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EFL Vocabulary-Learning Strategies of Saudi undergraduate and postgraduate Students.

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the vocabulary-learning strategies used by Saudi female university students in learning English as a foreign language, focusing on four areas: discovering meaning; storing and memorizing meaning; learning pronunciation and memorizing spelling. Participants were 46 female students (26 undergraduate and 20 postgraduate) in the College of Education, Taibah University. A questionnaire was developed containing 40 items, 10 for each of the four learning areas, reflecting possible learning strategies. Respondents indicated their frequency of using each strategy on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5=always, 1=never. The findings show that students used a variety of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies. They particularly favoured asking the teacher (for meaning) and using the affordance of internet capable mobile phones. However, in general, the level of strategy use, especially for spelling, was not high. A need is identified for training students in vocabulary-learning strategies and incorporating such strategies in curricula.

Keywords: EFL vocabulary, Vocabulary learning strategies, Saudi university students, learning strategies taxonomies.

المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على إستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات التي تستخدمها طالبات الجامعة في السعودية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية مع التركيز على أربعة محاور أساسية: إكتشاف المعنى، تخزين وحفظ المعنى، تعلم النطق، وتعلم الهجاء. تكونت العينة من (46) طالبة، (26) من مرحلة البكالوريوس و 20 طالبة من مرحلة الدراسات العليا في كلية التربية، بجامعة طيبة. وقد تم تصميم إستبانة تحتوي على (40) فقرة، 10 فقرات لكل محور من المحاور الأساسية لتعلم المفردات، والتي تعكس استراتيجيات التعلم الممكنة. وذلك بإستخدام 5 نقاط مقياس Likert لقياس مدى تكرار كل إستراتيجية، حيث 5 = دائماً (1)، أبداً. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطالبات تستخدم مجموعة متنوعة من الإستراتيجيات المعرفية، ما وراء المعرفة، والإجتماعية. ويفضلن سؤال المعلمة وإستخدام الإنترنت والهواتف المحمولة لإكتشاف المعنى ومع ذلك، فالمستوى العام لإستخدام الإستراتيجيات، وخاصة بالنسبة لمحور هجاء الكلمات كانت ليست عالية وهناك حاجة لتعريف الطالبات وتدريبهن على إستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات ودمج هذه الإستراتيجيات في المناهج الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات، طلاب الجامعات السعودية، تصنيفات استراتيجيات التعلم.

Introduction:

English is used and taught as an international language in Saudi Arabia, and it is the only foreign language taught in Madinah. The demand for learning English language is increased as more and more Saudi people seek to continue their studies, apply for vacancies where English Language competence is required, or look for promotion. Learning English requires learning vocabulary, which plays an important role in comprehending the English language, especially for college students. He (2010) states, "College is really a vital stage when it comes to students' improvement of their English proficiency. In the process of vocabulary learning, it is essential not only to know the meaning of a particular word, but all the aspects of the word" (He,2010, p. 1).

Vocabulary refers to the words that English as foreign language (EFL) learners must know to increase their comprehension of text or speech and is something that enlarges and expands over time. Vocabulary is a fundamental component of foreign language acquisition. A minimal amount of vocabulary is essential for effective communication. Wilkins (1972) argues that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, and without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). Therefore, vocabulary is considered the building block for the capacity of communication.

The statement of the problem

Learning vocabulary is considered a challenge for EFL students as it necessitates making connections between L1 and L2 to understand the meaning and discriminate the form. For this reason, learners engage a variety of learning strategies.

In learning vocabulary there is not one single technique. In fact educators and learners do not think there is one right method, but rather, a combination of various strategies (Wenden and Rubin, 1987). Learners are free to select the appropriate ones according to their needs and interests. Indeed, there are as many ways of learning as there are learners, what works varies from learner to learner, and sometimes for the same learner over time.

The situations and ways in which students review vocabulary, include writing the words, listening to them, spelling them, pronouncing them, singing them, being creative and playing with them, and incorporating them into daily conversation and usage. Moreover, education apps can play a vital role, being readily available and easy to use with today's handy devices. "Most vocabulary learning takes place outside the classroom. Mobile learning provides a wonderful opportunity for learners in this respect" (Ballantyne, 2011, p.3).

The current study explores various strategies used in foreign language vocabulary learning by Saudi students, focusing on English as foreign language vocabulary learning strategies regarding the transmission of meaning, pronunciation and spelling.

The Objectives of the Study

The purposes of the current study are to investigate

- The vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/post graduate) female university students regarding *meaning*.
- The vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/post graduate) female university students regarding *pronunciation*.
- The vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/post graduate) female university students regarding *spelling*.

The Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the study explores the vocabulary-learning strategies used by EFL students and is designed to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/postgraduate) female university students regarding *discovery and store meaning*?
2. What are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/postgraduate) female university students regarding *pronunciation*?
3. What are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/postgraduate) female university students regarding *spelling*?

Research Significance

The study is significant for the following reasons.

- It might develop EFL teachers' awareness and understanding of individual differences in language classrooms.
- It might help EFL learners enrich and develop vocabulary competence by using a variety of vocabulary learning strategies.
- It may encourage curriculum-designers to create various strategies for students, and to take them into consideration while designing activities and materials.
- It opens up new vistas for researchers for further studies in the field of activities using new vocabulary learning strategies in the light of current technology.

Research Delimitations

The current study is delimited to a sample of female (under/postgraduate) students enrolled at Taibah University in the city of Al-Madinah Al Munawwarah. The study is delimited to investigate and describe the learning vocabulary strategies most frequently used by under/postgraduate female university students during the first semester of 1437/2015.

Literature Review and Previous Studies

Learning strategies have been defined by many researchers. Griffiths (2013: p.50) defines them as "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning". They are ways and approaches students use to comprehend the materials and solve problems or complete a task: "any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 19). Most researchers confirm the significance and the beneficial impact of learning strategies. The effective use of strategies helps students to become self-directed, active learners and develops their confidence and proficiency (Little & Kobayashi, 2015).

Regarding the classification of learning strategies, several taxonomies have been established along with learning strategies in general. For example Oxford's (1990) taxonomy is one of the most widely used taxonomies in language learning. This and other vocabulary-learner strategy classifications are detailed in the following table.

Table(1): List of Several Taxonomies of Vocabulary Learning Strategies.

| Source | No. of Categories | Vocabulary Learning Strategies |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Oxford's (1990) | two divided into six groups | It classifies general language learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct include memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies are social strategies, affective strategies, and metacognitive strategies. |
| Stoffer (1995) | 53 items into nine groups | 1) strategies involving authentic language use 2) strategies involving creative activities 3) strategies used for self-motivation 4) strategies used to create mental linkages 5) memory strategies 6) visual/auditory strategies 7) strategies involving physical action 8) strategies used to overcome anxiety and 9) strategies used to organize words. |
| Schmitt (1997) | 58 vocabulary learning strategies in six groups | Six groups in two major classes: strategies for discovering a new word's meaning (determination strategies and social strategies) and strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered (social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies). Determination strategies are those used for discovering a new word's meaning without relying on other people. |
| Schmitt (2000) | two kinds of strategies divided into five groups. | First discover the meaning, and second merges include 5 groups (discovery of meaning, cognitive, metacognitive, social, and memory). |
| Gu, (2002) | Two sets of VLS into three groups | Metacognitive strategies include guessing, using a dictionary, and taking notes. Cognitive strategies include reviewing, repetitions, coding, and mental imagery. |
| Nation (2008) | Four strategies | Guessing meaning through context, direct learning by using flash cards and synonyms, analysis of words parts to remember, and using a dictionary. |
| Mizumoto and Takeuchi (2009) | Six subscales of strategic vocabulary learning behaviours | Self-management, input-seeking, imagery, writing rehearsal, oral rehearsal, and association. |

Previous Studies :

Many researchers have conducted investigations of vocabulary learning strategies. The following are recent ones.

Alhashemi and Ali (2012) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies of undergraduate Malaysian learners of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) in regard to frequency of use and beliefs. A questionnaire of two main themes– strategies (45 items) and beliefs (20 items).was distributed to 67 students in an Islamic university. The results showed that using a dictionary was the most common strategy used for learning vocabulary, followed by note taking, memorization, and guessing, which was the least frequently used strategy. Furthermore, learners agreed on the significance of using diverse approaches in learning vocabulary.

Regarding modern technology, Ahmad (2013) examined the effectiveness of use of Internet capable-mobiles in learning and remembering vocabulary. Three surveys were conducted on working class Saudi EFL learners at King Abdul Aziz University, to find out the homogeneity of working class students, to explore their attitudes towards the importance and relevance of Internet capable mobiles for learning vocabulary and to measure the effectiveness of Internet capable mobiles in learning and retaining vocabulary. The scores on learning and retaining vocabulary of students who learned with mobile Internet were much higher than those of learners using the traditional method. It was concluded that Internet capable mobile phone can be an

effective tool for learning vocabulary. Learners who frequently use their devices can learn diverse types of vocabulary and practise them in different contexts and situations.

Another study that examined the effect of using devices and integrating online tools in learning vocabulary is AlSahli (2014) who focused on integrating online tools such as games, You Tube and digital storytelling embedded in a wiki, and testing their effect on students' vocabulary achievement in the foreign language classroom. An experimental method was used involving 46 female students at the first secondary grade. The results revealed that the experimental group showed a great improvement in vocabulary achievement. The strategies helped students to improve their vocabulary, gain high motivation, feel less anxiety, to learn independently and think critically.

Bahanshal (2015) studied the English language acquisition of Saudi learners and investigated the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on acquisition of vocabulary at all levels in general and high school stages. The results showed that Saudi high school English learners applied some strategies automatically, more than others. Guessing words' meaning from context, using dictionaries and memorizing new words seemed to be the most preferred strategies, while note taking and seeking help from others were less accepted.

Al-Masrai and Milton (2012) did an empirical study of vocabulary knowledge of 92 Saudi university learners of EFL, Two tests were used to measure the participants' vocabulary size in order to find out their levels of vocabulary knowledge and to make decisions as to whether or not knowledge was at a level suitable for university study through the medium of English. The results indicated that Saudi university students' vocabulary size is about 2000 to 3000 words on entry to university and around 5000 words nearer graduation.

He (2010) studied Chinese learners' attitude and evaluation of L2 vocabulary learning strategies and offered some advice to L2 vocabulary teachers based on the results. A questionnaire survey and interviews were conducted. The result shows learning vocabulary using word cards was favoured by students who were good at English learning, while almost all or most strategies seemed ineffective for less able students, who did not have the skills to use these strategies. Teachers can teach students learning strategies and direct them to use these strategies in their learning process, according to their English abilities. However, the result from this study may be limited to Chinese people.

Zhang (2011) investigated the differences between effective and less effective learners in using vocabulary learning strategies. Thirty-five college students participated by taking a vocabulary test then filling in a questionnaire. The results indicated significant differences between effective and less effective learner. Effective learners have a positive attitude. They have an interest in English, listening and reading, learning words in sentences, using a bilingual dictionary, reading English books in free time and studying spelling. Acquisition of vocabulary was demonstrated, but vocabulary in general is considered a difficulty for Chinese English major students.

The last study is one examining the effect of word mapping strategy on EFL students' achievement of lexical items by Abdelrahman (2013). The sample of the study consisted of 50 EFL male students at Al Imam Mohammed Ibin Saud Islamic University, distributed randomly into experimental and control groups. a quasi-experimental method was used. The experimental group learned the lexical items via

a semantic mapping strategy, and the control group learned them in the traditional method. Vocabulary pre and post tests were given to both groups. The results revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in favour of the experimental group. The study suggested that semantic mapping can be used as an effective technique in learning EFL vocabulary.

Comments on the Previous Studies

Researchers on learning multiple languages have offered many categories and classifications of learning vocabulary strategies. Some are more comprehensive and detailed than others. (Oxford , 1990; Stoffer, 1995; Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt, 2000; Gu, 2002; Nation, 2008; and Mizumoto and Takeuchi, 2009). The adoption of Oxford (1990) is considered a basis for many of the studies conducted on learning other languages.

Vocabulary leads to success in linguistic communication. This necessitates arming language learners with effective strategies for the development of language and to be able to solve communication problems caused by new words or ambiguous meaning, to which they are often exposed in language learning and use, As Al-Masrai and Milton (2012) indicate, Saudi university students' vocabulary size is about 2000 to 3000 words on entry to university and around 5000 words nearer graduation. This indicates an emphasis on the strategies to continue to learn new words and expand the vocabulary.

Taking advantage of the categories mentioned in table 1, and after reviewing a number of lists in previous studies evaluating learning vocabulary strategies used (Abdelrahman, 2013; Ahmad, 2013; AlSahli, 2014; Bahanshal, 2015; He, 2010; Zhang, 2011; and Alhashemi and Ali, 2012), the current study investigates vocabulary learning strategies currently selected by under and postgraduate students regarding, (1) discovering the meaning of unknown words in English, (2) memorizing and storing the meaning of new words, (3) learning pronunciation, and (4) memorizing spelling.

Methodology Procedures:

The current study used the descriptive approach based on the description of a phenomenon as it really and is and tries to analyse, and interpret data, a survey method was adopted, using a questionnaire. The procedures were as follows:

The Sample:

The study population consisted of 115 female students in Master and Bachelor programs, "Teaching English as a Foreign Language" at the University of Taibah, Education College. The sample included 46 Saudi students in the academic year 2015 40% of the study population.

The participants were distributed as follows:

26 English female undergraduate students.

20 female Master students of teaching English as a foreign language, as shown in table 2.

The Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect data. It was composed of two parts. The first section was to elicit general information on students and the second, to determine their degree of use of strategies for learning vocabulary. This contained 40 statements, 10 for each of four variables representing basic categories of strategies for learning vocabulary, derived from previous studies, related to (1) discovering meaning of unknown words in English, (2) memorizing and storing meaning, (3) learning pronunciation, and (4) memorizing spelling. Students were asked to determine the

extent of use of each selection strategy by choosing one of five alternatives on a Likert scale (5= Always 4= Often 3= Sometimes 2= Rarely 1= Never).

To check the validity, the questionnaire was submitted to a group of faculty members in the College of Education at Taibah University in Al Madinah Al Munawwarrah, and the College of Education at the University of King Saud in Riyadh, and refined based on their observations; some statements were omitted and the wording of some items was amended. Reliability was tested by calculating Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient. The internal consistency of the first section was (0.93) and the alpha coefficient for the four axes of the second section were (0.72, 0.73, 0.77 and 0.82) respectively. The forty statements overall had a consistency coefficient of (0.92). These values show high consistency among the questionnaire components.

Viewing and analyzing results

The data were analyzed by using a statistical software package, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Means and standard deviations were calculated. The results of the study are presented below, arranged according to the study's questions, to reflect to which degree students used various strategies to learn vocabulary, through level of agreement with each statement.

1. What are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/postgraduate) female university students to *discover and store meaning*?

To answer the first question means and standard deviations were calculated

Table(2): Means and standard deviations for students' use of strategies to discovers meaning

| Statements | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|--------|--------|----------------|
| Ask instructor or classmates for its meaning. | 174.00 | 3.7826 | 1.26338 |
| Through reading electronic books. | 157.00 | 3.4130 | 1.48438 |
| Guess the meaning from textual context (comprehensible input). | 143.00 | 3.1087 | 1.13975 |
| Discover new meaning through group work activity. | 140.00 | 3.0435 | 1.21026 |
| Search images in Google search engine to create a picture in mind | 137.00 | 2.9783 | 1.39027 |
| Analyse part of speech (e.g. noun, verb, adjective). | 126.00 | 2.7391 | 1.48226 |
| Search on web in Google search engine. | 125.00 | 2.7174 | 1.44011 |
| Keep using bilingual dictionary (Arabic-English) dictionary on my mobile. | 119.00 | 2.5870 | 1.18464 |
| Keep using monolingual dictionary (English-English) dictionary on my mobile. | 118.00 | 2.5652 | 1.24101 |
| Engaging in reading stories can build emotional and sensory contexts. | 104.00 | 2.2609 | 1.18199 |

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for students' use of strategies to discover meaning, in descending order. It is clear that the highest mean (3.78) was for "*ask instructor or classmates for its meaning*" that is, using a social strategy to discover meaning. Teachers often provide help in a variety of ways, such as giving the L1 translation, synonym, definition, or using the new word in a sentence. This result is expected because this strategy is culture related as Alhaysony (2012) mentions "Saudi EFL learners rely heavily on asking the teacher as s/he plays the main role in the educational system. In other words, EFL learners prefer asking the teacher about the meaning, spelling, or any issue beyond trying to depend on themselves". The next highest mean (3.41) "*Through reading electronic books*" indicates that students favour using electronic strategies in learning vocabulary.

Regarding memorizing and storing meaning, the results show the highest mean (3.28) was for the cognitive strategy: "*Note taking by listing new words on my mobile device*". Taking notes on the mobile helps learners to create their own personal structure for unknown words, and also this strategy offers a chance for review. It is

useful for those students who prefer a more aural approach to learning and study vocabulary by listening (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995). Students can also make use of any special vocabulary sections in their textbooks on their mobile to help them study target words.

The results obtained from table 4 are very similar to those in table 3, which high lights the preference for using electronic means for learning vocabulary.

Table(3): Means and standard deviations for students' use of strategies for storing and memory

| Statements | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|--------|--------|----------------|
| Note taking by listing new words on my mobile device. | 151.00 | 3.2826 | 1.29380 |
| Break the word up into syllables to memorize it. | 149.00 | 3.2391 | 1.44814 |
| Combine the new vocabulary with phrases and sentences. | 147.00 | 3.1957 | 1.22238 |
| Find synonyms in Arabic. | 144.00 | 3.1304 | 1.37612 |
| Associate the word with its synonyms or antonyms. | 132.00 | 2.8696 | 1.16636 |
| Repeat the word and its meaning. | 130.00 | 2.8261 | 1.33840 |
| Watching on line videos on YouTube. | 124.00 | 2.6957 | 1.45861 |
| Create a mental picture of the word's meaning. | 118.00 | 2.5652 | 1.34416 |
| Illustrate the word with semantic maps. | 111.00 | 2.4130 | 1.40754 |
| Use the word in my speaking or writing tasks more than once. | 101.00 | 2.1957 | 1.29305 |

Moreover, the result indicates that the next highest mean (3.24) was for "Break the word up into syllables to memorize" As a memory strategy analysis of words can be useful for storing their meaning; studying a word's affixes, root, and word class can be useful as a way of combining its meaning and improves recall of a word by means of the management effort.

The second question of the study, what are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/post graduate) female university students regarding Pronunciation?

To answer the second question means and standard deviations were calculated

Table(4): Means and standard deviations for students' use of strategies to learn Pronunciation

| Statements | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|--------|--------|----------------|
| Use English-language media (songs, movies, the Internet, etc.) | 146.00 | 3.1739 | 1.41899 |
| Interact with native speakers to practise pronunciation. | 144.00 | 3.1304 | 1.29286 |
| Write the symbol of sounds that produce of the letters. | 142.00 | 3.0870 | 1.09191 |
| Look up new words in A SPOKEN dictionary. | 139.00 | 3.0217 | 1.43742 |
| Use some educational apps games and activities. | 135.00 | 2.9348 | 1.27196 |
| Listen then record my voice and repeat it | 133.00 | 2.8913 | 1.26891 |
| Listen to on line videos to native speakers of English and analyze the word. | 126.00 | 2.7391 | 1.43658 |
| Use words in real speech and interaction. | 122.00 | 2.6522 | 1.33695 |
| Read stories which have a huge amount of weird and wonderful words and expressions. | 107.00 | 2.3261 | 1.31748 |
| Do verbal repetition of a word's pronunciation until they are set in memory. | 105.00 | 2.2826 | 1.10881 |

The most frequently used strategy with the highest mean of 3.17, was " Use English-language media (songs, movies, the Internet, etc)", followed by "Interact with native speakers to practise pronunciation" with a mean of 3.13. The first of these is a metacognitive strategy, while the second is social. The environment is very important

for practising a language. When native English speakers are around, or English is seen and heard in mass media, this can powerfully encourage students and support more interactive learning, which helps in developing for the sake of developing greater linguistic fluency (Alhaysony, 2012).

Table(5): Means and standard deviations for students' use of strategies to learn Spelling

| Statements | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|--------|--------|----------------|
| Analyze the word into consonant and vowels included and memorize. | 142.00 | 3.0870 | 1.39565 |
| Look at the roots and suffix of the word | 132.00 | 2.8696 | 1.35988 |
| Write the new word when chatting in the social media. | 123.00 | 2.6739 | 1.46142 |
| Download vocabulary trainer apps. | 123.00 | 2.6739 | 1.31748 |
| Test myself with on line word tests or ask someone to dictate it to me. | 116.00 | 2.5217 | 1.20626 |
| Look at the graphic and image of the word in my mind. | 110.00 | 2.3913 | 1.43725 |
| Keep a vocabulary noted wherever I go, and write it on my phone or iPad. | 108.00 | 2.3478 | 1.15888 |
| Do written repetition of a word's spelling. | 105.00 | 2.2826 | 1.40891 |
| Practice by playing on-- line vocabulary games (e.g. crossword) | 99.00 | 2.1522 | 1.24664 |
| Count the number of letters in the word and try to memorize the form. | 66.00 | 1.4348 | .50121 |

The third question of the study, was "What are the vocabulary learning strategies most frequently used by (under/post graduate) female university students regarding *spelling*?"

To answer the third question, means and standard deviations were calculated. The results in table 6 show the highest values are (3.0) and (2.9) for analyse the word into consonants and vowels included and memorize", and "Look at the roots and suffix of the word. Both strategies reflect the same approach to analyse vocabulary structure and to break down the structured of vocabulary learning to facilitate learning spelling, independently and practise target words. As for remembering spelling, students found that the small components of words (consonant, vowels, roots and suffixes) are helpful in recall and in recognising the spelling of new words.

Generally, looking at the means for all statements it is found that means are between (2-1) which means that students rarely or never use strategies to develop spelling and these are the least frequently used strategies. Spelling is difficult to learn, not only in L2, but also in L1. Many students learning vocabulary have never been good at spelling, in general, especially when the words sound very similar (Lin, 2008, p. 178). The cause might be a lack of using strategies for develop spelling, this could be attributed to relaying on using devices and technology. Since these offer the features of automatic checking of spelling, students may feel that they do not need such strategies.

Discussion of results:

It is clear from the above findings that students use various strategies to discover meaning, but the most popular ones are the social and electronic strategies, "ask instructor or classmates for its meaning" and "Through reading electronic books" and this result confirm the studies of (Alhaysony, 2012; Ahmad, 2013; AlSahli, 2014; Oxford, 1990; Stoffer, 1995; Schmitt,2000; and Schmitt, 2007)

The findings indicate that 76% of students prefer to memorize and store meaning, by using cognitive and memory strategies, "Note taking by listing new words on my mobile device" and "Break the word up into syllables to memorize". This fact is consistent with match Omar & Mustapha (2014); Schmitt (2000); Gu (2002); Oxford (1990); and Schmitt (2007). However, it contrasts with Bahanshal (2015) who found that note taking and seeking help from others were less accepted. This could be

because nearly half of the participants were Master students, who are used to taking notes in their academic life.

Regarding strategies students use to develop pronunciation, it was found that most participants used " Use English-language media (songs, movies, the Internet, etc)" and "Interact with native speakers to practise pronunciation" It seems that these strategies (metacognitive and social respectively) are excellent ways to improve pronunciation of vocabulary and increase vocabulary input for learners. (Alhaysony, 2012; Schmitt, 2000; Gu, 2002; Oxford, 1990; and Schmitt, 2007).

Regarding vocabulary-learning strategies students use to memorize spelling, it was found that the majority of students never or rarely used vocabulary learning strategies to memorize spelling. In my view, this might happen due to use of technology which includes the feature of correcting any spelling mistakes. The results reveal that the highest mean values were for using "Analyse the word into consonants and vowels included and memorize", and "Look at the roots and suffix of the word" (Zhang, 2011; Lin, 2008; and Schmitt, 2000).

Conclusion:

The growth use of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, for study and work, faces students with the challenge of discovering and relating the meaning of new words, and mastering their correct pronunciation and spelling. Literature suggests a variety of taxonomies of strategies to aid this process, including cognitive, metacognitive, effective and social strategies (Oxford, 1990), and strategy use can be facilitated by the affordances of technology such as internet-capable mobile phones. Effective use of appropriate strategies for learning can improve students' confidence and independence in learning, as well as their language proficiency. Whilst this study confirmed that a variety of strategies are employed by Saudi female university students when learning vocabulary in EFL, the low to moderate mean scores show that most strategies were used only infrequently. This may be due to students' lack of awareness of such strategies, lack of skill to use them effectively, and over-reliance on certain strategies (such as asking teacher) at the expense of others that could accommodate individual students' learning style. Both teachers' and students' tasks would be facilitated by familiarity with a variety of vocabulary learning strategies to ease this crucial part of language learning as the foundation for students' communicative competence in English.

Recommendations

- 1- In the light of the outcomes of the study and within the limitations of the study, the following recommendations and suggestions can be offered.
- 2- In the light of the above result, it is recommended that there is a need to train students constantly on the use of vocabulary learning strategies regarding meaning, pronunciation and spelling using all types of vocabulary learning strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, discovery, and social).
- 3- Strategies training should provide for the individual differences among students and evaluate the vocabulary learning strategies used, in order to direct them on how to use the strategies effectively.
- 4- It would be interesting to train teachers to use vocabulary learning strategies in their instruction and educational activities, to improve the proficiency of the students in developing their vocabulary and communicative competence.
- 5- Vocabulary learning strategies should be included in the curriculum and related activities provided in the workbooks.

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