

To what extent do Teachers of English use Vocabulary Learning Strategies in Teaching Specialized English Vocabulary

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims at investigating the usage of vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English vocabulary. The study employed the analytical research method where the researcher designed a questionnaire for teachers of English in three Universities at Khartoum State: SUST (Sudan University of Science and Technology), UK (University of Khartoum) and U A (University of Alneelain), to investigate, to what extent they use these strategies when they teach specialized English vocabulary. The findings of the study showed that there is a big usage of vocabulary learning strategies by some teachers of English.

Key word: VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies), Specialized English Vocabulary, EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث استخدام استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية المتخصصة. استخدمت الدراسة البحث التحليلي، حيث قامت الباحثة بتصميم استبانة لأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في ثلاثة جامعات بولاية الخرطوم (جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا، جامعة الخرطوم وجامعة النيلين، وذلك لتقصي إلى أي مدى يستخدمون هذه الاستراتيجيات عند تدريسهم لمفردات اللغة الإنجليزية المتخصصة. وقد اشارت نتائج الدراسة الي ان هناك استخدام كبير لاستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات من قبل بعض اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية.

INTRODUCTION :

English is considered as Foreign Language (FL) in Sudan. In a particular, teaching and learning English vocabulary at the university level in Sudan is influenced by its status at the pre-university level. In schools , English is taught from level five at Basic schools up to Secondary schools and University level. Specific strategies are needed in teaching vocabulary to university students, especially those who study specialized English terminologies. So, vocabulary learning strategies are

regarded as the most important aspects contributing to teaching and learning vocabulary specifically, specialized vocabulary. It is known that vocabulary learning strategies are subcategory of language learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) can be defined as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier , faster , enjoyable, self-directed, effective and more transferable to new situations” Oxford(3). Another definition of VLSs, are steps taken by the language learners

to acquire new English words. Nation and Gu (4). This study aims at investigating the usage of VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies) in teaching specialized vocabulary at university level in Sudan and tries to identify, to what extent do the teachers of English use it. Also it tries to discover the useful and effective strategies in learning new specialized vocabulary. Furthermore, students cannot develop their specialized vocabulary without knowing vocabulary learning strategies. Some types of VLSs are needed in teaching vocabulary, such as: Consolidation strategies which include: memory strategies (word list, repetition, association; imagery, visual, auditory, etc.), dictionary strategies, cognitive and metacognitive strategies (identifying essential words for comprehension). Discovery strategies which include determination strategies (analyzing part of speech, affixes and roots.), social strategies (L1 translation of new words) and multimedia strategies (Computer and Web based strategies). So, this study will attempt to investigate the importance of these strategies in foreign language teaching and learning. This study is set out to answer the following question:

To what extent do teachers of English employ vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English vocabulary?

For the aim of investigating the study question above, the following hypothesis is formulated

There is little or no use of Vocabulary learning strategies by the most teachers in teaching specialized English vocabulary.

Objectives of the study:

The goal of this study is to investigate, using of vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English terms. Also, it is to find out effective strategies that teachers use in teaching these terms.

Literature Review:

The usage and importance of VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies) have widely been investigated and analyzed. The earliest and first study on language learning strategies use by English teachers, was by Rubin (5) as one of the earliest researchers directing attention from teaching methods and materials to a more learners-centered aspects, assuming that successful learners tend to operate a range of strategies in their learning process which might be made available to help under achieved learners. Rubin points out that the good language learner: Is a willing and accurate guesser, has strong drive to communicate, is uninhibited and willing to make mistakes, focuses on form by looking at patterns and using analyses, takes advantage of all practice opportunities, monitors his or her own speech and that of others and pays attention to meaning. Oxford (6). A large-scale study on Chinese university learners' VLSs was carried out by Gu and Jonson (7). 850 sophomore non-English majors participated in the survey by filling out a questionnaire. Researchers correlated responses to the questionnaire with results on a vocabulary size test and a general English proficiency measure. It was found that there were significant positive correlation between the two metacognitive strategies (Self-Initiation and selective Attention) and the two

test scores , whereas mnemonic devices (e.g imagery , visual associations and auditory associations), semantic encoding strategies , and word list learning probably correlated highly with vocabulary size. Another large skill survey on VLSs was conducted by Schmitt (8), who investigated six hundred Japanese learners from four different age levels- juniors high school students, high school students , university students and other learners. Schmitt also implemented a questionnaire to gather information about what VLSs, where used and how useful they were rated. Sanaoui(9) in his study about the Relationship between Vocabulary Strategies Use and Success in Acquiring and Retaining Vocabulary Items). This study demonstrated that adult learners of second language vocabulary were likely to fall into two categories: Those who adopted a structured approach to their vocabulary and those who did not. Learners in the first group took control of their vocabulary learning. They did not merely rely on what the language course provided with them. They used their own initiative in regular creating opportunities for vocabulary learning by listening to the radio, watching movies, reading and using self-study. They kept systematic record of vocabulary they learned by using vocabulary notebooks and lists. They reviewed what they had done several times a week. However, the learners in the second group who followed unstructured approach relied mainly on course material. If they made lists of vocabulary items, they did not review them and they occasionally lost them. Silverman R & Hines(10) in their

study (Using Multimedia to promote Vocabulary Learning). This study investigated the effects of video support during read-aloud vocabulary instruction, looking specifically at the performance of ELLs. The study was set in a small, semi-urban public school in the northeast. Eighty-five children from pre-school through kindergarten participated in the study. There were two intervention conditions in this study: (a) non-multimedia and (b) multimedia. In both of these conditions, teachers taught a scripted intervention lesson 45 minutes per day for three days a week over the course of twelve weeks. The length and duration of the intervention was the same across conditions. The content of both conditions was habitats (i.e., rainforests, savannahs, coral reefs, and deserts). The findings of their study supported the effectiveness of multimedia support for vocabulary instruction. They found that, compared to ELL children who only experienced read aloud, ELL children who were also exposed to the multimedia content learned more words than their ELL peers and caught up in vocabulary knowledge to their English only peers. We also found that non-ELL children learned the vocabulary words at the same rate whether or not they watched the video or only experienced read-aloud. On the other hand, there were some previous researches in the context of the study (Sudan) in the area of teaching and learning vocabulary: study about Vocabulary Learning Strategies, of English in the context of Sudan) by Abdalla (11). He used a questionnaire in his study to investigate the using of these strategies. Another study was by :

Rifaat, EisaAwad(12), Teaching and Learning Idiomatic Expressions and Multi-word verbs. The researcher touched briefly on the context of the study (Sudan) where English is considered as Foreign Language (FL). First, how to solve the problems and eliminate the difficulties of teaching/learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the context of Sudan? In doing so, the researcher have tried to apply the means, approaches, principles, techniques, strategies etc., of teaching/learning vocabulary. A considerable emphasis and concern were given to the guessing-from-context strategy (contextualization) within the framework of the mentalist and cognitive approach to language teaching/learning (awareness, explicitness, learners' active involvement in the teaching/learning processes, etc.). Inspired by some previous studies, the researcher decided to carry out a similar research on the usage of vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English vocabulary, particularly engineering terminologies in the Sudanese context. However, differences exist between some of previous studies are mentioned above and the current study. First, in some of the above studies English was the second language of the participants, whereas in this research English is a foreign language to the participants. Second, the researchers in some of above studies employed experimental research method while in this study the researcher used analytical research method by using a questionnaire for teachers of English.

Methodology of the study:

Sample of the study:

The researcher adopts a questionnaire for English language teachers in University level in Sudan, in a particular those who teach specialized English in College of Engineering at three universities: SUST(Sudan University of Science and Technology), UK (University of Khartoum) and UA(University of Alneelain).

The questionnaire is divided into two parts: The first part includes personal information about the teachers (their names, University where they work, their degrees and years of experience in teaching English). The second part includes seven statements about teachers' use of vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English vocabulary. There were 40 teachers who teach English not only for students of engineering, but also for students of all other specializations in different Colleges at the three universities. Most of the teachers are experienced and high qualified in teaching English. They have taught at university for more than 10 years.

Validity and reliability of the instrument:

In order to check the apparent validity for the study questionnaire and validation of its statements, the researcher showed the questionnaire to the (5) of the Ph.D. holding referees whom they are specialists in the study field. Some of the referees make some suggestions, and others were agreed that the questionnaire is suitable. For the questionnaire reliability: the study used calculated the reliability coefficient for the measurement, which was used in the

questionnaire using (split-half) method. This method stands on the principle of dividing the answers of the sample individuals into two parts, i.e. items of the odd numbers e.g. (1, 3, 5, ...) and

answers of the even numbers e.g. (2,4,6). The reliability coefficient was calculated according to Spearman-Brown Equation as the following:

$$\text{Reliability Coefficient} = \frac{2 \times r}{1 + r}$$

r = Person correlation coefficient

The researcher calculated the validity statistically using the following equation:

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

For calculating the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire from the above equation, the researcher distributed 15 samples of the questionnaire to the respondents. In

addition, depending on the answers of the pre-test sample, the above Spearman-Brown equation was used to calculate the reliability coefficient using the split-half method.

Table (2): The statistical reliability and validity of the pre-test sample about the study questionnaire

	Reliability	Validity
Overall	0.76	0.87

The results in the table above, indicate high validity and reliability of the study questionnaire. In order to satisfy the study objective and to test its hypothesis,

Results and discussion:

The analysis of questionnaire will focus on answering a basic question: To what extent do teachers of English employ vocabulary learning strategies in teaching specialized English vocabulary? To answer this question, the study computed the frequency distribution.

the researcher used Frequency distribution as one of statistical instruments:

The statements from 1 to 7 are concerned with English vocabulary learning strategies teachers use in teaching English vocabulary. Now each statement is considered individually :
Statement No.(1): Using variety of means to make the meaning of new words clear is useful method in learning specialized English vocabulary.

Table No.(2)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of the statement No.(1)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	32	80.0
Agree	6	15.0
Neutral	2	5.0
Disagree	0	0%
Stronglydisagree	0	0%
Total	40	100.0

It is clear from the table above, that (95.0%) of the teachers see that using variety of means to make the meaning of new words clear is a useful method in learning specialist English vocabulary whereas(5.0%) of them are neutral.

As shown as in the results above, the majority of the teachers preferred to use

more than one mean in teaching specialist vocabulary in order to make the meaning of new terms clear and easy for their students to recognize and understand the new terms easily.

Statement No.(2): Explaining essential words for comprehension help my students to know the new word easily.

Table No.(3)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(2)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	50.0
Agree	20	50.0
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0%
Stronglydisagree	0	0%
Total	40	100.0

As displayed in table No.(3), 100% of the teachers have agreed with explaining essential words for comprehension help their students to know the new word easily.

All the teachers see that explaining the meaning of new words in comprehension help students to know

the new terms easily. All the teachers preferred this strategy because of the nature of the English teaching courses which are basically depend on teaching new term through texts.

Statement No.(3): I Prefer to using study skills such as using of dictionary when I teach specialized English words.

Table No.(4)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(3)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	35.0
Agree	20	50.0
Neutral	4	10.0
Disagree	2	5.0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	40	100.0

As shown in table No.(4), (85%) of the teachers prefer to use study skills such as using of dictionary when they teach specialized English words while 10% of them are neutral and (5%) of the teachers are disagree.No doubt, that using a dictionary is familiar and useful method in teaching specialized terms and in the respondents' answer above that they preferred to use a dictionary. Moreover, different specialized dictionaries are available regarding

students specializations such as medical dictionary which includes most important scientific terms. Moreover, dictionaries become more developed in modern technology and students are more interested to use electronic dictionaries in their PCs and mobile phones.

Statement No.(4): Using of word class (Affixes: suffixes and prefixes) is useful method in teaching new terms.

Table No.(5)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(4)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	50.0
Agree	12	30.0
Neutral	4	10.0
Disagree	4	10.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	40	100.0

Table No.(5), shows that most teachers(80.0%) agree that using word class (Affixes: suffixes and prefixes) is a useful method in teaching new terms while 10% are neutral and 10% are disagree. Most teachers specifically those who teach in Sudan University of Science and Technology preferred to use

affixations as an effective strategy in teaching new terms. Also, they think that using affixations help students to develop and increase their vocabulary.

Statement No.(5): I prefer to use my own way in teaching specialized English vocabulary more than teaching vocabulary learning strategies.

Table No.(6)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(5)

Answer	Number	Percent
StronglyAgree	4	10.0
Agree	26	65.0
Neutral	6	15.0
Disagree	2	5.0
Stronglydisagree	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

As displayed in table no.(6) above, 75% of the teachers prefer to use their own methods in teaching specialized English vocabulary more than teaching vocabulary learning strategies where as 15% of them are neutral and 10% are disagree.

Of course teachers' own strategy is a useful and effective way in teaching

specialized words, and the teacher is one who know well about his/her student's level, interest, weakness...etc. So the teachers can find a suitable method for their students by themselves more than depend on such method.

Statement No.(6): Word list is more useful method in teaching specialized vocabulary.

Table No.(7)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(6)

Answer	Number	Percent
StronglyAgree	18	45.0
Agree	14	34.0
Neutral	4	10.0
Disagree	2	5.0
Stronglydisagree	0	0.0
Total	40	100.0

Table No.(7)above, indicates that there are (79%)of the teachers who see that word list is a useful method in teaching specialized vocabulary whereas (10%) are neutral and 5% are disagree.

It is clear from the respondents' answers, that most of them preferred to use word lists as an effective strategy when they teach new terms. Of course word lists

help students to know and understand the new words easily. A few number of the teachers do not use the strategy above, while a few of them have no comment.

Statement No.(7): Teaching specialized English vocabulary by using visual aids help students to memorize the new words easily.

Table No.(8)The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about statement No.(7)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	24	60.0
Agree	8	20.0
Neutral	4	10.0
Disagree	2	5.0
Strongly disagree	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Table No.(8) above shows that,80% of the teachers see that teaching specialized English vocabulary by using teaching aids help students to memorize the new words while only 10% of them are neutral and 10% are disagree. According to above results, the majority of the teachers preferred to use teaching aids such as visual aids, pictures, songs ...etc. in teaching English particularly specialized English vocabulary. These Aids have effective results, that students can know the words and associate them with their meanings, which help them to recognize these words easily. To sum up, it is clear from the results of the seven statements above, that most of the teachers in the three universities use vocabulary learning strategies, though the hypothesis of the study proposes that there is a little or no use of vocabulary learning strategies by the most teachers

CONCLUSIONS:

This study tried to investigate the usage of VLSs(Vocabulary Learning Strategies)by most teachers of English in teaching specialized English vocabulary. As hypothesized: There is little or no

and students in teaching and learning specialized English vocabulary. Similarly, Lotfi Ghazal(13) aimed to suggest a framework for training EFL learners in vocabulary learning strategies. In so doing, an account of different taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies and a rationale for strategy training are presented. He employed descriptive research. His findings showed that, learning new vocabulary is a challenge to foreign language students but they can overcome by having access to a variety of vocabulary learning strategies. Learners should then be trained in strategies they lack. To this end, teachers should consider the learners' willingness and readiness to receive trainings and think of the most appropriate way to introduce the strategies..

use of Vocabulary learning strategies by the most teachers in teaching specialized English vocabulary. The results of this study displayed that most teachers used VLSs in teaching specialized terms.

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