A Study of the Used Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Teachers for Elementary Stages in Jordanian English language Curriculum in Public Schools

Magda Abdullah Yasin Aldmour

Ministry of Education || Jordan

Abstract: This study aimed to presenting vocabulary using several strategies by Jordanian English teachers in public schools, the effectiveness of using several strategies in teaching target words supported the leaning and teaching process regardless of the presented vocabulary, while this study analyses what are the needed meaningful vocabulary learning strategies for elementary stages. Also this study presents the vocabulary without repetition of frequent words occurrences. Moreover, the explaining for what are the used strategies for teaching vocabulary simplify and enhance the teaching process and learning too. The study is based on qualitative research, in which 5 school students were investigated. The participants were asked to take a vocabulary tests. The data of the research indicates that there are significant differences between using meaningful strategies in teaching vocabulary and traditional ones. Effective using several strategies simplify the learning process and make students have a positive attitude towards the second language.

Keywords: vocabulary, language learning strategies, meaning.

دراسة في استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات المستخدمة من قبل المعلمين للمراحل الابتدائية في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية الأردنية

ماجدة عبد الله ياسين الضمور

وزارة التربية والتعليم || الأردن

الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى عرض المفردات باستخدام العديد من الاستراتيجيات من قبل مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية الأردنيين في المدارس الحكومية، وكذلك فعالية استخدام العديد من الاستراتيجيات في تدريس مفردات اللغة الانجليزية لدعم عملية التعليم والتعلم بغض النظر عن المفردات المقدمة، في حين تحلل هذه الدراسة ما هي مفردات المفردات اللغوية المطلوبة للمراحل الابتدائية. كما تقدم هذه الدراسة المفردات دون تكرار الكلمات. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن تفسير ماهية الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في تدريس المفردات يبسط ويعزز العملية التعليمية. تستند الدراسة على البحث النوعي، حيث تمت الدراسة في خمس مدارس. طلب من المشاركين إجراء اختبار مفردات. تشير بيانات البحث إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين استخدام استراتيجيات ذات معنى في تدريس المفردات والاستراتيجيات التقليدية. فعالية استخدام عدة استراتيجيات تعمل على تبسيط عملية التعلم وجعل الطلاب لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه اللغة الثانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات، استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة، المعنى.

Introduction

Vocabulary, as an important part of a language, plays a crucial part in the language learning and teaching process. The first step in teaching language is how to present all the needed vocabularies, and practice using them. Vocabulary is the basic unit that necessary for mastering a language. The purpose that we learn second language is for communication, also the improving the four skills, which are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Meanwhile, vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to them. One cannot understand a sentence without knowing what most of the words mean. The lack of vocabulary knowledge affects the meaning. A lot of students find it difficult to learn vocabulary. They think that vocabularies are obstacle for them to learn English as second language. Meanwhile, vocabulary which has been neglected in foreign language teaching for a number of years. Vocabulary which is a problem, especially for the students who don't speak or use even though there are dictionaries that have a lot of words. Vocabulary is huge and learning them takes time, even for a native speaker.

Statement of Problem:

Learning English language like learning other languages, it needs different techniques and strategies in order to learn the language units like vocabulary, also to asses that students achieve the basic units, knowing the meaning and use the language efficiently. Using different techniques and supported activities on teaching vocabulary are the teachers demands and students needs to prove that learning language is well achieved.

This study proves that using these strategies (drawing, guessing, illustration, word morphology, cloze exercise) of teaching vocabulary build the ability of the students to learn English language and support teachers' methods of teaching.

Purpose and Research Question:

The purpose of this study is to examine different techniques of teaching vocabulary as tools to be applied by English teachers to enhance teaching English language vocabulary and facilitate the process of learners learning English language. To achieve the purpose of this study, this research addresses the following questions:

1- What are the effects of using different techniques of teaching vocabulary in learning English language?

2- To what extend do using different techniques of teaching vocabulary contribute in supporting instructional strategies?

3- To what extend do using different techniques of teaching vocabulary contribute in the process of learners learning?

Addressing these questions will help the teachers apply these techniques of teaching vocabulary to recognize their effective roles in improving the process of teaching and learning. Data will be elicited from a group of English language learners at South Al-Aghware District of Education.

Significance of the Study:

The current study highlights the importance of applying different strategies of teaching vocabulary of English language. It demonstrates how these strategies affect the process of learning and understanding vocabulary in context or isolated. Also this study shows that these strategies of teaching vocabulary within teaching English language is not accidental or arbitrary. It follows a regular and systematic method to guide teachers and help learners to achieve certain purposes through learning vocabulary.

Limitation of the study:

- Limitation of human: this study is limited to five' schools of seventh graders. Each class has 35 students.
- Limitation of the place: this study was conducted in South Al-Aghware District of Education.
- Limitation of the time: this study is related to the academic year 2018/2019.

The Status of Vocabulary in the Curriculum:

Language teaching has been focused on the grammar of the language for more than half century. When grammar translation approaches came, they provided a balance of grammar and vocabulary. For example, audio-linguists believed that the learner first should learn the basic forms of grammar then after they internalize the basic principle of grammar, they unconsciously will build a large patterns of vocabularies later. Hockett (1958), one of the most influential structural linguists argued that vocabulary was the easiest aspect of the second language to learn.

The stage of learning vocabulary has been developed as this can be seen by the development of communicative approaches to language teaching, such as Natural Approach" Krashen and Terrell 1983". The researchers of these methods focus on the early stages of learning the second language should be supported by vocabulary rather than grammar. When I relate to Rivers (1983) who pointed out for the importance of learning a sufficient number of vocabulary to start a successful way of learning the second language, since without that number of vocabulary we will become unable to use the structures and functions of the second language in communication. Also he argued that learners become able to learn new vocabulary easier as he grows up and have a rich knowledge of the world.

Nowadays all the points of view agree on the development of a rich vocabulary as an important part in learning the second language. All the course books are structured lexically as they are syntactically.

The curriculum developers take care of selecting vocabulary to be taught and evaluated through teaching process.

Vocabulary Selection:

When talking about second language selection vocabulary, we look at the number of needed vocabulary that learners learn to communicate. Firstly, considerable attention has been paid to the topic of a minimum adequate vocabulary. For example, West (1960) published a list of 1200 words based on the frequent words. Also Fox (1979) focuses on productive purpose of learning vocabulary and authentic language. Before that Richards (1943) put a proposal for Basic English, he wrote a list of basic vocabulary which contains 850 words as he claimed the minimum number of vocabulary serve learners to communicate complex ideas. As Carter and McCarthy (1988) indicated that Richards list has 850 meanings, so a new question teachers came up with which of these meanings should be taught and when the order should we follow? According to this question, I based on the frequency. If the words are high frequency, low frequency or abstract, Richards (1974) showed the idea of familiarity, meaningfulness and concreteness. Also he focused on making list that based on the communicative needs for the learners.

However, teachers have the ability to choose what to teach and support that with various sources. There are text books, word lists and dictionaries, but there are also new ones, the internet and various program (e.g. Quizlet). For example, Communicative language teaching (CLT), which is highly known nowadays (Richards & Rodgers 2014), the needed point is to give students chances to practice communication using the second language they learn. There are a large number of sources for vocabulary with authentic examples of text use (e.g. online magazines and news websites) and other techniques for vocabulary study. For example, Quizlet, is an interactive learning site where teachers can create their own study vocabulary and let students practice using words online with different kinds of activities (e.g. flash cards with sound, games and songs) Quizlet 2016.

Previous Studies on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning:

vocabulary learning strategies which focus on the methods that learner use so as to learn vocabulary. Strategies could be conscious or unconscious mental actions a learner takes to do activities or missions (Oxford 1990). At the last decades an interest has appeared on vocabulary teaching. Schmitt (2008) with many others have presented many studies on what are the best ways to teach vocabulary. Studies have different point of views. The main point on their perspectives is teachers and how they teach vocabulary. Also there are some studies on learning vocabulary outside the classroom.

Macalister's (2012) interviewed teachers to recognize the importance of teaching vocabulary. Also Zhang (2008) interviewed Chinese teachers to ask about different methods of teaching vocabulary. He also studied seven teachers point of view about how to teach vocabulary by using different sources. The data came from interviews of the teachers, classroom observations and stimulated recall. The study

shows that teachers have a wide and diverse knowledge base on how to teach and learn vocabulary using various influential sources which are used their real teaching practices.

According to the mentioned studies students were more interested in learning languages using several resources like course books which are the most often sources being used for language learning.

Aim:

The aim of the present investigation is to get the efficient strategies used by Jordanian English teachers and to find what are the most methods they use to get positive effect on learning students new vocabulary. In addition, research will be done on the action pack of the graders of seventh within the Jordanian curriculum.

Participants:

The participants in this study are students who are in their seventh year at school. There are 35 students in each class. The schools are located in AL-Aghware Directorate of Education in the west of Karak city south of Jordan. The first language of all the participants is Arabic. The students are about 13 years old. They have learned English for about 7 years. However, they do not use English in their daily life. They cannot speak English fluently. They learn English as a second language in school now. All of the students who are included in the study live there also they are at the same level.

Material:

The primary material consists of two modules from Action Pack (pupil's book). One module is about detective stories, module five, seventh grade, page 54. and the other module is about fighting global warming, module two, page 16. The basic reason for choosing these two modules from Action Pack is that students are exposed to this book till the second secondary class finding many repeated words. The students are familiar to some words in each module. There will have 30 target words and they will be selected randomly from the two modules.

Method

In this research, there are three stages. In stage 1, the participants got the 30 target words within the modules from which the target words are selected. In stage 2, the teachers' roles will be obvious by explaining the target words using drawing, guessing, illustration, word morphology, cloze exercise. In the stage 3, they had an exam of vocabulary about the target words. Then, we got the goal of this test. The relationship between exposing students to the modules and explaining the target words using the mentioned strategies (drawing, guessing, illustration, word morphology, cloze exercise) is obvious. So, at the beginning, the participants were asked to explore the modules and words. They were given two modules and one week's time. In one week, they were exposed to the modules and it wasn't necessary to

know the meaning exactly. In addition, it is not necessary that everyone should make use of the two modules when they are learning the target words.

In stage two, the teachers explained and clarified the meaning of the chosen 30 target words based mostly on the five mentioned strategies above. Immediately after three weeks of learning, students have to interpret these words through a test. After they have finished the test, the teachers collected the papers. The papers were analyzed and classified according to the number of the words which are correctly interpreted by the students.

At last, we analyzed and contrast the two data, one is the vocabulary test and the other is the effectiveness of the used strategies. The first data reflects the effectiveness of the used strategies of teaching vocabulary in the front of the students. The second data is the assessment for the used strategies in vocabulary learning.

Theoretical background

Didactic theory:

Language learning strategies can facilitate and simplify the learning of vocabulary of the second language. There is much research in this aspect, providing with many theories about second language learning. From the perspective of didactics, we will get some ideas of how languages are learned.

The behaviorist perspective:

There is some research on how students learn language starting from early stages.one of a well -known research that teachers have a clear point and effective one on second language learning development. Behaviorism proved that imitation is one of the ways which is supported by reproducing followed by positive reinforcement. that would shape the learners' language. behaviorism had a powerful influence on second language teaching till 1970s. it focuses on imitation, practice, reinforcement, and then habit formation in order to learn the second language. This means that learners should be engaged in practice most of the learning time. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)

A. Classify words:

English words put into groups relating to the roots, prefixes or suffixes. If the student recognizes, he will remember the meaning of words since a large number of English words have been formed from the combination of morphemic elements (prefixes and suffixes) to the base word roots (Pikulski & Templeton (2004). According to this idea, knowing the meanings of roots, helps students in learning English vocabulary. Grave and Hammond also argue that: There are three reasons for knowing prefixes that there are few prefixes, easily definable; and tend to have consistent spellings. Graves & Hammond (1980) argued that grouping English words referring to their categories is an active method of

remembering words and their meaning, rather than spending time learning or remembering each word. For example, the word with either the prefix of "dis", "un", or "in" attached carrying the opposite meaning from its base word. Such as the word "unable", it means "not able", "unbeautiful" means "not beautiful", "disorganized" means "not organized". The word that ends in "tion", "ness" or "sion" always refer to a noun; and the word that ends in "ful", "tive" or "able" is an adjective. This method of learning vocabulary can help learners learn and remember words faster and easier.

Moreover, Grave and Hammond also indicate the positive effect of this method in guessing method. This means if the learner can construct a word family list, he finds it easy and possible to guess the meaning of a new words. For example, if a learner knows that "re" means "do again", such as "reread" means that "to read again", then he will guess out the meanings of "rewrite", "to write again". As Aitchison (2001)it enable speakers to construct new words of their own and to recognize new words made up by others. learners can be taught to extend their vocabulary by mixing and matching word stems, suffixes and affixes.

For example,

Re arrange the following words into the correct category

(ancient, to, historian, live, from, traveler, comfortable, intelligent, sailor, examine, under, put)

Number	Verb	Noun	Adjective	Preposition
1				
2				
3				

B. Guessing from context

It is said that "the good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser" (Rubin, 1975: 84). It is a method used with strange or unknown words in reading texts. Dubin (1993). Nation and Coady (1988) mention that there are two kinds of contexts. The first type is the context within the text, which relates to morphological, semantic and syntactic information in the text, the second one is the general context and the background knowledge the reader knows about text. Also McCarthy (1988) agrees that the context within the text itself like morphological and syntactic information. from other side, this technique helps learners to focus more in guessing the meanings of new words they do not know before. Furthermore, it encourages them in building up self-confidence in using illustrations, and general knowledge (Walters, 2004).

For example,

Today is a very important day for Jordan. A lot of people voted for Petra to be one of the new Seven Wonders of the world. The name Petra comes from the Greek word rock. The city received its name because its people, the Nabateans, constructed it from the land's stones in the 2nd century BC. Centuries

after the Nabateans civilization disappeared, archaeologists rediscovered the city in the 1800s. recently, Petra gained its place as one of the top locations in the world.

1- Multiple choice questions type 1

In this newspaper article rock means

a. small stones

b. Petra's name

c. land's stone

d. Greek words

2- In which century did archaeologists rediscover petra?

a. Eighteen century

b. Seventeen century

c. Nineteen century

d. 1800s

3- The word which means no longer exist is

a. rediscovered

b. disappeared

c. constructed

d. received

c –Drawing:

Teacher can draw the objects on the blackboard or flash cards to use them again in different contexts. cards can be made of plastic or cartoon. drawings can help young learners to understand the meaning easily inside the classroom. The drawings help learners to organize their ideas and also simplify sub ideas like mind map, directions and numbers. Furthermore, drawings lead learner easier to retrieve later. According to Jones (1999) quick draw strategy which focuses on drawing visual concepts on cards. while practicing this activity student in groups can convey the essence of a word on the board — without words — by illustrating it by drawing. This strategy works efficiently in feeding back. For example, teacher asks students to draw happy face versus sad one.

.

D -Cloze exercise:

Some words have been taken out from a text or paragraph. Students try to guess all the missing words and write them in the correct places. If they are not sure of a word, they will guess.

For example, The Great Pyramid of Giza is a great .... it was ....thousands of years ago the pyramid was a very large .... it was the shape of a .... It was ......of rocks from the land. The pyramid was a big .... Tombs were places where ancient kings and queens were buried. Pyramids had

.................rooms. The pyramids of Giza had .... for each of its kings and queens. It was the tallest ....made by man, for thousands of years. The pyramid is still.........today and it is in a very good condition.
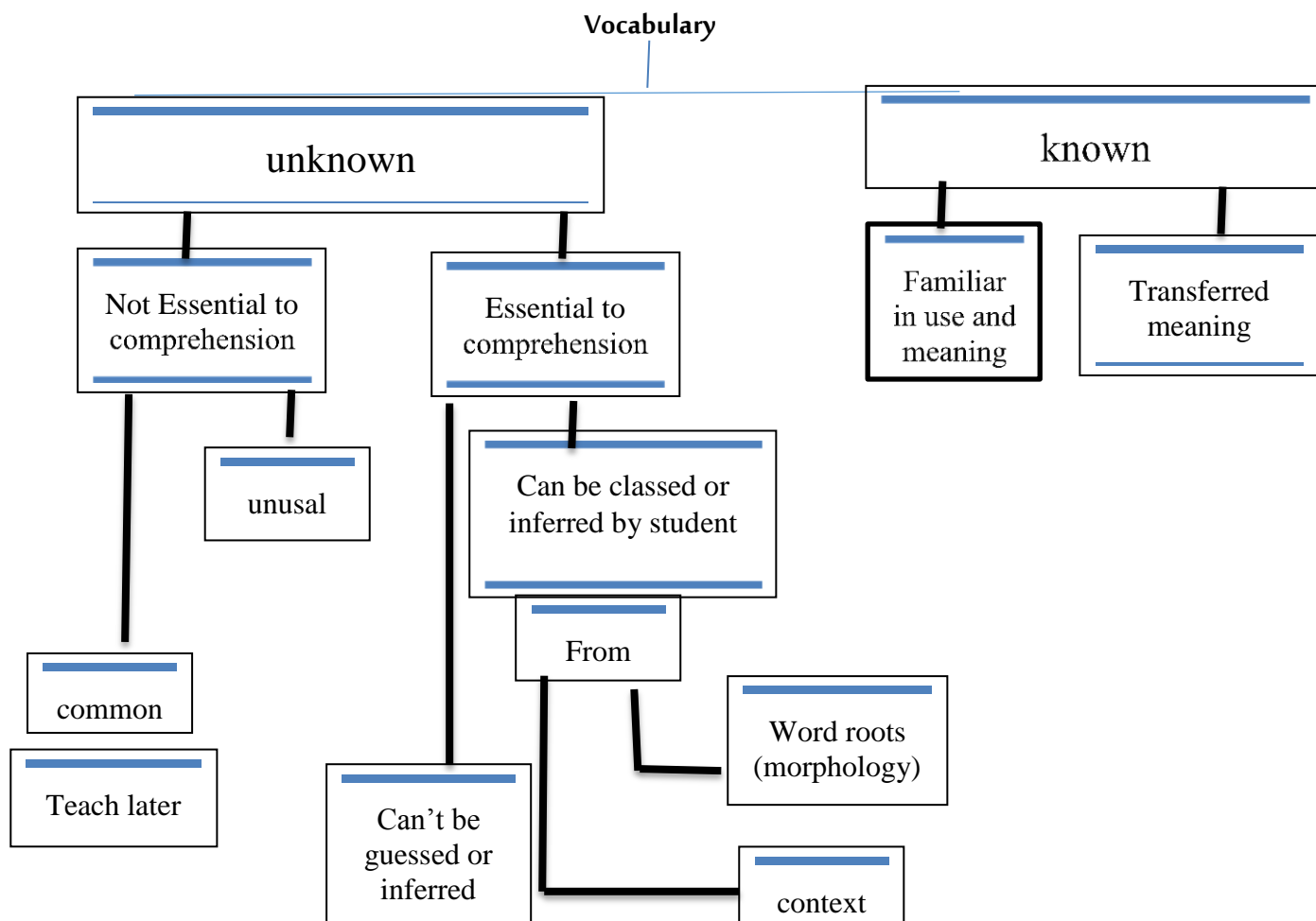
E –Illustration:

1- Choose a topic, for example "Global Warming "write it in the middle of a blank sheet of paper.

2- What is the first word that comes into your mind which is connected in some way with it? (if the word is in your language, find out the English for it) write the English word anywhere you like on the paper and join it to the first word.
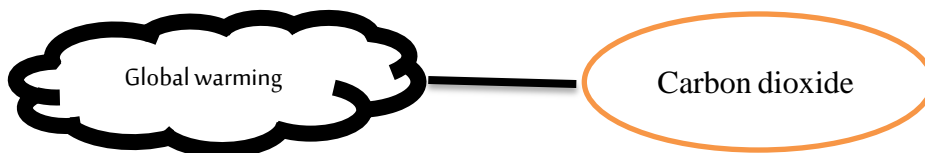
Focus on vocabulary

Design and Methodology

Sample of Study

The sample of study consisted of five schools of Jordanian students at South Al-Aghware Directorate of Education for seventh graders, (175) female for the academic year 2018/2019. The number of the teachers who were chosen to conduct the tasks was (5) females. The students in the five schools have almost started learning English at the same age and attended the school since the beginning of their early school days. None of the students had spent time in an English speaking country. Also, none had attended private classes for learning vocabulary except learning them by traditional ones assigned in the curriculum of the ministry of education in Jordan. The subjects were chosen randomly regardless of their school achievement in all subjects, especially English language.

The Data of the Study

The data of the study consisted of two modules of Action Pack 7. The researcher shows the effectiveness of using vocabulary teaching strategies (drawing, guessing, illustration, word morphology, cloze exercise), in five schools. The sample of the study consisted of 175 (35 in each school). After teachers used the five strategies for the academic year 2018/2019, they conducted a vocabulary exam for students consisted of fifty paragraph of multiple choice.

The Instructional Material

The material adopted in this study was the English textbook (Action Pack 7) pupil's book. This book consists of six modules; each module consists of known and unknown vocabulary. The researcher conducted post exams at the end of the semester to find out the effectiveness of the used vocabulary strategies for the second and fifth module. The test based on choosing, completing, classifying, matching to find the correct meaning.

Instrument of the Study

This study aims at investigating the effectiveness of using vocabulary strategies in teaching English language. For this purpose, an investigation of these strategies in English texts that are carried out indicating how to use these skills in teaching English language following certain ideas. At the end of the semester there was a comprehensive test of multiplied choices, filling gapes, matching, and classifying. The researcher used the English Action Pack seven to find out the effectiveness of the used vocabulary strategies through the academic year 2018/2019.

Reliability

The participants of this investigation are 175students from public schools. They may be not typical and the numbers of the participants is limited. There are only 30 target words. If there were larger number of students and target words, the reliability of this study could be promoted. In addition, we cannot exclude the possibility that there is a student with a good memory recite the meaning of the words without using a method.

The results of the test:
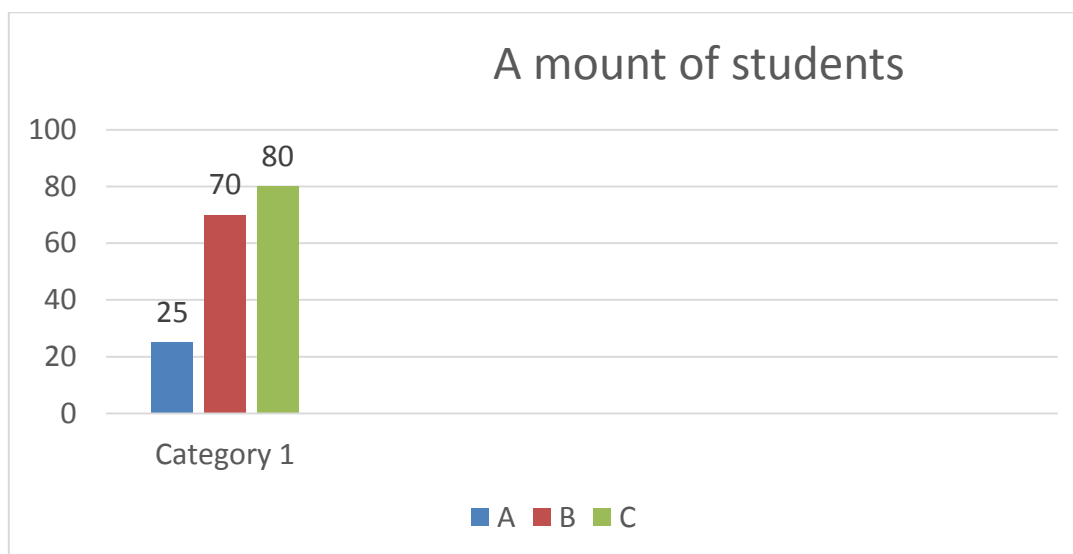

Figure(1)The results of the test

The students of level A: They correctly wrote the meaning of above 25 words in English. In addition, they also wrote down an English definition of several words. They have a good learning efficiency. The students of level B: They correctly wrote the meaning of above 18 words in English. Their learning efficient is moderate. The students of level C: They correctly wrote the meaning of under 18 words in English. Their learning efficiency is low.

Table (1) B – learning methods and characteristics of these five schools

Method / School	Drawing	Guessing	Illustration	Word Morphology	Cloze Exercise
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

From the table above, we can clearly find that students of the five schools use several kinds of vocabulary learning methods. There are five methods they used in common. They are "drawing" "guessing" "illustration" "word morphology" "cloze exercise".

After analyzing test, it is clear that using methods of vocabulary learning was effective. However, their abilities and the efficiency of their learning are different. We also can find some difference between the students of level A and level B and the students of level C. The first one is that they have different styles in learning English vocabulary. This kind of difference belongs to individual characteristics difference. There is a part of students lack perseverance. They use methods in learning vocabulary when they remember or have time. Individual characteristics play an important role in learning a language. So, using different strategies is helpful to learning efficiency.

عنوان المخطط
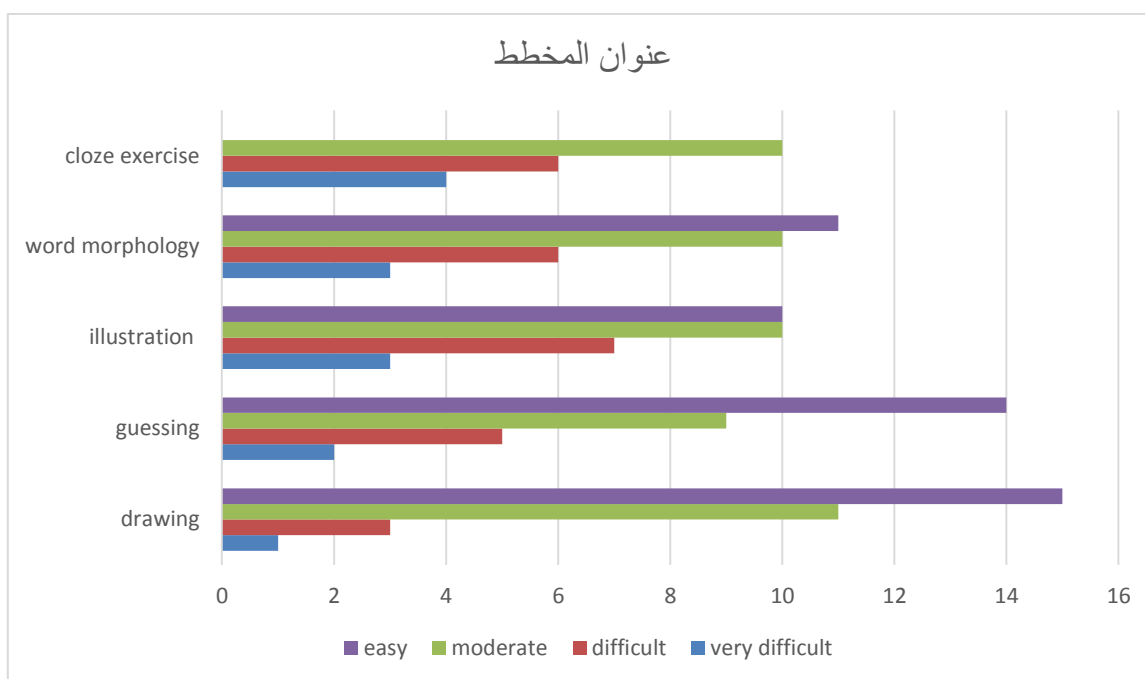
Figure(2) valuation of the degree of difficulty

From the above column, it is clear that vocabulary isn't a problem for the majority of the students since teachers used the mentioned strategies above. There are only two students who have difficulties in learning the target words (average of all the strategies). This small part of students is at a less level than others. On one side, they do not feel unfamiliar with the target words. On the other side, the strategies that teachers follow are useful and the students' results show that when facing vocabulary, so they believe that these strategies facilitate students acquiring of target words and related ones. However, most students are at a medium and easy level in learning the target words. Their current abilities of English vocabulary are better than others because of the using strategies. After all, which means that their current ability is better than when using traditional methods.

Findings:

The researcher explains in the previous results, which are characterized by different techniques of teaching vocabulary, that using different strategies in teaching English vocabulary helps students to learn them in meaningfully way. They simplify different words meanings of reading texts, sentences or even articles if the teacher used some moral support also they ensure students continuity to answer the tasks that teacher presents during the lessons.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends the followings:

1- The curriculum designers incorporate directed activities on teaching vocabulary through cooperative strategies in Action Pack Pupils' Book.

2- The English teachers of elementary and secondary classes use the practical guidelines on how to teach vocabulary tasks, and taking into consideration the fact that teaching vocabulary requires the acquisition of several skills.

3- Researchers carry out further investigation for the effect of using several vocabulary strategies, also they focus on the support of the used classroom language at different levels of English classes, and different language skills in the Arab World.

Reference

- Aitchison, Jean. (2003). Words in the mind. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

- Carter, R. and M. McCarthy.(1988).Vocabulary and Language Teaching. London: Longman.

- Coady, J. and Nation, I.S.P. (1988) Vocabulary and reading. In Vocabulary and Language Teaching eds. R. Carter and M. McCarthy. London: Longman: 97-110.

- Dubin, F. (1993).Predicting word meanings from contextual clues: Evidence from L1 readers.In Huckin, T., Haynes, M., and Coady, J (Ed.), Second language reading and vocabulary learning (pp. 181-202). Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

- Fox,L. (1979) On acquiring an adequate second language vocabulary. Journal of Basic Writing.

- Graves, M & Hammond, H. K. (1980). A validated procedure for teaching prefixes and its effect on students'' ability to assign meanings to novel words. Washington, DC: National Reading Conference.

- Hockett, C. (1958). A Course in Linguistics. New York: Macmillan.

- Jack C. Richards & Theodore S. Rodgers (2014). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press.

- Jones, S. (1999). Multisensory vocabulary – guidelines and activities. [On-line]. Available: http://www.resourceroom.net/myarticles/vocabulary.htm.

- Krashen, S and T. Terrell (1983). The Natural Approach. Oxford: Pergamon.

- Lightbown, Patsy & Spada, Nina. (2006). How languages are learned. Oxford University Press.

- Macalister, J. (2012). Pre-service Teacher Cognition and Vocabulary Teaching. RELC Journal, 43(1), 99-111. doi: 10.1177/0033688212439312.

- Oxford, R. L. (1990). Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know. New York: Newbury House.

- Pikulski, John & Templeton, Shane. (2004). Teaching and Developing Vocabulary: key to long-term reading success. Houghton Mifflin.

- Quizlet Inc. https://quizlet.com. (11 April 2016).

- Richards, I.(1943). Basic English and Its Uses. London: Kegan Paul.

- Richards, J. (1974). Word lists: problems and prospects. RELC Journal.

- Rivers, W. (1983). Communicating Naturally in a Second Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. TESOL Quarterly. 9: 41-51

- Schmitt, N. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning. Language teaching research.

- Walters, J.M. (2004) 'Teaching the use of context to infer meaning: A longitudinal survey of L1 and L2 vocabulary research'. Language Teaching, 37(4), pp. 243-252.

- West, M. (1960). Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances. London: Longman.

- Zhang, W. (2008). In search of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' knowledge of vocabulary instruction. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Georgia State University. [online] http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=alesl_diss.