Vocabulary Learning Strategies for Second or Foreign Language (SFL) Students of Missionary-Run Colleges in Bangladesh

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Abstract

One of the crucial challenges that learners face for processing second or foreign language (SFL) learning is learning vocabulary. Vocabulary is recognized as vital to language use in which insufficient vocabulary knowledge of the learners led to difficulties a SFL learning. Thus, in the case of learning the vocabulary in a SFL, students need to be educated with vocabulary learning strategies. Investigation for learning vocabulary and its connection to reading has become significant in the field of research in SFL acquisition. Since reading requires precise and spontaneous word recognition skills, learners need to be equipped with sufficient vocabulary knowledge to read fluently. Yet, for many SFL learners, reading is a 'suffocating slow process' (Anderson, 1991). One of the causes or often experienced by the students is that they don?t have enough vocabulary knowledge. As a result, they tend to surrender to understand the semantics of the text or skip reading the word, sentence and even the paragraph due to the unfamiliar words. These circumstances propose that some learners may not have enough skills to handle the unfamiliar words.

Index terms— vocabulary, learning strategies, SFL, missionary-run colleges, bangladesh.

1 Introduction

n Bangladesh, teaching and learning vocabulary is very vital both for teachers and students because there has been nominal effort on vocabulary training in the Second or Foreign Language (SFL) classroom. For this, teaching and learning vocabulary skills are essential for SFL learners in the process of language learning. Colorado (2007, as cited in Adger, 2002) claimed that the typical native English speaker begin the kindergarten school knowing about 5,000 words; whereas the normal SFL learner may know 5,000 words in his/her own language but some words in English. In fact, the native speakers continue to learn new vocabulary but SFL learners encounter the great challenge for developing strategy to build the foundation and completing the language gap.

Another significant point to consider is the time it takes for English language learners to learn English and be ready for school. While it takes one to three years for English language learners to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), they need seven years to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Collier, 1999; Cummins, 2000, as cited in Adger, 2002). There are reasons why English language learners would be struggling with academic content. First of all, the EFL learners are doing two things at the same time; they are learning a new language (English) despite the fact that learning new academic ideas. They are moving between two different worlds. Secondly, English language learners have to work harder and they need more scaffolding than the average native English-speaking student who has an age-level appropriate command of the English language. Scaffolding means availing necessary skills for the learners as they acquire the new information (Cummins, 2000, as cited in Taylor, 1990). Thirdly, academic terminology is very mechanical and seldom used in conversational English especially, in the Second or Foreign Language (SFL) classroom. Students are constantly required to use higher-level language functions such as analyzing, predicting, explaining, and justification.

About reading in the Second or Foreign language (SFL) context, various issues are raised concerning the SFL learners' behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of reading at the university level.

Findings from these studies **??**Oxford, 1990;Anderson, 1991) have shown that a lot of learners reveal significant informal knowledge and unusual reading skills and strategies to fulfill the reading requirements of the new academic setting. In addition to these, lack of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, extrinsic motivation, and less interest which have added to the ESL students' problems in reading. Moreover, there is also the issue of inadequate vocabulary knowledge. For reading fluently needs correct and spontaneous word recognition skills that will improve understanding (Grabe, 1991).

However, Anderson (1991) postulates that for many second language readers, reading is a 'suffocating slow process'. For example, learners may experience problems in understanding the meaning of the text if sentences or even the whole paragraph contain a few unknown words (Alderson, 1984). In that case, the students would skip reading the sentence or paragraph. However, this action will worsen the problem further as the students will not learn the words they skipped and thus, will fail to understand the text they read. Also, previous studies (Nation, 1990; Levine et al, 1992;Anderson, 1999) have reported SFL students meticulously referring to a bilingual dictionary for every word that they don't understand. In other contexts, SFL students might give up trying to understand the meaning of the text if sentences or an entire paragraph contain a small number of unknown words (Huckin et al, 1993). These encounters suggest that some SFL learners might not know how to handle words they do not understand. Although this factor is recognized as a critical factor of one's reading ability (Grabe, 1991), yet not much research has focused on investigating the strategies that learners use to learn vocabulary. Thus inspecting, the type of strategy employed by these SFL learners may shed light on the problems that students encounter in their reading processes. However, most research has been done in the field of instruction of SFL vocabulary neglecting the importance of vocabulary learning strategies (e.g., Schmitt, 1997;Park, 2001). Although there has been some research vocabulary learning strategies, they did not seem to attract any noticeable attention due to the lack of comprehensive investigation in this field (Schmitt, 1997). For most SFL learners, the importance of vocabulary learning strategies seems very clear to enhance their vocabulary knowledge depending on their different situations and contexts (Chin, 1999).

However, a study of vocabulary learning strategies of Korean students based on the word: from analysis, guessing the meaning of new words from the context, and dictionary use by Park (2001) has revealed that word form analysis and guessing the meaning of new words in the context seemed to work better in Korean students' English vocabulary learning. As Parry (1997) mentions, EFL teachers need flexibility in second language vocabulary teaching strategies. Parry claims that EFL teachers should consider individual learners' different learning habits, their cognitive development, and their different learning environments in the instruction of second language vocabulary strategies. Besides, learners should not stick to just one or two main strategies to develop their second language vocabulary. The results of the study also reveal that strategies affect learners' second language vocabulary learning. In this respect, teachers should teach learners appropriate strategies considering learners' differences in their classrooms; otherwise, learners will spend too much time learning second language vocabulary with inappropriate skills. Another study on "Effective Vocabulary Teaching Strategies for the English for Academic Purposes SFL Classroom" (Mukoroli, 2011) revealed that vocabulary learning could greatly assist English language learners in their journey of language acquisition and therefore expedite the language learning process. A similar study on "Developing Vocabulary in Second Language Acquisition: From Theories to the Classroom" (Mehring, 2005) also revealed the theories behind vocabulary acquisition in second language learning put these theories into practice in a class. Shen (2003) explored the vocabulary teaching and learning strategies for EFL Settings reviewing the historical development of vocabulary status in the ELT pedagogy. He also analyzed the current vocabulary teaching and learning strategies by considering the strengths and weaknesses of the contextual and decontextualize perspectives of acquiring and retaining vocabulary. This research illustrated the dimensions and dynamics of a 5R model -receiving, recognizing, retaining, retrieving, and recycling for effective vocabulary teaching strategies and learning processes. Results showed the significant aspect of vocabulary teaching, and students need to inform of a broad range of vocabulary learning strategies.

In another study, Longhurst (2013) investigated the benefits of explicit vocabulary teaching in the EFL Classroom. In this study, Longhurst postulated a certain level of knowledge of vocabulary is required for successful communication to occur for EFL learners. It seems that these students often lack language variation, accuracy, coherence, and descriptiveness; this paper dealt with the issue of teaching vocabulary in a more conscientious and focused way to help ensure that students will become more competent in using the language effectively. Alqahtani (2015) studied the importance of vocabulary in language learning and taught for second or foreign language learners. In this study, Alqahtani argued that vocabulary learning is an essential part of SFL learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or classrooms. It is also crucial to language teaching and is essential to a SFL language learner. The study summarized the impotence of vocabulary and explaining many techniques used by English teachers when teaching English, as well as own personal view of these issues.

Asyiah (2017) investigated the perception, strategies, and influences on students' mastery of vocabulary learning in Indonesia. In this study, he mentioned that vocabulary plays a pivotal role in foreign language learning. However, he argued that vocabulary teaching and vocabulary learning in TEFL seems to be neglected. The study intended to investigate how vocabulary teaching and learning are comprehended by teacher and students, strategies to teach and learn the vocabulary, and also influence of students' vocabulary learning strategy on their vocabulary mastery. Accordingly, a mixed method design was employed to one English teacher and 30

junior high school students to disclose the issues examined. The study recommended introducing students to various kinds of vocabulary learning strategies.

In a similar study, Nie & Zhou (2017) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies used by excellent English learners in the extensive process of vocabulary learning and consolidating in China. In this study, the researcher presented some theoretical study of vocabulary learning strategies conducted by some scholars in relevant fields. Then, an experiment is conducted to show some common vocabulary learning strategies adopted by three postgraduates who prove to be successful vocabulary learners. Moreover, it tries to explore the relationship between the number of vocabulary learning strategies and the level of vocabulary. At the end, the enquiry delivers some advice on vocabulary learning on the basis of research findings and analysis.

Learning vocabulary is a continuing process that involves systematic recurrence to help students learn, especially low context vocabulary. Students can retain the vocabulary they find valuable and relevant to their subject matter by learning vocabulary through context, cooperative learning, modules, usage of computer generated program and an action research project.

However, this paper has explored the strategies use of vocabulary learning among 46 Second or Foreign Language (SFL) students of the three Missionary-run Colleges in Bangladesh. This research has reported the findings of the vocabulary learning strategies employed by these SFL learners.

Hence, the following research questions are postulated: 1) What strategies are used the most by the SFL learners of Missionary-run Colleges in Bangladesh? 2) What strategies are used the least by the SFL learners of Missionary-run Colleges in Bangladesh? II.

2 Methodology

III. The respondents for this study were 46 college students (XI & XII Grad) in their first & second year of college. There were 27 female and 19 male respondents of ages that ranged between 16 -17 years old. These SFL students were attending the regular courses in English at Missionary-run Colleges in Bangladesh. The researcher used an adapted version (Appendix 1) of the vocabulary strategy questionnaire proposed by Gu & Johnson (1996). The questionnaire consisted of 48 statements grouped under nine categories: 1) Beliefs about vocabulary learning (1-11), 2) Metacognitive regulation (12) ??13)(14) ??15) ??16)(17) ??18), 3) Guessing Strategies (19)(20) ??21)(22)(23)(24)(25), 4) Dictionary Strategies (26-32), 5) Note-taking Strategies (33-37), 6) Memory Strategies (38-41), 7) Activation strategies (4243), 8) sources (44-45), and 9) Anxiety and Motivation (46-48). The subjects responded using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was distributed to the students in the classroom. The researcher remained in the classroom while the respondents answered the questionnaire to respond to any queries that they may have in regards to the questionnaire. For instance, linguistics, bilingual, collocation patterns, second or foreign language, synonyms, antonyms, etc. and the researcher explained the meaning of these terms to them. Upon completion, the researcher collected all answered questionnaires. Data of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, where frequency counts were tabulated and converted to percentages.

3 Findings of the Study

The data revealed that the students of Missionary-run colleges believe memorization (72%) and repetition (66%) to be one of the ways to learn vocabulary. On the other hand, approximately 20% responded that it would be necessary to know or remember more than one word definition. It seems, the respondent identified the use of circumstantial clues as a strategy toward comprehension of words when they approach any reading material. On the other hand, they also employed the strategy of guessing based on the context of the word is located. However, there was still quite a number (22%) who were unsure of recognizing the meaning through reading. This result might indicate that the student could identify with the strategy of using contextual clues to guess the meaning of the word, but were unsure (28%) as to how to employ the strategy. The respondents reported that they put to use the words that they have learned (92%). One of the reasons for doing so, perhaps, the students did not only pay attention to the meaning of the word but also at how the words were used (81%) in the context. This answer assumed was opposite to what poor students might usually do, whereby they just keep vocabulary journals or vocabulary notebooks, still, they hardly go beyond the scope of noting the words in the notebook. In other words, the learners lack the practice of the new words that they have learned. The table above suggested that the learners could recognize which words are important for them to know. Usually, these words would mention to terms with their course work (extrinsic motive). Besides, they also focused on other words of interest to them -not that much connected to their course work, but then for them to learn more about the vocabulary (intrinsic motive). Furthermore, there was also some initiative to note down these words for further reference. This displayed marvelous effort to progress their terminology knowledge. The data mentioned above exhibited that most of the respondents (89%) used their background knowledge such as experiences and common sense in guessing the meaning of the words. About thirty-six percent of the students mentioned that they would not skip unknown words unnecessarily while reading but rather would attempt to guess the meaning of these words (67%). Moreover, if they have failed to predict using a specific strategy, then they would try at it again by using other strategies in predicting the meaning of the word (66%).

4 b) Words should be acquired in context (bottom-up

5 c) Words should be studied and put to use (top-down)

In terms of self-initiation strategies, these respondents replied positively to thinking about their progress in vocabulary learning (75%) and demonstrating initiation to find out about the new words that they have learned (64%). However, there appear to be some respondents (31%) who are uncertain about result more than they ought to on a specific word. It was also found that with regard to examinations, 36% replied that they would not rely on things that were pertaining to examinations only. However, there was still 28% respondents who answered otherwise. This result suggests that students are still inclined by examinations. In terms of linguistic cues, as can be seen, more than half of the respondents (67%) employed their knowledge of the word structure in decoding the meaning of the words. However, approximately 34% were not confident about using such a strategy. This finding could indicate that some learners were unsure about the use of this strategy in learning vocabulary. However, they use the knowledge of the topic to guess the meaning of the word (86%). It seems that learners do to recognize the meaning of the word via dictionaries. The data shown that 92% claimed to use an English dictionary. Seventeen students mentioned that they also referred to the English-Bangla dictionary. There were a number of purposes of using the dictionary. The uppermost score showed the use of dictionary to find usages of the word in context (35 students), followed by the pronunciation of the word (34 students); finding the meaning of the word (27 students), and the least is looking at grammatical patterns of the word (25 students). It was interesting to note that 28% or 13 students responded that they are unsure how to use the dictionary to look for collocation patterns. Once more, the finding showed that some learners were unsure of what collocation was. 29. I use the dictionary to find only the meaning of the word 32. I use the dictionary to find the appropriate usage (example sentence) of the word 28. I use the dictionary to find out the pronunciation of the word Students employed various strategies for notetaking. Only ten students reported that they had a vocabulary notebook compared to 33 students who mentioned that they did not keep one. The most common citation was the usages of the word (33 students) and the meaning (25 students). Besides, they also listed that 20 students used their L1 translation. It was interesting to note that only 24 students reported noting the synonym or antonym of the word as compared to 22 students responded negatively. This data indicated that the learners were unaware of notetaking or keeping a vocabulary notebook for vocabulary development purposes. Furthermore, the skills that they employed, such as writing the English words and translations as well as remarking the meaning of words, are inadequate for improvement and memory of words. Obviously, all these students would need to engage in other note-taking strategies to help them develop their vocabulary knowledge. Regarding memory strategies, the students used the skill of oral repetition and creating mental images (mnemonic) in most of the cases (32 students). It was interesting to note that about 27 students repeated the word aloud to aid in memory of the word, whereas 17 students also employed the strategy of written repetition. But, students appeared to have difficulties in scrutinizing words by breaking them into parts (61%). The data revealed that the students run into problems in categorizing the root word and splitting the root word from the affixes. In terms of activation strategies, most students (89%) responded that they would employ the new words they learned in their speech and writing. At the same time, 61% of the students answered that they would use the new words learned in everyday situations. This result indicated that these students have confidence and put in effort in using the words. The data above presented that the key source of learning for new vocabulary derives from reading English materials (92%) as compared to only nine students who acquire new words from their teachers in class. Regarding anxiety toward learning the English language, the results displayed that only 19% of the subjects felt anxious. This indicated that students use English language in their studies widely. However, none of the students responded that they still do not know how to learn vocabulary, which indicated that students of Missionary-run Colleges in Bangladesh are confident enough in learning vocabulary.

6 IV.

7 Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the results of the data revealed that the strategies most often used by the students of the three Missionary-run colleges of Bangladesh were "words should be studied and put to use" (in terms of recalling the meaning to understand the context 95% and use of the words 92%), vocabulary should be acquired in the context (in terms of expanding the vocabulary through reading 94%), selective attention (interesting words), dictionary strategies, sources (English reading materials -newspapers, magazines, novels, etc.) and linguistic clues (speaking and writing). However, the least used strategy discovered is notetaking strategy. The implications of these results recommend that the students of Missionary-run colleges of Bangladesh would need to engage in more strategies to enhance their learning and memory of the vocabulary.

Although the participants in this study were found to know certain strategies, they failed to practice what they had learned. It is significant to make students aware that learning does not only include knowing a specific strategy (competence) but rather it will become enhanced when we make use of that knowledge (performance). Depending on the outcomes, some recommendations can be made. First of all, the advantage of this study is that it will increase public awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in second language learning

and teaching. As Oxford (2003) mentioned, "Vocabulary is not explicitly taught in most language classes" (P. 9).

The results of the current study can help language teachers in improving their teaching methods. Second, teachers interested in their students' performance to learn the English vocabulary can introduce the vocabulary learning strategies and techniques to their students by designing useful and meaningful tasks and giving relevant assignments. Next, it seems based on the interviews conducted, not all of the students are not aware of the existence of the numerous strategies used to learn words other than using dictionaries and rote memorization.

Future studies on vocabulary learning strategies can be carried out from two viewpoints. Studies on the individual's differences of language learners from primary to university level can be conducted both in qualitative and quantitative approaches. Besides, studying the effect of culture, home environment, peer groups, effective teaching methods, and classroom atmosphere on vocabulary learning strategies could be very helpful to get a better understanding of the relevant strategies.

Ediger (1999) believes that developing students' vocabulary knowledge should be a main objective in each academic discipline. Vocabulary development highlights that students seek purpose in learning. Thus, a purposeful learning in vocabulary enhancement means that students see the rationale for attaining good vocabulary knowledge. As teachers of Bangladesh, we need to understand that learners develop their vocabulary learning. Knowing plenty of vocabulary does not necessarily prove that the learner can read efficiently. There must be a balanced study of vocabulary within a reading development program. Thus, learners will be able to advance their knowledge of words and how they work.

1

Vocabulary Learning Strategies for Second or Foreign Language (SFL) Students of Missionary-Run Colleges in Bangladesh

a) Words should be Memorized Statement 1. The best way to remember words	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree		5 Str
is to memorize word lists	4	8%	3	6%	6	14%	29	64%	4
2. Repetition is the best way to remember words	1	3%	3	6%	12	25%	20	44%	10
3. It is only necessary to remember one dictionary definition	3	6%	15	33%	19	42%	8	17%	1
4. I can acquire a large vocabulary by the memory of individual words	0	0%	3	6%	14	31%	26	58%	3

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Figure 1: Table 1 :

244

7 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree		5
5. I can identify the meaning of most words through reading	0	0%	4	8%	10	22%	19	42%	13
6. I can expand my vocabulary by reading a lot	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%	22	47%	22
7. Guessing words in context is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary	0	0%	6	14%	13	28%	24	53%	3

Figure 2:

2

a) Self-Initiation Strategies

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree	
12. I think about my progress in vocabulary learning	0	0%	4	8%	8	17%	25	56%
13. I try to find out all I can about the new words I learn	0	0%	3	6%	14	31%	24	53%
14. I only focus on the thing that is related to examinations	5	11%	11	25%	13	28%	13	28%

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

a) Use Background Knowledge

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree	
19. I skip words I don't understand	6	14%	10	22%	14	31%	10	19%
20. I use my experience and common sense to guess	0	0%	1	3%	4	8%	26	56%
21. I guess the meaning and then look at the dictionary (when I meet new words in reading)	1	3%	4	8%	11	22%	19	42%
22. I use alternative clues and try again if I fail to guess the meaning of a word	0	0%	4	8%	11	22%	27	58%

Figure 4: Table 3 :

4

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree		5 Stron
26. I use an English dictionary	0	0%	3	6%	1	3%	23	50%	19
27. I use a bilingual dictionary	0	0%	15	33%	14	31%	14	31%	3
	0	0%	6	14%	6	14%	24	53%	10
	1	3%	12	25%	6	14%	21	44%	6
30. I look in the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word	0	0%	8	17%	13	28%	20	44%	5
31. I look in the dictionary for collocation patterns	1	3%	14	31%	13	28%	15	33%	3
	0	0%	5	11%	6	14%	32	69%	3

Figure 5: Table 4 :

5

Figure 6: Table 5 :

6

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree	
38. To remember a word, I repeat it aloud to myself	1	3%	8	17%	10	22%	14	31%
39. To remember a word, I write it repeatedly	1	3%	14	31%	14	31%	11	22%
40. I create a mental image of the new word to help me remember the word	0	0%	4	8%	10	22%	21	44%
41. To remember a word, I analyze the word by breaking it into different parts (prefix, root, and suffix)	1	3%	5	11%	11	25%	18	36%

Figure 7: Table 6 :

7

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree		5 Stron
42. I make use of the words I learned in speaking and writing	0	0%	1	3%	4	8%	31 67%	10 22%
43. I make use of the words I learned in everyday situations	0	0%	3	6%	15	33%	21 47%	7

Figure 8: Table 7 :

8

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 A
44. I learn new words only in my class from my teacher	8	17%	19	42%	10	22%	8
45. I learn new words from reading English newspapers, novels, etc?) materials (e.g.	0	0%	0	0%	4	8%	23 5

Figure 9: Table 8 :

9

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Unsure		4 Agree		5 Str
46. I feel anxious about reading in English	5	11%	17	36%	15	33%	9	19%	0
47. I skip words I don't understand when I read in English	4	8%	19	42%	13	28%	9	19%	1
48. I do not know how to learn vocabulary	28	61%	18	39%	0	0%	0	0%	0

Figure 10: Table 9 :

7 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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261 *best ways to learn vocabulary,*

262 [I analyze the word structure (prefix, root, and suffix) when guessing the meaning of the word] *I analyze the*
263 *word structure (prefix, root, and suffix) when guessing the meaning of the word,*

264 [I can identify the meaning of most words through reading 6. I can expand my vocabulary by reading a lot] *I*
265 *can identify the meaning of most words through reading 6. I can expand my vocabulary by reading a lot,*

266 [I guess the meaning and then look at the dictionary (when I meet new words in reading)] *I guess the meaning*
267 *and then look at the dictionary (when I meet new words in reading),*

268 [I know what cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word] *I know what cues I should use in*
269 *guessing the meaning of a particular word,*

270 [I learn new words from reading English materials] *I learn new words from reading English materials,* (e.g.
271 newspapers, novels, etc?)

272 [I make use of the words I learned in speaking and writing 43. I make use of the words I learned in everyday situations]
273 *I make use of the words I learned in speaking and writing 43. I make use of the words I learned in everyday*
274 *situations,*

275 [I skip words I don't understand when I read in English 48. I do not know how to learn vocabulary] *I skip*
276 *words I don't understand when I read in English 48. I do not know how to learn vocabulary,*

277 [I try to find out all I can about the new words I learn 14. I only focus on the thing that is related to examinations]
278 *I try to find out all I can about the new words I learn 14. I only focus on the thing that is related to examinations,*

279 [I use the dictionary to find only the meaning of the word 30. I look in the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word]
280 *I use the dictionary to find only the meaning of the word 30. I look in the dictionary for the grammatical*
281 *patterns of the word,*

282 [I write down the English word and L1 translation of the word 35. I only take note of the meaning of the word]
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323 [When I have learned the word, I will recall the meaning to help me understand the context] *When I have*
324 *learned the word, I will recall the meaning to help me understand the context,*

325 [When I learned the word I pay close attention to its new usage and new meaning] *When I learned the word I*
326 *pay close attention to its new usage and new meaning,*