

University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel  
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages  
Department of English Language and Literature



## Teachers' Vocabulary Explanation Strategies:

The Case of Third Year Algerian Secondary School EFL

Students

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**Presented by:**

- Boudjaoui btissem
- Taleb Amel

**Supervised by:**

Boukhenteche Slimane

**Board of Examiners :**

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| - <b>Examiner:</b>    | Guamid Boutkhil      | Jijel university |
| - <b>Supervisor:</b>  | Boukhenteche Slimane | jijel university |

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### **Abstract**

The present study attempts to identify vocabulary explanation strategies used by secondary school English teachers with third year foreign language learners. In order to investigate this research concern, a Classroom observation and a Questionnaire were implemented with secondary school English teachers. The observation is intended to describe teachers' vocabulary explanation strategies used in third year foreign language classes of 8 Mai 1945 secondary school, Jijel. The questionnaire investigated teachers' views about using different explanation strategies in the teaching process. The findings show that using appropriate vocabulary explanation strategies are helpful in enhancing vocabulary repertoire and knowledge. On the basis of the results obtained from both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire, some pedagogical recommendations have been proposed for future research to direct teachers toward the effective way to use these strategies in order to develop learners' vocabulary.

## Dedications

*In the Name of Allah Gracious, Most Merciful All the Praise is due to Allah alone, the*

*Sustainer of all the Worlds*

*I lovingly dedicate this work to:*

*my mother the dearest person to my heart and the light of my eyes, for her devotion to my education, for her whole-hearted support;*

*my father; for earning an honest living for me and my siblings, supporting and encouraging me to believe in myself and go further;*

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*my beloved fiancé "Djalal" for his love, support and encouragement and his family;*

*my brothers in law "Ahcene and Omar";*

*my precious sister in law "Zahra "and her family;*

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*all those people who lives in my heart. Who by their supportive attitudes, encouragement, and trust succeed in inspiring me and changing my life. Those people open doors and bring me hope when others do just the opposite.*

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*the roses of my life for their love, support and understanding; my five sisters "Hanane, Nadjoua, Assia, Loubna and Ikram";*

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*all my dearest friends who have wiped away tears on my face and draw smiles instead.*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BD: Bilingual Dictionary

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

FL: Foreign Language

GFC: Guessing from Context

GTM: Grammar Translation Method

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

MD: Monolingual Dictionary

SL: Second Language

%: Percentage

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

1. Introduction
2. Background of the Study
3. Statement of the Problem
4. Aim of the Study
5. Research Question
6. Research Hypothesis
7. Research Methodology
8. Structure of the Study

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Introduction**

The primary focus of the learner in a foreign class is on understanding spoken or written discourse but there are inevitably unfamiliar lexical items, some of which may be crucial for adequate comprehension, and the learner should have ways of finding out what they mean. Teachers are aware of this problem in the classroom context and have a variety of techniques at their disposal to address them with texts that they use in class such as: giving a quick oral translation of the word, a physical demonstration, a verbal explanation involving a number of context, giving synonyms or asking the learners to look the words up in the dictionary (Hedge, 2000).

Vocabulary is central to language and of crucial importance to the typical language learner. Nevertheless, till the 1970's and the 1980's, vocabulary teaching and learning have been undervalued in the field of second / foreign language learning. Researchers and teachers had given priority to syntax and phonology as “more serious candidates for theorizing” Richards (1976) more central to linguistic theory and more critical to language pedagogy (p.77).

It would be impossible to learn a language without learning its vocabulary, its words. Harmer (1991) states that if language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. Therefore, the use of grammatical structure does not have any potential for expressing meaning unless words are used. Students often manage to communicate in English using individual words, and they can most of the time convey meaning without necessarily having acquired grammar. Vocabulary is defined in Oxford Dictionary (2007) as the total number of words that make up a language. Longman Dictionary (1995) defines vocabulary as all the words that someone knows, learns or uses. It is vocabulary that

leads learners to express themselves clearly and appropriately in a wide range of situations. Hatch and Brown (1995) consider vocabulary as a list or set of words of a particular language that individual speakers of a language might use. Language teachers and applied linguist researchers now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary teaching / learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively.

Vocabulary is a double-edged sword. Students universally recognize the need to expand their vocabulary in order to improve their fluency, but it is difficult and often boring to memorize word after word. Thus, varying the types of vocabulary exercises used will engage students and enable them to retain the new words more effectively. Vocabulary teaching is often planned in the sense that teachers choose specific vocabulary items to be taught and using different techniques and strategies for explaining and presenting new vocabulary lexis brings variety and also helps the retention of new vocabulary words.

### **1. Background of the Study**

Keith and Folse (2004), state that "Learning a language entails learning numerous aspects about that language, including its pronunciation, writing system, syntax, pragmatics, rhetorical modes for reading and composition, culture, and spelling, but the most important aspect is vocabulary" (p. 1-13). It is generally accepted that vocabulary is the heart of learning and mastering a foreign language because foreign language learners are always in need to learn and enlarge their size of vocabulary. As a support to this view, Wilkins (1972) uncovers the significance of vocabulary learning and uses in a very straightforward statement as "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed"(p. 111). This is the evidence that in learning a language, grammar is not sufficient and, thus, more importance has to be given to vocabulary. Wilkins (1972) in his advice also states that a person can say very

little with grammar, but he / she can say almost anything with words. Scrivener (1998) expands on this view saying that vocabulary is a much more powerful carrier of meaning compared to grammar because we can get our message over with vocabulary and without grammar, but we cannot communicate unless we use the necessary words in our patterns and structures (as cited in Akar, 2010, p.1).

Many studies have been carried out on syntax and phonology and much more attention and interest has been given to lexis. Recently, teaching vocabulary has such an importance in EFL classrooms, and should be part of a syllabus and taught on regular basis. This view meets Lewis, M. (1993) who argues that vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching because language consists of "grammaticalized lexis not lexicalized grammar" (as cited in Laraba, 2007, p. 125).

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in vocabulary teaching. This is partly due to the recent availability of computerized databases of words (or corpora), and partly due to the development of new approaches to language teaching which are much more 'word-centered'. (as cited in Thornbury, 2002, p. 2). Numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises and practices have been introduced into the field to teach vocabulary (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Hulstjin (1993) suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge.

Teaching vocabulary must be more than simply covering a certain number of words on a word list. Ancient methods and approaches give a great importance to the language structures and grammar rather than vocabulary. In addition, these methods encourage rote learning i.e. learners are provided with a list of words to be learnt by heart even without understanding. Hence, it will be a necessity to know how teaching techniques can help the



learner realize what is meant by knowing a word. Now, vocabulary teaching/learning has developed especially with the more recent approaches.

Vocabulary teaching strategies refer to a variety of teaching techniques that help students learn vocabulary knowledge and may be to expand their lexis. Inside the classroom, the teacher's interference is necessary. Thus, teachers are supposed to adopt different strategies and techniques like translation, dictionaries and synonyms or antonyms to deal successfully with unfamiliar words, to overcome various problems encounter by learners and make them engaged in the learning environment.

Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Language learning strategies encourage greater overall self-direction for learners. Self-directed learners are independent learners who are capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning and gradually gaining confidence, involvement and proficiency (Oxford, 1990). Thus, students need training in vocabulary learning strategies. Research has shown that many learners do use more strategies to learn vocabulary especially when compared to such integrated tasks like listening and speaking. However, Students at schools still face problems in the four skills which can be due to lack of vocabulary achievement. It is difficult for them to improve their vocabulary; on the one hand, they sometimes forget the vocabulary materials that the teacher has explained. On the other hand, they do not acquire any vocabulary at all; students are often bored and not interested in the subject. This could be a result of the traditional methods and strategies the teachers use. Thus, for teaching vocabulary, teachers should create effective and various teaching strategies to explain vocabulary and increase motivation in the learning and the teaching process.

Vocabulary is a vital part of language that students need to master in order to communicate effectively. However, within the context of English as a foreign language, the most significant problem encountered by foreign language learners is this aspect of language. In this study, we will investigate whether vocabulary teaching strategies can help EFL learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge or not.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

On the basis of what have been said above, we have noticed that Third year secondary school foreign language learners in Jijel face serious problems in developing their vocabulary. The reason behind this is probably due to the strategies teachers use to teach vocabulary. Hence, in order to improve students' vocabulary knowledge, teachers should pay attention to the selection of the vocabulary teaching strategies that suit the students' learning.

## **3. Aim of the study**

In the process of learning and teaching a foreign language, vocabulary is of crucial importance. The principal aim of this study is to examine what teaching strategies teachers use to explain vocabulary knowledge to third year foreign language learners.

## **4. Research Question**

This study seeks to answer the following question:

- What are the appropriate teaching strategies teachers use to explain vocabulary?

## **5. Research Hypothesis**

In order to answer the research questions, it is hypothesized that: if teachers use the appropriate teaching vocabulary explanation strategies, learners will better enhance their vocabulary repertoire.

## **6. Research Methodology**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate vocabulary teaching strategies English teachers use to explain vocabulary words like guessing from context, using dictionary, synonyms /antonyms, translation and other strategies. In the course of this research, two instruments will be used. First, an observation during the teaching process will take place in different sessions inside the classroom with third year secondary school foreign language learners in "8 Mai 1945" , Jijel. Second, a questionnaire will be handed and administered to (28) English teachers who will be the population of this study. The aim of these research tools is to find out about the teaching strategies used to explain new vocabulary.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

The present research is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter will contain two sections. The first section will outline some theoretical views about vocabulary while the second section will highlight vocabulary explanation strategies. The second chapter will contain two sections. The first section deals mainly with the research methodology and the second section provides the results along with the analysis and discussion.

**Chapter One**  
**Review of the Literature**

## Chapter One

### Review of the Literature

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## **Chapter One**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Vocabulary acquisition is considered as an integral and fundamental area of language teaching and learning. Whether the language is first, second or foreign, it would be impossible to learn a language without its lexis. Indeed, a large rich vocabulary gives language learners the right words to use at the right time and also enables them to express their real thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Furthermore, teaching vocabulary is supposed to consist not only of teaching specific words but also providing learners with strategies necessary to speed up their vocabulary knowledge (Hulstjin, 1993). Since, vocabulary is an inseparable element which is used to activate learners' both mind and ability to express the intended meaning in the field, teachers make use of many techniques to teach and develop their learners' knowledge of vocabulary.

This chapter includes two sections named vocabulary, and vocabulary explanation strategies. The first section discusses vocabulary issue as well as its sub-sets, including definition of a word, what is involved in knowing a word, and word mastery. In addition, the definition of vocabulary, its description, its relation with the four skills, how it is learnt and taught. Finally, it will conclude with the importance of vocabulary. The second section discusses four main aspects related to vocabulary explanation strategies: a perspective about vocabulary and language teaching, vocabulary teaching in some approaches and methods, vocabulary teaching strategies and the purpose behind teaching vocabulary.

## 1.1. Vocabulary Issue

All languages have words. Language emerges first as words, both historically, and in terms of the way each of us learned his first and subsequent languages. The acquisition and the coining of new words never stops. This part aims at introducing some basic terms and concepts in the analysis of vocabulary. The main emphasis is on the exploration of what constitutes a word. In order to understand that, one first has to determine '*what it means to know a word*'?

### 1.1.1. Defining a Word

Everybody is aware that without vocabulary there is no tool for communication. However, different people see words and vocabulary differently. It is pointed out that in some sense, "Everyone knows what a word is " (Carter, 1998, p.4). He argues that "A word is a minimum meaningful unit of language that carries meaning and which can stand on its own as a reply to any question or statement" (Carter, 1998, p. 4). However, a closer examination reveals the usefulness of every day common-sense notions of a word.

#### a) Orthographic words

An Orthographic word, quite simply, is any sequence of bounded letters which has a white space at each end but no white space in the middle. The orthographic word is generally of very little linguistic interest and only formalistic because it is bound to the form of a word but it is not sensitive to distinctions of meaning or grammatical function (Carter, 1998).

#### b) Lexical items

Carter (1998) defines a lexical item or a lexeme as being the abstract unit which underlines some of the variants observed in connection with 'words'. He states that lexemes are the basic, contrasting units of vocabulary in a language. Therefore, when we look up words in a dictionary, we are looking up lexemes rather than word, i.e. '*brought*'



and *'bringing'* will be found under an entry for *'BRING'* which realizes different word forms. Carter (1998) argues that a lexical item is an abstract unit, and it must be represented in speech or writing by one of the possibly several forms it can assume for grammatical purposes (p. 7).

#### **c) Grammatical word-forms**

In view of what has been stated above, a grammatical word-form is one of the several forms that may be assumed by a lexical item for grammatical purposes. Thus, a distinction between grammatical words and lexical words is necessary. Grammatical words comprise a small and finite class of words which include pronouns, articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. They are, most of the time, known as "function words". On the other hand, lexical words are potentially unlimited and also known as "content words" which include nouns, adjectives, verbs and Adverbs (Thornbury, 2002).

#### **d) Phonological words**

A phonological word is defined as a piece of speech which behaves as a unit of pronunciation according to criteria which vary from one language to another. The phonological words are of crucial importance in the study of pronunciation, but they are irrelevant to the study of grammar (Carter, 1998).

### **1.1.2. Knowing a word**

Learning words is considered as one of the most important parts of any language and without words there is no communication between people. Knowing a word involves knowing the different meanings carried by a single form; while indeed to master a word is not to learn its meaning but also to learn its register, association, collocation, grammatical behavior, written form, spoken form and frequency. All these properties are known as "word knowledge" (Schmitt, 2005).

## TEACHERS' VOCABULARY EXPLANATION STRATEGIES

Richards (1976) proposes that a lexical item includes knowledge of words frequency, collocation, register, case relations, underlying forms, word association, and semantic structure (as cited in Lai, 2005, p. 5). Nation (2001) indicates that knowing and learning a word means knowing a word receptively and productively. Being able to understand a word while listening to a text is known as receptive knowledge; on the other hand, being able to use a word in spoken and written form is understood as productive knowledge. Schmitt (2000) states that receptive vocabulary is larger than productive vocabulary and people learn words receptively first and later achieve productive knowledge.

Schmitt (2000) proposes the following list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know a word:

- The meaning of the word
- The written form of the word
- The spoken form of the word
- The grammatical behavior of the word
- The collocations of the word
- The register of the word
- The associations of the word
- The frequency of the word

Nation (2001) applies the terms receptive and productive to vocabulary knowledge description covering all the aspects of what is involved in knowing a word (p. 24). The example below demonstrates the receptive knowledge of a word according to Nation (2001). We shall take the word 'underdeveloped' as an example, knowing a word involves:

- Being able to recognize the word when it is heard (form-spoken)
- Being familiar with its written form so that it is recognized when it is met in reading (form-written)

## TEACHERS' VOCABULARY EXPLANATION STRATEGIES

- Recognizing that it is made up of the parts 'under', 'develop' and 'ed' and being able to relate these parts to its meaning (form-word parts)
- Knowing that 'underdeveloped' signals a particular meaning (meaning-form and meaning)
- Knowing what the word means in the particular context in which it has just occurred (meaning-concept and referents)
- Knowing the concept behind the word which will allow understanding in a variety of contexts (meaning-concept and referents)
- Knowing that there are related words like 'overdeveloped', 'backward' and 'challenged' (meaning-associations)
- Being able to recognize that 'underdeveloped' has been used correctly in the sentence in which it occurs (use-grammatical functions)
- Being able to recognize that words such as territories and areas are typical collocations (use-collocations)
- Knowing that 'underdeveloped' is not an uncommon word and is not a pejorative word (use-constraints on use, e.g. register, frequency)

On the other hand, the productive knowledge of a word involves:

- Being able to say it with correct pronunciation including stress (form-spoken)
- Being able to write it with correct spelling (form-written)
- Being able to construct it using the right word parts in their appropriate forms (form-word parts)
- Being able to produce the word to express the meaning 'underdeveloped' (meaning-form and meaning)
- Being able to produce the word in different contexts to express the range of meanings of 'underdeveloped' (meaning-concept and referents)

## TEACHERS' VOCABULARY EXPLANATION STRATEGIES

- Being able to produce synonyms and opposites for 'underdeveloped' (meaning-associations)
- Being able to use the word correctly in an original sentence (use-grammatical functions)
- Being able to produce words that commonly occur with it (use-collocations)
- Being able to decide to use or not to use the word to suit the degree of formality of the situation. (p. 24-26)

Richard (1976) suggests various aspects of what is meant by knowing a word:

- 1) Knowing a word means knowing the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print. For many words we also know the sort of words most likely to be found associated with the word.
- 2) Knowing a word implies knowing the limitations on the use of the word according to variations of function and situation.
- 3) Knowing a word means knowing the syntactic behavior associated with the word.
- 4) Knowing a word entails knowledge of the underlying form of a word and derivations that can be made from it.
- 5) Knowing a word entails knowledge of the network of associations between that word and other words in the language.
- 6) Knowing a word means knowing many of the different meanings associated with the word (p.25). This set of assumptions has frequently been taken as a general framework of vocabulary knowledge, although Nation (1990) incorporate Richards' assumptions and several other components into the following analytical table:

## TEACHERS' VOCABULARY EXPLANATION STRATEGIES

<b>Form</b>		
Spoken form	R	What does the word sound like?
	P	How is the word pronounced?
Written form	R	What does the word look like?
	P	How is the word written and spelled?
<b>Position</b>		
Grammatical patterns	R	In what pattern does the word occur?
	P	In what patterns must we use the word?
Collocation	R	What words or types of words can be expected before or after the words?
	P	What word types or types of words must we use with this word?
<b>Function</b>		
Frequency	R	How common is this word?
	P	How often this word should be used?
Appropriateness	R	Where should we expect to meet this word?
	P	Where can this word be used?
<b>Meaning</b>		
Concept	R	What does the word mean?
	P	What word should be used to express this meaning?
Associations	R	What other words does this word make us think of?
	P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
R= receptive knowledge.		
P= productive knowledge.		

Table 1: Knowing a Word (Nation 2001, p.27)

As can be seen by this listing and based on what has been mentioned above, we can say that true mastery of a word includes knowing several aspects of word knowledge. The more aspects are understood, the more likely it will be employed in the right contexts in an appropriate manner.

### **1.1.3. Word mastery**

Richard (1992) states that it is not an easy matter to decide about the meaning of a word since it involve various aspects of knowledge. According to him, knowing a word means how frequently this word is encountered in spoken and written input, and words different usage. Furthermore, it means also knowing word families, classes, building and the different meanings associated with the word's semantic value.

In the same area, Nation (1997) mentions three aspects of knowledge involved in knowing a word which are:

1.1.3.1. Knowledge of the form of the word (spoken, written and word parts).

1.1.3.2. Knowledge of the meaning of the word (what does a given word refer to, and knowledge of words whose meaning has relationship with that word).

1.1.3.3. Knowledge of the use of that word including the grammatical function and the different constraints on its use. The main difference between Richard's assumptions and Nation's components of word knowledge is in the distinction between the receptive and the productive knowledge of vocabulary. This indicates that there is a difference between recognizing a word once we hear or see it and the ability to use it when we speak or write it.

#### **1.1.4. Definition of vocabulary**

The definition of vocabulary often relates to the different views about the nature and use made of vocabulary. In the Longman dictionary (1995) vocabulary is defined as all the words that someone knows, learns, or uses. Thornbury (1997) states that vocabulary or lexis in English is frequently used interchangeably. Graves (2000) defines vocabulary as the entire stock of words belonging to a branch of knowledge or known by an individual . Miller (1999) extends Graves 'definition further by stating that vocabulary is a set of words that are the basic building blocks used in generating and understanding sentences. Furthermore, vocabulary is known as evolutionary in the sense that constant changes are made all the time because of the introduction and omission of words in a language .It is for that reason that Rivers (1968) defines it as that aspect of language which continues to develop and evolve for as long as one has contact with whether it is one's first, second, or third language (p. 23). Broadly defined, vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings (Osborn & Laher, 2004, p. 5). However, the word vocabulary is more complex than it seems at first sight, not in the sense of word stock a person may have but in how those words were acquired and put to use.

#### **1.1.5. Vocabulary description**

In order to describe and study vocabulary in a convenient way, we must have recourse to lexicography and lexicology: two branches of linguistics that are concerned with the study of vocabulary and its different forms and uses.

##### **1.1.5.1. Lexicology**

Jackson and Amvela (2000) define lexicology as the study of words in a given language and analysis of lexis, understood as the stock of words in a given language, i.e. its vocabulary, as well as their meaning and evolution .It is concerned with word classes (how they are formed by affixation or compounding), word formation, and word meaning.

### 1.1.5.1.1. Word Category: Class

Word class is defined as a grammatical term to describe words that belong to the same part of speech. Thornbury (2002) believes that the English language is classified in "eight different word classes": noun, pronoun, adjective, verbs, adverb, preposition, determiner and conjunction (p.3-4).

### 1.1.5.1.2. Word Formation

According to Grains & Redman (1986), "word building" or "word formation" takes three main forms which are characteristics of English: affixation, compounding and conversion.

- **Affixation** is the operation of adding prefixes and suffixes to the base item. In this way, items can be modified in meaning and/or changed from one part of speech to another.
- **Compounding** is the formation of words from two or more separate words (with separate meaning) which can stand independently in other circumstances to form a new word different in meaning from the ones which make it.
- **Conversion**, also called zero affixation, is the process by which an item may be used in different word classes, yet does not change its form (p. 47).

### 1.1.5.1.3. Word Meaning

Carter (1998) states that the meaning of words and their relationship is often understood and learned through the use of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, or polysemy.

**a. Synonymy:** This is essentially a bilateral or symmetrical sense relation in which more than one linguistic form can be said to have the same conceptual or propositional meaning. This does not mean that the words should be totally interchangeable in all contexts; but where synonyms are substituted changes in the propositional meaning of the sentence as a whole do not occur. For example, sub- senses of *house*, *abode*, *domicile*, and *home* are synonyms in some contexts.



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**b. Antonymy:** there are different kinds of contrasts in meaning, but basic to an antonymy is a notion of semantic opposition or unrelatedness. Demarcation within antonymic sense relations can be made as follows:

- **Complementarity:** This is where the presence of one sense component excludes another. For example, the relationship between *alive* and *dead* is such that to use one logically entails the denial of the other. An entity cannot be both simultaneously and there is no continuum or gradation between the terms. Other examples would be *single-married*; *male-female*.
- **Converseness:** These are contrastive lexical relations where there is a measure of logical reciprocity. e.g. *husband-wife*; the sentence *he is her husband*, can be 'reversed' to produce the reciprocal correlate *she is his wife*. Converseness contrasts with 'complementarity' in that there is interdependence of meaning. Other examples would be *buy-sell*; *above-below*.
- **Incompatibility:** This refers to relational contrasts between items in a semantic field (words which co-occur with reference to a familiar topic). It occurs in such sets as seasons, days of the week, cycles, and generic types. For example, *rose*, *daffodil* and *chrysanthemum*; *red*, *blue* and *yellow* would be incompatibles. *The house is red* excludes that it is any other colour.
- **Antonymy:** This may now be used as an inclusive term for all the above contrastive sense relations but also, in relation to opposition, in the more restrictive sense of *gradable* opposites. e.g. *hot-cold*; *big-small*; *good-bad*, which are all gradable relative to each other with reference to a norm. We must note here, however, that the same word can be antonymous with more than one word depending on different semantic network. E.g. *old* can be an antonym of *young* and of *new*.

**c. Hyponymy:** Reference above to super- and subordinate relations leads to consideration of what have generally been termed 'inclusive' sense relations. Hyponymy is a relationship existing between specific and general lexical items in that the meaning of the specific item is included in, and by, the meaning of the more general item. In short, hyponymy is a kind of asymmetrical synonymy; its basic organization is hierarchical. *Tulips* and *roses* are co-hyponyms, for example, and are linked by their common inclusion under a *superordinate* (or *hypernym*) *flower* in whose class they belong.

**d. Polysymy:** In a language, the same word may have a set of different meaning. This is polysymy; which means 'many meaning'. The precise meaning of the word is derived from the context it is used in (p. 34-35).

#### **1.1.5.2. Lexicography**

The act of compiling, comparing, defining and grouping lexical items in a book form is known as lexicography. It is in other words, the act of making the inventory of language words and gathering them in a book called a dictionary. In a dictionary, the list of the lexical items of a language is put in an alphabetical order with information about the spelling, the pronunciation, the meaning and the usage. Since lexicography has the objective of realizing dictionaries, it tries to make a synthesis of different fields of knowledge from etymology, lexicology and semantic (Carter, 1998).

#### **1.1.6. Vocabulary and the Four Skills**

As an element linking the four skills in EFL, vocabulary plays the most significant role in foreign language learning. Students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately and appropriately for a successful communication.

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In order to understand how vocabulary items work or relate to the four language skills, it will be helpful to know the four categories of vocabulary learning: listening vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, reading vocabulary and writing vocabulary.

Listening vocabulary: refers to words learners use to understand what they hear.

Speaking vocabulary: refers to words learners use when they speak.

Reading vocabulary: concerns words in prints that they recognize and use to understand what they read.

Writing vocabulary: involves words learners use in their own writing.

Based on the type of vocabulary in general, listening and reading are vital inputs; very helpful in receiving information and knowledge, since they are both used to understand language which was produced by other people. Thus, listening and reading are known as "receptive skills" while speaking and writing are "productive skills" where learners produce language forms to convey messages. Nation (2000).

### **1.1.7. Types of Vocabulary**

Based on what has been mentioned above, vocabulary plays a dominant role while the four skills and word knowledge together come into two kinds: receptive and productive vocabulary. By receptive vocabulary, we mean the words that we recognize when we hear or see them. Productive vocabulary includes the words that we use when we speak or write. Thus, according to Nation (2001) receptive vocabulary use involves perceiving the form of a word while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning .Whereas, productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form. Grains and Redman (1986) state that "receptive vocabulary" means to understand language items which can only be recognized and comprehend in the context of reading and listening material, and

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productive vocabulary to be language items which the learner can recall and use appropriately in speech and writing (p. 64).

Ellis and Tomlinson (1980) argue that a learner's passive vocabulary consists of the total number of lexical items which he can understand correctly and the learner's active vocabulary consists of the total number of lexical items which he can accurately use in speech and writing. A learner's passive vocabulary will always be larger than his active vocabulary as he will have heard or read items which he will never need to use, and he will be able to understand approximately many items which he cannot use with any degree of accuracy( as cited in Akar ,2010 ,p. 16-17).

Receptive carries the idea that we receive language input from others through listening or reading and try to comprehend it. Productive carries the idea that we produce language forms by speaking and writing to convey messages to others. The terms passive (for listening and reading) and active (for speaking and writing) are sometimes used as synonyms for receptive and productive (Meara, 1990; Corson, 1995; Laufer, 1998, p. 37-38).

All in all, vocabulary items can be generally categorized into receptive or passive, productive or active vocabulary. It is obvious that vocabulary is vital for the improvement of the four language skills.

### **1.1.8. How is Vocabulary Learnt**

Learning vocabulary is an essential step in learning a second or a foreign language since words are the main way of conveying or receiving messages. McCarten (2007) suggests that there is a lot to learn about vocabulary in terms of its range, the sheer number of words or phrases to learn, and the depth of knowledge students need to know about each vocabulary item. Materials can help students in two broad areas: First, they need to present and practice in natural contexts the vocabulary that is frequent, current, and appropriate to

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learners' needs. Second, materials should help students become better learners of vocabulary by teaching different techniques and strategies they can use to continue learning outside the classroom (p. 19).

Knowing a word is one thing, but how that knowledge is acquired is an important matter that needs to be clarified. Learners use a wide variety of strategies to acquire new words. Good language learners tend to take responsibility for improving their own vocabulary, while less successful learners do not.

Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) view that a way to manage the learning of huge amounts of vocabulary is through indirect or incidental learning. An example of this is learning new words (or deepening the knowledge of already known words) in context through extensive listening and reading. Learning from context is so important that some studies suggest that first language learners learn most of their vocabulary in this way (Sternberg, 1987). Extensive reading is a good way to enhance word knowledge and get a lot of exposure to the most frequent and useful words. At the earlier and intermediate levels of language learning, simplified reading books can be of great benefit. Other sources of incidental learning include problem-solving, group work activities (Joe, Nation and Newton, 1996) and formal classroom activities where vocabulary is not the main focus (p. 11).

### **1.1.9. How is Vocabulary Taught**

Vocabulary teaching is a way which is considered as one of the most important mechanisms of any educational context and building up vocabulary is a complicated process that takes a long time. Inside the classroom, the teacher's interference is necessary. Thus, she/ he should not only understand the students' difficulties of word study, but also is supposed to adopt strategies and techniques to deal successfully with unfamiliar words.

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Only in this way she/ he can help to improve the students' language competence and their ability to use English freely in communication.

Seal (1991) classified vocabulary teaching strategies as planned and unplanned activities in classrooms. As the terms show, the unplanned strategies refer to occasions when words may be learned incidentally and accidentally in class when students request particular meanings of the word, or when the teacher becomes aware of any relevant words to which attention needs to be drawn.

Unplanned vocabulary teaching strategies may differ from teacher to teacher, from lesson to lesson, or even from class to class. Nevertheless, when the teacher decides to use an item or a set of vocabulary items during the course of the lesson are called the planned strategies.

Furthermore, Allen (1983) adds that "Language teachers are responsible for creating conditions which encourage vocabulary expansion "(p. 28). They make use of many techniques to teach and develop their learners' knowledge of vocabulary to help them build a great deal of words and convey their intended messages in different contexts at anytime and anywhere. Much works have also addressed the strategies teachers use to facilitate learners' development of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. Grains & Redman, 198; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997).

### **1.1.10. The importance of Vocabulary**

In spite of little attention to research, the importance of vocabulary was not completely ignored in language pedagogy, even during the heydays of the development of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). For example, Wilkins (1972), as an early representative advocate of the Communicative Approach, clearly indicated that learning vocabulary is as important as grammar. Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their

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own ideas. Thus, Wilkins (1972) once said "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed"(as cited in Thornbury, 2002, p. 13). Pikulski and Templeton (2004) point out that it seems almost impossible to overstate the power of words; they literally have changed and will continue to change the course of world history. Perhaps the greatest tools we can give students for succeeding, not only in their education but more generally in life, is a large, rich vocabulary and the skills for using those words. Our ability to function in today's complex social and economic worlds is mightily affected by our language skills and word knowledge.

Allen (1983) also emphasized that "Lexical problems frequently interfere with communication that breaks down when people do not use the right words" (p. 5). This underlines the importance of vocabulary in classroom teaching, as without vocabulary, it is difficult to communicate. Nevertheless, at that time priority to teaching was given to the notional and functional aspects of language, which were believed to help learners achieve communicative competence directly, so the teaching of vocabulary was much less directly emphasized in many ELT classrooms.

Vocabulary is obviously a very important element within a language as the overwhelming majority of meaning is carried lexically. Therefore, something to be taken into consideration both in SL/FL teaching. According to Nation (1990), vocabulary is a very important part in English language learning, and no one can communicate in any meaningful way without vocabulary.

Vocabulary and Grammar are both essential in a good language learning classroom, but vocabulary is much more important and should receive more attention than grammar. Allen (1983) asserts that in the best classes there is an equal focus on both grammar and vocabulary. But, vocabulary must have the priority to be taught before grammar. Indeed

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words are the most important things students must learn. Grammar is important, but vocabulary is much more important.

To summarize, vocabulary is of crucial importance in the sense that language learners with vocabulary knowledge can achieve a great success in their classroom environment because rich vocabulary enables them to express their real thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

In this section, we presented a brief overview about vocabulary in accordance with its importance in teaching and learning a foreign language. In the coming section, we will discuss some key strategies and techniques teachers use to explain new vocabulary items for their learners inside the FL classrooms.



## **1.2. Vocabulary Explanation Strategies**

By using creative and effective vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classrooms, students will experience success with the content and will be able to communicate with various registers. This section attempts to discuss vocabulary and language teaching, vocabulary in the major teaching methods, the various vocabulary explanation strategies and the purpose of teaching vocabulary.

### **1.2.1. Vocabulary and Language Teaching**

English is one of the most important languages in the world and it is used as the main language for communication. Schmitt (1997) stated that "The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary"(p. 201). Thus, vocabulary is very important in teaching foreign language because it must be learned by students early and correctly and without knowing vocabulary, they will encounter difficulties in learning English. Vocabulary is vital because if the students do not master it well, they will face problems in understanding the new language. Though, by teaching vocabulary, it will be easier for students to understand a sentence since they have known the meaning of each word. Learning vocabulary is necessary in every stage of language teaching and learning.

### **1.2.2. Vocabulary in the Major Teaching Methods**

Vocabulary teaching is a way which is considered as one of the most important mechanisms of any educational context. The most important reason lies in the fact that vocabulary is a vehicle, which carries meaning. Focus on teaching vocabulary has recently been under investigation, somewhat as a result of "The development of new approaches to language teaching, which are much more 'word-centered'" (Thornbury, 2004, vi).

In language teaching, there have been various directions in FL teaching from Grammar Translation, to Direct, to Audio-Lingual Method, to CLT. Each of these

directions has its own view on how a FL has to be taught, and has equally treated the question of vocabulary teaching and learning according to its beliefs and principles.

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) of foreign language teaching is one of the most traditional methods, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was originally used to teach 'dead' languages. Richards and Rodgers (1986) state that "The Grammar Translation Method is a way of studying a language through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences into and out of the target language"(p. 3). In the Grammar Translation Method, great accumulation is set by the learning of many FL words. Lexis is not presented and taught in context but in bilingual lists that are to be memorized and vocabulary is presented and taught mainly through memorization and direct translation from the native language. However, it is noticed that vocabulary learned for one unit is not reinserted in other units, and as a result, students rapidly forget a great amount of it. In addition, vocabulary teaching through the GTM does not allow the learners to get the meaning of words easily or at all because they are not put in any context. However, this method can, at least, help the learners have their equivalents in the mother tongue or target language (Richard & Rodger, 1986).

The Direct Method focuses on the learning of everyday vocabulary. The words that students learn are combined not with first language equivalents but with pictures, actual objects (realia) or actions. This combination of words is used relying on the exclusive use of the target language (Krashen, 1987). Rivers (1968) specifies the aims of this method as "Developing listening and speaking skills first, as the foundation on which to build the skills of reading and writing"(p.23). The belief at that time was that in learning a new language, it is more important to master its sounds and its grammatical structures than

learning its vocabulary. All what learners need, at first, is just enough elementary vocabulary to practice the syntactic structures.

At that time, different views and orientations in linguistics and psychology from structuralism to behaviorism helped the progress of the Audio-Lingual Method. Vocabulary learning in this method is given a minor role until students achieve a complete mastery of the elementary structural patterns and are able to express themselves freely within a limited area of language. Vocabulary teaching is contextualized; but while pronunciation and intonation are given high credit, meaning is secondary. This method aims to form good habits through students listening to model dialogues with repetition and drilling but little or no teacher explanation. Moreover, the Audio-lingual Method became the primary teaching method, where vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context, there is much use of tapes, language labs, visual aids, great importance is attached to pronunciation and very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted (Richard & Rodger, 1986).

By the mid 1970's, the word started to be learned in context and semantics began to play a very important role in vocabulary teaching; vocabulary has even started to be regarded as a skill that should not be subsumed by other aspects of language. The Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the name which has been given to a set of beliefs which included not only a re-examination of what aspects of language to teach, but also a shift in emphasis in how to teach. It is based on beliefs that learners will learn best if they participate in meaningful communication.

The communicative approach is an umbrella term to describe the methodology which teaches students how to communicate efficiently. It also lays emphasis on students' responsibility for their own learning; it involves cooperation within group, self-activity, and dictionary work (Richard & Rodger, 1986).

### **1.2.3. The Purpose of Teaching Vocabulary**

Pikulski and Templeton (2004) hold that one reason teachers are concerned about teaching vocabulary is to facilitate the comprehension of a text that students will be assigned to read. If students do not know the meaning of many of the words that they will encounter in a text, their comprehension of that selection is likely to be compromised. When the purpose of vocabulary instruction is to facilitate the comprehension of a selection, it is obvious that this instruction must take place as an introduction before the reading of the selection. A second major reason for teaching the meaning of words is to increase the number of words that students know and can use in a variety of educational, social, and eventually work-related areas (p. 5-6).

### **1.2.4. Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary**

Learners acquire vocabulary in various ways and they are exposed to a lot of new vocabulary during lessons: by the teacher, by texts or through other materials they work with. A lot of this vocabulary is automatically absorbed (Harmer, 1991). Various strategies and techniques are aimed directly at learning vocabulary, which is usually put into sets of somehow related words, often by topic or meaning. Herrel (2004) states that effective vocabulary teaching strategies enhance word retention, broaden the depth and breadth of word knowledge and therefore expedite the vocabulary development of English language learner. These strategies can be adopted to teach and present new vocabulary items, some are more popular and more often used than others. Also it is up to the teacher to choose which strategies he or she wants to use but always the effectiveness of teaching should be considered.

Grains and Redman (1986) divided techniques of vocabulary presentation in the classroom into two groups: visual techniques and verbal techniques.

### 1.2.4.1. Visual Techniques

In teaching the meaning of words, especially at the elementary stage, we should try to establish a link between the word and the meaning by using one of the following means or techniques depending on the words to be taught:

- a) Realia i.e. objects in the class, including the students themselves, and others brought to class.
- b) Pictures, photos, drawing, flashcards, slides, wall charts, and transparencies.
- c) Mime, gestures, actions, and facial expressions.

These techniques are extensively used for conveying meaning and are particularly useful for teaching concrete items of vocabulary such as food or furniture, and certain areas of vocabulary like places, professions, descriptions of people, actions and activities (such as sport and verbs of movement). They often lend themselves easily to practice activities involving students' interaction. For example, a set of pictures illustrating sporting activities could be used as means of presenting items such as skiing, sailing, and climbing (p. 73).

As Hill (1990) points out that "The standard classroom is usually not a very suitable environment for learning languages" (p.15). Teachers search for various aids and stimuli to improve this situation. Pictures are one of these valuable aids and they bring images of reality into the unnatural world of the language classroom. Also, pictures are cheap, often free, personal (teacher selects them); flexible, easily kept, useful for various types of activities (drilling, comparing), and they are always fresh and different; which means they come in a variety of formats and styles and the learner often wonders what comes next. Moreover, the teacher might as well assign colors to words with their pictures that can be directly linked to vocabulary. This strategy of word associations is known to help students learn words or phrases faster than learning them independently. The use of pictures helps

to create a mental image and develops the students' semantic mapping. When students encounter one of the words in this grouping, it is easier to recall other related words.

Wright (1990) states that "Drawings provide an immediately available source of pictorial material for the activities. Student and teachers' drawings also have a special quality, which lies in their immediacy and their individuality" (p. 203).

Wright and Haleem (1996) said that although some teachers may not be exactly proficient in drawing, they are eventually bound to find a way of drawing simple pictures for classroom use. The element of individuality might have a significant impact on remembering. This feature widens the teacher's options how to present or review language in a meaningful way. This is true for teaching structures as well as vocabulary. E.g. in reviewing, the teacher draws only a piece of a picture on the board and invites students to guess what he or she is drawing. This makes students curious, they desire to know what the answer actually is and it makes them speculate and reason their opinions and so on (p. 6).

Wright and Haleem (1996) present another very inspiring idea of using drawing on the board: They suggest using it in combination with flashcards or pictures from magazines, e.g. the teacher draws a scene and supplements it with individual pictures of people, animals or things. The authors presented this technique for teaching structure (p. 8). Drawings are suitable as illustrations for personal expression. That is yet another reason why to use drawing in language teaching and the fact that it gives students the opportunity to express themselves. Every piece of drawing is unique and projecting a piece of personality of its instant mood or state of mind personalizes the learning subject and makes these pictures highly memorable along with the language connected with learners. (p. 203).

#### **1.2.4.2. Verbal Techniques**

In addition to the visual techniques, the verbal techniques are used by FL teachers to clarify new vocabulary terms. These techniques include the use of illustrative situations and the use of synonymy and antonymy.

##### **a) Use of Illustrative Situations (Oral or written)**

This is most helpful when items become more abstract. To ensure that students understand, teachers often make use of more than one situation or context to check that learners have grasped the concept.

##### **b) Use of Synonymy and Antonymy**

Teachers often use synonymy with low level students, where inevitably they have to compromise and restrict the length and complexity of their explanations. It would, for example, be justifiable at low levels to tell students that 'miserable' meant 'very sad'. Secondly, it is commonly used with higher level students and subsequently qualified. 'Bloke', for instance, means the same as 'man', but is colloquial. This qualification is clearly very important.

As with synonymy, antonymy is a technique which students themselves use to ask about the opposite of a new item (Grains & Redman, 1986, p.74).

In addition to the visual and the verbal techniques, Akar (2010) suggests other techniques to present and clarify new items which are called "the aural techniques" where teachers use some materials like:

- a) Sounds from the nature and everyday life (birds twittering different tones of voice).
- b) Poems, nursery rhymes, limericks.
- c) Audio sound tracks from films, plays videos. These may be used solely as audio references and they have flexibility in that the teacher can monitor them stopping, pausing

or moving back and forth, also learners find these materials interesting since they are authentic or realistic.

c) Interviews, dialogues, speeches.

d) Songs, with or without their lyrics (p. 33-34).

#### **1.2.4.3. Guessing from Context**

One of the most important strategies investigated and on which an extensive literature exists is "guessing from context "(Nation, 1990, p. 400). This strategy is essential to vocabulary teaching which provides adequate clues to guess a word's meaning because much of students' exposure to new words occurs as they read. Furthermore, when the teacher explains unfamiliar words in context, students may have a better understanding of a word since they see and hear how the word is used in daily life or how its meaning is related to their own reality.

Guessing from context (GFC) could be the most generally used strategy among foreign language teachers mainly when they deal with comprehension texts and in situations where other strategies may not be used. Nation (1990) recommends using GFC especially for low frequency words. GFC strategy requires teachers to use linguistics and context. Harmer (2007) explains that learners need to see words in context to understand how they are used. The best way for teachers to help learners catch the meaning of words is may be to read texts, listen to audio tracks and to see or hear those words in action. A major reason why teachers use texts in class for intensive reading or listening is to give them new language input (as cited in Akar p. 17).

Akar (2010) indicates that putting a word in context is more helpful than any verbal explanation of its meaning. In some cases, students guess the word itself, and sometimes derive an idea of its meaning (p. 66). He adds that the ability to guess from context is a valuable skill and should be developed by teachers in class and learners should not be



asked to guess the meaning from context when the context is inadequate. Redman and Grains (1986) argue that contextual guesswork involves making use of the context in which the word appears to derive an idea of its meaning or in some cases to guess from the word itself. Many teachers devise classroom activities to develop the ability to guess from context.

#### **1.2.4.4. Definitions**

One of the key strategies to unfold the information and meaning of a new word to a class is using definitions. Akar (2010) affirms that definition alone is often inadequate as a means of conveying meaning. Therefore, contextualized examples are required by language teachers to clarify the limits of the item. For example, 'to break out in a fire', 'broke out' has the sense of 'to start', but this would be misleading because it might encourage the learner to think that 'the lesson broke out' were acceptable English (p. 35). Definitions in the target language may be very handy if they are expressed in terms that are better known or more easily guessed than the word that is defined. In these directions teachers and students can refer to authentic and reliable dictionaries.

#### **1.2.4.5. Dictionary Use**

Using dictionaries is the most traditional strategy employed by teachers of a FL. Dictionaries can be used for a wide range of purposes; they are a good source of information and can also be aids to learning. In order for teachers to explain the meaning of a new word, they usually ask students to look up the word in the dictionary, or infer it from context, or from its structure. Hulstijn (1993) found evidence that the amount of dictionary consultation depends on the task. Dictionary gives, in an alphabetical order, the meaning of words of language. It includes a word's spelling, syllables, pronunciation, origin, meaning, etc. Using a dictionary helps teachers to explain and present new vocabulary items. In addition, it is a comprehensive source of general information for

students. There are two categories of dictionaries which are used by teachers as a useful strategy to enhance and improve the students' knowledge of vocabulary. First, there is the bilingual dictionary (BD) which is also known as translation dictionary and this kind of dictionaries translates a word from a target language into the learner's mother tongue or vice versa. Second, the monolingual dictionary (MD) is another sort that helps the learner to enrich his vocabulary. This type of dictionary is usually directed for native language learners. Dictionaries help both teachers to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learners to enlarge their culture about language and to develop their skills.

Usually, students want to know the meaning of many words that teachers can teach, Dictionary provides one of the best resources for students who wish to increase the number of words they understand. Using a dictionary was, at times, synonymous with laziness on the part of the students who were considered to be unwilling to use their own resources and guess the meaning by themselves. However, in certain situations, dictionary can be a valuable support and be a quick way of finding information. This is, in fact, important especially for students learning outside the classroom; it gives them autonomy of learning (Grains & Redman, 1986).

#### **1.2.4.6. Translation**

Translation is the process of giving the equivalence of words in a target language from the mother tongue or another language. It is a valuable means for teaching and acquiring vocabulary. Translation is used by teachers as an effective way of conveying meaning of unknown lexical words because it can save valuable time that might otherwise be spent on a tortuous and largely unsuccessful explanation in English, and it can be a very quick way to dispose of low frequency items that may worry the students but do not warrant significant attention. Grains and Redman (1986) argue that "Translation may be legitimate for items possessing a clear mother-tongue equivalent, but should otherwise be

avoided"(p. 75). This is possibly overstating the case. Translation may not always convey the exact sense of an item, but then neither does English synonyms or definitions on many occasions. A more real danger with translation is that if teachers overuse the mother tongue inside the classroom as a framework on which to attach L2 items, students will not develop the necessary framework to take account of sense relations between different items in the new language (p. 75).

#### **1.2.4.7. Games**

Teachers are responsible for creating a constructive classroom atmosphere, which encourages vocabulary expansion. The use of media and various techniques in vocabulary teaching has a great effect on vocabulary achievement. Using games is one of the best techniques that teachers use when teaching and presenting vocabulary lexical terms. To reinforce important concepts and provide sufficient practice, teachers should create effective and various kinds of games to increase motivation in their students.

Akar (2010) states that games are helpful because when teachers use them, they can make students feel that certain words are important and necessary because without those words, the aim of the game cannot be achieved and a well- chosen game can help students acquire English words (p. 53). Thornbury (2002) indicates that "Games are the fun factor may help make words more memorable" (p. 102). Bodson, et al. (1981) proposed that" A game is a wonderful way to break the routine of classroom drill by providing relaxation while remaining within the framework of language learning" (p. 123).

Allen and Valette (1977) state that games have proved to be a better way to engage students and help them retain information in the classroom. Teachers need to consider possible ways of developing exercises that students can carry out with new words to realize varied lexical features. Similarly, a matching exercise and a crossword puzzle can be designed with the target words as a warm up or a closure to a lesson can attract students'

attention and motivate them to learn vocabulary. In addition, using puzzles is considered as a tool that allows FL teachers to add color to their classroom activities and to make them lively by providing challenge and entertainment at the same time. Crossword puzzles enable teachers to teach unknown vocabulary terms in a more recent ways and give learner the opportunity to prepare themselves to become capable learners; rely on themselves to develop self-confidence and achieve better results.

#### **1.2.4.8. Flashcards**

It can be seen that flashcards have been used for teaching a variety of purposes during the history of foreign language teaching. They can be adopted as a useful mean for both teachers and even students like a self-study vehicle. Flashcards are also helpful for handing out as part of various activities. Schools sometimes have their own library of flashcards, but many teachers build up their own stock.

Flashcards have a lot of functions and they seem to be at teachers' service in vocabulary teaching activities. Specifically, they are used to assist learners with learning vocabularies. Nation (2001) describes this strategy in that a learner writes the word in FL on one side of a card, and its translation in the L1 on the other side. The learner goes through a set of cards and tries to remind its meaning. It is one of the most commonly employed strategies of teaching and learning English among FL learners and by using flashcards, teachers should create various teaching techniques to amplify the students' vocabulary knowledge.

Teachers use flashcards as a tool for presenting and drilling forms of new words to make boring activities more enjoyable, to catch their learners' full attention, to raise their interest in the presented subject and also their motivation. At the same time flashcards (as well as other forms of pictures and visual aids in general) enable students to link the meaning of the words with real-world images immediately. By using flashcards in teachers'

presentation, it is easy to involve learners actively and to combine the presentation with controlled practice. The presentation of vocabulary with flashcards can be done in lots of various ways depending on vocabulary lesson (Nation, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

In summary, in the process of learning a FL/SL, learners need to learn, to understand, and to produce a large amount of words. Vocabulary teaching and learning has greatly developed: many strategies and techniques for teaching/learning vocabulary have been introduced. Hence, there is no doubt that virtually all second /foreign language learners and teachers are aware of the fact that learning a second/ foreign language involves the learning of a large number of words, but how to accomplish this task is often of considerable concern to them.

This chapter discussed mainly, in the first section a brief overview about vocabulary, the definition of a word, knowing a word which involves more than knowing its meaning and form but it entails having mastery of several aspects of word knowledge. Besides the definition of vocabulary and its description, this section also shed light on the relation between vocabulary and the four skills, how is vocabulary learnt and taught, and how is vocabulary important in language teaching and learning. On the other hand, the second section dealt with vocabulary and language teaching, vocabulary in the major teaching methods, several strategies and techniques teachers use to explain and teach vocabulary knowledge and the purpose behind teaching vocabulary.

After dealing with the various strategies teachers use to explain new vocabulary, now we move on to the next chapter that deals with the research methodology, the analysis and the discussion of the results obtained.

## **Chapter Two**

# **Research Methodology, Data Presentation and Interpretation**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Methodology, Analysis and Discussion**

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Methodology, Analysis and Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and analysis of data obtained through the implementation of the present research. It consists of two sections; the first section presents a full description of research methodology designed to investigate the strategies used by English teachers to explain new items of vocabulary and enhance students' knowledge and acquisition of new words .It provides a description of the research tools, the population (participants), the nature of the study, the description of both the classroom observation and the teachers' questionnaire and the limitations of the study. This section is considered as an introduction to what will be presented in the second section .The second section is concerned with the analysis of data obtained from two different tools, namely, classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire.

#### **2.1. Research Methodology**

This section deals with the main elements related to research methodology: the nature of the study, population and sampling, research tools, procedure, description and administration of questionnaire, description of classroom observation and limitations of the study.

##### **2.1.1. The Nature of the Study**

There is no best way of classifying research methods in the field of education. The choice of the research method is dictated by the nature of the subject to be treated, i.e. the topic, the aim of the research, the sample under investigation, and the collected data impose the use of a specific method. As far as our research is concerned, the most suitable method is qualitative and quantitative data.



In order to meet the needs of our research, a descriptive methodology was used, i.e. in which we try to describe a situational phenomenon and to gather adequate information about it. This method attempts at identifying the teachers' vocabulary explanation strategies used inside the EFL classroom setting, in this sense, we have used two different instruments. The first instrument was an observation during the teaching process as an attempt to collect qualitative data about the explanation strategies and techniques teachers use to present new vocabulary items. The second one was the teachers' questionnaire which was conducted to gather quantitative information about the different strategies used by teachers to explain vocabulary knowledge and if they incorporate them in the FL classroom environment or not.

### **2.1.2. Population and Sampling**

This research is conducted with third year foreign languages secondary school students in "8 Mai 1945" , Jijel during the academic year 2014/2015. Foreign language classes are selected as a sample for the study. The observation is dealt within these classes. The total number of the students' population is exactly 65 students who are subject of interest. The students are of both sexes, multiple levels and their ages ranged between 16 to 21 years old. In addition, they are from different socio-economic background and from different geographical regions in Jijel.

The choice of third year foreign language students as a case of study is done purposefully. We decide to work with them because they are more aware and responsible on their learning and because this is not their first year at the secondary school so they are accustomed with this context of study (Secondary school). The observation sessions are done with only one teacher because she is the only one to accept an outsider in her class. She is a young, inexperienced teacher who graduated from "L'Ecole Normale Supérieure" at Constantine since three years ago.

As far as the teachers' questionnaires are concerned, they were administered to 28 teachers of different secondary schools, different ages, both sexes, different degrees and different years of work experience. They aimed to examine the different strategies teachers use to explain new words of vocabulary.

### **2.1.3. Research Tools**

There are many factors that interfere when intending to choose the most appropriate means of research. In this respect, Beiske (2002) states that time are factors that certainly play an important part in deciding how to approach a given research problem, the subject of the research itself should determine the methods utilized. For the analysis of the results in this research, both quantitative and qualitative data are of equal importance. Quantitative design provides numerical data which can be measured, and qualitative method helps to get a deeper insight into the FL teaching situation by which a clearer picture of the situation can be finally established. In this regard, Dörnyei (2007) writes:

... the qualitative should direct the quantitative and the quantitative feedback into the qualitative in a circular, but at the same time evolving process with each method contributing to the theory in ways that only each can.(p. 43)

Therefore, a mixed-method approach seems to be most appropriate to this study. This has been reflected in the combination of both the quantitative and qualitative method within a piece of research for the sake of providing answers to the research question .To serve the needs of our hypothesis, the empirical touch will be sustained with evidence from two perspectives:

### **2.1.3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire**

For data reliability and validity, a teacher's questionnaire was respectively designed to cross-check the information and process analysis. The questionnaire as one of the most useful tools is often perceived as a partly valid research instrument to elicit available information from the informants. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) consider the questionnaire as being one of the procedures of data collection a researcher can use to provide her/ him with a good and expanded picture of the phenomenon she/he is studying.

Therefore, to ask the correct and the right questions to get reliable data is very important, in the sense that using both types of questions (closed and open questions) may help to get more information to this study.

### **2.1.3.2. Classroom Observation**

Because of human's nature which may consider the fact of being observed as a stressful experience, there has been a risk that teachers may refuse to be observed, i.e. it has been considered as an unwelcome experience for them. In an attempt to have a useful insight in what is happening in the FL teaching situation, the classroom observation was one of the acceptable tools to gather authentic and qualitative data about day-to-day vocabulary strategies language teacher's use in FL classrooms. Mason (1996) states that:

Observations are methods of generating data which involve the researcher immersing him or herself research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions events, and so on, within it. (p. 60)

### **2.1.4. Procedure**

Two instruments were used in this research: a teacher's questionnaire and a classroom observation. The use of questionnaire has provided a considerable amount of data about various

strategies and techniques used by teachers when teaching vocabulary in the FL classes. For the purpose of making the questionnaire authentic and valid, we have selected twenty eight English teachers from five secondary schools in Jijel who are experienced in teaching FL learners and familiar with various vocabulary explanation strategies. It consists of three sections: the first section includes background information about the participants, i.e. age, degree and their years of experience in teaching English; the second one is about teachers' attitudes towards the affective side of learners, their responsibility to motivate learners and establishing a relaxed atmosphere for them. However, in the last section which is the interest of this study, teachers were asked to mention different strategies and techniques used to explain vocabulary knowledge to third year FL learners and to order these strategies from the most important to the least ones, i.e. the strategies that help them to convey the meaning of words to their learners and make them interested in the learning environment. In this questionnaire, teachers were supposed to answer

t w e l v e q u e s t i o n s by ticking statements whenever required or by giving full explanations to open questions. Few of them answered all types of questions while, others ticked only closed questions with no response to the open ones.

As far as classroom observation is concerned, it has contributed to have a full idea about the real teaching experiences of English teachers. The context in which the courses have taken place and in-depth data which have been gathered during observation have constituted an important data source for the study. For this purpose, a checklist has been chosen as an important tool to gather data. Additionally, note-taking was also a basic means to systematically accomplish this task. The observation took place in "8 Mai secondary school" in Jijel, from 29 of March to 27 of April, i.e. about one month and the total number of classroom observation sessions was 12 depending on the timetable of third year FL classes. The elements to be observed in each session were the teaching strategies used to explain vocabulary knowledge and the frequency of their occurrence, i.e. we took notes about the different strategies she used to achieve her objectives and how many times these strategies occur when presenting vocabulary lessons.

### **2.1.5. Description of the Questionnaire**

Teachers' questionnaire (Appendix) seeks to collect data about the teaching of vocabulary and the strategies used to enhance the learners' vocabulary knowledge.

In the introduction of the questionnaire, it was explained to the teachers that the questionnaire aims at investigating the different strategies teachers use to explain vocabulary to their learners. The current questionnaire is composed of (12) questions. The questions are either closed or open questions. In closed questions; the teachers choose 'yes' 'no' answers, or tick the appropriate box and make statements whenever required. In open questions, teachers are requested to give their own explanations. The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

### **2.1.5.1. Section One: Background Information (question 1 —————> question 3)**

This section attempts to get general background information about the teachers involved in this piece of research. The participants have indicated their age, the degree they possessed and an overview of the teaching experience.

### **2.1.5.2. Section Two: Teachers' Concern with the Affective Side of the Learner (question 4 —————> question 8)**

This section intends to gather data about the psychological side of the learners under an important element which is motivation as well as the teachers' concern with the general learning climate 'atmosphere '. These four questions would enable us to determine the extent to which teachers concern themselves with the psychological side of their students which is as essential as the cognitive side.

### **2.1.5.3. Section Three: Teachers' Perception about Vocabulary Teaching Strategies (question 9 —————> question 12)**

This is the most important section in this questionnaire; it provides some strategies teachers use to explain and present new vocabulary items which is our interest in this study.

### **2.1.6. Administration of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were distributed on 21<sup>st</sup> of April and they were supposed to be administered to 28 teachers of English from five Secondary schools in Jijel .However, some teachers were absent in the time when the questionnaires were distributed, whereas others were not generous enough to cooperate and answer them. As a result, only 21 of them were handed back.

Table 2. *Number of Teachers'-Participant*

Schools	Number of Teachers
---------	--------------------

8 Mai 1945	6
Abd el Hamid Ben Badis	5
Draàa Mohamed Sedik	7
Terkhouch Ahmed	5
El Kandy	5
<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>

### 2.1.7. Description of the Classroom Observation

Observation is the first tool used to collect qualitative data about the strategies and techniques teachers use to explain new vocabulary items. It is conducted with third year foreign languages class in "8 Mai 1945" secondary school in Jijel. It has taken place for about one month from 29 of March to 27 April. During this period, most of the teaching strategies have been observed. Most of the parts of the units have been studied. This enables us to see different types of activities and techniques.

### 2.1.8. Limitations of the Study

In conducting this study, we have met a number of limitations. Those limitations can be manifested in two main aspects which are: Time constraints and the number of the sample.

Time constraints can be considered as the most important limitation of the current piece of research. Having more time would be helpful in data collection and analysis of the practical part, enriching the theoretical one and would give our results different

dimensions. Also, the observation was implemented during the third semester, the students were very stressed because they were restricted with a final official exam at the end of the year "the Baccalaureate ".As a result, we faced the problem of absences.

The second limitation of the current piece of research lies in the sample, the questionnaire has been more reliable if the sample was bigger. Different teachers teach different groups of the population, hence different strategies and techniques would be used. Therefore, the number of sample (25%) would not represent the whole population, thus it is difficult to generalize the findings.

We have dealt with the main elements of research methodology ( the nature of the study, population and sampling, research tools, procedure, description of both classroom observation and teachers questionnaire, and limitations of the study) and now, we move on to the presentation and the analysis of data.

## **2.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The section in hand attempts to present data analysis, results and discussion of both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire. Thus, classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire are described, analyzed and interpreted. The results help us to support or refute the hypothesis of this research.

### **2.2.1. Results from Classroom Observation**

As an attempt to summarize data which has been gathered from classroom observation and has been undertaken with close reference to the teacher, the following table represents the most important strategies and techniques teachers use to explain vocabulary words with the frequency of their occurrence .

Table 3. *Results from Classroom Observation*

---

Vocabulary Explanation Strategies being	The Frequency of their occurrence
---	-----------------------------------



observed in the Classroom

---

Translation	4
Synonyms / Antonyms	12
Using Games (Crossword Puzzles)	5
Guessing from Context	15
Visual / Verbal Techniques	7
Dictionary use (Definitions)	10

---

The above table was designed to identify the different vocabulary explanation strategies applied by teachers during the teaching process. These strategies are categorized as follows:

**a) Translation**

During the implementation of the classroom observation, we have noticed that the teacher rarely uses translation or the students' mother tongue. This strategy should be avoided in explaining new vocabulary terms so that students become independent from their first language. Moreover, using translation is prohibited especially for foreign language classes and should be used only when necessary, i.e. if teachers overuse this strategy, learners will be dependent to their first language and they may not progress their vocabulary repertoire. For instance, in a reading comprehension text, the teacher gave a direct translation of words like 'illiterate' and 'grandsons' to the learners' first language in order to explain the meaning of these unfamiliar words. As a result, learners may like this strategy because it contributes to an easy acquisition of new vocabulary terms.

**b) Using Games (Crossword Puzzles)**

From our observation, we can say that when the teacher used games inside the classroom, learners were motivated and interested to learn vocabulary especially when they were asked to do a task in a group work or in a discussion. For instance, in doing the listening and speaking lesson " Earthquake safety measures", learners were asked to reorder the letters to find out the names of natural disasters like: storm, volcano, and hurricane ; they were enjoyed and having fun in doing this crossword puzzle. Games play a great role in creating an enjoyable and exciting atmosphere where the students can practice their vocabulary and encourage vocabulary expansion without getting bored.

**c) Synonyms/ Antonyms**

Another strategy that has been observed during the vocabulary teaching process is the use of synonyms and opposites to explain difficult terms encounter by the students. Throughout the lesson of " Feelings and emotions" the students were asked to give the antonyms of many words by using the appropriate suffixes like: the word 'hopeful', 'happy' , and 'optimistic' or synonyms of some other words like: 'disappointed', 'satisfied', and 'furious'. Thus, using synonyms can avoid repetition of words, and learners can enrich their vocabulary size and express what they feel or think.

**d) Guessing from Context**

Explaining lexical vocabulary terms by using context is of crucial importance in the sense that it helps learners to memorize words easily and enhance their vocabulary repertoire. Furthermore, inferring meaning from context is considered by most of teachers as the key source to efficient vocabulary teaching. In the reading comprehension text, the teacher asks learners to guess the meaning of phrases from context such as 'bottle it up',

'let all of it out' and 'avoid getting involved' and use them in illustrative sentences of their own. Hence, when teachers use this strategy, learners may expand their lexical memory.

**e) Visual / Verbal Techniques (Pictures – Drawing - Dialogues)**

Concerning visual and verbal techniques, the teacher uses some of them like pictures, drawing and real objects because they need much time to be applied for learners, i.e. they are time consuming. Besides, third year students have limited time and are obliged to finish their syllabus since they are restricted with a final official exam at the end of the year "the Baccalaureate exam". Moreover, by using these techniques, the learner can see what is named by the word mentioned such as pointing to the objects like different parts of the classroom, using pictures to show things or even looking at actions and gestures made by the teacher. For example, in the lesson of "Feelings and emotions", she brought pictures into the classroom to teach learners feelings and moods like 'happiness', 'satisfaction', 'sadness' and 'anger'. Consequently, learners were motivated and interested in learning how to express their feelings. Although the visual and verbal techniques are time consuming, learners and teachers like to use them in the teaching / learning environment.

**f) Dictionary Use (Definitions)**

With regard to the use of dictionary, we noticed that almost all students make use of dictionaries and they use them for various purposes like checking the meaning, definitions, synonyms, pronunciation, spelling and translation of unknown words. For instance, during the lesson of "working with words", learners were requested to check the meaning of verbs like 'to emerge', 'to flourish', 'to collapse', and to form their adjectives and nouns. Also, they were asked to find the definitions of some other unfamiliar words like 'civilization', 'culture', 'conquest', and 'merchandise'. Thus, by using dictionaries as an explanation strategy, learners were motivated and involved in the learning environment.

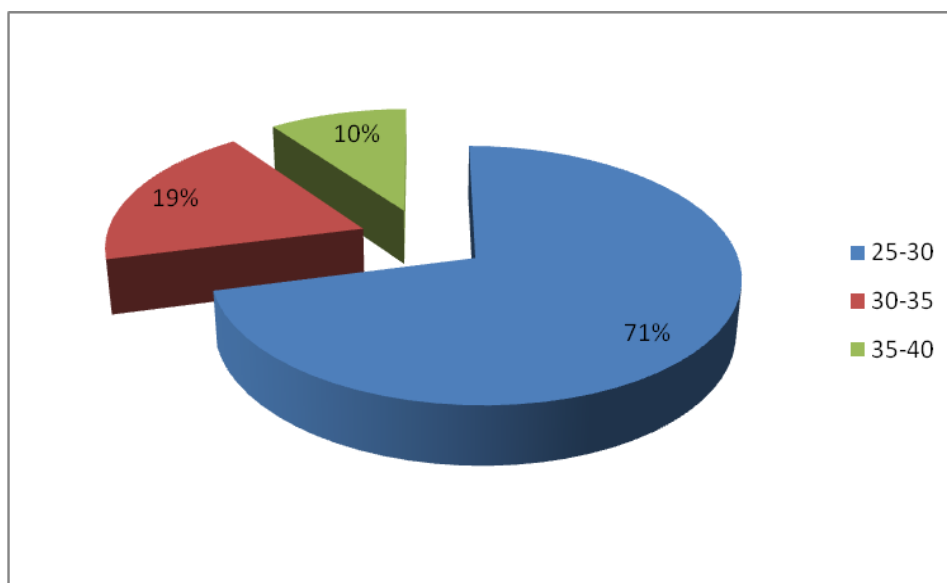
In summary, we can say that teachers use different vocabulary explanation strategies inside the classroom like dictionaries, translation, guessing from context, games and visual / verbal techniques to explain unknown words. Additionally, the frequency of using these strategies depends on the teacher and the type of vocabulary activities.

We have analyzed the results obtained from classroom observation and now we move on to analyze the results obtained from teachers' questionnaire.

### 2.2.2. Results from Teachers' Questionnaire

1: Teachers' responses to question 1: (Indicate your age :)

Figure 1. *Teachers' Age*

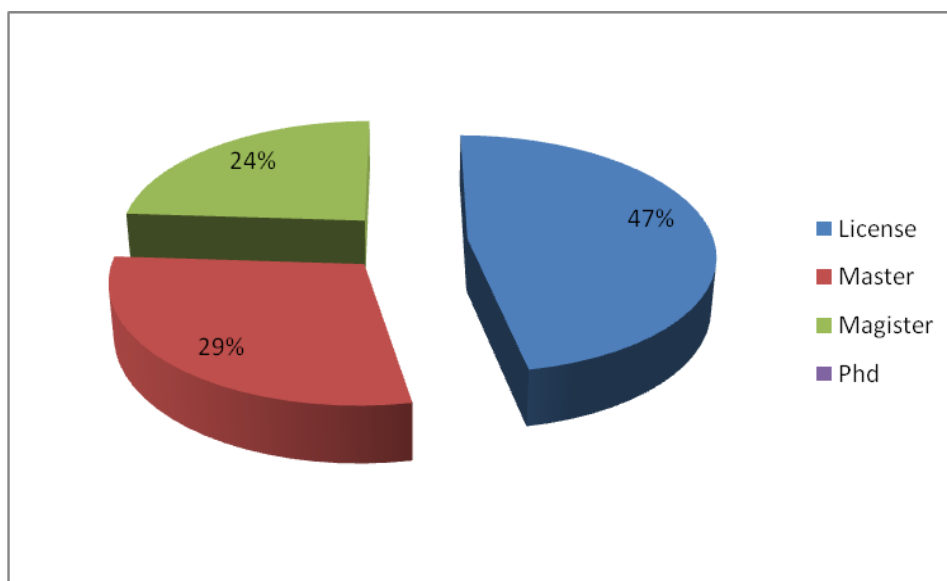


By analyzing this pie- chart, we have noticed that our sample population is between 25 and 40 years old where three age groups in this selected sample population are found. The dominant age group is from 25 to 30 years old which has 71%. Also 19% of teachers are from 30 to 35 years old. 10% are between 35 and 40 years old. The fact of having young teachers clarifies that they have little experience in teaching English.

**2: Teachers' responses to question 2: (Indicate your degree :)**

In this question, teachers were asked about the degree they held. The aim of asking the teachers such a question is to see whether this factor affects in any way or another the teaching of vocabulary.

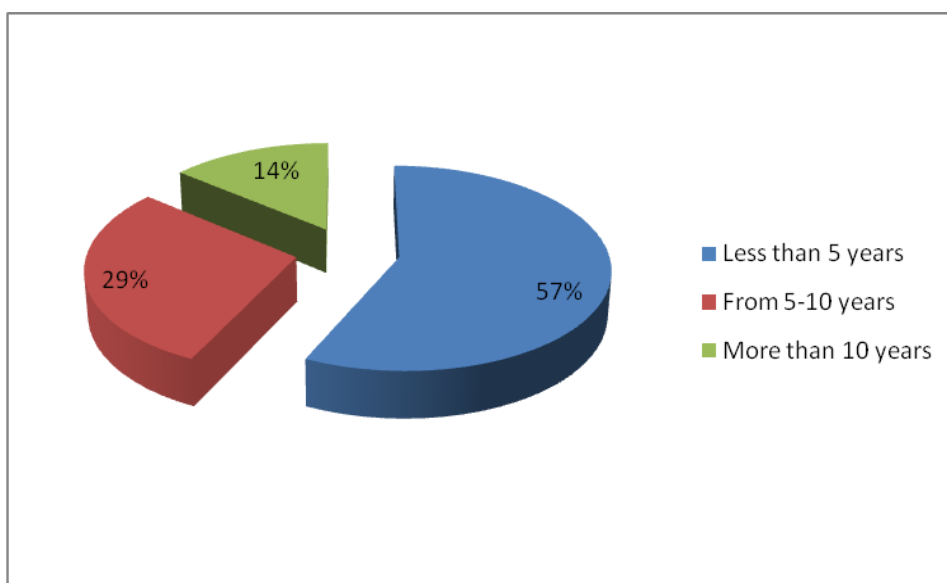
Figure 2. *Teachers' Academic Degree*



As it is plainly displayed in the pie- chart 2, the majority of teachers (47 %) have a License degree, 29% have a Master degree. Whereas, 24% possess a Magister degree and none of them have a Phd degree. This indicates that there is no big significant difference between teachers' qualifications.

**3: Teachers' responses to question 3: (How long have you been teaching English?)**

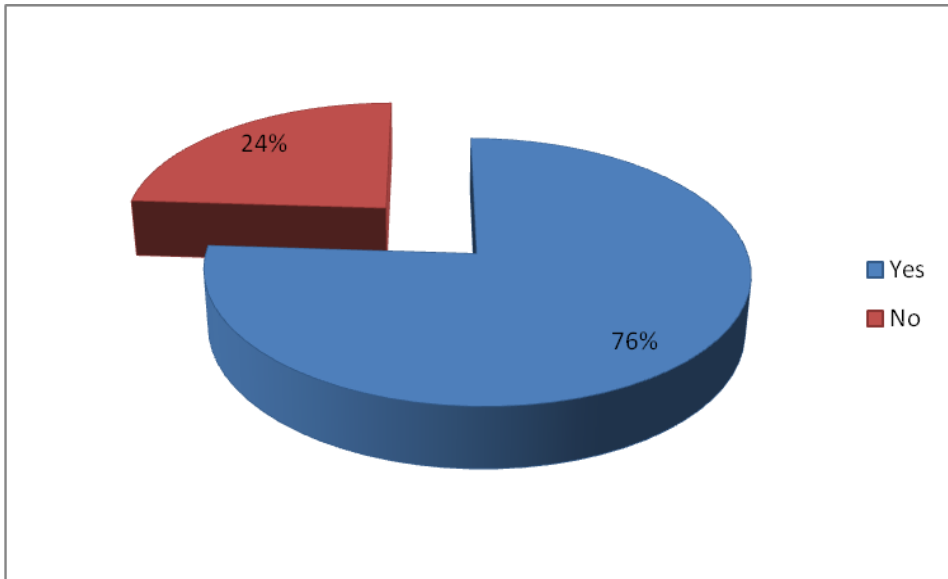
Figure 3. *Teachers' Experience in Teaching English*



This question was devised to have information about the teachers' experience in teaching English. As it is obviously shown in the above pie- chart, the majority of teachers (57%) have less than five years of experience, 14% of them have more than ten years in teaching and 29% of teachers have less than ten years of experience in teaching English. This indicates that teachers belong to different generations and they use different types of approaches, strategies and techniques to teach vocabulary.

**4: Teachers' responses to question 4: (Do you feel that your students are motivated to learn vocabulary?)**

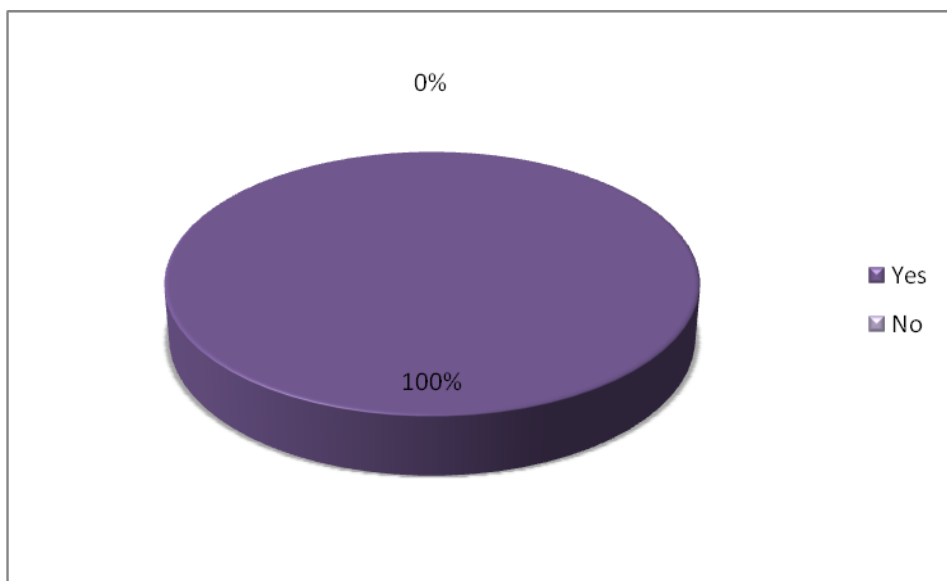
Figure 4. *Teachers' Perception of Students' Motivation towards Vocabulary Learning*



The results obtained denoted that most teachers (76%) said that their students are motivated to learn vocabulary because they are aware about its importance in learning and acquiring English and they are curious to know new words and knowledge. Only 24% of them stated that their students are not motivated because they have some difficulties like (pronunciation, poor vocabulary and fear of committing mistakes) or may be because they are not well prepared in the English language. The following questions give a clear image of teachers' perception as far as motivation and relaxed atmosphere are concerned.

**5:** Teachers' responses to question 5: (Do you think that motivating students is the responsibility of the teacher?)

Figure 5. *Teachers' Attitudes about the Task of Motivating Students*

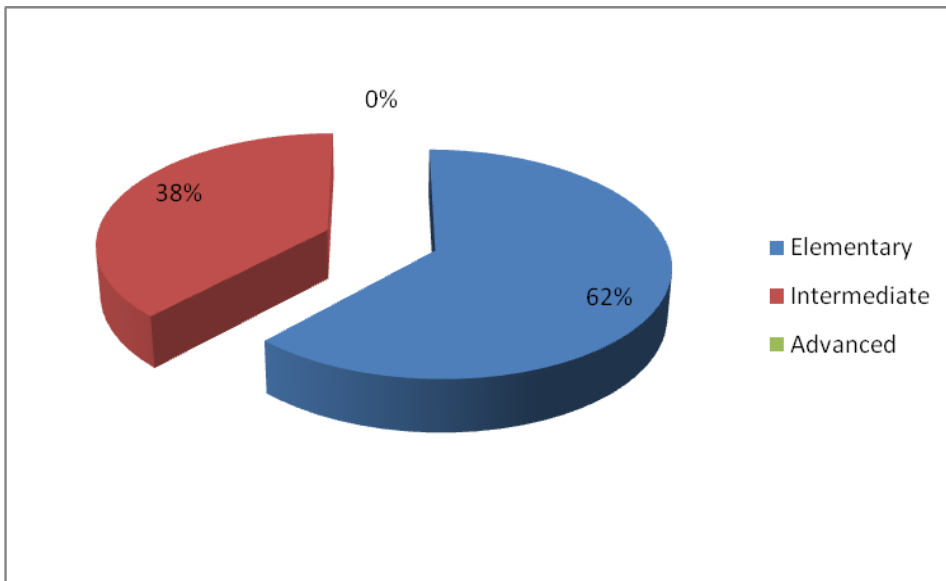


The results showed that all teachers (100%) stated that it is their job to motivate students. As far as vocabulary is concerned, teachers have a crucial role to play in motivating their students and accompanying them; they need to generate interest in the study. Thus, creating a desire for learning. In addition, teachers of English are aware of the great role motivation plays in successful vocabulary acquisition in language learning and teaching. Hence, by using interesting and useful techniques or strategies like games, pictures and dictionaries inside the classroom, learners become motivated and interested in learning vocabulary.

**6: Teachers' responses to question 6: (What is your students' vocabulary level?)**

Figure 6: *Students' Vocabulary Level*

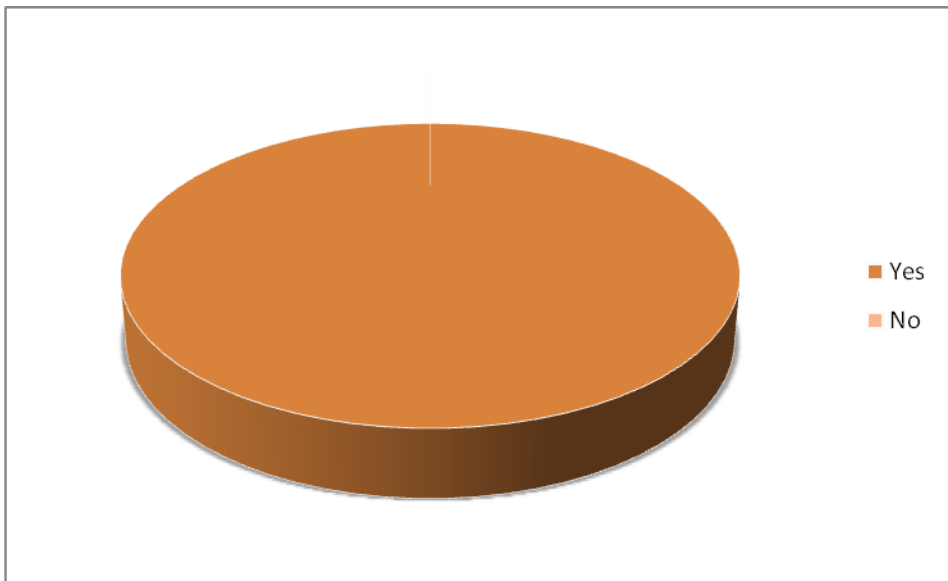




As it is shown in this pie -chart, 62% of students have an elementary level because they have not fully mastered the English vocabulary words yet since they are secondary school students, 38% of them may be are intermediate because they have some command of the English language and some vocabulary knowledge. No one agrees that the students' level is advanced.

**7:** Teachers' responses to question 7: (Do you try to establish a relaxed atmosphere in classroom?)

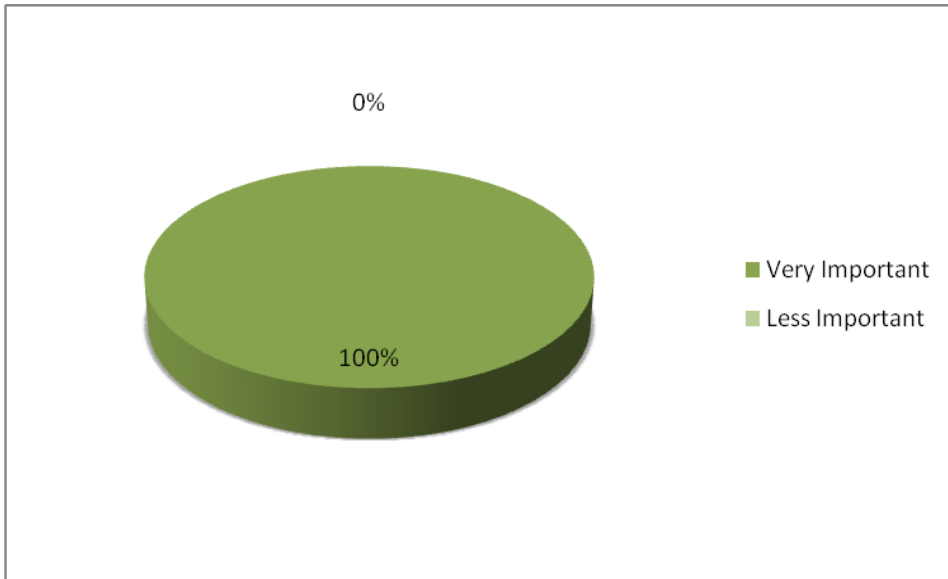
Figure 7. *Rate of Establishing a Relaxed Atmosphere*



All teachers (100%) admitted that they try to establish a relaxed atmosphere especially when teaching vocabulary. This means that the relaxed atmosphere is very important and helpful when teaching new vocabulary words because it makes students engaged and involved in the learning process.

**8:** Teachers' responses to question 8: (Based on your experience, how important do you find vocabulary in language teaching?)

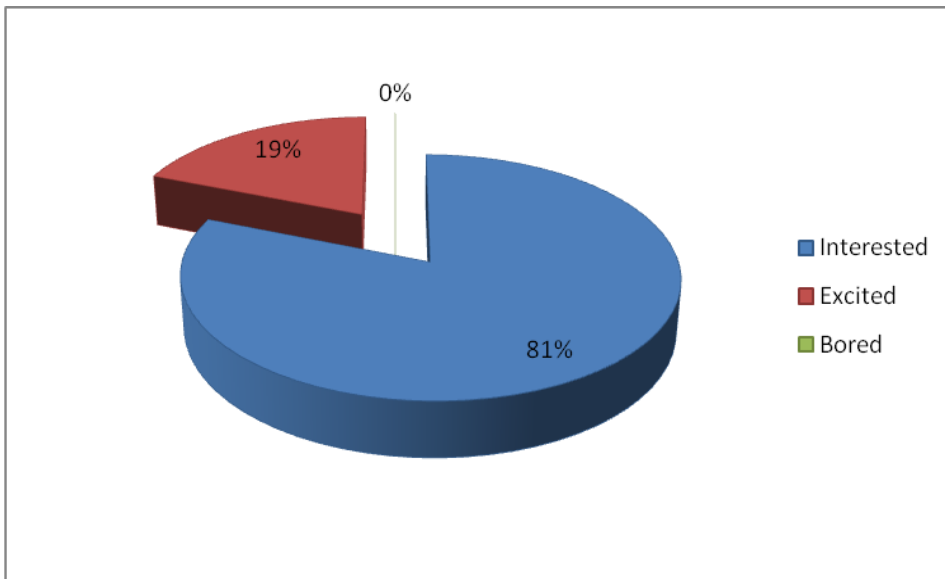
Figure 8. *The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Teaching*



This question was asked to find out the importance of vocabulary in teaching English. All teachers (100%) stated that vocabulary is of crucial importance because a rich vocabulary provides learners with new items that help them to express their ideas and feelings i.e. effective and successful communication.

**9:** Teachers' responses to question 9: (When you use vocabulary explanation strategies, how do you feel the students?)

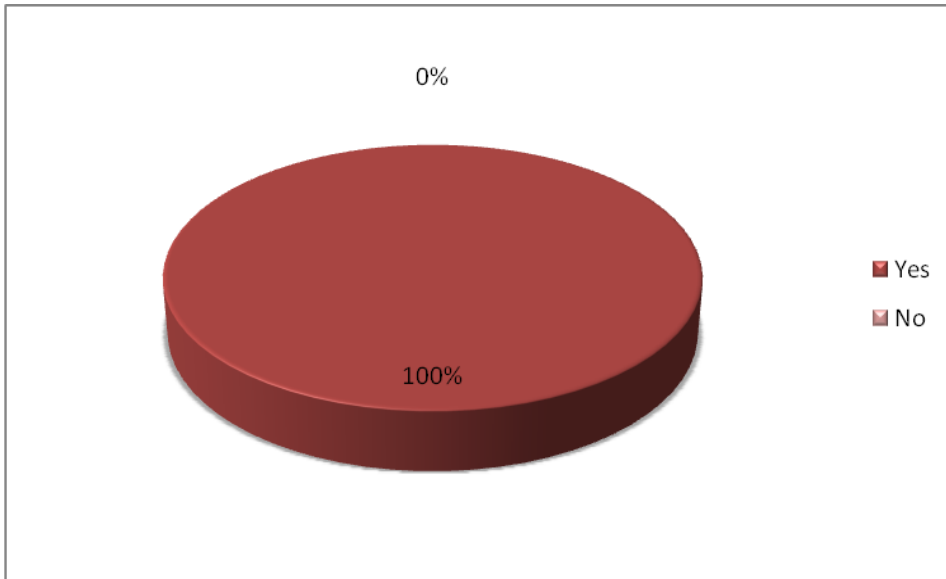
Figure 9. *Students' Attitudes towards Vocabulary Learning*



From pie-chart 9, most teachers (81%) said that when using vocabulary explanation strategies, students are interested and motivated to learn this aspect of language especially enjoyable strategies and techniques like context, crossword puzzles, pictures and dictionaries. However, 19% of teachers stated that their students are excited in learning English vocabulary despite the different strategies and techniques teachers may use in the classroom environment.

**10:** Teachers' responses to question 10: (Do you present new words in every lesson?)

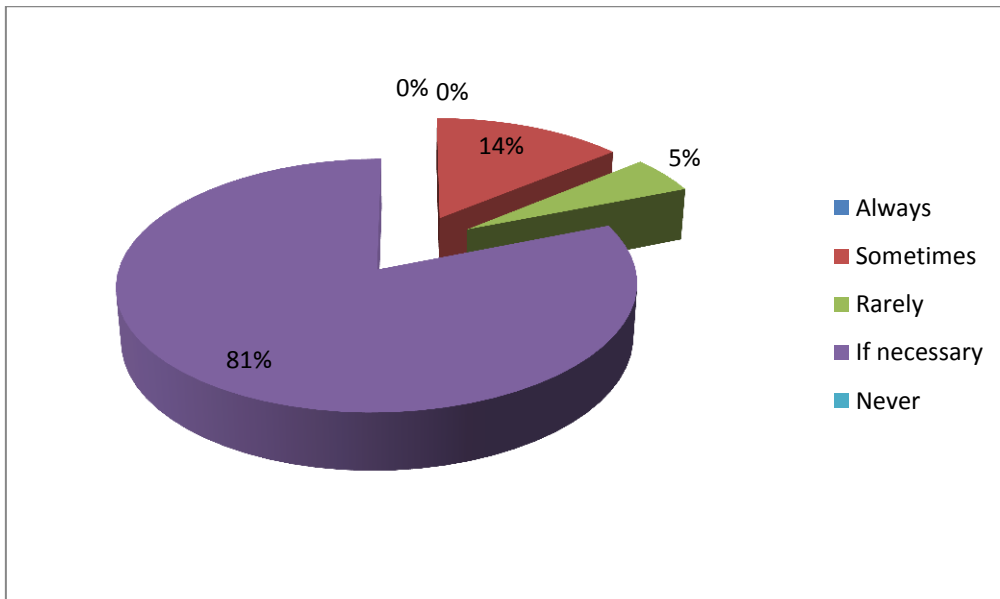
Figure 10. *Introduction of New Vocabulary Words during the Lesson*



As it is indicated in pie-chart 10, all teachers (100%) said that they present new words in every lesson to enrich and enlarge the students' vocabulary size. This result showed the importance that teachers give to the teaching of vocabulary knowledge, considering it as an important component of the FL teaching.

**11:** Teachers' responses to question 11: (When you teach vocabulary, do you use :)

Figure 11. *The frequency of using Translation in Explaining Vocabulary Words*



From this pie -chart, it can be noticed that the majority of teachers (81%) stated that they use translation "if necessary" in explaining new vocabulary words, in other words, after having recourse to all other teaching techniques and strategies. This implies that teachers think that since they are teaching a FL, the use of the first language must be prohibited.

Figure 12. *The Frequency of Using Definition in Teaching Vocabulary*

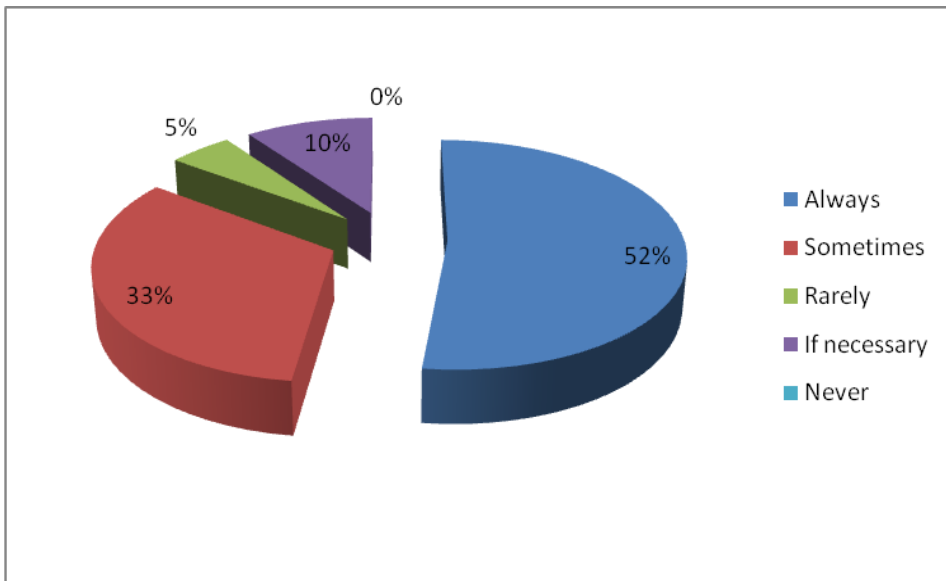
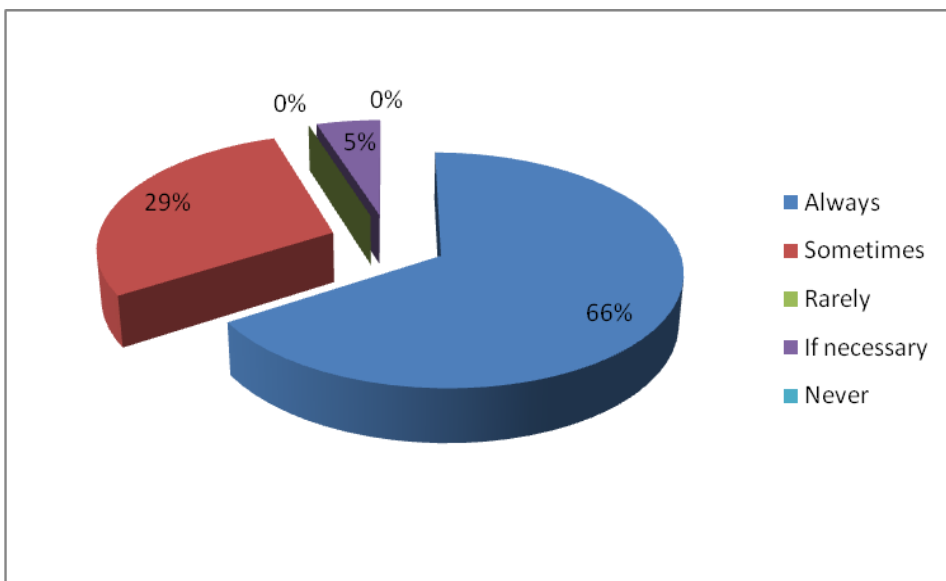
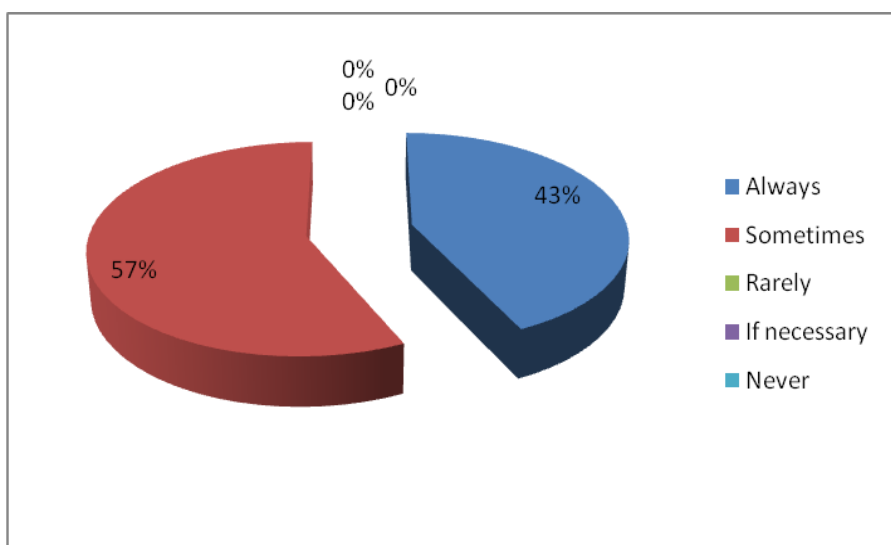


Figure 13. *The Frequency of using Words in Context in Explaining Vocabulary Words*



The results obtained have shown that some teachers (52%) said that definition strategy is 'always' used inside the classroom setting to explain new vocabulary items because it provides students with the appropriate meaning of unknown words. Some of them (66%) indicated that they 'always' use words in context when explaining vocabulary because they think that using context makes new words memorized easily and recalled by learners at any moment. Definitions and guessing from context are the most widely used vocabulary strategies in the teaching environment.

Figure14. *The Frequency of using Synonyms/Antonyms in Explaining Vocabulary Words*

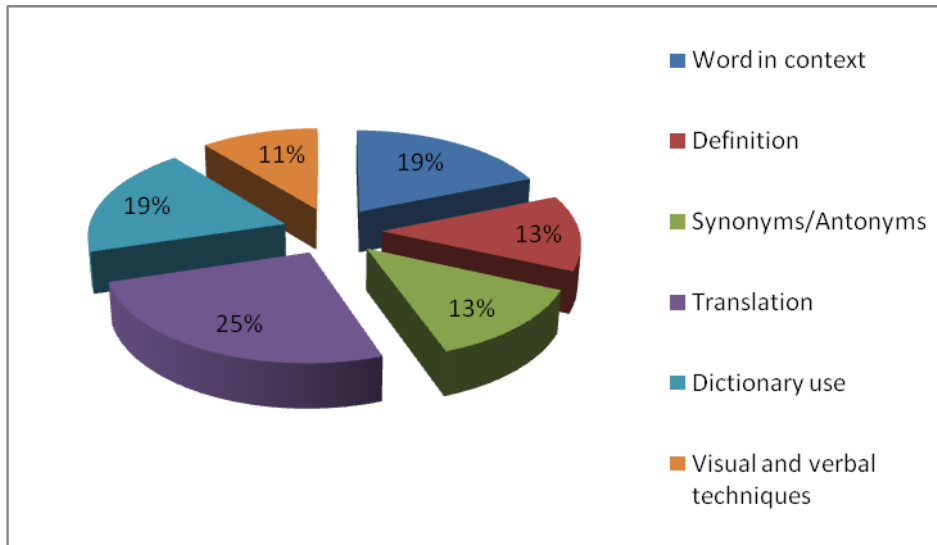


Most teachers (57%) stated that they 'sometimes' use synonyms and antonyms when they explain vocabulary items to clarify and illustrate the meaning of ambiguous words especially when dealing with comprehension texts. Teachers give synonyms and antonyms explicitly to learners because it is a useful strategy which contributes to a full understanding of reading texts.

Each teacher gave some other techniques to explain unfamiliar vocabulary words with different degree of use such as dictionary use, giving examples, drawing on the board, and making gestures and mimes. They said that these techniques are of great help and they draw learners' attention and concentration.

**12:** Teachers' responses to question 12: (Which teaching strategy helps you better to teach vocabulary knowledge?)



Figure 15. *The Order of Vocabulary Explanation Strategies*

From the result obtained, 19 % of teachers agreed that the best strategy that helps in the acquisition and improvement of the students' knowledge of vocabulary is "word in context" because it helps learners to memorize words easily particularly when using real life examples and situations . The second common strategies as many teachers (13%) stated are "using definitions" and "synonyms/ antonyms"; they contribute to a full understanding of unknown words and comprehension texts. When teachers give synonyms or opposites, learners can grasp and store the meaning in their lexical memory. The third useful strategy is "using visual and verbal techniques", 11% of teachers agreed that by using pictures, drawings, games, and songs, learners become motivated and desired to learn vocabulary knowledge. Another less common strategy as some teachers (19%) said is "dictionary use" ; they utilize this strategy for different purposes like translation , pronunciation, spelling , category and origin of words. Dictionaries help both teachers to explain or present new vocabulary lexis and students to expand their lexical knowledge. 25% of teachers stated that translation is the least strategy that helps the students in enhancing their vocabulary knowledge because it inhibits vocabulary acquisition and development of new words. Furthermore, when translating words to the students' first

language, learners become dependent to their mother tongue and they will not grow their English vocabulary size, i.e. they will not master this language well.

After analyzing both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire, we have noticed that teachers use different strategies and techniques like: guessing from context, dictionaries (definitions), synonyms/ antonyms, translation and visual/ verbal techniques to explain vocabulary words inside the FL classrooms. The frequency of using these strategies depends on many factors like: time, types of activities and classroom environment.

Now , we move on to discuss the obtained results from the two perspectives to see if English teachers actually use explanation strategies in class to teach new vocabulary words, and whether they incorporate them in the teaching process or not.

### **2.2.3. Discussion and Interpretations**

Analysis of teachers' questionnaire has revealed many facts on teachers' attitudes toward explaining new vocabulary items through using various strategies and techniques.

The findings show that the sample is composed of three different degrees; their experience in teaching is very limited since the age of the majority of them is under 30 years. This would be the cause of having different points of views about the topic. Also, the results point that motivation is extremely necessary for students in order to acquire new lexis. Thus, teachers should find their ways to motivate students, should look for their real problems and create efficient strategies or techniques for teaching. Creating a relaxed atmosphere helps teachers a lot in presenting and clarifying unfamiliar words and may have a very positive effect on the way their learners behave in class as well as the way they look at learning vocabulary knowledge.

Regarding the importance of vocabulary, results from the teachers' questionnaire have shown that all the teachers are aware of the crucial role that vocabulary plays in

language teaching by considering it as a paramount component in their teaching of a FL. Hence, they present new lexical words to their learners in every lesson.

As far as vocabulary explanation strategies are concerned, results from teachers' questionnaire have shown that using context in explaining vocabulary words is the most used strategy by English teachers. It is considered by the largest part of the teachers as the key source to efficient vocabulary teaching and learning because it contributes to successful vocabulary teaching if it comes at the top of the list of vocabulary teaching strategies.

Teaching new vocabulary terms through definitions, synonyms and antonyms strategies are often used by EFL teachers. In fact, these strategies play a vital role in helping teachers to convey meaning of difficult words and make them much easier to be memorized and recalled. Thus, learners can store new words in their memory and enlarge their vocabulary package.

With regard to the use of dictionary, almost all teachers sometimes make use of dictionaries (either a bilingual dictionary or a monolingual one). It is considered as a useful tool teachers use to clarify ambiguous words and it may contribute to vocabulary growth. Beside the aforementioned strategies, six teachers use some other strategies such as translation and verbal / visual techniques inside the classroom setting. Also, results have shown that translation is rarely used by teachers especially when teaching foreign language classes and it should be used only when necessary. In addition to translation, visual and verbal techniques are not widely used by teachers because they need much time i.e. time consuming.

From analyzing classroom observation, we notice that teachers use the mentioned explanation strategies (guessing from context, definitions, dictionaries, translation, synonyms/ antonyms, games, visual and verbal techniques) inside the classroom setting

when teaching new vocabulary words. The implementation of some strategies like dictionary, games (crossword puzzles) and visual techniques (pictures and drawings) have a great role in creating an enjoyable and exciting atmosphere where students can practise their vocabulary without getting bored. Furthermore, guessing from context, definitions, synonyms/antonyms and translation are of crucial importance because teachers use them in the teaching process to expand students' vocabulary knowledge.

The study is concerned with getting data about the different explanation strategies used by third year English foreign language teachers. All in all, the results obtained from both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire concerning teachers' vocabulary explanation strategies have answered the research question, i.e. the various strategies teachers use to explain vocabulary are guessing from context, using definitions, synonyms and antonyms, translation, dictionary use and visual / verbal techniques ( pictures, games, flashcards and drawing).

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers recognize that vocabulary explanation strategies are of crucial importance to foreign language teaching. Thus, the hypothesis formulated is supported by our findings, i.e. that when teachers use vocabulary explanation strategies, learners will better enhance their vocabulary repertoire.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter represented the practical part of the current study. It is composed of two main sections: the first section dealt mainly with the main aspects related to research

methodology and the second one provided a description, results analysis and discussion of the results obtained from both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire. The results obtained from the present study lead to the conclusion that teachers use vocabulary explanation strategies to better enhance their learners' vocabulary repertoire.

# **General Conclusion**

### **General Conclusion**

Since vocabulary is in the heart of mastering a FL, teachers make use of various strategies to explain and teach new vocabulary words. By using the appropriate explanation strategies, learners may improve their vocabulary knowledge and communicate effectively and successfully.

Considering the importance of vocabulary explanation strategies in foreign language teaching, the current piece of research aims at identifying the teaching strategies used by English teachers to explain vocabulary to third year secondary schools foreign language learners. This research contains one main hypothesis: learners will better enhance their vocabulary repertoire if teachers use the teaching vocabulary explanation strategies.

The field investigation carried out by an implementation of a classroom observation and a questionnaire to English secondary school teachers in Jijel. Both tools helped in collecting data about the different teaching strategies used in EFL classes to explain vocabulary knowledge.

The results obtained from both classroom observation and teachers' questionnaire revealed that the teaching strategies teachers use to explain vocabulary are guessing from context, using definitions, dictionary use, synonyms / antonyms, translation and verbal / visual techniques (games, flashcards and drawing) and supported the research hypothesis, i.e. If teachers use vocabulary explanation strategies, learners will better enhance their vocabulary repertoire.

## **Pedagogical Recommendations for Further Future Research**

In the light of these results obtained and their analysis, we recommend the following:

- There is a requirement for teachers to seek new and innovative ways to teach vocabulary. The traditional methods often fail to create the appropriate learning atmosphere. Thus, EFL teachers should substitute the teaching of vocabulary by implementing new teaching strategies and techniques which help to motivate students and boost their vocabulary repertoire.
- Based on the findings of this research, we believe that using vocabulary explanation strategies like guessing from context, definitions, translation, synonyms / antonyms, dictionary use and visual / verbal techniques (pictures, flashcard and drawing) can enhance the learners' vocabulary size. A variety of vocabulary explanation strategies make learners more active, revive their interest in the class and also help them improve their language skills.
- It is suggested that the results of this research can be used as a reference for future researchers to conduct further research dealing with the effect vocabulary explanation strategies on separated skills such as problem solving skills.
- It is suggested for future researchers to investigate the effects of explanation strategies on motivating students to learn new vocabulary.

Finally, this case study provides; readers and especially teachers, an overview about various strategies teachers use to explain new vocabulary to EFL learners. However, teachers must judge whether the findings are applicable to their own unique situation and needs or not.



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# Appendix

## Appendix

### The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

The following questionnaire is part of research work that deals with the strategies teachers use to explain and enhance the students' knowledge of vocabulary.

Your answers will be of great help for the research. Would you, please, tick the appropriate box and make statements whenever required.

Thank you in advance

#### Section one: Background Information

1/ Age: ..... Years old

2/ Degree:

License

Master

Magister

Phd

3/ How long have you been teaching English?

Years

#### Section Two: Teachers' Concern with the Affective Side of the Learner

4/ Do you feel that your students are motivated to learn vocabulary? And why?

Yes

No

.....  
.....

5/ Do you think that motivating students is the responsibility of the teacher?

Yes

No



Whatever your answer is, please explain.

.....

.....

6/ What is your students' vocabulary level?

a) Elementary

b) Intermediate

c) Advanced

7/ Do you try to establish a relaxed atmosphere in classroom?

Yes

No

**Section Three: Teaching Vocabulary**

8/ Based on your experience, how important do you find vocabulary in language teaching?

Very important

less important

9/ When you use vocabulary explanation strategies, how do you feel the students?

Interested

Excited

Bored

10/ Do you present new words in every lesson?

Yes

No

Sometimes

11/ When you explain new vocabulary do you use:

Options	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	If Necessary	Never
Translation					
Definition					
Word in Context					
Synonyms/ Antonyms					

Others: please, specify

.....

.....

.....

**12/** According to you, which teaching strategy helps you better to teach the students' vocabulary knowledge? Arrange the following list from the most (01) to the least (05) important:

- a) Word in context
- b) Definitions
- c) Synonyms/ Antonyms
- d) Translation (mother tongue)
- e) Dictionary use
- f) Using visual and verbal techniques
- g) Others: please, specify

.....

.....

.....

## ملخص

حاولت هذه الدراسة التعرف على استراتيجيات شرح المفردات المستخدمة من قبل أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية للسنة الثالثة لغات اجنبية من التعليم الثانوي. من أجل دراسة هذا المجال من البحث تم تنفيذ ملاحظة صفية واستبيان مع مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية للتعليم الثانوي. الملاحظة الصفية تقصد الى وصف استراتيجيات شرح المفردات المستخدمة في السنة الثالثة لغات أجنبية لثانوية 8 ماي 1945 جيجل. الاستبيان لاستطلاع آراء المعلمين حول استخدام مختلف استراتيجيات الشرح في العملية التعليمية. أظهرت النتائج أن استخدام الاستراتيجيات الملائمة لشرح المفردات مفيد جدا من اجل تحسين المفردات وتوسيع المعرفة اللغوية. استنادا إلى نتائج الملاحظة الصفية والاستبيان تم اقتراح بعض الاقتراحات التربوية للبحوث المستقبلية لتوجيه الاساتذة إلى الوسيلة الفعالة لاستخدام هذه الاستراتيجيات لتطوير مفردات المتعلمين .