

**Introduction to Qualitative Research  
ELPS 871**

**Exploration of second language learners' vocabulary learning strategies**

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## **Introduction**

Nation (2006) have stated that second language learners need 6000 to 9000 words in order to communicate effectively in English. However other studies that were carried out in

many contexts of second language learners have shown that second language learners are not up to that level. The following table summarizes the real case of second language learners of English in many studies that were carried out in many contexts.

Country	Vocabulary size	Hours of instruction	Reference (re-size)
Japan EFL University	2000	800–1200	Shillaw 1995
	2300		Barrow et al. 1999
China English majors	4000	1800–2400	Laufer 2001
Indonesia EFL University	1220	900	Nurweni and Read 1999
Oman EFL University	2000	1350+	Horst et al. 1998
Israel High school graduates	3500	1500	Laufer 1998
France High school	1000	400	Arnaud et al. 1985
Greece Age 15, high school	1680	660	Milton and Meara 1998
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These studies were recent and prior to these studies vocabulary acquisition or learning and teaching have been neglected for a very long time especially within the domain of second language acquisition research. Until Paul Meara produced his famous paper Vocabulary acquisition: a neglected aspect of language learning in 1980. Before this date Paul Nation had published some papers that suggested ways for teaching vocabulary between 1974 and 1978, but majority of them were practical papers that were produced based on experiences of language teachers. These papers provided solutions for what language teachers may come across in their classes. However, these papers were not scientific and were not based on experiments, which is a problem, because these papers cannot be generalized to other contexts. In spite of vocabulary importance in language learning, it was seen as suggested by Klapper (2008) as an unimportant

vehicle that provides context for language rules, which 'the rules or grammar' is the main focus for language teachers and linguists at that time.

Based on the previous ideas that showed that language instruction is not enough for vocabulary learning. Researchers began a general quest for helping language learners to upgrade their level in language in general and more specifically in vocabulary acquisition. Researchers and teachers began to suggest ways of learning that learners may use within their classes and outside their classes to enhance language acquisition in general and vocabulary acquisition in specific. They began exploring the rate of acquisition of language learners. Researchers and teachers noticed that some language learners excel in comparison to other learners in their quest of language learning, Takac(2008).

At this stage, the research was not focused on vocabulary but rather on language in general and the least efforts were given to vocabulary. These studies include: Naiman et al. (1978), Reiss (1985), Rubin (1975 & 1987), Stern (1975), Chamot (1987), O'Malley (1987), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), which defined and classified learning strategies. Other studies focused on the connection between learning strategies and language competence, these include Bialystok (1979), Dreyer & Oxford (1996), Green & Oxford (1995), Hsiao & Oxford (2002), Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) and Politzer & McGroarty (1985). The use and choice of learning strategies in relation to age, proficiency level and gender were explored by Bialystok (1979), Dreyer & Oxford (1996), Ehrman & Oxford (1989, 1995), Green & Oxford (1995), LoCastro (1994 & 1995), Merrifield (1996), Nyikos & Oxford (1993), Oxford (1996) and Wakamoto (2000) and many more.

From the previous research, vocabulary research emerged. Actually, some of these strategies are used in language learning in general and in vocabulary in specific. Then there was

a second type of vocabulary research that came into existence, which worked to help language learners excel in their vocabulary learning specifically. In this kind of research language learning and vocabulary learning strategies experts suggested or classified some strategies of vocabulary learning. These include memorization, Cohen & Aphek (1981), repetition, O'Malley et al. (1985), making associations, Cohen & Aphek (1980), the Keyword Method, Pressley et al. (1982) as being the most employed strategies by language learners.

In this short paper, the researcher will try to answer the following question; How do second language learners build their vocabulary, what ways or strategies help them most and which is not? We will try to explore whether language learners of today's world of technology are still using these strategies or do they devise new ones. Previous strategies are important and logical, in spite of that they are not enough. Moreover strategies are important and vital but that do not negate the reality that we have unsuccessful language learners, who need to be helped by presenting new strategies that we hope our successful learners have devised and utilized. The domain of this paper is second language learners of English who are highly proficient. The level of proficiency is based on their language scores in standardized tests '6.5 in IELTS or 90 in TOEFLIBT' and being admitted to a graduate degree in US university.

### **Strategy Definition**

Oxford (1990) suggested that this word comes from the Greek word 'strategia' which means generalship or the art of war or the management of the troops ships, or aircraft in a war situation. She defined learning strategy as "learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations."(8). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) have defined strategy as "behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning and that are intended to

influence the learner's encoding process." Chamot (1987:71) describe learning strategies as, techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information. (Chamot 1987:71). For Wenden (1987:9) Cited in Macaro (2001), "Learner strategies refers to language learning behaviours learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language . . . what they know about the strategies they use . . . what they know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use. Cohen (1998:5) Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners either for the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both. (Cohen 1998:5) Cited in Dornyei (2005). Some other researchers suggest shorter definition such as Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:68) who defined learning strategies simply as "the processes that underlie performance on thinking tasks." Masters, Mori, and Mori (1993) move toward a definition of cognitive strategies rather than the term learning strategies. They refer to a definition of cognitive strategies coined by Alley and Deshler (1979, in Masters, Mori, and Mori) as "techniques, principles, or rules that will facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage, and retrieval of information across situations and settings."

They added on to say that "cognitive strategies are a fundamental part of the process of acquiring knowledge as well as the tool skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, note taking, questioning, vocabulary acquisition, time management, reasoning, problem solving, and memorization."

They go on to explain that "strategies are more than simple sequences or agglomerations of skills; they go beyond the 'strings' or routines advocated in some study manuals. They are almost always purposeful and goal-oriented, but they are perhaps not always carried out at a conscious or deliberate level. They can be lengthy or so rapid in execution that it is impossible to recapture, recall, or even be aware that one has used a strategy." They move toward a metacognitive approach to strategy use and learning. They believe that since not all learning strategies are equal in terms of usability and ease of acquisition, there exists a hierarchy of strategies which are related to metacognition, or knowledge of one's own mental processes. Masters, Mori, and Mori (1993) move toward a definition of cognitive strategies rather than the term learning strategies. They refer to a definition of cognitive strategies coined by Alley and Deshler (1979, in Masters, Mori, and Mori) as "techniques, principles, or rules that will facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage, and retrieval of information across situations and settings." They go on to say that "cognitive strategies are a fundamental part of the process of acquiring knowledge as well as the tool skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, note taking, questioning, vocabulary acquisition, time management, reasoning, problem solving, and memorization."

#### Literature review:

#### Define strategy and vocabulary with references Dornyei and Nation and many more

The previous research have investigated this area in different ways. I find those who theorize by presenting models for these strategies. They suggested or classified strategies like the previous overview on one side. On the other side, those who did experiments to see the use of those strategies by language learners. This short overview will begin by exploring the theorizers and then experimental studies. The classification of language learners strategies began in the

works of Cohen, O'Malley and Chamot and Oxford and in vocabulary learning strategies in the works of Carter, Meara, Nation and Schmitt. The major questions that all these people were asking 'why some language learners are more successful than other?'. The classifications of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) Oxford (1990), Schmitt (1997) and Nation (2001) will be only presented due to the requirement of this paper.

### Language Learning Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classified three types or norms of language learning strategies. These strategies are Metacognitive, Cognitive and social/affective strategies. The metacognitive means that language learner thinks, plans and watches then assesses his or her learning. The cognitive strategies is the modification of text to make it more comprehensible for learners. The Social/affective strategies include using the social part of language and raising motivation to enhance the process of learning. The second classification is Oxford (1990) which was more conclusive and had more details. Her classification included; Cognitive, Mnemonic, Metacognitive, Compensatory, Affective and Social strategies. Cognitive strategy means making connection between previous knowledge and new one. Mnemonic strategy is the same as cognitive but through use of certain formula or phrase. Metacognitive strategies resembles O'malley and Chamot metacognitive strategy. Compensatory strategy is using context to help in overcoming hindrance factors in language learning in the skills of reading and writing. Affective indicates controlling emotions to be toward learning. Finally, social strategy is conversing with other and accepting their cultures.

### Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The second level of strategies is the taxonomies that were classified by researchers in the domain of vocabulary studies. Two classification of vocabulary strategies of two frontliners in

this field will be presented. The first is the taxonomy of Schmitt (1997) and the second is the taxonomy of kinds of vocabulary learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Schmitt's taxonomy is so detailed into 58 sub-strategies that occur under determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive main strategies. All of these major strategies were extracted from Oxford's taxonomy except determination strategies. Schmitt suggested that because language learners may many times sort out their vocabulary learning alone without being helped by other, which is the case in all of Oxford taxonomy, where language learners rely on others. The second taxonomy is suggested by Nation (2001). In this taxonomy, Nation was trying to make the classification of vocabulary learning strategies easier for language teachers. The following table is from Nation (2001:218).

<i>General class of strategies</i>	<i>Types of strategies</i>
Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	Choosing words
	Choosing the aspects of word knowledge
	Choosing strategies
	Planning repetition
Sources: finding information about words	Analysing the word
	Using context
	Consulting a reference source in L1 or L2
	Using parallels in L1 and L2
Processes: establishing knowledge	Noticing
	Retrieving
	Generating

## **Experimental Studies**



A number of studies were carried out to explore whether language learners are aware of vocabulary learning strategies or not. The first study is Elgort & Warren (2014) which implemented Likert-scale statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) for assessing language learners case with strategies use. They found that learners who use vocabulary strategies had a positive effect on learning. Moreover, learner who used vocabulary strategies such as noticing, underlining and trying to work out the meaning of unknown words performed better with regard to explicit knowledge of meaning. They concluded that use of vocabulary strategies is vital for making explicit connection between form of words and meaning. The second research is a paper published by Guduru (2014). In this paper, the author targeted 50 Saudi EFL students through a self assessment tool of their vocabulary learning strategies. He utilized 25 statements on Likert scale of 0-4 points. The paper found that Saudi EFL students are unaware of vocabulary strategies. Moreover, they did not use the strategies that they already knew.

3- The importance of this mini-study can be seen in the idea that is examined. Vocabulary is a vital part of any language. The importance of vocabulary can be summarised into the following citation from Schmitt (2010) where he cited Wilkins (1972) quotation, which states; "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" i.e. vocabulary is as piece of textile and grammar is the thread used to sew that textile to form clothes, lest we 'users' could cover ourselves in an inappropriate way with pieces of fabric. However, it is not possible to do so with yarn or thread only. Alderson (2005) stated that vocabulary is a key factor in interlocutor ability to communicate in her language.

Many studies were undertaken to specify the necessary number of words in English that users need to acquire in order to communicate effectively. However, results indicate divergence

of views between researchers. Nation and Waring (1997) stated that native speakers add one thousand word families a year at their early years, meaning four to five thousands word families when they begin their schooling. Then by the time they graduate from university, they would have acquired around twenty thousands word families. However, second language learners do not need such a large amount of word families to communicate. According to Hu and Nation (2000), learners need to know about 98% of the targeted text vocabulary in order to communicate. In another study that was based on Wellington Corpus of Spoken English, Nation (2006) suggested that learner needs to know 6000-7000 word families to communicate in spoken discourse. On the other hand, based on British National Corpus, learner needs to know 8000-9000 word families for written discourse communication (ibid). Other studies delineate a lesser amount of word families, yet with a lower percentage, which is around 95% of the targeted text, such as Adolphs and Schmitt (2003) and Staehr (2009) cited in Schmitt (2010).

The following table represents the amount of learnt vocabulary through instructed reading that learners undertake. Table 1 shows that learners cannot achieve that number of required words (6000-9000 word families).

Country	Vocabulary size	Hours of instruction	Reference (re-size)
Japan EFL University	2000	800-1200	Shillaw 1995
	2300		Barrow et al. 1999
China English majors	4000	1800- 2400	Laufer 2001
Indonesia EFL University	1220	900	Nurweni and Read 1999
Oman EFL University	2000	1350+	Horst et al. 1998
Israel High school graduates	3500	1500	Laufer 1998
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Table 1 Adapted from Schmitt (2008)

The above table shows that the amount of vocabulary acquisition by language learners through instructed learning ranges from one and a half to three words for every hour of instruction. Therefore, the need for introducing strategies to our second language learners is crucial. Moreover, none of the previous studies that the author came across has used interviews with language learner in this domain. Majority of these studies imposed their strategies on their sample and used questionnaire that reached certain ends. This study would try to ask successful learners to present their own strategies rather than using prescribed strategies. Moreover this study would explore whether the previous strategies are still used by those successful learners. Do things like technologies make a change or not?. The study may got more issues of vocabulary strategies due to its freedom.

## Methods:

In this study I used interview as a mean of measurement. Interviews gave the freedom for both the author and participant to converse more in depth about the topic. Issues that come up during interviews can be investigated immediately, however it is not the case with questionnaire

and other elicitation methods. Nation (2001) suggested that L2 learners are likely to devise or develop new individualized strategies when dealing with L2 new words. This shows us that questionnaire or predetermined questions cannot be always a wise choice. Although interview was categorized by O'Malley & Chamot (1996) as a visible way of questioning learners' use of vocabulary strategies, I could not find a research that utilize interviews with second language learners.

The plan that this study follows is going to utilize previous vocabulary learning strategies by categorizing them for the sake of this study. The participants will be asked about strategies in general to set a scene. Then the speech will be shifted slightly toward language and more specifically vocabulary strategies. The study should share the idea of strategy with participant and then discuss them. First, learners will be asked about their knowledge of previous strategies. Second, Learners will be asked about their use of these strategies if they knew them. Third, learners will be asked about their own strategies or ways of learning vocabulary. Fourth, learners will be asked about their modification for previous strategies or whether they combine different strategies. The interviews will be semi-structure to give more area for participant to unpack their endeavors of learning.

This study will target highly proficient learners of English, because the goal of this study is to enrich language teachers with ways of learning that are utilized by successful learners. The criterion for successful second language learners is scoring 90 in TOEFL IBT or 6.54 in IELTS and being admitted to US university. Successful language learners have ways that need to be explored. These ways can be presented and explained to low performance students who are classified as unsuccessful L2 learners. This might give them a solution for their problems or at

least shows them how successful learner modify existing strategies to suit their needs and ways of learning.

The problem that I may encounter in this study is the extent to which participants are ready to present their strategies. Because this is a mental action that cannot be explained easily within the short time of interviews. The second problem is classifying learners strategies, because it was apparent in the literature of strategies that strategies researchers have difficulty classifying strategies. The third problem is lack of research that used interviews in investigating the use of strategies.

The interviews will be around 45-60 min in length. The places of recording should in a quite places that my participants choose for two reason; being quite will make recording clear and allowing participants to choose the place may make them calm and ready to talk. Interviews will be audio recorded in order to keep the information that may participants present for further analysis. After recording my participants, interviews will be transcribed and participants' names will be codify to protect their personality.

Finally, I need to read more in the literature of second language vocabulary acquisition and strategies to have a clearer view, because there are other issues that were not covered in this literature review. I may need to consult International Reading Association publication, which has a number of journals in the domain of reading that cover vocabulary strategies. These journals present ideas for language teachers to help their learners acquire English in easy ways that may increase their success opportunities.

My interviews will be based on a number of main points, Language level, Learning Experiences, Vocabulary learning Strategies, Eagerness to learn vocabulary and Tips for vocabulary learners. Under each of these main points there are a number of questions that seek

some information from learners about this main point. All of these point were based on previous researches measurement tools from the field of second language acquisition.

To enhance the validity of my study, I work hard to have participants of different ages, learning experiences and L1s. Although they are successful in their L2, their age of beginning to learn L2 is different. Moreover the ways of learning that my participants went through in acquiring their L2 are different, some of the participants learn traditionally and some are not. The last point is their L1s, similarity and difference between L1 and L2 is monitored. All three participants' L1 are not associated with English in any form, their languages are not Germanic or Latinate. Their languages are Arabic and Mandarin. These points may reduce the risk of chance association and systematic biases due to have similar participants, Maxwell, (1996). Due to these precautions, the result of this study can be generalized to other context. The point that I may improve in this study is lengthening the interviews time or provide my participants with some of the ideas that I am going to ask them about in order to get more answers from them.

## **Results**

For the result part, each participant responses will be summarized with the most important ideas. After that a summary of the general findings is going to be presented. Then limitations will be presented if there are any. Participants will be named first, second and third participants instead of their actual names.

### **First participant**

This participant struggled in his early days of learning English language for a different of reasons. First, he stated that his school was suffering from English language teachers shortage, Which led his school to use other subjects teachers to teach English. Second, this learner tends not to be eager to learn vocabulary and this might be a consequence of the type of teachers that taught him in his early stages of learning English. Third, he is not confident to speak in English and he always repeats that he cannot compare himself at any level with native speakers of English with regard to communicative ability in English, although he wrote a book in English.

**we used to memorize words and we did not have the chance to use them in a meaningful context, so that was a problem.**

This learner use memorization as the only strategy for him in learning vocabulary. Moreover due to lack of qualified teachers who could present excellent learning strategies. The art teacher who taught this learner used classical way of teaching, which relies on rules of language only. As a result of that the learner used a traditional way of learning, which relied totally on learning rules of language and ignore the importance of using the language and learning its vocabulary. This way of learning is called Grammar Translation Method, Larsen-freeman (2000). Moreover, the way of teaching words in this way of teaching is out of context, in which words are presented to learners without its appropriate use. The best example for this kind of teaching is the use of the words 'snow' and 'ice'. In grammar translation way of teaching, learner may say to a waiter 'could you give a cup of lemonade with snow'. Because they were not introduced to the acceptable use of words. They were taught that language is structure and any words that represent the idea of frozen water could fit their context.

The teacher role in presenting and using strategies is so important, Lane and Allen (2010). Teacher in class can be a source of help or contrary a hinderance in the way of learning. In Lane and Allen article, they presented a hypothetical teacher that make her class a rich source of vocabulary in use. However the case in our participant it was vice versa, vocabulary learning was out of context in a dull way that hinder our participant from learning. Moreover, Vocabulary role in language was negated when compared to grammar. The product of this kind of classes will produce students who could say limited number of sentences that are grammatical however these sentences are not appropriate.

### **Second Participant**

The second learner was not different when compared to the first one in his learning, which tend to rely on Grammar translation method. He began learning English when he was 10 year old. Moreover this learning is for test. Teachers are preparing students to pass their tests rather than learning language. However he thinks that his language learning was not improve until he join university study, in which he got exposed to authentic materials. Although he resembles the first participant in using memorization and repetition, he has a different way of learning words deductively that is new to me after he becomes in intermediate level. He thinks that he used many strategies yet he thinks that memorization is the easiest and the most logical and common way of learning.

This learner is satisfied with his vocabulary strategies yet he is not satisfied with his language abilities in general. Moreover, he thinks that vocabulary association strategy is not workable and cannot be useful with kids and abstract words, because he thinks that this way of learning may add a mental load on learners in their vocabulary learning. Therefore, he suggested



that teachers should present more strategies that do not require more mental load from learners and these strategies should be pragmatic in the long run.

With regard to eagerness to learn vocabulary, he seems to be zealous to learn new words whether he is required as mandatory course reading or not. In addition, he enjoys reading difficult texts if these texts interest him. Although he uses vocabulary strategy of memorization, he relies mostly on dictionary in retrieving words meaning. Moreover, he enjoys opening the dictionary as a hard copy or as a soft copy and learning words. In this regard, he describes himself as a perfectionist in vocabulary learning. To keep track of the words that he came across, he creates an online custom dictionary to save the words with their meanings. With this feature he can check back all these words whenever he wants without manually searching for the meaning of same words again and again.

### **Third Participant**

This learner began learning English when he was four years old with the help of his father who is an English language teacher with focus on communicative approach, Littlewood (1981). This approach focuses on learning language through communication without teaching grammar. For this reason, his language learning experience was more in context compared to the previous two participants. His language level is better than the previous two participants based on his score in standardized language tests. He was fortunate to be taught at home alone, which gave him more focus from the teacher 'his father'. This kind of teaching would give him better chances to acquire language when compared to students within a class of thirty students. He said that his father prepared an atmosphere of learning that presented English language through many means such as movies or conversation with each other.

In his undergraduate degree, he began a vocabulary learning and use vocabulary learning strategies. At first he used a vocabulary log in which he wrote the new words that he came across to retain them and revise them later. Then after sometimes, he noticed that his word bank is not rich with words to express himself eloquently. As a result of that he began memorizing words from dictionary and try his best to use them in his communication either written or spoken form. Therefore, he stated that used memorization and repetition yet he did not used mnemonic strategies such as keyword methods or making association between words and objects for different reasons. He find them impractical except in one way, which is making association between words and its derivatives.

His strategy that stand out is exploring words from dictionary, he has a strange way in which he highlight words in his dictionary. He stated that his dictionary has word meaning, usage, collocation, word part of speech and all he wanted to know about any word. After getting exposed to the highlighted words he put a condition for his that he must know this words in any way that is possible. By doing so, he stated that was able to upgrade his word bank and become better in expressing himself. The other point that he stated for keeping the words that he learnt is through using them. This is supported by Nation (2006) where he suggested that language learners cannot easily keep their vocabulary unless they recycled them. His undergraduate degree was in English literature. This kind of study requires a stronger expressive ability and persuasive language. He considered this is the key factor in his vocabulary growth beside using dictionary to learn new words.

He suggested teaching or presenting morphology to students which may help them in acquiring new words. This may saves time for student instead of memorize each word independently from its derivatives. He suggested introducing the use of synonyms and antonyms

and texts features or clues to guess the meaning of new words for learners. For this participant the most important point for learning words is dedication and the way of learning should be practical for learners to learn words and most importantly to retain them.

He is eager to learn words yet he was logical in his learning. Learning a word should be important however for this participant that should not hinder him from focusing on the text. Unless the words are essential for understanding the text and he could not guess its meaning, he will consult the dictionary. His use of dictionary vary based on his language level, when he was in his stage of learning English he relied heavily on dictionary and as his level in English became advance, his reliance on dictionary become less compared to his reliance on text to guess the meaning of new words. Finally, he stated that words important and the way of learning them should go through steps that begin sounds, spelling, meaning, grammar, use and connotative meaning.

### **General Findings and Discussion**

Out of these interviews, It is apparent certain features that all participants share and some features are not. For this reason, the general ones will be presented first and then the unique ones. Learners share some strategies such as memorization and repetition. Moreover, participants were educated in Grammar Translation Method, which presented vocabulary in decontextualized way. In addition, this method do not care much for words, therefore learner utilize the strategies of memorization, Cohen & Aphek (1981) and repetition, O'Malley et al. (1985).

### **Participants Vocabulary Strategies**

They tend to use two strategies 'memorization and repetition' more than other strategies. However their use of these strategies differ from one learner to another. The first two participants were using these strategies with words out of their context. They used to memorize and repeat words in uncommunicative ways, however the third participant make memorize and repeat words in its context. These usages seem to be the same for an outsider to the field of vocabulary research yet for vocabulary researchers. Webb (2008) found that context rather than the number of encounters with target words out of context may have a greater effect on gaining knowledge of meaning and use of that words.

The use of strategy evolves or changes as the level of language learner changes. This is noticeable with all participants in this study. For the first participant, he used to rely solely on memorization and repetition with the help of dictionary in learning new words at his language learning early stages, then when he became more fluent he uses the same strategy through guessing the meaning of the new words. On the other hand the other two participants have changed their strategies completely. The second participant began learning word through memorization and repetition in the context of grammar translation method. Afterward as his language level elevated he eventually rely on syllabifying words in order to know the word part of speech in his quest of knowing the meaning of new words that he came across. The third participant used memorization and repetition but in a communicative way with reliance on dictionary help. Then eventually he relied on other strategies such as relying on context to guess the meaning, morphology to syllabify words and grammatical clues in context in order to know the words meaning.

There are factors that may have an effect on vocabulary strategies use such as language level, age, teacher, way of teaching and many more. In these short interviews, our participants

language level has some effect on the use of strategies. The way of teaching may shift the intention of learners from focusing on words in isolation to words in context. The first two participants were not focusing on learning words in context however their main focus was learning words out of its context. The last participant used the same strategies that they used but his focus was on words in context. These different usages is supported by Nation (2001) who suggested that L2 learners are likely to devise or develop new individualized strategies when dealing with L2 new words.

### **Eagerness to Learn Vocabulary**

The three participant showed different level of eagerness to learn new vocabulary. The first one was not interested in learning new words unless these words are a course requirement. The second one was more enthusiastic to learn new in comparison to the first one. On the contrary from the two, is the last one, who is highly motivated to learn new words yet with some balance between getting the main ideas and acquiring new words. He believed that acquiring news words should distract learners from understanding what they read. Moreover, he treated words according to their importance, important words should be learn at any time and less important one should be negated and at the same time, these words should distract us from understanding the main point of what we read.

### **Satisfaction with their Current Level**

None of the participants was satisfied with his current language level and two were stratified with their vocabulary learning strategies. I would think that being not satisfied with language level can be a result of your vocabulary way of learning. For example the first participant who expressed a kind of satisfaction with his strategy, stated that he cannot use words

fluently as Native speakers do, which shows me that his vocabulary learning is not good because he cannot converse his ideas. The same idea can be said about the second participant who expressed his approval of the strategy he used. These two participants were struggling to speak fluently, which might be a result of the way of learning that they went through which deal with words independently from their context or use.

### **Vocabulary Strategies Suggestion**

The participants were asked to suggest some ways or strategies for second language learners in order to help them acquire vocabulary with ease. All of them were supportive of present vocabulary learning strategies to students. They suggested that language teachers should present many to their learners in order to accommodate student individual differences. They suggested the use of previously mentioned strategies with some strategies that they suggested. These strategies include, use of technology to help learners in their vocabulary learning, presenting morphology of English to learners, teachers should ask learner to use different strategies or combinations of strategies.

I notice that the two participants who are taught within the domain of Grammar Translation Methods that they have a lot of pauses during their interviews. Moreover the flow of their speech were some telegraphic when compared to the third participant who is not, Because he is simply while learning English was using English in a meaningful context compare to the other two. In addition to this point the first two participants were not confident to converse in

English with native speakers, however the third participant was so confident to communicate with native speakers.

The answers of our three participants is supported by a previous studies Guduru (2014) and Elgort and Warren (2014). The first study found that Saudi students are not aware or do not use vocabulary strategies that they got exposed to. The second study found that learner who use vocabulary strategies had a positive effect on learning. Moreover these learner perform better in comparison to other learners who do not use vocabulary strategies with regard to vocabulary meaning recall and use.

## **Reflection**

I have done the interviews and I am reflecting on them. I noticed some ideas that I need to present and discuss shortly after doing my interviews. Interview is a hard game that I need to win. The winner has some requirements to reach his or her goals. The first point is being wise, careful, skillful, prepared, observant and has a lot of luck. Luck is important because sometimes the interviewer has all the previous features but unluckily s/he interviews unresponsive or uncooperative interviewee. I noticed that in my interviews, the first one was not totally cooperative and the second and the third were totally cooperative and interested in participation. The second point is choosing the appropriate time for the interview. I did my first two interviews in two different time and I notice the level of fatigue on my interviewees. Therefore, I was cautious with my last interviewee with regard to time.

The other point that I learned is be patient, because my interviewees were interrupting me and I should accept that, because this is their time and I should listen to them. Moreover, I learned that there were some characteristics for each interviewee that made him different from

the other one. Therefore, I had to be flexible to accommodate all of them in my interviews and use their differences to enrich my short study. There is a good side for my interviews, which is including two different second language learners with regard to their L1s; two Arabic and one Chinese. They all brought their ways of learning and their cultures in their answers.

The big lesson that I got from these interviews is expecting the unexpected, Maxwell (2012) and Peshkin (2007). My three participants had provided me with ideas that I had not thought of, when I was preparing the interview protocol. This showed me the greatness of interview. Therefore, interviews could show me more than a questionnaire or any other rigid elicitation written methods, it gave participants more areas to express themselves and introduce ideas that interviewer had not thought of. For example, the first interviewee had provided me with variables such as teacher, textbook, learner age, L1 and L2 relation, context of learning and many more that may affect vocabulary acquisition. This is one of the advantages of qualitative research.

In this paragraph, I will discuss my experience with the first interviewee, who is a graduate student at local university and had worked as GTA in this local university. This student tended to be more traditional in learning vocabulary by focusing on the use of dictionary. To make that learning durable, he used to memorize words in repetitive way. He tended to notice the importance of words and the way of learning and teaching words along with learning strategies. He suggested that introducing vocabulary learning strategies and learning vocabulary in meaningful context might lead to fruition in the quest of learning vocabulary for second language learners.

The other learner was completely different from the first one in his learning. He suggested an idea that I have not thought of which is learning word by dismantling them. He



provided the following example, activities. He said, to know certain word he needed to divide that word into its syllables and out of that he could specify the word part of speech. Then he used the context to guess the meaning of that word. He as well used technology to maintain his words by creating an online dictionary for him. Which is an idea that I speculated in this time of technology when I formulated my study questions, by questioning the use of technology in vocabulary learning, which proved to be true with this learner.

The last interviewee resembled the second one, however he differed in a number of points. His fluency was much better than the second one, which is a normal result of his language learning experience that enforce meaningful communication. He suggested presented many vocabulary strategies in balanced way that accommodate all learners' individual differences. Finally, he showed me that learning strategies differ as the level of language learner changed.

With two interviewees, I noticed that I could just throw a question and he would bring a lot of ideas. However, the other was not . I noticed with my first interviewee that I needed to ask question again or reword my question to make him talk, Kavle (1996). Moreover his response was not informative all the time. But for the second and the third one, I just asked the question and leave the stage for him and he did bring a lot of ideas. Moreover, he used to make sure that he answered my questions by asking or showing me his interest in making complete answers.

The cooperation or sometime being uncooperative participant might and sometime for sure brought new questions that I had not thought of. All of my participants brought ideas from their learning experiences, which forced me to use the opportunity and ask them questions that I had not prepared to be used or asked. This showed me the vividness of interviews and the

richness of the context of interviews, in which examiner should or even must utilize every part of it toward his or her research, Rubin and Rubin (2011).

In this short study I notice some advantages for qualitative research, which include:

- Data based on the participants understanding.
- Useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth.
- Useful for describing complex phenomena.
- Provides individual case information
- The researcher can use the primarily qualitative method of grounded theory to inductively generate a tentative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon
- Can determine how participants interpret constructs
- Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research
- Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs.

And many more.

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