obviously self-evident to elaborate the significance of vocabulary in English language teaching (ELT) and the responsibility it consequently puts on the part of the teacher. People exchange information, ideas, thoughts and feelings by speaking or writing in a particular language. Language is a system which is made up of hundreds of thousands of words. "It's almost impossible to say exactly how many words there are in English" (McCarten, 1997, p. l) .These small meaningful units which are often combined together to create an utterance are our tools for expressing ourselves (Compillo, 2003). In fact, a lot of learners of English as a foreign Language (EFL) feel that they are hampered from mastering an effective communicative competence by their lack of English vocabulary which is an obstacle needs to be taken into consideration by English teachers. Therefore, an English teacher needs to be aware of the lexical system of English so that he will be able to decide what to teach, what techniques to use, what strategies may help promote active vocabulary learning.

The question here is what vocabulary should be considered as core, and therefore, worth being taught to learners of English. The answer to this should be made an account of understanding what is meant by the word *core*, or in other words, what characteristics a particular word should have to be considered as core; however, linguists have been discussing and arguing about what makes the corneas of a word. McCarten, (1997,p. 41) argued that the coreness in vocabulary is not a simple yes/no category. He pointed out that cautious investigation is required in specifying the concept of a core vocabulary since there is not an automatic harmony between what may be central words in the "internal structures" of a language and the perception of the language users of those particular words. However, on the whole, there is agreement that the frequency of a particular term is an important element in considering it as a core vocabulary. Peng (2009) has stated that core words tend to be the most frequently occurring ones [t], but he commented that the fact that they are widely used is because - they do have core meaning — potential.

Content Word

Clark & pointon (2003) defined content word as, those words which have meanings on their own and reflect our experience in life.. content words are the flesh and blood of the sentence ,Content words include nouns,(girl, book) verbs (write), adjectives (fast , nice) and adverbs (quickly, clearly). Consider the following example, "the boy is playing in the garden'. The words boy,

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playing and 'garden are the content words because they give meaning and make us understand the sentence i, e without them the words the, is, in, do not make any sense. The category of content words is considered as an open class of words as there is an infinite number of lexical words.

Structural or Functional words

"The structural words from the skeleton of a language" (Nation, 2001, p 79). Although functional words do not have meaning on their own, but their meaning appears when they are used in a sentence. Their function is to combine the sentence together and that is the reason why it is only in context that their meaning is determined. Functional or what is known as 'empty words' belong to closed class of words as there is a limited number of grammatical words in English and no new function can be added to this category (Carter, 1998).

Vocabulary and its relation to other Skills of Language:

A good base of vocabulary can enhance learners' performance in the main skills of a language. Campillo (2003) states, research indicates that in order for the students to perform well in speaking, reading, and writing they need to possess a rich vocabulary (p.3).

This is quite intuitive. When a person knows the vocabulary associated with a certain topic, it becomes obvious how this person outperforms others in the activities that are related to that topic. In contrast, when he/she encounters many unfamiliar words in a certain context, whether the words are low or high frequency words, the meanings of these words become obscured. The refore it is safe to assume that he/she has a difficult time trying to understand what is going on. Nation (2001) elaborates that learners feel that many of their difficulties in both receptive and productive language use result from an inadequate vocabulary.

When L2 learners read a text that contains a number of familiar vocabulary items, it becomes easy for them to understand the gist of the text, even if they do not know the meaning of all words. When learners do not know many words in the text, however, they often find themselves confused and frustrated regardless of their competence in other aspects of the language. Regarding the effect of vocabulary on reading, Beng (2009) argue that fluent readers recognize and understand many words, and they read more quickly and easily than those with smaller vocabularies. one reason that student do not read well is that they do not possess a functional vocabulary for reading. This reason is one of the eight reasons which most of researchers suggest as to how learners develop their vocabulary.

The effect of vocabulary is most obvious in writing and speaking skills. The richer vocabulary we have, the more we find ourselves able to express what we want to say in a way that impresses our readers and listeners. This can be inferred from what Beng (ibid) claims that variety in selecting words to convey accurate meanings is necessary in speaking and writing, the outages of the language arts, and use of diverse terms and concepts in speaking and writing adds variety to quality communication. Of course, choosing the most suitable words to express an idea or an event serves to convey the message with more ease and more accuracy, vocabulary development must be taken seriously in the classroom. In addition, regarding the effect of vocabulary on writing, Pikulski & Templeton (2004) discuss in a paper in which they examine the role of the lexical component in the scoring of sixty-six placement tests. they find that error-free variations are congruent with scores. So, if EFL teachers, want to help students to make good progress in their writing abilities. They should give more attention to vocabulary in their classes.

Strategies to Vocabulary Teaching:

We can probably all agree that passive learning is not an effective teaching strategy to instruct vocabulary. Students need multiple exposures to a word before they can fully understand it. They also need to learn new words in context. Teachers can emphasize active processing by having students connect new meanings to words they already know. The more exposures students have to a word, the better chance that they will remember it (Lynch &Anderson,2012).

The term strategies is defined as, "the approaches that can be used across curricular areas to support the learning of students, may be used only on occasion" (McCarten, 1997, p.4). Wandberg and Rohwer (2010) define teaching strategies as the structure, system, methods, techniques, procedures, and process that a teacher uses during instruction. These are strategies the teacher employs to assist students learning. While techniques are defined as the body of specialized procedures and methods used in any specific field. However, due to the difficulty in establishing and distinguishing between strategies and techniques during one observation class the researcher decided to make these two terms interchangeable.

Many researchers have examined the effect of vocabulary learning strategies in order to find out those that better serve to develop L2 learners' vocabulary. Some of these strategies found to be very effective in this area will be briefly presented in the following section.

The Translation Strategy:

In spite of the general view by teachers that they try not to use translation inside English class, linguists street the effectiveness of translation as a way of conveying meaning. (Gairns& Redman, 1986) the usefulness of translation emerges from the time it saves that -might otherwise be spent on tortuous and largely unsuccessful explanation in English and it can be a very quick way to dispose of low frequency items that may worry student but do not warrant significant attention.

On the whole, judicious use of translation vocabulary into the mother tongue should be ensured. Otherwise, over usage of learners' first language will result in a problem in which student often give up if the exact word does not come to mind, whereas those who are use to manipulating English will often substitute for other communicative strategy (Clark & Pointon, 2003). Of course, a teacher may use a combination of the previous techniques in one vocabulary class. Moreover, in a study conducted by Grace (1998) on 181 higher-proficiency native speakers of English studying French, the researcher divided the participants into two groups: a group enrolled in a computer assisted language learning (CALL) program in French with the opportunity of using English translations and a group using a CALL program in French without translations in English. The researchers found that learners who had the option of using translations gained 42 percent more new words than those who did not (cited in Clark &Pointon, 2003).

The Context Strategy (offer variety inside the class):

The most valuable thing that you can do to increase your students' vocabulary is to encourage them to read. Wide reading is the main pathway for word acquisition. This activity enables students to see words in different contexts, therefore deepening their knowledge. It requires students to find new words as they encounter them in their reading.

Since, knowing the meaning of a word is not enough to learn the different shades of meaning that a word may have, here emerges the role of the context strategy. Clark & Pointon, (2003) say regarding the role of context in learning a new word: We can learn much about a word's meaning through different contexts in which it is used. And the more different contexts we encounter with that word, the more flexible we become with that word and its meaning and the more likely it is that we will remember it.

Other researchers and educators as well stress the importance of context in acquiring new words. For example, Hedge (2000) pointed out that "a reading text can provide a springboard for a range of vocabulary -focused work "(p

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134). On the contrary, teaching vocabulary does not necessarily mean a separate class of delivering isolated words; it may be integrated with other major language skills as the classes of reading, writing, listening can provide learners with good opportunities to acquire useful words. Furthermore, teaching vocabulary may take place in the form of follow-up activities Of the lesson or at the end of the class as a recap and practice for the learners. The point is to ensure that learners are exposed to a rich and variable vocabulary, in many cases, the class is the only place EFL learners use and receive exposure to English .

The keyword Strategy:

Another strategy found to have a considerable role in increasing EFL learners' vocabulary and widely discussed in the literature is the keyword strategy. It helps students visually organize the relationship between pieces of information. Researchers have identified this strategy as a great way to increase students' grasp of vocabulary words The keyword strategy is a mnemonic strategy for elaborating upon an unfamiliar word or concept by making it more meaningful and concrete (Lynch,2012). For instance, a learner might recall that "muck" means filth by rhyming it with "yuck."

Regarding its effectiveness, Lynch(ibid) sates that students experience increased levels of academic success when teachers implement the Keyword Method [and this] has been well documented. Furthermore, Nation (2001) argues that "the keyword strategy is an effective way of doing this remembering a new word".

To add to that, Pikulski &Templeton (2004), in their study of three methods of learning vocabulary, examined the effectiveness of rote learning memorization, semantic mapping, and the keyword strategy among 778 EFL learners. They concluded that the use of the keyword strategy to introduce vocabulary results in better EFL vocabulary learning at initial stages of acquisition. Thus, it might be inferred from the study discussed above that the keyword method is very useful in teaching vocabulary although its implementation can consume a lot of time and effort.

The Word Links Strategy (word connect):

A further strategy for developing word knowledge is Word Links which is based on the characteristics of effective vocabulary instruction. That is, it engages learners in multifaceted activities. Peng (2009) and Hedge (2000) claim that: Word links offer students myriad opportunities to think and talk about the contexts in which words are used, to revisit words that they have been learning, to think about relationships among words as they connect with

classmates, and to actively engage with words as they decide whether or not to link with peers who have different words. A Venn diagram is a great way for students to compare similarities and differences within words. It also provides students with new exposures to words, which helps them solidify what they have learned. For this activity, students are directed to connect two words or more that are written in the center of a Venn diagram. Their task is to connect these words by writing down each words definition on the Venn diagram, then explaining the reason for the connection (McCarten, 1997). Likewise, this type of strategy provides students with the opportunity to think about and discuss the meanings of words with their partners as they are trying to find relations between the words, which makes it a very useful experience. (ibid), explains that reviewing the words in this way usually results in rich conversations about the meanings of the words and is a motivating and interesting experience for the students.

The Semantic Mapping Strategy:

An addition to these strategies is semantic mapping. A semantic map is a graphic organizer that helps students visually organize the relationship between pieces of information. Researchers have identified this strategy as a great way to increase students' grasp of vocabulary words. It can be used as a pre-reading activity to active prior knowledge, or to introduce key words. One form of semantic mapping is to ask learners to write a newly introduced word in the middle of a paper and then lead them through answering three questions that could give details about the word. In another form the teacher writes a word on the board and asks learners to repeat all the words that fit in the category (Lynch, 2012). This serves to connect between prior knowledge and new knowledge, which strengthens learner's acquisition of significant words.

Regardless of which vocabulary teaching strategies are adopted, there are four characteristics for effective vocabulary teaching should be taken into consideration (ibid):

• The vocabulary teaching method exposes learners to contextual use besides the definition of the items under focus.

• It subsequently retrieves the items under focus and gives the learners the opportunity to apply and practice the words.

• It pushes the learners to figure out associations among word meanings.

• It engages the learners in dynamic learning activities.

In addition, to decide which vocabulary learning strategies to recommend to EFL learners, one needs to consider the specific learning context as the

effectiveness with which learning strategies can be both taught and used depends on the students' proficiency level, their motivation and purposes in learning the L2, the tasks and texts being used.

Methodology:

Study design:

The study is qualitative in nature. It is a case study approach, which normally entails a detailed description of the situation under focus. A case study is "intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system" (McCarten,1997. p.19).

The qualitative method is motivated by its reflexivity as connected to education research. It stresses the idea of providing comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the different features included in a study. The availability of such descriptions in this study makes it feasible for other EFL teachers, specifically college teachers.

Participants:

The participants of this study are four teachers teaching different skills courses in the English department at faculty of education, Misurata University. These teachers, who are all Libyan, have different experiences. Besides, they are teaching different levels of students.

All teachers have an MA degree in English Language Teaching. The faculty where the study is conducted is mostly-female. Thus, The syllabus which is taught is provided by the English Department at the Faculty of Education .

Data Collection and procedures:

Three main tools of data collection procedures are used interviews, observations, and post-observation interviews.

Interviews:

Collecting data by interviewing is widely used in social studies research because it helps the researcher to get data about subjects' personal information, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. One of the good points of the interview is that when interviewees are asked but questions are not clear, the interviewer clarifies his or her questions so that the interviewees understand. Interview is chosen because conducting one-on-one interviews require the researcher to be directly involved in the process of data gathering. This helps to closely observe the responses of the interviewees, both verbal and non-verbal as recommended by Seidman (1998).

In this study, the interview phase each teacher is interviewed alone. Each interview lasts 20 to 30minutes. The interviews are conducted in English. The interviewees are asked seven questions (see appendix A&B). Each has follow

up-questions depending on the answers given by the interviewees. Each interviewee is provided with a copy of these seven questions in advance to have the chance to think and arrange better responses motivated by their experience and practice teaching vocabulary.

Regarding post- observation interviews phase, the same procedure used for the interviews are applied. Post-observation interviews follow classroom observations. During post-observation interviews, interviewees are asked to explain issues observed in the their classrooms observation. Each interview is analyzed to find systematic patterns and compare the responses of the teachers involved. These patterns are identified by using the constant comparative method of data analysis. The comparison of the derived patterns enables to find out how teachers generally deal with vocabulary in classes. This is compared with other data collection methods at a later stage of this analysis.

Classroom Observation:

Collecting data from classroom observation is a good technique because researchers directly study and collect data based on situations. Robson (2002) mentions that a major advantage of observation as a technique is its directness since a researcher does not ask language learners about their views, feelings or attitudes, but he or she can watch what they do and listen to what they say.

In observation phase of this study, each teacher is observed twice in a two-weeks period. A reflection for each observation is reported (see appendix C). While observing, The researcher notes the type of strategies the teachers use to teach vocabulary and the number of times these strategies are used. The collected data from the combination of interviews and observations provides the researcher with a wealth of data to analyze in order to answer the study questions.

Data analysis, Findings and Discussion:

Strategies teachers use should reflect the teacher's philosophy and awareness of how to use the most recent strategies in class best. Thus, this section starts by shedding light on the participating teachers' philosophies regarding the role of vocabulary. And also considers, the reported vocabulary teaching strategies teachers claim to use during interviews. Furthermore, a description of the observed strategies that teachers seem to use in classrooms are given. To answer the first question in this study, some discrepancies between reported and observed strategies are clarified. The reasons given by teachers to account for reported and observed discrepancy are examined. The vocabulary teaching style of the participating teachers and the most useful

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vocabulary teaching methods are compared according to recent literature. This, in turn, contributes to shed light on the second question.

Teachers' philosophy of vocabulary:

All teachers assert that vocabulary is the core of language. They argue that the acquisition of a good amount of vocabulary helps students to develop all language skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking. For instance, teacher 1, affirms that *vocabulary is very important for other skills. For example, students write better if they know more words and, of course, they read quickly and understand a reading text if they have more vocabulary.* Teacher 2, states that *vocabulary is more important than other skills because students have to start collecting vocabulary to start understanding English…*teacher 3, states that *vocabulary is a very important aspect of English … because if students know a lot of vocabulary, they can understand what they read and hear, and then write and speak.*

Moreover, the acquisition of a good amount of vocabulary transfers students from the stage of dealing with the language in pieces to the stage of dealing with it as a whole, which contributes to enhancing their language production. All this improve the academic performance of the students. As a participant responded to the question: How *vocabulary improve your students' English level?* for example, he says *I have a student, who knows lots of vocabulary, so when I ask questions, he answers most of them and he always tries to participate. This clearly affects his level.* These factors urge teachers to give vocabulary priority in their philosophy of teaching as it is clearly indicated in their responses. This emphasis given to vocabulary in EFL teaching by the participants is congruent with the prominence given to it by many researchers as discussed in the literature review. In spite of the weight given by teachers to vocabulary in their teaching philosophy, they all reach a consensus regarding the general weakness of their students' vocabulary knowledge. Some of teachers' responses are:

Teacher 1: *The students are weak; whatever you do for them, whatever you teach, whatever you say for them to review the words.*

Teacher 2: *You can say, through my experience, that they are poor.*

Teacher 3: *In each class, one or two students have a good amount of vocabulary, the rest are very weak.*

Basically, some teachers attribute lack of vocabulary to students' negative attitude, which stands, as they claim, as a great barrier to their language learning. As one says, *I think students are not interested in English because it is difficult for them, and it is not their first language.* Other teachers attribute

weakness to detailed syllabus, which restrains them from setting better plans to develop students' vocabulary. Regarding this point, a teacher adds *our students don't have a good base in vocabulary; this is because of the syllabus.* These justifications could be part of the problem; but teachers do not seem to realize that the low level of students' vocabulary could also be related to teaching style strategies used by teachers. None of the teachers mention the thought that students' inability to grasp new vocabulary items may be partially an outcome of vocabulary teaching methods used in the classroom, as it is clear from the following analysis.

Reported and Observed strategies of Vocabulary Teaching:

In response to the interview question regarding the way in which the teachers teach vocabulary, each teacher, as expected, has something to say. As explained above, two- class observations compare what teachers are supposed to do with what they actually do during class time. Mismatches between reported and observed methods of instruction are discussed below to answer the research question, *"What are the vocabulary teaching strategies used in classes by EFL teachers?"*

To begin with, teacher 1, says that *he normally writes unfamiliar words on the board to attract students' attention to those words. He tries to demonstrate them through illustrative examples and miming words. If the words are difficult and the students show no signs of understanding, he translates the meaning in Arabic, as a last resort.* This according to teacher 1, saves time and effort. The two observations of teacher's 1 class show a sequence of vocabulary strategies that match the sequence he describes in his interview. For example, to explain the word "*make*," in introducing some of vocabularies in his lesson, he first writes it on the board and read it out loud. When no student knows its meaning, he mimes it, to help students guess its meaning. It is obvious that the students have the meaning of the word because most of them were already saying the answer. However, one mismatch between what he reports doing and what he actually does that he does not use any of the strategies he says that he uses in his interview. Moreover, he uses the translation strategy often. He translates words or asks students to do so. The translation strategy is used by teacher 1 as first method of teaching in class for half of the words taught in the two observed classes. Teacher's 2 response to the same question shows that he uses the same methods teacher 1 uses. However, in practice, these methods rarely appear in teacher's 2 teaching. He uses methods only with some of words he taught in two observed classes. The prevailing strategy he uses in teaching vocabulary is the translation strategy. He uses it right from the beginning to

explain most lesson words. All other words, are taught by visually. There is no attempt to present words in context. This contradicts what he says in his interview. Teacher3, says something different. He comments that teaching vocabulary could take different forms, depending on the level of the students. Thus, he explains that when he introduces new vocabulary items to students, he uses words in sentences that may give clues to their meaning in teaching advanced English. He also reports that he tries to draw students' attention to the position of the word within the sentence to help students figure out its meaning. With lower-level students, he says that he uses strategies that are different from those mentioned above. He makes use of miming, illustration, and finally, the translation strategy if students are still unable to comprehend the meaning of the unfamiliar words. However, through observing his class, contextual vocabularies are rare. It does not seem to have a priority. One of the words " *civilians*" in a context: *"your civilians reading the paper or listening to their leaders on the evening news…"*. Only few students raised hands to guess the meaning of the word, but for the others, the teacher have to give the meaning in Arabic after a few attempts by the students to translate the word. Thus, the strategy of vocabulary teaching that teacher 3 has mostly used is the translation method, whether words are new or reviewed, and students are lower or advance. Furthermore, his use of the translation strategy takes different forms, such as teacher translation, students translation, and directing students to their English Arabic glossaries.

Moving to another teacher, teacher 4, says that when he introduces new vocabulary items to his students, he relies on miming, material pictures in order to teach concrete words. He resorts to the translation strategy when teaching abstract words which are difficult for students to understand through context. The observed classes do not show that he takes into account whether a new vocabulary item is concrete or abstract when choosing the appropriate strategy. For example, he uses the translation strategy right from the beginning to explain the words "*communication*" and "*system*". The other strategies he uses during the interview match those he uses during the observed classes. Among those, is the context strategy which he uses to review two words at the beginning of the first observed class: for an example, in a lesson titled (*Globalization*), the word "*changing*," is reviewed in the sentence: Today, television is changing more and more quickly and the word "*international*" which he uses in the sentence: This international network needs communications satellite system like Arab sat. He also uses drawn pictures to

explain the words: "radio station" transmitter" Students appear to comprehend the meanings of these words and no need to be translated into Arabic.

Considering teacher's 3 response to how he teaches vocabulary, he first says that *he uses context to explain new words. Then, he uses one of the following strategies: book or sheet pictures or drawings to help students to get the meanings of the words in question. If students are still not able to understand new words, he, in the line with other teachers, resorts to the translation strategy.* Analysis of collected data through observations shows that teacher 3 relies heavily on the translation strategy, he uses directly to explain most words he taught during the observed classes. Some of these words are "*drip down*" "*spread germs*" and "s*kating.*" There are no instances in which he uses direct translation as a last resort as he states in his interview.

It is clear that there are some mismatches between the participating teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching methods. To begin for example, teacher 1, teacher 2, and teacher 4, report that they contextualize new words to help students guess the meanings of such words. There are no occasions in which they employ this strategies in the observed classes. What is more is that teacher 2 does not follow the same sequence of teaching vocabulary that he claims to follow when he teaches vocabulary. Teacher 4 uses the translation strategy as a main and only method. Another teacher, teacher 3 states that the vocabulary strategy he selects depends on the student level. The context strategy is mostly used. However, students' level and priority of the context strategy are not taken in consideration two observed classes. Lastly, teacher4 notes that difference between concrete and abstract words is crucial when choosing vocabulary strategy. This distinction has not been shown in the observed classes as concrete and abstract words are taught with the same strategy.

Used Strategies vs. Suggested strategies:

The collected data indicates that the teachers use very simple strategies that serve only to provide the meaning of the words. These strategies include miming, book/sheet images, drawings, definitions and the translation strategy. All these strategies are very useful to introduce the basic meanings of new or even unfamiliar words, but they do not assure that students develop a good mastery of vocabulary. With no other strategy adopted, there is no guarantee that students understand and attain the new vocabulary items in the long run. For instance, the literature review shows the significant of the context strategy to clarify meaning.

The analysis of the data suggests that none of the participating teachers use context to explain words. This implies that teachers rarely refer back to

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previously taught words for reinforcement. Almost all words that teachers teach are presented once and only once. None of the teachers in this study use homework exercises to enhance students vocabulary. Regarding this, Nation (2001) says, teachers should expect only limited learning from single meetings with a word and should bear this in mind when they plan or carry out those meetings. He justifies this with the fact that a number of facts need to be known about a word: its form, its meaning, and its use. All these points do not seem to be taken into consideration by the participating teachers in this study, which implies that their methods do not develop learners' vocabulary.

Furthermore, the collected data indicates that none of the participating teachers seem to teach his students strategies to learn vocabulary outside class. This is supported by their responses to the post-observation interview question, which, shows whether teachers teach their students strategies to learn vocabulary or not. All teachers claim that they teach their students such strategies. When asked how this is done, they respond that this is done through translation strategy, miming, sheet images, and drawings. When explain that the researcher observe participating teachers using these strategies, which is not the same as overtly teaching students how to use these methods, the teachers' responses indicate that he cannot differentiate between using strategies to teach vocabulary and teaching strategies for learning vocabulary. Some of their responses are teacher 1: *I can't see any difference between using and teaching strategies… when I use a strategy to teach vocabulary, the students should know how to use it by themselves because I set an example for them.* Teacher 3: *When we use strategies, we actually teach using them at he same time, doesn't have to be direct.* Teacher 2: *I use different strategies to teach vocabulary, so when Students see me use a strategy a number of times, they Should be able to use it when they need to.*

This implies that the way the participating teachers teach vocabulary is not consistent with the current norms in the field of teaching vocabulary, and the teaching vocabulary strategies. Wandberg & Rohwer (2010, p.2) argue that "*learners need to be given explicit instruction to become more aware of and proficient with the broad range of strategies that can be used through the learning process*".

A further point that could be deduced from analyzing the results is that the teachers generally do not consider the different proficiency levels of students as a criterion to choose vocabulary teaching strategies. All participating teachers use the same strategies to teach vocabulary regardless of the level they are teaching, even when there is a noticeable gap between the students'

proficiency levels. Teacher *3* and teacher *4* are a case in point. Nation (ibid), distinguishes between lists of translation pairs and context strategies in terms of learners' levels of competence says while advanced learners may benefit from learning vocabulary in context, learners probably benefit most from words that are presented in lists of translation pairs". This is evident in the teachers' responses to the post observation interview question whether participating teachers plan what words to teach and what strategies to adopt in introducing them. Teacher 4for instance replied *I don't have to plan which words, items, or idioms to teach because they are already planned in the given source (course design), but what strategies to use to teach them, I leave to class .. Sometimes I feel translation strategy is enough, and at other times I use available book/ sheet images.*

Thus, the reasons teachers give to justify students' poor vocabulary, discussed earlier in this section are not the only factors. The teaching style of participating teachers apparently plays a major role in compounding this problem, a role which goes unnoticed by these teachers. What's more, none of the strategies in their teaching style, has effective vocabulary teaching . Accordingly, the answer to the second research question in this study , *" Do the strategies used in their classrooms reflect the various methods of teaching vocabulary in the recent literature?."* The answer is to a large extent a negative one. Although teachers are aware of the effect vocabulary teaching methods in recent literature -context and recycling- they often neglect these methods in their classrooms.

Conclusion:

Teaching vocabulary is an unavoidable of any English language teacher. Whatever he/she is responsible for teaching in a particular lesson whether reading, listening, speaking or writing, the possibility of encountering new lexis by the learners is inevitable and this requires a competent teacher who is able to elucidate the meaning of new words sensibly such as using different teaching aids, helping student acquires effective vocabulary learning strategies and help them put the new items in practice.

All participating teachers in the study grant vocabulary high significance, compatible with the importance assigned to vocabulary teaching in recent literature in the field of TESOL. However, they believe that their students' level of proficiency in vocabulary is far lower than average, despite the efforts they exert in class.

Analysis of the data collected in interviews and observations, reveal that there are some Mismatches between what teachers say and what they actually

do in their EFL classes. The discrepancies or mismatches are spotted in the following issues: the teachers claim that they provide context for new words or phrases, use the translation method as the last resort, and take students' level of proficiency into consideration, when choosing methods to teach abstract and concrete words.

Generally, the analysis show that the strategies used by the participating teachers to teach vocabulary items, phrases or even some idioms are miming, book/sheet images, drawings, definitions and the translation method. The analysis of the data also show that the majority of the teachers makes little use of context strategy to explain new or unfamiliar words. Contrary to the norms set in the literature for teaching vocabulary, none of the teachers teach students the strategies to learn vocabulary outside class.

Recommendations:

Developing a suitable vocabulary syllabus and applying appropriate methods, activities, techniques inside the classroom should be the concern of course designer, educators and English teachers here in Libya. Using modern strategies should be taken into consideration i.e. the traditional way of teaching new lexis by making lists of isolated words and their translations should be substituted by a way which shows the meaning in context and integrate teaching vocabulary with teaching reading, listening and speaking. In fact, it is one of the essential roles of the English teacher to expand their students' vocabulary and to encourage them to be independent from the teacher, leading eventually to continuous learning out of the classroom.

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Yopp, R.,

Appendix A
Sample of Interview Form

Time started: Time ended: Teacher:

Strategies Used in Teaching Vocabulary

1- Where does vocabulary teaching stand in your teaching philosophy? Do you give it priority?
a-   Why does vocabulary teaching take priority in your philosophy?
 2- How do you teach vocabulary in your classes?
3- How do you think, teaching vocabulary improve students' English level?
4. What are the sources of the vocabulary you teach in your class?
a- (if the teacher uses other sources) On what bases do you choose that Vocabulary.
5. How many new words do you usually teach per class?
a- what is your impression about your students' vocabulary level?
b-   Do you think that you need more time or what you are doing is enough?
6. What strategies you use to teach vocabulary?
a- What strategy you use most? Why?
7. How do you usually revise vocabularies?

Appendix B
Sample of Post-Observation Interview Form

Time started: Time ended: Teacher:

1- It is noticed that you teach certain numbers of vocabulary in each class. How does that match the importance you give to vocabulary?

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2- What strategies do you plan to teach with and How?

3- It is noticed that you learn more toward the ……… strategy, to teach new words. Why?

4- In most cases, it is observed that the purpose behind teaching unfamiliar words is _____ . could you explain?

5- In learning vocabulary, do you teach your students strategies independently? How?

6- Do you think English Department policy helps to apply your philosophy of teaching vocabulary? How?

7- Do you think that the period designated for the course is enough? Why?

Appendix C
Sample of Observation Sheet Form

Date: Place: level of course: Teacher:

Started: Ended: Number of students:

strategies used to explain words: Number of times strategies used:
* Teachers use context: _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category:- nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____ verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____
-adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ …1 2 3 4 5 6 ___
Aims of presentation: Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. _____
* Teachers use translation from the beginning: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Word category:- nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____ verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ……1 2 3 4 5 6 __
Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. _____
* Teachers use translation as a last resort:_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____ verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ……1 2 3 4 5 6 __
Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. _____
* Teachers use miming: _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____ verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 ____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ……1 2 3 4 5 6 ____

Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. - _____

* Teacher uses drawing: _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ……1 2 3 4 5 6 __
Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point. -
- Facilitates understanding a text. _____
*Teacher uses flash cards: _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ - verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ - ……………1 2 3 4 5 6
Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point. -
- Facilitates understanding a text. _____
* Teacher uses a game: _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ - verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ………1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
Aims of presentation: - Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. - _____
* Teacher uses _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Word category: - nouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ - verbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____
- adjectives 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____ ……1 2 3 4 5 6
Aims of presentation: -Expanding vocabulary. – Clarifying a point.
- Facilitates understanding a text. - _____

Class material
Number of revised vocabulary: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Number of new taught vocabulary: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Time allotted:
Words taught: -in the first third of the period
- In the second third of the period
- in the last third of the period
- throughout