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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF STRATEGIES USED TO TEACH AND ASSESS EFL VOCABULARY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN Al AIN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

By

Warqa Salem Suhail Khadra Al Ameri

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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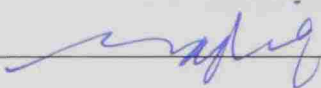
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF STRATEGIES USED TO TEACH AND ASSESS EFL VOCABULARY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN Al AIN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Abstract

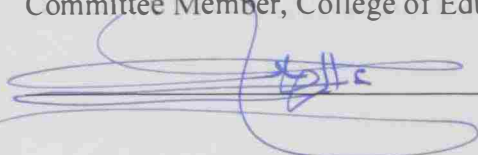The purpose of the study was to investigate vocabulary teaching strategies used by English language teachers in Al Ain public schools in the United Arab Emirates. The research focuses on three areas: investigating the strategies that teachers use to teach vocabulary, strategies teachers use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary and strategies teachers use to assess vocabulary learning. Such a study is important to evaluate and categorize the most frequent and effective strategies in the context of vocabulary instruction in Al Ain.

The research used quantitative and qualitative approaches exemplified in a questionnaire and an interview. A questionnaire was used to gather primary data from 197 English language teachers in Al Ain public school, besides seven face-to-face interviews were conducted in the same vein.

The research findings stated the importance of integrating vocabulary learning concept in the daily instruction. It has been found that the primary vocabulary strategies that were used by teachers in Al Ain public school are relating unfamiliar words to pictures or real objects, focusing on pronunciation and spelling of the new words, studying new word lists, use new words in sentences, using flash cards of new words in classroom. Second, the most common used strategy to teach new vocabulary was found in using pictures, real objects or drawing, using vocabulary exercises in worksheets, using reading tasks which require the students to encounter the new words. The research has found that the most frequently used strategy in vocabulary assessment is using matching words with pictures exercises and documenting students work using portfolios such as using vocabulary logs.

The findings of this research indicated that English language teachers are aware of using various strategies to teach and assess vocabulary. Questionnaire and interviews declared that teachers do not focus only on one strategy but use many various strategies depending on the classroom context and instruction. The implementation of these strategies supports a more holistic and balanced approach to the effective of teaching vocabulary.

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Special thanks and appreciation must go to my family members; father, mother, brothers (Suhail, Ahmed, Obaid, Saeed, Mohammad and Mubarak) and sisters for their ongoing moral support and encouragement. Without their love and support my study would never be accomplished.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest love to my colleagues and friends (Jamila, Aysha, Mariam and Rouda) for their assistance and encouragement during the journey of the study.

DEDICATION

To

My Father

My Mother

My brothers and sisters

My friends

With Love and Gratitude

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

English teachers should pave the path for learners to build their knowledge of the English language through a variety of means. However, teaching vocabulary lays the foundation that allows students to confidently retrieve words in speaking, writing, reading and listening contexts. Therefore, acquiring a sufficiently large vocabulary is the most significant part of language learning (Graves, 2000). Usually, without good teaching students of pedagogy will have difficulty in learning and remembering vocabulary, especially if this learning is not reinforced through efficient learning methods. Generally, teaching vocabulary helps students to build the means to communicate and clarify their meaning or express themselves in an articulate way that is otherwise unavailable to them without this knowledge.

Language acquisition needs to be supported with distinctive teaching techniques to aid comprehension. Students require motivation to learn and need strategies to help them retain recent learning. Teachers should be aware of how the memory process works and how the concepts of brain-based learning can affect learning retention.

Direct instruction is one type of teaching strategy that can be used in teaching vocabulary. Also, the continual exposure to new vocabulary through a variety of methods can help establish spheres of familiarities in learning English (August & Shanahan, 2006). Many methods have been created to motivate students and learners to absorb new

vocabulary. It has been found that English language vocabulary needs to be taught in the form of root words, cognates, suffixes and prefixes to assimilate a base of vocabulary. Also, implementing practices such as showing pictures, using charts and including definitions enhances the ability to make sense in terms of learning vocabulary. Teachers are responsible for the effective teaching of vocabulary in the classroom context, and a significant part of their job is to deliver that mandate. For example, they might choose the proper vocabulary for their students; in other words, from the perspective of Graves (2000), Nation & Macalister (2009), teachers should analyze the current knowledge levels of learners as well as their need to learn English. In the same vein, measuring the capacity of high-frequency words is most important for teachers if they are to meet the needs of their students.

Nothing is better than building a solid foundation of vocabulary in the students' minds. This foundation of vocabulary is mainly composed of two major categories: high frequency words and low frequency words, and teachers should vary their style when dealing with those two types (Nation, 2001). Distinguishing between the two parts is essential because the learner will use the most frequent words in daily life, in the classroom, as well as outside the classroom. However, the low frequency words are limited and used only in certain subject areas, such as medical terms. Finally, the acquisition of a good vocabulary is the most important instrument that can be given to students in the education context as well as in their life. A reasonable level of acquired vocabulary is indicated in the level of reading achievements and abilities.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to analyze the strategies of teaching vocabulary and to gather information about various strategies used by English teachers in the Al Ain public school system. Ultimately, this research investigates strategies for teaching, consolidating newly learnt vocabulary and assessing vocabulary used by English Language teachers in the Al Ain schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through answering the following questions:

1. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to teach vocabulary?

2. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary?

3. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to assess students' vocabulary learning?

Problem Statement

Within Abu Dhabi Education Council's New School Model, the central philosophy is that vocabulary is a significant area in language development. However being a student and an English language teacher in the educational system in the United Arab Emirates, it was very noticable that learning and teaching vocabulary presented a real challenge. When the New School Model was officially implemented in 2006, teachers were given opportunities to explore new areas of teaching vocabulary. New strategies were encouraged and English langugage teachers were given the freedom to use various strategies and teaching resources to teach and assess vocabulary. Nevertheless, students still find it dificult to use the vocabulary they learnt in their daily

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conversation and writing with their teachers. In terms of my own experience students learning vocabulary were always not up to my expectaion. It occurs to the researcher that English language teachers are not innovative enough in teaching and assessing vocabulary.

Vocabulary teaching has been emphasized by many researchers such as Nation, Lewis, Carter and others. Almela and Sanchez (2007) emphasize learning vocabulary as a fundamental tool when learning a foreign langugae at primary level and consider vocabulary as a key unit in building other skills and knowledge. Along this line, Lewis (1993) states that "lexis is the core or heart of language but language teaching has always been the Cinderella" (p.89). However, Gairns and Redman (1986) point out that vocabulary has not received the recognition it deserves in the classroom. In recent years, most teachers tend to ignore vocabulary as one of the main tools for learning a language. They place more of an emphasis on teaching other language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. From my own experience as an English language teacher, teachers in the United Arab Emarites appear to teach vocabulary by the following means: presenting it with the aid of visuals, having students practice through repetition, and then asking students to memorize the wordlist. While these techniques may be necessary, teachers need to extend their current practices and provide more opportunities for students to explore and find the meaning of the vocabulary independently. After all research by its very nature enhances vocabulary and opens the student up to more experiences. On a personal note, I would like to mention that I was never exposed to any of the more effective strategies for teaching vocabulary during my studies. Consequently, acquiring teaching vocabulary strategies has become a challenge to me.

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Vocabulary is selected in the new English curriculum from a list prepared by the English Department at ADEC and shared with all English language teachers. Vocabulary is related to one theme for each grade level.

Significance of the Study

On the international stage English is developing into a global language, and this has dramatically influenced and developed teaching policies and strategies in elementary schools. Teaching English vocabulary earns its significance as it provides learners with the essential skills for learning reading, writing, listening and also speaking. Therefore, it is important to invistigate strategies that are being used to teach vocabulary in the field of English as a Second Language and it is vital to know the different aspects of these strategies and their efficacy. In addition to the above, English plays an essential role in most countries including the United Arab Emirates. It has a valuable role in the UAE because it is a second language for most expatriates and citizens and is used to communicate with others who do not speak the same language in most places around the country. This is particularly important in the UAE because of the sheer number of expatriates who reside here. Young Emirati people, including the children who are in elementary schools right now, must acquire a fluency in English language if they are to participate as active members in developing their country. In lieu of the economic growth of the UAE and its goals to become a knowledge-based country, and because English is the language of business throughout the world, it now becomes essential for Emirati people to be able to speak English proficiently in order for them to participate, not only in their local economy, but also in the world economy.

Young children in elementary schools have a clear mind that is open to acquiring a new language which is essential when building a robust background of vocabulary. Learning English as adults poses some difficulties rather than learning it in elementary school or pre-elementary school when children's minds are more receptive to that information (Herlambang, 2010). When English is taught comprehensively to older children, there are often varying levels in vocabulary as each child comes from a background that has had different levels of exposure to English language. Students who have been exposed to more vocabulary knowledge in nursery school or pre-school have a better chance to develop their reading ability. If students are not enriched with new vocabulary in the elementary years, a gap that can be attributed to the shortage in fluency and recognition of words and phrases will be created in their vocabulary knowledge and will broaden year by year. The greater the amount of material and texts to which students are exposed, the more they will achieve in terms of language acquisition. As they get older, however, children may avoid reading altogether and will not expose themselves to difficult materials (Kown, 2004) in order to achieve fluency in the English language because they will not be capable of acquiring new vocabulary. This language acquisition must be embedded at a very young age, so it is paramount that effective strategies for English vocabulary development, the very basis of language acquisition, are implemented at the elementary level.

As a language teacher within a huge educational reform, it is important to find out about the best strategies which teachers in the sane system have found effective or ineffective. In other words which strategies did they use to teach vocabulary, consilidate newly taught vocabulay and assess vocabulary. The result of this study will assist English

language teachers in the United Arab Emirates to review their own strategies and build an understanding on why some of these strategies are more effective or ineffective than other strtategies. Policy makers and curriculum developers will gain information about what best works for their own students within the New School Model. The best strategies should be supported by policy makers either by providing training for teachers or supplying teacher resources. The students on the other hand will be mostly influenced by the study. After all, the aim is to improve the students performance and enhancing methods associated with vocabulary teaching and assessment will be reflected in their results.

Definitions of terminology

English as a second language (ESL) is a term for the use of the English language by non-native speakers in an English-speaking environment where the country's mother tongue may be Arabic, Urdu, Australian, ... English as a Second Language refers to "specialized approaches to language teaching designed for those whose primary language is not English" (Nordquist, 2012), while English as a foreign language (EFL) is a term used to describe "the English language by non-native speakers in countries where English is generally not a local medium of communication" (Nordquist, 2012).

The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) is an educational organization which was created in 2005. The purpose of this organization is to evaluate the quality of education in three regions of the United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western area. It emphasized the idea that all these areas citizens have access to high-quality education which meets the highest international standards.

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The New School Model (NSM) is a new approach created by ADEC to learning that will overcome the existing challenges in the public schools. It is a "comprehensive foundation for learning that will enable desired student outcomes by developing major components of the educational experience: teaching quality, learning environment, school leadership, and parental involvement". This new model enables students to become independent thinkers and problem-solvers in the future.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is critical to reading and writing, therefore many people concentrate on finding new ways of teaching and assessing new words. Moreover, many educators had the initiative to investigate these issues in order to improve vocabulary teaching process. A substantial base of vocabulary is essential for effective student communication. It has been confirmed by Ching-yan (2008) that the reliance on lexis is important in the process of learning foreign languages. It has been argued that depending on textbooks is a notable problem in teaching English. Alternatively, English language teachers have found that mastering sufficient vocabulary can help students effectively and confidently in conversations and in using reading materials. However, teachers may review and subsequently repeat their own past experience when it comes to teaching vocabulary, ignoring the training that has been provided on how to best teach it (Ching-yan, 2008). Therefore, it is important to explore new techniques in order to illustrate ways in which vocabulary is being taught for students at the elementary level within the context of the United Arab Emirates and to examine teachers' perceptions in teaching vocabulary.

The review of the literature is generally intended for exploring most pertinent and significant studies; it consists of the examination of the concept of vocabulary, a discussion of the importance of teaching and learning vocabulary, and a discussion about

the strategies used for teaching vocabulary. Then, vocabulary assessment and its role in determining teaching strategies will be highlighted.

What is vocabulary!

When we talk about vocabulary, we are talking about words; every teacher knows what a "word" means. However, it is not easy to define words precisely in one formal way since each definition creates many exceptions. Here, the researcher shall try to define words without necessarily dealing with the exceptions or problems such definitions might create. The present research concentrates mainly on the basic prototypical properties of a word. However, vocabulary not only means the single words but also refer to the groups such as idioms and phrases (Pan and Xu, 2011). Orthographically speaking (talking about the written form), a word is 'any sequence of letters (and a limited number of other characteristics such as hyphen and apostrophe) bounded on either side by a space or punctuation mark' (Carter 1987: 4). Semantically speaking (speaking about meaning), a word is the minimum or smallest meaningful unit of a language.

Vocabulary can be defined in various ways. As found in the literacy dictionary, vocabulary is "(I) controlled, (II) core, (III) expressive listening, meaning, receptive, recognition or sight, (IV) simplified, (V) speaking or oral, and (VI) writing" (Lombardi, 2008). In order to understand the different aspects of vocabulary, vocabulary development has been defined by Harris and Hodge (1995, p.211) as: "(1) the growth of a person's stock of known words and meaning, (2) teaching-learning principles and practices that lead to such growth as comparing and classifying word meanings, (3) using

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context, and (4) analyzing word roots and affixes, etc.". Vocabulary constitutes language basic building blocks; thus, it carries the central message in communication. From words come larger structures like sentences and paragraphs which tap into the listeners' and the speakers' memory (Koah, 2000; Read, 2000). Learners make connections between "a lexicon of words and the concepts the words stand for and a set of rules that combine the words to convey relationships among concepts (a mental grammar)" (Koah 2000, p.76). Through these words and connections of words, language learners may use and manage the ideas that come to their minds.

Pan and Xu (2011) categorized the vocabulary knowledge into internal and external knowledge with both categories embracing "the conceptual meaning of vocabulary, grammar, connotations, pragmatic rules and its socio-cultural message." From another point of view, Pan and Xu (2011) suggest that vocabulary has three important parts that should be provided in a way that effectively teaches vocabulary. The first part is pronunciation and spelling. Teachers are responsible for associating these two concepts in favor of students as they present an essential part in teaching and learning vocabulary. Students should be familiar with what a word looks like and what a word sounds like.

The second part is grammar. When students are provided with new vocabulary, the English language teachers should teach them the grammar essential for using the new vocabulary. The significance of linking the grammar with the new vocabulary is that in certain grammatical contexts words may have unpredictable changes or may be difficult to use in sentences. For example, when teaching the different tenses for a verb, one must consider whether it is regular or irregular. In the case of nouns, teachers should clearly

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teach plurals, suffixes, parts of speech, word formation, and how words can be broken down in such a way as to change their form. For instance, teachers should familiarize students with the useful components of words, such as knowing how prefixes and suffixes can alter meaning. The meaning of sub-, un-, and –able, will change the meaning of words such as affordable or unpleasant.

It is informed that one of the most complicated elements of English is vocabulary, however, it is essential to enhance all language skills. Also, when the vocabulary is limited many people find it difficult to express themselves. Therefore, the following section will handle the importance of teaching vocabulary especially for second language learners.

The importance of teaching and learning vocabulary

There is no doubt that vocabulary is an essential element for successful communication in our classrooms. Actually, the lack of vocabulary may result in a complete failure to convey the message. Davidson, Atkinson, and Spring (2011, 33) declared that "A common maxim states, without grammar students cannot say very much, but without vocabulary they cannot say anything at all". There has been a revival of interest in vocabulary teaching since the late 1970s. Articles such as those by Judd, (1978), Twadell, (1973), Lord, (1974) and Richards, (1976) which are mentioned in Davidson et al (2011) are some examples that show interest in vocabulary teaching and its development in the 1970s. A sound vocabulary base is of great importance to foreign or second language learners. A learner of a second or a foreign language needs to build

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up a repertoire of the most frequent words (basic or core vocabulary) in the target language in order to have a firm basis of the words likely to be encountered.

It must be stated in this connection that it is easier to specify the structures to be learned than the number, type or range of vocabulary items that may be required, as confirmed by Carter (1987: 145). Yet a syllabus could be based on the most frequent words in the language being taught. An example is Collins' three level lexical syllabuses entitled 'Cobuild English Course'. Collins was involved with the English Language Research Department in Birmingham University in a research project in lexical development. The first part of the project involved the computer storage of a 7.3 million-word corpus of spoken and written English. The following are some of the findings:

1. The 700 most frequent words of English account for around 70% of all English texts.

2. The most frequent 1,500 words account for around 76% of texts.

3. The most frequent 2,500 words account for 80% of texts.

In Collins' three level course, level 1 aims to cover the most frequent 700 words together with their common patterns and uses. Level 2 aims to recycle these words and goes on to cover the next 800 to bring learners up to the 1,500 word level. Level 3 aims to recycle those 1,500 and adds a further 1,000.

Computerization has made frequency counting much easier. This has led to the evolution of the lexical syllabus that claims to focus on the commonest words and their commonest patterns in their most natural environment.

Skehan (1996: 21) sheds light on the new emphasis on lexis:

> *Although much of language teaching has operated under the assumption that language is essentially structural, with vocabulary elements slotting in to fill structural patterns, many linguists and psycholinguistics have argued that native language speech processing is very frequently lexical in nature.*

It has been reported by Davidson et al (2011) that effective reading by students learning a second language comes by having knowledge of a minimum of 3,000 word families. This adds weight to the argument for having a dedicated vocabulary program at the primary stage.

It has been found in previous literature that there is an evident relationship between the degree of vocabulary knowledge and reading assimilation as well as the entire academic success of a student (Nelson, 2008; Stahl and Nagy 2006). Students not only need considerable number of words in their word-base, they also need to possess the ability to use different strategies to construct the meanings of new words when they encounter them. It does not make any sense to simply teach the student the meaning of new vocabulary without giving them some direction as to how to use these bases of words. Reading, for example, is a complex issue that needs skill and knowledge. The shortage of a vocabulary reserve has been considered a problem, especially for young students who often find problems in understanding what they have read as their mind lacks an adequate vocabulary or efficient word learning strategies to help them construct meaning. Although there is significant evidence showing the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension, there is little evidence of vocabulary instruction amongst elementary grade levels (Neuman and Dwyer, 2009). Vocabulary development has not been considered widely in literature (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2005). As stated by Stahl and Nagy (2006), while reading successfully enriches the vocabulary of children, it

might not be helpful for very young students or students who find difficulties in reading in the first place.

Therefore, an unsuccessful reading experience can lead the students to feel frustrated and they may lose motivation to read, hence losing the chance to be exposed to and learn many new words (Nelson, 2008). This issue is known as the "Matthew Effect" (Stanovich, 1986), "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." Applying this quote in the area of vocabulary development, the good reader is one who broadens his/her vocabularies, while the poor are those who read less and learn fewer words. Thus, it is important for students to develop their vocabulary base and reading skills since there is a strong association between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Generally, vocabulary teaching strategies do not have an agreed upon definition by scholars in spite of the great attention that has been paid to teaching strategies over three decades. Teaching strategies are defined by Rubin (1975: 43) as "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge". Vocabulary learning strategies vary; they are complex and contain long steps. They require specific knowledge and rigorous training. There are basically five essential steps that determine vocabulary teaching strategies: first, possessing effective sources of vocabulary in order to acquire new words; second, identifying the different forms of the new words; third, defining the meaning of the words; fourth, building a strong memory according to these new words; and finally, using these words in different contexts (Pan and Xu, 2011). It is apparent

that teaching strategies for vocabulary enrich the process of vocabulary learning as noted by Nation (2001) and Tran (2011).

Generally, English teachers neglect to teach vocabulary in a manner that is explicit and direct for their students. Frequently, they provide students with the needed words, but fail to teach them how to access that vocabulary and make the words themselves. Therefore, explicit and direct teaching strategy is essential for vocabulary acquisition.

Direct Vocabulary Teaching vs. Indirect Vocabulary Teaching

Nation (2001), state that vocabulary teaching is divided into direct and indirect approaches. In a direct approach of teaching, attention is given to vocabulary explicitly. This includes vocabulary exercises, studying vocabulary in context and rote learning. This was the situation before ADEC started their education reform; teachers were asked to teach vocabulary directly. The curriculum was designed with a particular focus on vocabulary as each unit usually included a minimum of one or two vocabulary exercises.

Indirect approaches, on the other hand, encompass communicative activities such as listening to stories and songs, watching films and television, role-playing and group work, which is the current case now. Richards and Rodgers (1996) stated that many teachers are influenced by the communicative approach. It is advocated that vocabulary should be learnt in context. Learning vocabulary through extensive reading increases lexical knowledge as learners are exposed to multiple meanings of the same word (Curriculum Development Council, 2005). For this reason, there has been a shift from traditional learning strategies to more current integrative ones that emphasize learning

within a context and use multiple approaches that address different ways in which students acquire a language.

Reading is an example of an indirect vocabulary teaching technique because teachers do not deliberately draw learners' attention to all the vocabulary in the text. Thus, when a new word is encountered, its meaning is inferred from the context by learners, rather than always being explicitly explained by teachers. In fact, inferring word meanings encourages learners to activate their prior learning and enables them to consolidate the words that have been learnt already. Therefore, possessing a good foundation in English allows them to deal with new words more effectively; hence, indirect vocabulary teaching can be very beneficial. Besides the above information, incidental vocabulary teaching can also let students notice the grammatical behavior of words in contexts. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) demonstrate that "knowing a word involves understanding its translation as well as its application communicatively in the context." Ultimately, indirect vocabulary teaching is essential for the enhancement of learners' vocabulary.

However, because it requires mastering a large vocabulary bank for its success, indirect teaching strategies such as reading, writing or presenting may not suit all students. Therefore, especially for the lower-intermediate students, teachers still need to highlight the words that students have to learn and they need to teach them directly. Otherwise, these learners may not be aware of which vocabulary should be learnt first and they may have difficulty in handling a large number of words at one time. According to Nation (2001, p. 91), especially in the early stages of learning, paying attention to words increases the chance that learners will notice them on later occasions. Also, he

claims that it is worth spending time on a word if the objective of the lesson is vocabulary

learning and if the word is a high-frequency word, a useful topic word or technical word,

or contains useful word parts. In addition, if the word provides a chance to develop

vocabulary strategies, it is also worth teaching it directly (Nation, 2001, p.93).

Gairns & Redman (1986) explain some traditional ways of presenting new

vocabulary items through visual techniques, verbal techniques and translation as well as

student-centered approaches which involves asking others, using a dictionary and

contextual guesswork. Taylor (1990) states that presenting new items can be carried out

through written stimulus, that is, the graphological representation of the word; non-verbal

stimulus like picture and realia; as well as the oral/aural stimulus. She also suggests that a

combination of stimuli is beneficial for giving learners a wider knowledge of an item.

Nation (2001) suggests that teachers can demonstrate definitions by performing

actions, showing objects, pictures or diagrams, and also by defining in the first language

or in the second language or by providing language context clues. He also mentions that

teachers can provide rich instruction through providing dictionary entries. Teachers can

also practice pronunciation and do dictation with learners. All of these are classified as

direct vocabulary teaching strategies.

Moreover, Nation (2001, p. 97) states that "direct vocabulary teaching is a way of

bridging the gap between second language learners' current proficiency level and the

proficiency level needed to learn from an un-simplified input." Therefore, it is a way to

speed up the learning process. It is suggested that such activities should be designed for

both direct and indirect teaching of vocabulary according to students' proficiency

(Schmitt, 2000). For elementary learners, vocabulary should be taught directly in order to build up the most frequently occurring words. These words are necessary for language use and thus it is better to teach them directly (Nation, 1995). When learners are beyond the elementary level, words can be taught incidentally by providing different contexts where students can meet a word. In this way, students will remember words more effectively. In fact, both teaching methods complement and support each other.

Rieder (2010) stated that "there is some confusion in research on language learning with regard to the notions of implicit vs. incidental learning." This is again highlighted in his research about learning to learn. Rieder's research findings came to contradict Ellis' model, which sees that the idea of implicit and incidental learning mismatches. "The data points to the need for modifications and differentiations on three levels: With regard to form-learning, explicit learning mechanisms seem to have facilitating effects, which would imply an interaction of implicit and explicit learning processes rather than the proposed separation." (Rieder, 2010)

Teachers always try different ways and methods to teach vocabulary, but many consider teaching vocabulary in context as the very best way to learn. When students see new words or expression in context, students remember the words better and see how the words are used. The following section will explain and reveal this important strategy.

Teaching Vocabulary in Context

According to Pan and Xu (2011), context means a phrase or a statement, or words that are joined before and after a particular word, that help us make meaning. As mentioned by Stevick (1973), in order to make a notable development in the criteria of

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vocabulary, words must be experienced in different contexts, such as with action, which will help to make deeper cognitive processing. Furthermore, teaching vocabulary in context enhances reading and communication abilities for students. This approach is highly useful in the learning process. For example, the word "mean" has different meanings in different contexts as follows: (1) Only a man of means could afford to buy such a big house (here it means money, income or wealth); (2) Television is an effective means of communication (a way of achieving something); (3) She is by no means an inexperienced teacher (not at all); (4) He was too mean to pay for the work (not generous); (5) He has the look of man who means business (be serious in one's intentions); (6) I do not mean any harm to you (have no intention of hurting).

According to this example, the word "mean" has been used in different contexts; consequently, students gradually develop their understanding of the structural framework in the different contexts of the word. There are three accepted advantages for memorizing words in context rather than memorizing them in isolation. Firstly, teaching vocabulary in context spurs students on to use their anticipating and deducing ability, which is essential for their learning in that it improves the students' self-reliance. Secondly, this strategy highlights the fact that words are essential for the purpose of effective communication. Finally, it covers the different ways and forms in which words can be used.

Certainly, teachers who are aware of learning theories of teaching and learning practices are more professional than teachers who lack this knowledge. Therefore, the following section explains this theory and the importance of its application in details.

Teaching Vocabulary with Semantic Field Theory

Semantic field theory implies that words cannot exist in isolation; they can be arranged or organized into semantic fields. For example, teaching vocabulary that is related to the vegetable lexis would include words like okra, tomato, cucumber, carrots, peas, beet, and onion. Pan and Xu (2011) and Jalongo and Sobolak (2010) add that children in certain cases turn the new word into words that they already use, such as, "vanilla" and "manila"; also, they may come up with new words that makes sense for them rather than the one which they have been taught, for example, "pasture" as "grassture". In terms of the theory of semantic field, the association between certain words and other words in the same semantic field can decide the meaning of a word; for instance, of relationships hyponymy, part/whole relationships, synonymy and antonym. According to these relationships, teachers can be encouraged to regularly broaden their vocabulary-base and strengthen the learning of new words.

Synonyms are used to explain the same concepts using different words. Therefore, it can be declared that vocabulary teaching is mainly concerned with how words can be embedded in the mind of the learner, in terms of using semantic relations. In this way, the mind will be more adept at retrieving words from the mental dictionary. It has been argued by Bright and McGregor (1970) that semantic techniques have proven to be useful when teaching vocabulary; for example, when studying words associated with vehicles, the teacher can use semantic techniques to expose students to words like buses, lorries, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, vans, as many other different types of vehicles. Also, students can understand words like saloons, sports cars, coupes, and taxis being certain types of cars. While going through the different brands such as Mercedes, Ford,

Volkswagen, Peugeot, the teacher can then introduce some detailed words like Mercedes Benz 190D Saloon, Ford Anglia Saloon, etc.

There are many ways to improve vocabulary. Actually, word formation is one of the keys to success for students and an excellent way to expand their vocabulary.

Expanding Vocabulary by Word Formation

The effective use of words in the network of association might be a result of the word formation. Therefore, it is advisable to intensively shed the light on suffixes, common roots, and prefixes. In the word "scribble", for example, the common root is "scribe". The teacher should first provide students with the meaning of the root, "to write". The derivatives of scribe would be given to the students: "describe, prescribe, inscribe, proscribe and subscribe". Thus, students are familiarized with the formation of the particular word and assimilate the stimulus of English word formation. Chin-yan (2008) has confirmed what has been found by Pan and Xu (2011) that when teachers correctly provide learners with the ways of word formation, students can guess the word pronunciation and meaning when they encounter a new word. Presenting an explanation of word formation for students has been considered as a helpful strategy for teaching vocabulary. Scholars have argued that making in depth conversation with students using the word formation techniques is very effective and always helps student become more equipped with new words and strengthens the base of their words (Beck et al, 2002).

Creating Mental Linkages by Association

In order to effectively teach vocabulary, it might be helpful to know how the human memory works. It has been declared by Grain (1988) that humans' learning must be passed and saved in the short-term memory and then moved to long-term memory in order to be permanently implanted in the mind. However, in order to maintain the new information, new words in the short-term memory will only be helpful and useful if there are no more than seven pieces of new information. Hence, it is advisable to not exceed this amount in each session. On the contrary, the long-term memory can carry much more information with no limits. Word frequency is another element that can help maintain words in the memory and also aid retrieval.

Oxford (1990) identifies some strategies to enhance mental linkage such as grouping, associating, putting new words into different contexts, using interactive pictures as well as sounds, describing from the imagination, using word trees and using keywords. When English teachers are teaching vocabulary, it is good to combine some of these methods in order to broaden students' vocabulary. An effective example that reflects the creation of activities in teaching vocabulary is using the white board to write a word tree, then asking students to participate by contributing some words that connect to the initial word on the board. The words gathered from the students can be put into a meaningful context to learn new vocabulary; however, the focus would be on the meaning of isolated items. Also, teachers should be encouraged and guided to use and create new methods to mentally link vocabulary by association.

On the one hand, Chin-yan (2008) strongly advises English teachers to develop students' ability to make associations between words or texts. For example, students should be supported with eliciting activities using brainstorming in order to sort out the ideas through the mind map. Oxford (1990) added that the association can exist by linking the written word with its sound and pronunciation; by repeating and miming the word, the learners are interacting with the environment. Therefore, a visual memory will be created in students' minds and they will find it easier to retrieve the word when speaking or writing by linking the sounds and their forms with the meaning.

Teaching Cultural Connotations and Cultural Differences

Culture could be defined as "consist(ing) of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a natural phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people's behaviors or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things, "it is the form of things that people have in mind, as a model of perceiving relating and interpreting them" (Goodenough, 1997:675). Therefore, culture is the knowledge that links people and contains the shared concepts for certain nations. The language cannot be separated because culture links the people, and people in certain nations share the same language. It has been argued that studying different cultures can motivate students or learners to learn a language and learn more about their behaviors. Teachers are responsible for linking English language to the cultural context in order to make meaning of the vocabulary for the students. The commonly used strategy for teaching cultural connotations and cultural differences according to Rivers (1981) is exposition and explanation. This method depends on the way in which the teacher will present verbally or in written form the cultural perspective about a certain nation. Within

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this explanation, a group of information will be introduced in terms of, for example, geography, history, special events and famous characters.

Basically, English vocabulary has been affected throughout history by other languages and cultures. As Hossain (2008) confirmed, that importance of linking both the experience with the culture and the environment will make the learning process more interesting for students. Since vocabulary presents the foundation of language, it expresses cultural information and also reflects cultures of different societies. Preferably, student should be motivated to build a good informational background about western countries and their societies. For example, according to the Chinese culture the symbol of the dragon reflects power and strength; on the other hand, in other cultures, the dragon represents a fierce, ugly monster. Therefore, different aspects of cultural communities in the context of teaching vocabulary should be provided to students, consequently increasing the interest of students in the English language.

One of the best ways to learn new words is to keep a good dictionary close to your students and in the classroom. Sometimes, teachers want students to know how words are used and formed. The significance of using dictionaries will be explained in the following section.

The Use of Dictionaries

Pan and Xu (2011) have identified dictionary usage as an important element in vocabulary acquisition and is an essential resource that students should use to enrich their vocabulary base. Dictionaries are an additional resource for students that can be very useful in supplying them with grammatical information, word formation, pronunciation,

spelling, metaphorical and idiomatic information and usage, giving students a whole profile of words they are learning or even additional words to what is being used in class. Dictionaries can be a useful strategy in teaching vocabulary. Frequent exposure to words accompanied by a bilingual dictionary has the potential to promote student learning, and this is corroborated by a study done in Japan that found bilingual dictionaries contribute notably to vocabulary learning.

However, Suberviola and Mendez (2002) disagree, saying that dictionaries are unreliable in improving reading comprehension, as many definitions are vague to understand for students. For example, "a definition from a well-written school dictionary (American Heritage school dictionary: 1977) for the word mirror: any surface that is capable of reflecting enough light without scattering it so that it shows an image of any object placed in front of it" (Nagy, 1988). Although this definition is correct and accurate, it is inaccessible to new language learners and is very difficult to understand and determine the meaning even though it is a relatively simple word. Therefore, the type of dictionary used is of great importance; it should provide meanings in accessible, simplistic forms so as to be fully understood by readers. Additionally, the teacher bears responsibility in showing and presenting meaning from dictionaries in a simple way to ensure that the student is fully aware of the meaning of the definition.

Actually, there are some words that teachers consider passive because students understand but do not utilize. Therefore, educators are aware of building students' both active and passive vocabulary. So, it is the teachers' role to verify teaching strategies.

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Teaching Active and Passive Vocabulary

Both active and passive vocabulary knowledge should also be provided for learners. Passive vocabulary means students can listen and understand. Hearing the vocabulary prompts them to recall its meaning. Active vocabulary, on the other hand, is vocabulary that you can recall and use when the situation requires it. You are choosing to use the word and actively retrieving it from memory. Teaching passive vocabulary earns its importance in terms of comprehension. The listener needs to possess passive vocabulary to comprehend the speaker's words. Similarly, achieving high performance in teaching activities requires teaching active vocabulary. This will make students or learners generate sentences from their minds. The active vocabulary is easy for students to recognize and manipulate in order to express their own ideas.

Teachers in elementary schools should provide sets of vocabulary that students can learn (Akarsu, 2009). Most of the words that should be constantly practiced at this level are considered to be active vocabulary. It is recommended by Laufer (1998) that active vocabulary must be taught to children at a very young age. On the contrary, the passive vocabulary can be integrated into the students' vocabulary knowledge after these first levels. It is widely accepted that distinguishing between passive and active vocabulary is clear in lexical knowledge forms. However, for second language learners, the relationship between both passive and active vocabulary is still unclear. It has been argued that passive vocabulary is larger than active; however, no signs show how decisively bigger passive vocabulary is. In the same vein, no signs show the growth in the passive vocabulary is preceding the growth in active vocabulary. In his study in the context of comparing between the acquired active and passive vocabulary, Laufer (1998)

compared two groups of learners on passive-active vocabulary knowledge. He found that learners who obtained a further year of vocabulary instruction had a larger passive vocabulary. The percentage of the passive to the active vocabulary was lower for the older group. This refers to the existence of a gap between the two kinds of vocabularies. Although acquiring passive vocabulary is important in the early stages of learning a language, if students don't work on active vocabulary, they may end up being able to read and listen to a language quite well, but they will speak or write very little of it. That is why it is so important for teachers to work on both active and passive vocabulary acquisition, so that students are not just learning vocabulary, but they are also actively engaged in using it verbally and in written form so they can access it at will.

Knowledge of words plays a key role in reading comprehension and learning process in general. Therefore, tracking their vocabulary growth is essential through different ways of assessment. It is really critical for identifying students at risk Therefore, the following section explains the importance of this issue.

Vocabulary Assessment

Vocabulary testing reflects the assimilation of the students and is a relatively simple activity. The authors Stahl and Bravo (2010) emphasize using classroom-friendly vocabulary assessment which can measure vocabulary development and used to inform instruction as well. In fact, they stated that assessment measures vocabulary breadth or vocabulary depth. They define vocabulary breadth as "the quantity of words for which students may have some level of knowledge", where as vocabulary depth refers to "how much students know about a word". Regarding this issue, the authors Kearns and

Biemiller (2011) acknowledge that assessing vocabulary knowledge remains a challenge in elementary grades. There is no doubt that it is a serious challenge for teachers to assess children's general vocabulary and vocabulary which have been taught in the classroom.

Through the assessment process, numbers of words will be selected to put in a certain format of testing; for example, the chosen words can be assessed by gap filling, matching, multiple choice, or effective modes of translation. Stahl and Bravo (2010) stress the use of multiple-choice task, a fill in the blank task and matching task as vocabulary assessment tools. The effective use of those mentioned formats can reliably measure and assess the competencies of the students (Coombe, 2011). As Nelson (2008) suggest assessing vocabulary can be used through pictures, linking activities, or verbal assessment. He also found that student who been given rich instructions earn better performance than those who had been given only instructions. Likewise, Read (2007) acknowledge the importance of using various assessment tools when assessing vocabulary especially with second language learners to insure the assessment validity and reliability.

Notable research in the area of vocabulary has proven that students, or learners in general, use less words than what they actually recognize. Previous studies have tested the most frequently used vocabulary versus specialized vocabulary, for example, that found in medicine or engineering, and research has consistently shown that focusing on high frequency words is most significant, something that teachers and learners should bear in mind (Nation, 2001, Stahl and Bravo,2010). Interestingly, Nation (2001) declare that it is highly functional for students to focus on assessing the 2,000 most frequent

words of English, especially those who want to be involved in academic study. Therefore, assessing high frequency vocabulary effectively is most useful and effective for learners.

Coombe (2011) suggests that assessing students can be discretely embedded with other skill activities. Discrete assessments are mainly concerned with the independent construct of the word. In order to assess vocabulary knowledge there are familiar formats (multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and matching). According to MCQs, questions are presented basically in stem and response options; however, there are many structures for this form of assessing vocabulary. The basic model of the MCQs contains the key or correct answer and the distracters or incorrect responses. The student will be asked to choose the correct answer. Through the context of the questions and the provided clues, student can derive the answer. Coombe, Folse, and Hubley (2007) have listed the advantages and the drawbacks of the MCQs, as a well-designed form to discretely assess vocabulary. They conveyed four main advantages for the MCQs form. First, it is consistent as the well-written questions include only one proper answer. Second, MCQs are an easy and quick way for both teachers and students to assess and be assessed. Third, these questions create an adaptability sphere for students to be familiar with the different vocabularies, from the beginner to the advanced level. Finally, this format is well-known by most students in the world. However, MCQs are not typically considered to be ideal for the testing of productive language skills or language as communication.

Matching assessment questions are generally the type of discrete vocabulary assessment that has two columns and students are asked to make a matching process between the suitable words. This type is advantageous over the MCQs as there are more incorrect answers presented from which to choose. Another type of vocabulary

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assessment is the embedded assessment, which is concerned with assessing students' knowledge of vocabulary through a written essay, reading comprehension or speaking.

A deep review of the abovementioned research confirms the significance of teaching vocabulary, its highly positive impact on reading comprehension, and its effective development of the communication of learners. The above review illustrates the significant role of various strategies in enhancing levels of assimilation, vocabulary growth and success. Although there are substantial references to investigate the different strategies that are used to teach English as a second language in the literature, only few studies have investigated teachers' perceptions of strategies used to teach English vocabulary in elementary school as a second language, and none have been conducted in the United Arab Emirates.

Stressing the same point of the simplicity of assessing vocabulary, Read (2007) suggest a simple form of testing vocabulary which is Yes/No format. It includes a list of words which requires students to indicate if they know the word or not. To accomplish this, several important issues need to be taken into account and decisions need to be made about how best to assess vocabulary in the classroom. To sum up, it has been proved as a beneficial informative mean of assessing the students' vocabulary knowledge particularly for placement and diagnostic reasons.

In order to develop vocabulary teaching and assessment, teachers' perception is highly regarded.

Teachers' perception toward vocabulary teaching

Teachers' interest and motivation in verifying vocabulary teaching and assessment strategies is one of most important facts that affect students' motivation, and therefore their learning and performance in vocabulary. The ultimate aim of most researchers in the area of vocabulary teaching strategies is to identify, describe, or explain the most effective strategies in teaching and assessing vocabulary. Regarding this issue, Tran (2011) argues that learning strategies and individual differences may be two elements that are likely or directly affect language learning outcome specifically vocabulary acquisition.

Results from research have become a prime source of information. Regarding teachers' perception toward vocabulary teaching, Lombardi (2008) argues that teachers find teaching vocabulary both directly and indirectly should be implemented in second language classrooms; repetition and multiple exposure to vocabulary items are important, learning in rich context is valuable for vocabulary learning , vocabulary tasks should be restructured when necessary, vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks, how vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on instruction, and dependence on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning. For this reason Lombardi (2008) conducted a study to examine teachers' perception toward vocabulary teaching strategies. The participants of the study to examine the perception were eight of nine effective classroom teachers. The interview of the group revealed that teachers find verifying vocabulary activities is essential. Also, utilizing reading materials in vocabulary teaching is highly regarded. In addition, participants added that utilizing writing tasks is useful when consolidating vocabulary.

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Also, teachers finds communicating with students in a daily basis is essential in consolidating vocabulary. Rhyme and availability of books are two essential ways of teaching vocabulary. Generally, all participants agree on verifying strategies in teaching, consolidating, and assessing vocabulary because using traditional or only one way in teaching vocabulary is a failure in second language classrooms.

In the same line, Nelson (2008) examined teachers' perceptions of their teaching the meanings of vocabulary words and what are their explanations for their teaching methods. 15 teachers were selected for interviews. The participants were selected purposefully because they had participated in vocabulary teaching project for Years 2, 3, and 4. Teachers reported that it is essential to concentrate on vocabulary instruction and find creative ways and time to teach new words. Also, they mentioned that having enough time for vocabulary teaching is essential. In addition, participants mentioned that direct vocabulary instruction is the secret behind students' acquisition. They agreed that the most frequently used approach for teaching words was through the use of definitions. Furthermore, they find combining methods of instruction is an effective way in teaching new words. Not only definitions but also context clues, word play, synonyms and antonyms should be utilized in teaching vocabulary (Nelson, 2008).

In order to examine the most effective and used strategies in vocabulary teaching in EFL context, Tran (2011) conducted a study on 49 Vietnamese EFL teachers. The findings of Tran's study revealed that the participants reported using or having used a large number of vocabulary learning strategies, among which guessing unknown words from context, monolingual dictionary use, and learning new words in an English sentences were reported as being used or having been used by the most number of

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participants. All participants believed that vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategies, and dictionaries play extremely important roles in language learning. Generally, participants showed a strong consensus on three major points. First, they perceived that reading is a powerful method to increase vocabulary. Second, they considered guessing new words from context to be an excellent strategy for vocabulary acquisition. Third, they believed that technology can greatly help students to learn vocabulary. They reported that verifying using vocabulary teaching techniques is important.

To conclude, vocabulary is clearly a vital part of English language learning and teaching. Actually, vocabulary teaching and assessment is something which must be at the forefront of English teachers' minds. There are many methods, strategies and approaches to think about when teaching vocabulary. The literature review section handled most of relevant issues. Previous research has shown different views and different methods in teaching, consolidating and assessing vocabulary. Empirical research stating the various strategies show variation in the choice of types of utilized strategies by second language teachers. Some prefer to choose certain strategies rather than the others. However, survey research studies aimed at finding out the different types of strategies used by English language teachers ending up in revealing the different types of strategies for teaching and assessing students' vocabulary acquisition. Learning vocabulary is a complex process and many factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding what vocabulary to teach and how. Teachers should be qualified in verifying the strategies of teaching and assessing vocabulary. Verifying strategies is not only for understanding the word itself but also for comprehending and understanding what they read.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter seeks to address the research methodology used in the research project. It tackles the main framework behind this mixed method approach which includes quantitative and qualitative methods of research to explore the vocabulary teaching strategies presently used by elementary English teachers in Al Ain city, in the UAE.

Research Design

The research employs a mixed method approach, which involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach depends mainly on numerical data collection and analysis obtained from a large number of participants by a questionnaire, whereas qualitative research involves the use of words in collection and analysis of data obtained through different tools such as interviews (Gay and Airasian, 2003). Thus, the research conducted here combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the issue from various perspectives and ensure validity of the study. There were two instruments used the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

Setting

This study was conducted to investigate vocabulary teaching strategies used by English teachers in Al Ain public schools in the United Arab Emirates. There were 120 elementary girls' and boys' schools based on Al Ain Education Zone statistics in the

academic year 2011-2012. Students in the UAE are living in an environment where English is used as a foreign language and there is often very little exposure to English after they leave the classroom setting. English is simply viewed as a subject that is only learnt and used in class. The vocabulary learning strategies are included in the scheme of work.

ADEC has introduced the New School Model in which English native speakers where assigned to teach English language, Mathematics and Science. Mathematics and science are also taught using English language median. When the study took place, grades 1, 2 and 3 were taught by English native speakers, while grade 4 and 5 were taught by Arabic native speakers. Both parties use different vocabulary teaching strategies which they think are effective in language teaching. Some Arab teachers often speak of direct and explicit vocabulary teaching as an effective method while others prefer indirect and implicit methods. Traditionally, students mainly learn unfamiliar vocabulary items through texts, teachers often use direct vocabulary teaching strategies to explain new and unfamiliar words, and vocabulary knowledge is mainly assessed by writing dictations, quizzes and exams. Classroom environments have changed tremendously in the last few years. One can easily notice vocabulary displays in all elementary classrooms as it is a requirement of the New School Model. Whether used effectively or not is still under investigation.

Research Instruments

The Pilot Interview

The pilot interview was conducted early in the research process. It consisted of a set of questions that were given to seven female English teachers from seven different elementary girls' and boys' schools. The English teachers were randomly selected based only on the criteria that they were all English teachers at elementary schools. The underlying purpose was to gather a broad spectrum of the vocabulary teaching strategies being used by the group. The information and data gathered as a result of this pilot interview was used to design and develop the questionnaire, which formed the next stage of the research study. The data collected helped in indentifying gaps and common themes to add important points and strategies for teaching vocabulary, strategies for consolidating newly taught vocabulary and vocabulary assessment tools.

The Questionnaire

Based on the data collected from the pilot interview and reviewing the relevant literature, the researcher wrote the statements of the draft questionnaire. After constructing the questionnaire, the draft questionnaire was shared with a panel of university professors as well as colleagues. The draft questionnaire was modified and adjusted based on the suggestions and comments of the university professors to have a final questionnaire which was ready to be implemented.

The questionnaire designed for this study consisted of 52 statements that were divided into 3 sections, which will be addressed in more details in the following

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paragraphs (see appendix 1). These statements were related directly to the research questions:

1. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to teach vocabulary?

2. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary?

3. What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to assess students' vocabulary learning?

The questionnaire starts with a series of questions about personal information of the respondents. For example, English teachers were asked about their first language, if they are a native English speaker or not; also, they were asked about their gender, qualifications, experience, and the school where they teach (girls or boys). The next part of the questionnaire includes statements, which were deliberately written in a single, first person "I" positive form in order to ensure a quick personal response; for example, "I use mother tongue translation to explain unfamiliar words to students" and "I ask students to look up unfamiliar words in Arabic-English dictionary". The statements were in English as the group of participants was all teachers of English. The researcher has developed a questionnaire to collect the required data. The questionnaire's design consists of a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1-5). The respondents have to choose between five descriptors: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never.

The second part of the questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A dealt with the strategies that English language teachers use for teaching vocabulary in Al Ain public schools. In this section, there were 27 statements, which were related to the first research question. Throughout this section teachers were given the freedom to

determine from the five-point Likert scale the degree of using such strategies. Teachers were asked to identify the following: the degree of reliance on dictionaries; looking up unfamiliar words; linking words to pictures; using guessing games; focusing on spelling and pronunciation; teaching vocabulary in context; using word lists; use synonyms and antonyms; applying repetition strategy; using interactive games; using facial expressions and gestures; extensive reading; watching movies and listening to songs; role-playing; presentation or group discussion; writing stories or articles.

Section B contained 13 statements, which were related to the consolidation strategies for the new learned vocabulary. The questionnaire offered the English teachers an easy way to state the strategies that they have been using in the classroom. These strategies are repeating new vocabularies through pronunciation and spelling; regularly making students tell teachers word meaning; using word lists to make students remember words; using vocabulary quizzes; using vocabulary exercises in worksheets; using new words in conversations; using drawing methods and pictures to identify vocabulary; exploring the synonyms for new words; using different contexts for one word; using reading tasks with new vocabulary; using writing tasks with new words; and using listening tasks to identify new words.

Section C included 12 statements related to vocabulary assessment strategies. It included statements about the frequently used assessment strategies for vocabulary; for example: frequency of using multiple-choice question tests; short answer written questions done in class; listening to students reading vocabulary aloud and oral questioning; description of new words; using cloze-question procedures; using open book quizzes and open dictionary quizzes.

The Interview

The second instrument used for collecting data in this research study is the interview (see appendix 2). Interviewing is an appropriate method of investigation into the attitudes, thoughts and perspectives of participants. Cohen el al (2008) recommend conducting interviews as a major instrument for data collection, which allows the researcher to test hypotheses and/or support other data collection instruments. In this study the interview allowed the researcher to follow up data from the questionnaire in more detail and to seek more information regarding teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching strategies. It is also used as a validating instrument for the questionnaire results. If opinions diverge wildly between the two instruments, then the validity of the study would have to be called into question. The researcher decided to carry out a semi-structured interview because it would focus on achieving the purpose of the research instead of getting too much unwanted data (McDonough et al, 1997).

The participants interviewed were seven female English teachers who teach English in elementary schools. The interviewees were different from the pilot interview participants. In this study the English teachers responded to open-ended questions regarding how they viewed vocabulary performance in their classrooms. Seven interviews were conducted in the context of identifying the vocabulary teaching strategies used in The United Arab Emirates' education environment. The interview questions were very similar to the statements included in the teacher's questionnaire but in open question format aiming for deeper understanding of the teaching strategies used by English teachers. All the interview questions were strongly tied to the main research questions and questionnaire statements. The interview tries to measure the importance of

vocabulary instruction in teaching from the teacher's perceptions. Also, the interview indicates the importance of teaching vocabulary by measuring the time that shall be devoted for teaching vocabulary. Moreover, it explores the strategies used in the classrooms and prioritizes these strategies. Interviewees were asked to specify ways of clarifying new words to students as well as the vocabulary they choose to explain and assessment strategies.

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

The process of designing the questionnaire included seeking feedback from UAE university professors, English ADEC supervisors, and heads of faculty staff. The draft questionnaire statements were shared with a panel of university professors and English ADEC heads of faculty. The questionnaire was adjusted and modified according to the feedback received to determine face-validity of the tool.

It is important to implement a reliability test on the used instruments, as Cohen et al. (2007) indicated that reliability signifies to the consistency of a measure of a phenomenon or a concept. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most common measure of internal consistency of the variables. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability (0.832) which indicates a high level of reliability.

Ethical Issues

Ethics issues have been taken into consideration in this research; for example, study objectives were established for the participants with the questionnaire. The researcher also took into account anonymity and confidentiality as all the records of

respondents were kept away from any interference. Thus, participants were given numbers to use in lieu of their names so as not to make their performance public and maintain their privacy. In addition, all participants were asked to join this study willingly and voluntarily without any kind of force to prevent any kind of abuse. In addition, permission was issued by the Abu Dhabi Educational Council to carry out the research.

Participants

The participants in this study are all English language teachers from elementary schools in Al Ain. There are 197 English language teachers. The participants who were involved in the study were all approved as English language teachers in the Al Ain public elementary schools. The reason for choosing Al Ain public elementary school is that the researcher lives in the city; consequently, it facilitates easy access to the chosen schools.

In terms of the questionnaire, all elementary teachers were asked to participate in the study, whereas for the interview, only seven female English language teachers were invited to participate in the study. These teachers were chosen randomly from seven different elementary schools.

The descriptive statistics in table 1 presents that the number of native English teachers is 138, which represents 70.1% of the whole sample, while Non-native English teachers who participated in the questionnaire are 59, or 29.9% of the whole sample. Seven female teachers have missing qualifications, teachers with BAs are 115 or 58.4%, teachers with MAs are 73 or 37.1% of the whole sample, while teachers with PhDs comprise only two with a percentage of 1. It appears that more than half of the teachers in the chosen sample are teachers with BAs. The questionnaire has recorded the

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experience of the teachers with a missing value of one teacher as follows: teachers with less than five years (37 or 18.8%), teachers with experience between five and ten years (85 or 43.1%) and teachers who have more than ten years experience (74 or 37.6%). Also, it can be derived from the descriptive statistics and frequencies that in terms of gender, the female teachers predominate over the male participants; the table shows that female teachers comprise 193 or 98% of the sample while males only comprise only 1.5%. Finally, the below table show that the research questionnaire has been distributed in 62 boys' school with 31.5% of the total, and in 132 girls' school with a 67% total.

Table1.

Demographic Data of the Participants

	Teachers		Experience			Qualification			School		Gender	
	Non-native	Native	>10	5-10	<5	BA	MA	PhD	Girls	Boys	Female	Male
N	59	138	74	85	37	115	73	2	132	63	193	3
%	29	70.1	37.6	43.1	18.8	58.4	37.1	1	67	31.5	98.5	1.5

Data collection

The sampling frame of this study was obtained from the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) – Al Ain Education Office, which presents a highly accredited and inclusive database for schools in the Emirates, listing 120 schools in the region. All English teachers in these schools were involved in the study. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to collect the data from all English language teachers in Al Ain, and interviewed only seven female teachers. The interviews took place in the 2ed term of the academic year 2010-2011. Seven female teachers were randomly selected and were contacted to schedule the interviews. The interview scheduled with each English

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language teacher proceeded as follows: each teacher was reminded of the general purpose of the research and the interviews were conducted face to face.

Data analysis

The researcher employed the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the collected data from the questionnaire. The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by synthesizing the response results. Means and standard deviation were employed to analyze the data. The data was entered into SPSS and using descriptive statistics.

The data analysis of the interview was carried out in two steps, one transcribing the results and then summarizing them. The researcher transcribed the interview's responses occurred immediately after carrying out the interview or at least on the same day. After that the researcher summarized and categorized the results into themes according to relevance and relating them to the research questions. Interview results' were used to support the data gathered from the questionnaire when discussing them in the final chapter. Also, the researcher quoted the interviewees' responses to add them in the discussion.

Chapter 4

Research Results

Introduction

This research focuses on investigating the strategies that teachers use to teach vocabulary, strategies that teachers use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary and strategies that teachers use to assess students' vocabulary learning. In order to examine this, the researcher developed questionnaires and organized semi-structured interviews with teachers.

This chapter presents the results of data gathered from the research instruments (the questionnaire and the interview) mentioned in the previous chapter and highlight the strategies frequently used by the participants. This chapter first presents the questionnaire results that are divided into three sections; strategies used in teaching vocabulary, strategies used in consolidating them, and finally strategies used in assessing newly learned vocabulary. In order to enrich the questionnaire results, this chapter presents the results of the interview which are overlapping with the questionnaire results and tied to the three research questions. Overall, this chapter reports the descriptive statistics concerning teachers' perceptions related to the importance of teaching vocabulary in Al Ain elementary schools.

An Overview of the Questionnaire Results

English teachers answered the questionnaire to point out their perceptions toward strategies used in teaching, consolidating, and assessing vocabulary in primary schools

classes. These research questions are answered by showing the results of analysis of the questionnaire administered to the teachers of English. Participants were asked to choose from 5 to 1 (5=always; 4=often; 3=sometimes; 2=rarely; 1=never) related to their perceptions toward strategies used in teaching, consolidating, and assessing new vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, the interpretation of the questionnaire results is divided into three parts based on the research questions. The first part will include strategies elementary school teachers use in teaching vocabulary. The second one will demonstrate strategies elementary school teachers use in consolidating newly learned words. Finally, strategies teachers use in assessing newly learned vocabulary will be highlighted in the third section. The perception data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to illustrate teachers' perception of teaching, consolidating, and assessing vocabulary.

Table 2. *Strategies for teaching English vocabulary*

	N	Mean	Std. D.
I use mother tongue translation to explain unfamiliar words to students	195	2.91	1.361
I ask students to look up unfamiliar words in Arabic-English dictionary	194	2.01	1.172
I ask students to look up unfamiliar words in English-English dictionary	195	2.07	1.274
I relate unfamiliar words to pictures or real objects	197	4.51	.740
I use smell, touch or other sense to teach new words	196	4.14	.881
I teach students to guess from context	193	3.75	1.132
I teach students to study word formation (prefixes, roots, suffixes)	194	3.06	1.270
I teach students to study parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives)	196	3.54	1.390
I teach pronunciation and spelling of the new words	197	4.51	.873
I ask student to study word lists	196	4.41	.887
I get students to use new words in sentences	197	4.34	.869
I teach students to study semantic relations (synonyms and antonyms)	195	3.23	1.260
I teach vocabulary by verbal repetition	197	4.19	1.002
I teach vocabulary by written repetition	197	4.01	1.025
I use flash cards of new words in classroom	196	4.37	.822
I use displays of new words in classroom	195	4.45	.820
I use word games like hangman, scrabble or crossword puzzle	195	3.53	1.163
I teach students to write new words form and meaning in their vocabulary notebook	197	3.60	1.288
I teach vocabulary by using facial expressions or body gesture	197	4.38	.834
I use English definitions to explain the new words	194	4.07	1.026
I encourage my students to learn vocabulary by reading stories extensively	197	3.92	1.071
I get my students to learn vocabulary by watching TV/movies	195	2.73	1.162
I get my students to learn vocabulary by listing to songs	197	3.46	1.131
I get my students to learn vocabulary through role-plays and drama	196	3.33	1.050
I get my students to learn vocabulary through interaction with the teacher	197	4.21	.797
I get my students to learn vocabulary through presentation or group discussion	196	3.67	1.021
I get my students to learn vocabulary through writing stories or articles	196	3.38	1.146

Question 1: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to teach vocabulary? There are several strategies that have been agreed on to be mostly used in teaching vocabulary in English language classrooms. While some strategies are mentioned to be used sometimes, some strategies are explained to be rarely utilized. Regarding the strategies teachers use in teaching vocabulary in elementary schools, table 2 reveals that there are eight strategies that English teachers frequently use to teach vocabulary. Table 2 demonstrates that many English teachers relate unfamiliar words to pictures and real objects with a high mean (4.51) (SD= .740), similarly they emphasize the use of pronunciation and spelling aspects of the new words (4.51) (SD= .873). Another common strategy that the English teachers agreed on is displaying the new words in the classroom (4.45) (SD= .820). It is also clearly illustrated that the English teachers ask students to study a word lists (4.41) (SD= .887). Regarding the utilization of facial expressions or body gestures, teachers show a mean of (4.38) (SD=.834). Getting students to use new words in sentences is another favorable strategy that teachers marked as frequently used (4.34) (SD=.869). A mean of (4.37) (SD= .822) shows that teachers prefer to use flash cards when teaching new words. Since the classroom interaction is vital in any classroom, a mean of (4.21) (SD= .797) proved that teachers utilize this strategy when teaching new words. Additionally, table 2 indicates that some teachers find it useful to teach students vocabulary by verbal repetition with a mean of (4.19) (SD=1.002). Furthermore, utilizing senses in teaching new words seems to be vital for English teachers with a mean of (4.14) (SD=.881). On the other hand, the results in table 2 show that in public elementary schools teachers mark using English definitions to

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explain the new words as a useful strategy with a mean of (4.07) (SD=1.026). Likewise, some teachers use written repetitions with a mean of (4.01) (SD=1.025).

English teachers indicate that some strategies are used occasionally in teaching new vocabulary words. For example, table 2 presents the mean score of (3.75) (SD=1.132) on teachers' perception who use guessing the meaning from the context sometimes in teaching vocabulary. Likely, teaching students to use word formation (3.06) (SD=1.270) and parts of speech with mean of (3.54) (SD=1.390) are strategies that can be used sometimes. Moreover, table 2 explains that teachers who get students study synonyms and antonyms of new words and write the word and its meaning in vocabulary notebook range from (3.23) to (3.60) (SD=1.260) and (SD=1.288). In addition, utilizing games is used sometimes in English classrooms scoring mean of (3.53) (SD-1.163). Finally, some teachers find it useful to reinforce vocabulary acquisition by extensive story reading scoring mean of (3.92) (SD=1.071).

Surprisingly, the results in table 2 demonstrate good strategies which are seldom used by English language teachers. English teachers do not ask students to look up unfamiliar words in Arabic-English dictionary or English-English dictionary as the mean show in table 2 which range between (2.01 to 2.07) with standard deviation of (1.172 to 1.274). Also, data in table 2 shows that many teachers do not emphasize the use of the mother tongue when explaining unfamiliar words (2.91) (SD= 1.361). Moreover, table 2 indicates that few teachers get students to watch TV/movies to learn new vocabulary (2.73) (SD= 1.162).

To sum up, table 2 indicates the strategies used in teaching vocabulary by English language teachers and shows that teacher in general favor some strategies to others when teaching vocabulary.

Table 3.

Strategies for consolidating newly taught vocabulary

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
I use dictation regularly	197	3.53	1.323
I review the spelling and pronunciation of a word with students repeatedly	196	4.32	.850
I ask student to tell me the meaning of the new word regularly	197	4.02	.926
I use vocabulary exercises in worksheets, workbooks and textbooks	197	4.11	1.007
I use a word list to help students remember words	197	4.22	1.000
I use pictures, real objects or drawing by students	196	4.49	.754
I use synonyms and antonyms that are associated with the learned word	197	3.46	1.171
I use the learned word in different sentences	195	4.16	.856
I use conversation with students to practice the new words	197	4.28	.815
I use reading tasks which require the students to encounter the new words	195	4.12	.931
I use listening tasks which require the students to encounter the new words	197	3.97	.950
I use writing tasks which require the students to use the new words	196	4.10	.939
I ask students to revise their dictation word list	194	3.51	1.272

Question 2: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary? In fact, English language teachers employ certain strategies for consolidating new words. Table 3 shows strategies for consolidating newly taught vocabulary. In order to address this issue, it is evident from table 3 that English teachers use pictures, real objects and drawing by students to ensure their understanding of the new words scoring a high mean of (4.49) (SD= .754). In addition,

data in table 3 reveals that teachers review the spelling and the pronunciation of the new words repeatedly during their classroom instruction (4.32) (SD=.850). Moreover, the table shows a preferred strategy for consolidating newly taught vocabulary which is using the word list to help students remember new words (4.22) (SD=1.000). Another strategy which is frequently used by English teacher is having conversations with students to practice the new words (4.28) (SD=.815). In order to emphasize the newly learned words, some teachers use the words in different sentences with a mean of (4.16) (SD=.856). Moreover, some teachers utilize reading tasks to stress and encounter the new words with a mean of (4.12) (SD=.931). Due to the importance of writing in developing students' vocabulary, table 3 demonstrates that some teachers utilize writing tasks in developing students' vocabulary by using them meaningfully with a mean of (4.10) (SD=.939).

On the other hand, surprisingly few teachers use dictation regularly to dictate a word list (3.51) (SD=1.272). It is clear that using synonyms and antonyms that are associated with the learned word, and dictating students regularly are less preferred strategies for consolidating newly taught vocabulary with mean of (3.46 and 3.53) (SD= 1.171 and 1.323).

Overall, reinforcing the learned knowledge is essential for all subjects. Therefore, English teachers expressed their ways of consolidating newly taught vocabulary which is considered to be the base of both reading and writing tasks.

Table 4.

Strategies for Assessing Vocabulary

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Using multiple-choice questions on vocabulary taught	197	3.11	1.381
Using short answer for written questions on vocabulary taught	194	3.07	1.249
Using listening to students reading new words	196	4.04	1.015
Students give an oral description of pictures using vocabulary taught	197	3.87	.979
Meeting with students to discuss what vocabulary they have been studying	197	3.39	1.145
Using portfolios to documents the student work	197	4.34	.921
Using matching words with meaning exercises	196	3.84	1.142
Using matching words with pictures exercises	197	4.20	.843
Using cloze-questions (filling in the blanks)	196	3.61	1.134
Using context clues to guess meaning	196	3.68	1.083
Using open-book quizzes	194	2.37	1.274
Using open-dictionary quizzes	195	1.93	1.105

Question 3: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to assess students' vocabulary learning? Assessment strategies and tools is one of learning teaching experience. Table 4 presents the strategies which teachers use to assess vocabulary. It is highly obvious that teachers use portfolios to document the students' work (4.34) (SD=.921). Another strategy which his highly is matching words with picture exercises (4.20) (SD=.843). One of the strategies frequently used to assess vocabulary is using listening to students reading new words (4.04) (SD=1.015). In the same way, some teachers mark some strategies to be used sometimes such as using multiple choice and short answer questions (3.11) and (3.07) with (SD=1.381) and (1.249). In addition, some teachers give an oral description of pictures (3.87) (SD=.979). Likely, teachers use discussions as a way of assessing vocabulary sometimes (3.39) (SD=1.145). Furthermore,

matching and cloze questions are utilized sometimes (3.84) (3.61) (SD=1.142) (SD=1.34). However, very few English teachers use open dictionary quizzes (1.93) (SD=1.105). Also, there were few teachers use open-book quizzes to assess vocabulary (2.37) (SD=1.274).

Overall, assessment is considered to be an essential tool to check students' understanding and knowledge acquisition. So, the above table explains teachers' perceptions regarding the strategies used among elementary school teachers.

Interview Results

The interview results stress the degree of significance for vocabulary instruction for teachers. The interviews make it easy for the researcher to seek more information regarding teaching, consolidating, and assessing new vocabulary in elementary schools. Regarding the importance and the vital role of vocabulary in second language learning, it appears from the interviews conducted that teachers consider vocabulary instruction as the main driving force to learning key concepts in English language, as well as being the backbone of improving reading and writing skills.

Question 1: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to teach vocabulary? All interviewed English teachers agreed on the importance of teaching vocabulary in their teaching process. Only two teachers agreed on devoting separate lessons for teaching vocabulary, justifying their answers by saying that *"devoting lessons for teaching vocabulary support students a lot while they are doing other follow up writing or reading activities"*, and *"second language learners will gain more language and content related to a particular topic or theme to have enough*

background knowledge about it". The rest of the five teachers disagreed on devoting separate lessons for teaching vocabulary citing the following reasons: "*teaching vocabulary is integrated with other language skills*", "*children learn vocabulary more when it occurs in context*", "*teaching vocabulary should be taught within context, such as in a story*", and "*through teaching, the vocabulary instruction will appear when it is needed*". Context is vital in the development of vocabulary in second language learning classrooms. Therefore, experiencing different contexts is essential in gaining and utilizing the newly learned words. Three of the interviewed teachers emphasized the importance of teaching vocabulary in context. All the teachers interviewed use various strategies to teach vocabulary such as real objects, picture cards, role-playing, body and facial expressions, and showing videos. In addition, teachers who have been interviewed share the same perspective of devoting part of each day's classes to teaching vocabulary as this provides student with a daily review and practice and refreshes their memories in terms of words.

Question 2: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary? Consolidating the previously learned information is a core value of any successful lesson. Teachers do not hesitate in embedding certain strategies in emphasizing the targeted information. Regarding consolidating the newly learned vocabulary, teachers find it useful to combine certain useful strategies such as word lists, checking pronunciation, worksheet exercises, using real objects, and emphasizing writing tasks. In addition, many English language teachers have also stressed the importance of using repetition and drilling frequently utilized to

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reinforce vocabulary learning in their daily instruction. As quoted by one teacher "*I use a lot of drillings and repetitions all the time*."

Question 3: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to assess students' vocabulary learning? There is no doubt that assessment is essential in any learning process. Specifically, in the context of second language teaching and learning, assessing the newly learned words is essential. Stressing assessment process, all the teachers being interviewed agreed on the importance of assessing vocabulary. Some of them do this on a regular basis, while others integrate vocabulary assessment in their daily instruction. Most of the English teachers interviewed mentioned using portfolios in assessing vocabulary. Actually, most of the results from the interviews show that teachers assess vocabulary by checking to see if students are using the new learnt vocabulary in their writing tasks or through answering the reading comprehension passage. Another strategy that most English teachers agree on is using matching exercises (matching words with pictures), especially with young students. One of the teachers mentioned that she use quizzes and multiple-choice questions.

Taken together, chapter four presents the results obtained from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews conducted with elementary English language teachers in all Al-Ain public elementary schools. Actually, both instruments seek teachers' perception of teaching vocabulary for second language learners. The questionnaire targeted invistigating teaching vocabulary and was divided into three main parts. The researcher aimed at examining the strategies used in teaching vocabulary, ways of reinforcing the newly learned vocabulary, and ways of assessment as a major aspect of vocabulary instruction for second language learners. The results found that teachers of

English prefer to use certain strategies such as relating unfamiliar words to pictures or real objects, utilizing the five senses, teaching pronunciation and spelling of the new words, asking students to study word lists, getting students to use new words meaningfully, teaching vocabulary by both verbal and written repetition, using flash cards and displaying newly learned words, teaching vocabulary by facial expressions, and finally they like to use English definitions to explain the targeted words.

Not only teaching vocabulary but also reinforcing the newly learned words is considered as a core value of all English teachers. Regarding this issue, English language teachers consider reviewing the spelling and pronunciation of new words, regular meaning checking, utilizing worksheets and workbooks exercises, using word lists, employing real objects, using words meaningfully, classroom discussions, embedding reading tasks, and finally using writing tasks which require students to use newly learned words as the most important ways for merging newly taught words.

Three main assessment strategies seem to be preferred by Al Ain elementary English teachers. Actually, they prefer listening to students' reading new words and using them in their daily conversations, portfolio to document students' work as vocabulary logs, and using matching words with pictures exercises.

The teachers, overall, agree that teaching vocabulary for second language learners as one of the major aims of English teachers. They consider vocabulary as the base of English language skills such as reading and writing.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perception regarding the strategies they use in teaching vocabulary, ways of consolidating the newly taught words, and finally strategies of assessing words. This study utilized a mixed method research design, which explored the perception of teachers using two different instruments questionnaire and semi-structured interview. This chapter summarizes research study, present findings and conclusion based on the results of chapter 4, and provides implications for teaching English vocabulary in the UAE, as well as future recommendation for future research and English language teaching in the UAE.

Question 1: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to teach vocabulary? Throughout the literature review this research referred to the importance of vocabulary teaching and the various techniques and strategies found most useful by education scholars. Teachers in Al-Ain as shown in the results have developed sets of strategies that they believe they strongly make a contribution to learning and teaching vocabulary. Effective strategies, perspectives and views from different English teachers were explored and investigated. In this case, the results from the distributed questionnaire and the interviews conducted stated that English language teachers were aware of the importance of integrating vocabulary learning in their daily instructions. According to the questionnaire findings, English teachers who participated in the study are providing much support to their students to learn vocabulary by using some of the

following most important vocabulary strategies such as relating unfamiliar words to pictures or real objects, teaching pronunciation and spelling of the new words, displaying the new words in the classroom and clarifying the meaning of new words by using facial expression and body language. Additionally, participants in the interviews mentioned similar strategies as well as pictures, word wall charts and gestures, and described them as being important and effective in helping students acquire and retain vocabulary. The results supports what other research studies done by Nation (2001), Oxford (1998) and Nelson (2008) which also sustain the effectiveness of using these strategies to teach vocabulary in elementary classrooms. Apparently most English teachers have found out, either by academic knowledge, trying, or sharing experiences with other teachers, that their students benefit from these most frequently used strategies to acquire vocabulary. Similarly, participants in the interviews elaborated on these strategies and added details such using pictures, wall charts and other displays. The most commonly used strategy to teach new vocabulary, as derived from the questionnaire and interviews, was using pictures, real objects and drawing. One of the teachers mentioned "*I found using pictures and flash cards very useful in teaching vocabulary*". This strategy is consistent with research that emphasizes the value of teaching new vocabulary by viewing pictures. It has been found by Lombardi (2008) that students are most responsive when using graphics to assimilate new vocabulary in writing or in a presentation.

The results of this study point out that teachers do not favor using the mother tongue although scholars as Nation (2001), Gairns & Redman (1986) , Taylor (1990) and Oxford and Scarcella (1994) have proofed that translation is a technique where teachers can make use when there is no other way to explain and teach the new words. Teachers

should take advantage of students' first language. It is a direct way however, it should not dominate; otherwise students will not be able to acquire the language in a proper way. Usually teachers avoid using the mother tongue when teaching English either because they were instructed by their supervisors or because it is the policy of the Ministry of education which explains the reluctance of teachers to use the first language. In the interviews the researchers asked some teachers to explain further why they do not prefer using the mother tongue, two teachers replied in the same way "*it is not allowed*". One said "*I used the mother tongue when I am not observed by others because it is sometimes the only way*".

Working out meanings is also a good technique where students play games to work out the meaning of a word from a context. This technique is where the learner has to know the meaning of the word and also know what the word means in particular context in which it has occurred (Pan and Xu 2011, Oxford, 1990, and Stevick 1973). Working with dictionaries and other reference books is also quite helpful in teaching and learning new vocabulary as emphasized by scholars (Pan & Xu, 2011 and Mendez & Suberviola, 2002).

Question 2: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to consolidate newly learned vocabulary? Many teachers indicated that repetition and recycling activities to reinforce words and expressions that have been learned are some of most frequent strategies for better understanding of meanings. Using Realia and objects are also found by teachers quite effective to make the learners understand better. The results of the questionnaire present evidence that teachers are aware of some the best strategies to consolidate newly presented vocabulary. The interview results also support

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that approach. Five out of seven teachers interviewed stressed the fact that repetition and using worksheets are frequently utilized to reinforce vocabulary learning. As quoted by one teacher "*I use a lot of drillings and repetitions all the time*." The researcher wondered how these drilling and repetition are performed in the classroom. Some teachers were asked to give more details on this techniques, the repetition was done in a traditional way where the teacher say words and students repeat. None of the teacher explained any innovative techniques to do the drillings (using games, Chinese whisper). The result is consistent with the research (Yan & Xu, 2011 and Nelson, 2008) that supports using these kinds of techniques to consolidate vocabulary learning.

Reading such as extensive reading is highly appreciated by research when consolidating vocabulary (Davidson, Atkinson and Spring, 2011, Beck et al., 2005, Stahl & Nagy, 2006 and Nelson, 2008). The result of the questionnaire in this study pointed towards appreciation of teachers for this strategy too. Intensive reading scored high mean by teachers which show that teachers understand the effectiveness of using reading approaches to strengthen vocabulary learning. The same results are emphasized in the interview results, almost every teacher in the interview mentioned reading to consolidate vocabulary as reported from one teacher "*I encourage my students to read stories by having a small library in the classroom*", for example they all mentioned story reading, using the library and reading logs. With the introduction of the New School Model to primary schools, reading is considered as a major approach in teaching language (ADEC site: NSM). Furthermore, to encourage teachers to use reading in a daily bases, ADEC provided teachers with guided reading books as well supplying school libraries with

various level of books and stories in both languages. However, many teachers complained lack of time to use books in the classroom.

Similarly, using writing tasks to recycle newly learnt vocabulary was highly supported by English language teachers as one of the effective strategy. It is an indication that elementary teachers in AlAin are aware of such a strategy to enhance vocabulary learning. In the interview, teachers pointed out that ADEC ensured the use of various genres (narrative, description, procedure and so on) when carrying out writing tasks as supported by (Davidson el al, 2011and Nation, 2001)

Over all, participants of both the questionnaire and the interview show a huge awareness of some of the best strategies used to consolidate teaching vocabulary. The New School Model has exposed these teachers to many effective strategies highly supported by literature.

Questions 3: What strategies do teachers in elementary classrooms use to assess students' vocabulary learning? Vocabulary assessment techniques have been explored in the context of this research and it has been found that the most frequently used strategy is using matching words with pictures (4.20) and using portfolios (4.34). The result of the question is constant with the literature review confirming that assessing vocabulary by using strategies such as matching and portfolios are very effective (Coombe (2011), Nation (2001), Read (2007) Stahl & Bravo (2010) and Kearns & Biemiller (2011). Teachers in the interviews mentioned strategies such as using vocabulary logs, creating pictunaries, and keeping word lists in their portfolios are some

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of the essential assessment tools to assess students' vocabulary as also supported by scholars (Coombe (2011), Nelson (2008), Stahl & Bravo, 2010).

On the other hand, some strategies such as using open-book quizzes and open-dictionary quizzes were less preferred by teachers and had low mean scores. In the interview, teachers seemed unsure about using quizzes as they are linked to *"old fashioned testing"* as pointed out by one of the teachers.

In general, assessment strategies used by teachers depend on the schools' policy or the lead teacher (head of faculty), because certain strategies are emphasized in certain schools while others emphasize other strategies. Using various strategies in various schools is an indication that there is a space of freedom is given to teachers alternative assessment tools.

Limitations

This research had met some limitations that must be acknowledged in order to be avoided in future research. The research only focused on the elementary schools in one area, Al Ain public schools. It is recommended to widen the research area to have a broader view of vocabulary teaching strategies throughout the UAE in order to generalize the results. Moreover, additional research replicating this study at different Emirati elementary schools is highly recommended. Further research should also incorporate vocabulary teaching strategy effects on students' overall performance. Additionally, in the qualitative part of the study, no male teachers participated in the interview and this would be advisable in future research. The reason was because it was hard to reach the male teachers in the boys' schools. Another suggestion can be interviewing native English

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language teachers, the reason behind this is that they have very full busy teaching day and it was hard to schedule interviews with them. In addition, it will be a good idea to investigate the vocabulary strategies in elementary private schools as well. Moreover, the questionnaire results did not explain how teachers administered certain strategies which can be investigated in further research.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore three main areas: strategies for teaching vocabulary, strategies to consolidate newly learned vocabulary, and strategies to assess vocabulary. As an EFL teacher I believe that teachers can assist the academic language development of English language learners more effectively by providing them with the main topics of the curriculum, the content specific vocabulary and sentence structure related to what they learn in class.

This research was conducted using qualitative as well as quantitative research methods to ensure the validity of the research findings. The participants were clarified as being from Al Ain elementary public schools. The research used two instruments to gather data from the intended sample: a questionnaire that was distributed over 120 schools, and an interview that was conducted with seven female English teachers. The findings of this study revealed that relating unfamiliar words to pictures or real objects and teaching pronunciation and spelling of the new words are the main strategies used by English language teachers in Al Ain public schools. Secondly, using pictures, real objects or drawings by students are the most frequently used strategies to consolidate

newly learned vocabulary. Thirdly, using matching words with picture exercises are a strategy "always" used by the teachers in elementary schools.

Teachers believe that vocabulary instruction needs to be given much more importance in terms of providing students with highly effective strategies to acquire new vocabulary thereby enhancing performance in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking for English as additional language learners. However, future research could include different criteria such as broadening exploration to include a greater sample from broader areas to cover the United Arab Emirates. As well, interviews must contain both males and females, as gender may be a factor that affects decisions in terms of chosen strategies in the classroom. Also a comparative study can be done for the questionnaire results for future use between the public and private sectors.

Consequently, this study has contributed to a great extent to my academic knowledge, skills and awareness that I came to learn through this study. As an English teacher, I have become quite aware of the various effective teaching strategies, not only in the English for Academic Purposes classroom but in the TESOL world in general. These teaching strategies have their merits and demerits and it is my duty as an English teacher to apply vocabulary teaching strategies that will improve the learning process of my students. I do understand that the level of the students determines how the teacher will use the appropriate teaching strategies.

I have come to know that help learners to communicate more effectively within their immediate communities they must have a certain level of vocabulary. Therefore, I feel that it is my responsibility as an English teacher to provide my learners with the necessary vocabulary that will help my students become independent and productive

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members within their own communities. I have learned that in order for ELLs to communicate more effectively within their immediate communities they must have a certain level of vocabulary. I consider it my responsibility as an English teacher to provide my learners with the necessary vocabulary that will enable my learners to become independent and productive members within their own communities.

The researcher believes that the adequate vocabulary teaching strategies utilized in the classroom can help both teachers and students to realize the great benefits of good teaching practices. Moreover, it will help teacher to incorporate strategies as part of their teaching. Furthermore, the researcher believes that incorporating strategies in teaching vocabulary, consolidating words, and assessing them in their classrooms can open the door for incorporating other good strategies in language teaching while accommodating the needs of the Emirati students.

The researcher believes that verifying vocabulary teaching strategies should be utilized within the larger context of course objectives of curriculum. Verifying vocabulary teaching and assessing vocabulary may provide a powerful tool to help meet the ADEC's educational indicators. Research on the educational benefits of vocabulary teaching strategies specifically in the Emirati context is rare but recent studies have indicated gains in students' performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are provided. The first part of my recommendations is related to teachers. This study has brought me to the fact that the work of a teacher is important and what is more important than that is the preparation of a teacher. If the teacher is not well prepared to carry out his

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responsibilities, then the there will be no effective teaching. Therefore, teachers ought to be careful when dealing with this important issue. A good teacher is the one who makes use of various teaching strategies as well as upgrading himself or herself continuously. Mentioning teaching strategies we can say that there are many of them.

In accordance to my study, English language teachers need to focus on the most effective strategies in teaching vocabulary recommended in this study. They are as follows:

1- Using realia and pictures.

2- Guessing meaning of new words from the context.

3- Words using words in context.

4- Implement games and competitions in teaching new vocabulary.

5- Watching and listening to native speakers through TV or Radio.

6- Exposing students to real life situations by making trips.

7- Reading stories and magazines frequently.

8- Helping students to form their own dictionaries by using their notebooks.

9- Using facial expressions and miming to teach mew vocabulary.

Since ADEC is looking forward having high standard education, the researcher believes that more research is needed as to how verifying vocabulary teaching and assessment can promote students performance in the UAE. At the same time, the researcher believes that considering the context in which vocabulary teaching and assessment strategies will be incorporated.

The suitability of verifying teaching and assessing vocabulary strategies is to foster students' acquisition and widen their vocabulary as well as to engage students in new teaching processes required to understand new vocabulary. Therefore, when preparing teachers for elementary schools, they need to be prepared how to anticipate and reflect on how to overcome some difficulties regarding utilizing some strategies. For this reason, it is highly recommended to teach teachers before graduation strategies to overcome difficulties in applying new strategies in their classrooms such as vocabulary teaching and assessment.

The researcher, based on the implications and recommendations for further research, believes that the current study has informed the area of vocabulary teaching in English classrooms in elementary y school in the UAE. Finally, the researcher hopes that the findings of the study can contribute to the nascent but growing body of research that deals with the implementation of new strategies in Emirati English classrooms.

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Teachers' Perceptions of Strategies used to teach ESL Vocabulary in Elementary School in the United Arab Emirates

Dear teacher

This questionnaire aims to collect information about Vocabulary teaching strategies used by English teachers in Al Ain Public school. It consists of two parts; the first includes general information about the teacher and the second one includes statements about vocabulary teaching strategies.

I-General Information

1) **Teacher :** 1. English Native speaker   2-Non-native English speaker

2) **Teacher's experience**

      1. Below 5 years   2. 5-10 years   3- Above 10 years

3) **Teacher qualification**   BA   MA   PhD   Other

4) **Teacher Gender :**   1. Male   2. Female

5) **School:**   1. Boys   2.Girls

II) **In this questionnaire you will find each statement followed by numbers (1, 2, 3, 4), and each number means:**

"5"   always

"4"   often

"3"   sometimes

"2"   rarely

"1"   never

The researcher

Warqa AlAmeri

Statement	Always 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Seldom 2	Never 1
gies for Teaching Vocabulary					
use L1 translation to explain unfamiliar words to students.					
ask students to look up unfamiliar words in an Arabic-English dictionary.					
ask students to look up unfamiliar words in an English-English dictionary.					
relate unfamiliar word to picture or real object.					
use smell, touch, or other senses.					
teach students to guess from context.					
teach students to study word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes).					
teach students to study parts of speech.					
teach students to study pronunciation and spelling of a word.					
ask students to study word lists.					
get students to use new word in sentence.					
teach students to study semantic relations (synonyms and antonyms).					
teach vocabulary by verbal repetition.					
teach vocabulary by written repetition.					
use postings in classroom.					
use word games like hangman, scrabble or crossword puzzle.					
teach students to write down new words (form and meaning) in their ocabulary notebook.					
teach vocabulary by using facial expressions or body gestures.					
use English definition to explain the word or use English definition of the word					

as a hint for students to guess.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary by reading extensively.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary by watching TV/ movies.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary by listening to songs.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary through role-plays and drama.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary through interacting with English teacher.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary through presentation or group discussion.					
I get my students to learn vocabulary through writing stories or articles.					

tegies for Consolidating newly learnt vocabulary

I use regular dictation.					
I review the spelling and pronunciation of a word with students again and again.					
I ask students to tell me the meaning of the new word regularly.					
I use vocabulary quizzes.					
I use vocabulary exercises in worksheets, workbook, textbook.					
I use the word that they learnt previously in my conversation in the lesson.					
I use a word list to help students remember words.					
I use picture, real object or drawing by students.					
I use synonyms and antonyms that are associated to the learnt word.					
I use the learnt word in different sentences.					
I use conversation with students or speaking task which requires students to practice the new word verbally.					
I use reading task which requires students to encounter the new word again.					
I use listening task which requires students to encounter the new word again.					
I use writing task which requires students to use the new word.					

I ask students to revise their dictation word list.					

Using multiple-choice questions on vocabulary taught					
Using short answer for written questions on vocabulary taught					
Using listening to students reading new words					
Students give an oral description of pictures using vocabulary taught					
Meeting with students to discuss what vocabulary they have been studying					
Using portfolios to documents the student work					
Using matching words with meaning exercises					
Using matching words with pictures exercises					
Using cloze-questions (filling in the blanks)					
Using context clues to guess meaning					

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution in completing this questionnaire.
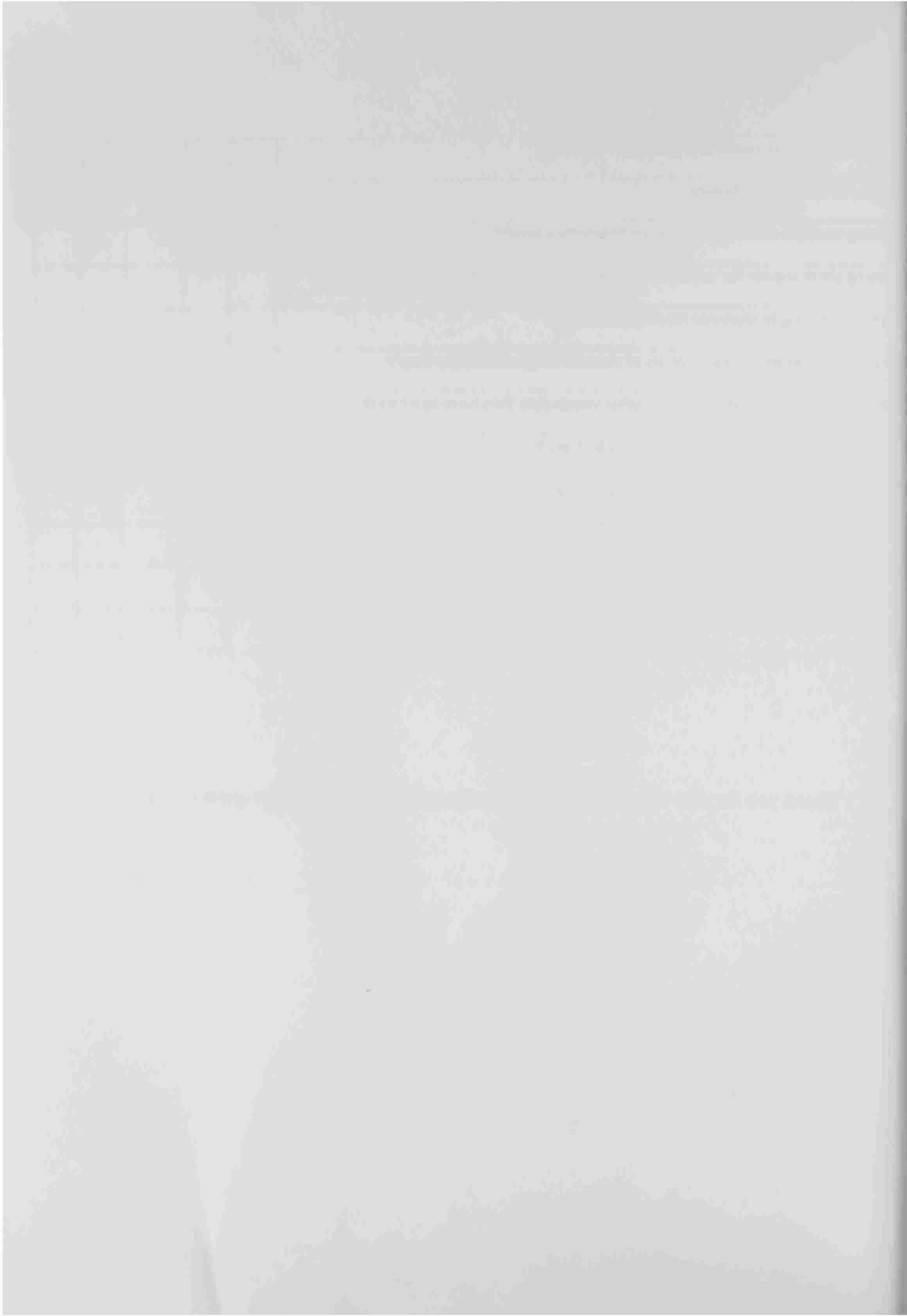
Appendix 2 The Interview

1. How important is vocabulary instruction in your teaching?

2. Do you believe that a lesson should be devoted for teaching vocabulary? Why?

3. How do you clarify the meanings of new words?

4. What vocabulary do you choose to explain? Why?

5. How do you assess vocabulary?

6. What vocabulary do you choose to give an assessment on? Why?

7. Do you regularly give assessment or activities on previously taught vocabulary?

الأستاذ الفاضل/ مدير منطقة العين التعليمية   المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بداية يطيب لنا أن نتقدم لكم بأطيب تحياتنا متمنين لكم ولمنطقة العين التعليمية كل التوفيق والنجاح في الارتقاء بالعملية التعليمية التعلمية، هذا وفي إطار التعاون الدائم بين منطقة العين التعليمية وكلية التربية بجامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، نود إفادتكم علماً بأن الطالبة/ ورقه سالم سهيل سالم خضره العامري، رقم جامعي: 200850023 مسجلة في برنامج الماجستير تخصص "المناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية"، وتقوم بإعداد رسالة الماجستير تحت عنوان "آراء وتوجهات معلمي ومعلمات **اللغة الإنجليزية في** أنسب أساليب تدريس **اللغة الانجليزية** لطلبة مدارس **منطقة العين بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة**" لذا نرجو التكرم بالموافقة على تسهيل مهمتها البحثية.

شاكرين ومقدرين حسن تعاونكم.

هذا وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والتقدير.

منسق برنامج الماجستير
أ.د. محمد أحمد عبد الدايم

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

كلية التربية – قسم المناهج و طرق التدريس

برنامج الماجستير في التربية

آراء معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حول الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة لتدريس وتقييم مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الابتدائية في مدينة العين- الإمارات العربية المتحدة

رسالة مقدمة من الطالبة

ورقة سالم سهيل خضرة العامري

إلى جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

استكمالا لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في التربية

المناهج و طرق التدريس – لغة إنجليزية

يناير 2013