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**Exploring Vocabulary Learning Difficulties faced by EFL  
learners**

The Case of First year students of English at Mohemmed Seddik Ben  
Yahia University –Jijel-

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Studies

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Running head : THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY LEARNERS WHEN LEARNING  
VOCABULARY

Exploring Vocabulary Learning Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners

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**Dedication**

*We dedicate this simple work to:*

*our dear Parents;*

*our Brothers and Sisters;*

*to our lovers;*

*to all the extended family and friends.*

### **Acknowledgements**

First and for most, we thank Allah the all mightily for giving us the blessing and strengths to do this work.

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### Abstract

The present study aims at exploring vocabulary learning difficulties faced by EFL learners. It is hypothesized that first year License students at the department of English Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University- Jijel face many difficulties when learning vocabulary. These difficulties may be related to length and complexity, meaning, or pronunciation. In order to collect the data needed for the study, a students' questionnaire and a teacher's interview were used. The questionnaire was administered to 100 out of 285 first year students in order to figure out their opinions about the main difficulties they face in the vocabulary. In addition, an interview was conducted with three first year teachers of Oral and Written Expression in order to investigate their views about these difficulties. The obtained results of this study, is that EFL learners face many difficulties when learning vocabulary, which confirmed the previously set hypothesis.

### **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

**%:** Percentage

**B.C.:** Before the Christ

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**LMD:** License – Master – Doctorate

**P:** Page

**Q:** Question

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### **General Introduction**

1. Background of the study
2. Statement of the problem
3. Research questions
4. Research hypothesis
5. Aims of the study
6. Research methodology
7. Structure of the study

## Exploring Vocabulary Learning Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners

### 1. Background of the study

The English language is the most dominant language in the world. It is the first language that is used in the field of education, business, science, and politics. In addition, it is the language which is mostly used for communication between nations around the world. This significant role of English has greatly shown the importance of teaching and learning it and particularly its vocabulary which is conceived of as a crucial component of any language.

Vocabulary was first neglected by researchers for many years. However, it has come to be considered as one of the most important components of any language, it is now agreed that it plays a vital role in learning a foreign language. Without an adequate number of words, learners will not be able to communicate or interact with each other; they will find it difficult to speak fluently or to express their feelings and ideas. Arguing for the importance of vocabulary, Wilkins (1972) states in Thornbury (2002, P. 13), that “without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. Besides, Harmer (1991, p.15), confirmed that by saying that the selection of words in certain situations is more essential than that of grammatical elements, because without adequate vocabulary learners cannot use the grammatical structures correctly. Hence, assisting learners to acquire a wide range of vocabulary knowledge should be a part of any language teaching program.

Teaching vocabulary is a crucial aspect of learning any language. It is almost impossible to learn a language without learning its vocabulary. However, acquiring a new vocabulary item is not an easy process thus; learners face many difficulties when they try to learn new vocabularies, Thornbury (2002, p.27), states that words are different, some of them are easy to be learned and many others are not. He added that there are some factors that make some

words more difficult than others. Moreover, Takac (2004, P. 24), states that the process of acquiring vocabulary is quite hard and complicated and not all learners are able to achieve it. He added that, there exist a number of different factors that affect vocabulary learning.

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

The subject under study was chosen out of an interest in the domain of teaching and learning vocabulary in EFL classes. Since vocabulary is one of the most important items in acquiring a language, it is very common that students encounter difficulties when they learn it. Without sufficient words, EFL students will fail to comprehend the intended meaning in spoken and written forms. Thus, in recent years many researchers started to focus more on teaching vocabulary and they try to facilitate the way for the learners to acquire more vocabularies.

## **3. Research questions**

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Do EFL learners face difficulties while learning vocabulary?
- What are the main difficulties that EFL learners face when acquiring vocabulary?
- What are the main factors behind vocabulary learning difficulties?

## **4. Research hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the present study is that: First year EFL learners at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel face many difficulties when learning vocabulary. These difficulties may be related to length and complexity, meaning or pronunciation.



## **5. Aims of the study**

The current study aims at exploring the difficulties encountered by first year EFL learners at the department of English, Mohammed Saddik Ben Yahia University- Jijel- when learning vocabulary. Moreover, it is also designed to discover the main factors behind these difficulties.

## **6. Research methodology**

In order to obtain the information required from the subjects, two main research instruments are used: a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview. The questionnaire is directed to first-year EFL learners, it is administered to 100 students and conducted at Mohammed Saddik Ben Yahia University. The aim of this questionnaire is to find out the difficulties that students face when learning new vocabularies. The interview, on the other hand, is administered to three teachers at the same department and it aims at investigating the teachers' views towards these difficulties.

## **7. Structure of the study**

The present research is divided into three chapters. The first and the second chapters deal with the theoretical framework and the third one is devoted to data analysis and interpretation of the result obtained through the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview.

The first chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents vocabulary; it introduces the definition, the description and the types of vocabulary. The second section presents vocabulary teaching and learning; beginning with a historical overview, followed by approaches to vocabulary teaching, then the importance of vocabulary and steps to effective vocabulary instruction, and ending with the techniques used in teaching it. The second chapter is devoted to EFL learners' vocabulary difficulties; including the factors affecting

vocabulary learning, the difficulties faced by students when learning vocabulary and finally, some solutions to overcome these difficulties.

The third chapter presents the practical part. It provides a detailed description of the research methodology adopted to conduct this study in terms of the method, data collection tools, in addition to the sample. It also provides a full description of the questionnaire and the interview as well as the obtained results.

## **Chapter one: Vocabulary and Vocabulary Teaching and Learning**

### Introduction

#### **Section One: Vocabulary**

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##### 1.2. Description of Vocabulary

###### 1.2.1. Lexicology

###### 1.2.1.1. Word Class

###### 1.2.1.2. Word Formation

###### 1.2.1.3. Word Meaning

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##### 1.4. Historical Overview of Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

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Conclusion

## **Introduction**

Vocabulary is considered as an integral and fundamental area of language teaching and learning. Indeed, it would be impossible to learn a language without learning its vocabulary. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on vocabulary as well as vocabulary teaching and learning. It is divided into two sections. In the first section the definition, the description and the types of vocabulary are introduced. The second section highlights the historical background of vocabulary teaching as well as the methods and approaches involved in teaching it. This section deals also with the importance of vocabulary and the steps involved in learning it. Finally, the techniques used in teaching vocabulary are discussed.

### **Section One: Vocabulary**

In the present section, we are going to discuss three main parts concerning vocabulary which are: the definition, the description and the types of vocabulary.

#### **1.1. Definition of Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is an important aspect of any language and it is hard to learn a language without learning its vocabulary. According to Longman dictionary (1995), vocabulary is defined as “all the words that someone knows, learns or uses; or the words that are typically used when talking about a particular subject”. Similarly, in Oxford dictionary (2008), it is defined as “all the words that a person knows or uses” or “a list of words with their meanings”. Additionally, Hodges (1982, P.2) stated that “vocabulary or lexicon of a language encompasses the stock of words of that language which is at the disposal of a speaker or the writer”.

Moreover, according to Ur (1991, p. 60), “vocabulary can be defined as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than a single word”.

## **1.2. Description of Vocabulary**

Lexicology and lexicography are two main branches of linguistics that are concerned with the study of vocabulary and its different forms, meanings and uses. Thus, both of them must be discussed in order to give a clear explanation of vocabulary.

### **1.2.1. Lexicology**

Lexicology is a branch of linguistics which is concerned with how words are classified and formed, as well as their different meanings. According to Jackson and Zé Amvela (2000, p.2), “lexicology is the study of lexis, understood as the stock of words in a given language”. In other words, lexicology analyses all the vocabulary items of a language including, not only complex words, but also complex and compound ones. It is concerned with the classification, formation and the different meanings of words.

#### **1.2.1.1. Word Class**

Word class describes the category of the grammatical function of a word. There are different word classes in the English language and each word is categorized according to its function. Thornbury (2000, p.3) arranged the English language words into eight different classes: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, determiner and conjunction.

- A noun is a word used to identify a person, a place, an idea, an animal or a thing (book, cat).
- A pronoun is a word that can function as a noun or a noun phrase (his, they).

- An adjective is a word that describes a noun or pronoun (pretty, sweet).
- A verb is a word class that is used to describe an action or a state (help, act).
- An adverb is a word or phrase that modifies the meaning of an adjective, verb or another adverb, expressing manner, place, time or degree (carefully, sensibly).
- A preposition is a word governing and usually preceding a noun or pronoun, expressing a relation to another word or element in the clause (for, like).
- A determiner is a word class which is divided into five categories:
  - a- Definite article (the).
  - b- Indefinite article (a, an).
  - c- Possessives (her, their).
  - d- Demonstratives (this, that, those).
  - e- Quantifiers (many, some).
- A conjunction is a word used to connect clauses or sentences or to coordinate words in the same clause (and, but).

#### **1.2.1.2. Word Formation**

Word formation refers to the process of building new words on the basis of other words keeping the same root and giving another meaning. According to Grains and Redman (1986, p.47), word formation takes three main forms which are: affixation, compounding and conversion.

- Affixation: is the process of adding prefixes and affixes to the base item; in this way, items can be modified in meaning and/or changed from one part to another.



- Compounding: is the formation of words from two or more separate words which can stand independently in other circumstances. There are three different types of compounds: adjective compounds, verb compounds and noun compounds.
- Conversion: also known as zero affixation is the process by which an item may be used in different parts of speech, yet doesn't change its form.

### 1.2.1.3. Word Meaning

According to Grains and Redman (1986, p.22), the meaning of a word can only be understood and learnt in terms of its relationship with other words in the language. Hence, the learner should know some lexical items in order not to be confused when encountering words that have different meanings.

Synonyms: are words that have the same meaning. Thornbury (2002, p.9) states that “synonyms are words that share a similar meaning”. For example, jail and prison are synonyms also old, ancient and antique are synonyms in that they share the common meaning of not young/new.

Antonyms: are words that have an opposite meaning. According to Thornbury (2002, p.9), an antonym is a word that means the opposite of the word to which it is compared. Thornbury noted that using antonyms involves some ambiguity. For example, black is the opposite of white, whereas old man is contrasted by young man and old record player is contrasted by a new one.

Hyponyms: are words that belong to a more general category. Thornbury (2002, p.9) indicates that a hyponym “is another –nym word that is useful when talking about the way word meanings are related”. It is a kind of relationship as it is in the case of the word hammer which is a kind of tool. Thus, the hammer is a hyponym to the tool.

Homonyms: According to Thornbury (2002), homonyms are words that share the same form but have unrelated meanings (e.g. meet and meat).

Polysemes: are words that overlap in their meanings. They include homonyms, homophones and homographs. “Examples of polysemes: we have a fair size garden and we may as well make use of it, she was only a fair cook, this fair city of ours..., it will be fair and warm” (Thornbury, 2002, p.8).

### **1.2.2. Lexicography**

Lexicography is a branch of linguistics which is concerned with the study of dictionaries. According to Jackson and Zé Amvela (2000, p.8), lexicography is a special technique of writing dictionaries. In other words, it is the act of grouping lexical items in a dictionary with their meanings, functions and examples of their uses.

### **1.3. Types of Vocabulary**

Vocabulary learning can be divided into two major types: receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. According to Grains and Redman (1986, p. 64), productive vocabulary is defined as “the language items which the learner can recall and use appropriately in speech and writing”. Moreover, according to Nation (2000, p. 37), “productive carries the idea that we produce language forms by speaking and writing to convey messages to others”.

Receptive vocabulary, on the other hand, is defined as “language items which can only be recognized and comprehended in the context of reading and listening materials” (Grains and Redman 1986, P.64). In the same line, Nation (2000, p. 37) denoted that “receptive carries the idea that we receive language input from others through listening or reading and try to comprehend it”. Essentially, receptive vocabulary use requires receiving the word’s

form and meaning when listening and reading. Whereas, productive vocabulary use, requires the desire to express the meaning through speaking or writing and retrieving and producing the suitable spoken or written form of the word (Nation 2000, p. 38). Essentially, the term passive (for listening and reading) and active (for speaking and writing) are sometimes used as synonyms for receptive and productive vocabulary.

## **Section Two: Vocabulary Teaching and Learning.**

In this section, many essential elements are dealt with: a historical overview of vocabulary teaching and learning, approaches to vocabulary instruction and techniques used in teaching vocabulary.

### **1.4. Historical Overview of Vocabulary Teaching and Learning**

Vocabulary learning is considered as an important issue in the process of teaching and learning. This issue has been discussed by different scholars and linguists in the field of foreign language teaching. The history of second language learning went back to the second century B.C. in the Roman age (Schmitt, 2000). Students used to learn to read by first mastering the alphabet, then progressing through syllables, words, and connected discourse. Some of the texts gave students lexical help by providing a vocabulary that was either alphabetized or grouped under various topic areas (Schmitt, 2000). By the medieval era, grammar becomes dominant to the language teaching classrooms. Additionally, Schmitt (2000) argued that teaching grammatical structures became the basis of language instruction at the age of renaissance, the thing that created a hot debate among scholars such as William (1611) who wrote a textbook about vocabulary acquisition. This textbook presented 1,200 proverbs, which exemplified the common Latin vocabulary, and demonstrated homonyms in the context of sentences. Comenius also supported William's idea of contextualized

vocabulary by creating a textbook, which presented the eight thousand common Latin words that are grouped according to various topics and illustrated with labeled pictures. As Schmitt (2000) noted, the reform movement of the twentieth century influenced many scholars, so that, they rejected the focus on grammar and tempted to raise vocabulary status in foreign language teaching processes.

Besides, Schmitt (2000) introduced that by the age of reason, people started believing in natural laws of everything and because these laws are derived from logic, they stressed logical thinking and rejected old myths. But the claim that held up Latin as a corrupted language went hand in hand with the view of considering Latin grammar as the core of language as Schmitt introduced, Robert Lowth's *A short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) was one of the most influential of the perspective grammars. Outlawing features in common use, such as double negatives (I don't want to study no more grammar rules!), these grammars received general acceptance, which helped prolong the domination of grammar over vocabulary.

The attempt to standardize vocabulary resulted in producing language dictionaries. Under this light, Schmitt (2000) cited a list of dictionaries including the first dictionary which was Robert Cawdreys's *Language Dictionary*, in addition to Samuel Johnson Dictionary, Noah Webster Dictionary, and others. To sum up, since language is the basic means of communication, the need of human to communicate successfully and effectively using different languages has resulted in the emergence of various teaching approaches which view vocabulary teaching and learning from different perspectives.

## **1.5. Approaches to Vocabulary Teaching**

Teaching vocabulary is one of the important components of any educational system. Because it is the machine that deals with semantics, many experts and linguists highlighted the need for vocabulary teaching. Indeed, the history of language teaching introduces different approaches and methods which have cast light on vocabulary teaching. These are the grammar translation method, the audio-lingual method, the communicative approach, and the lexical approach.

### **1.5.1. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM)**

The grammar translation method is one of the most traditional methods. It was used to teach classical languages, and it dominated Europe and the foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s. In this method, students learn the language through learning its grammar rules then applying those rules by translating sentences from and into the target language using bilingual word lists. It was argued that vocabulary can be better learned through memorizing and translating vocabulary items; the translation can be either from the target language to the mother tongue or vice versa through using bilingual dictionaries. Moreover, the lexical items taught in one sequence or unit did not re-occur or were not re-used in the other sequence, that's why learners could not remember a huge number of items after a period of time. It only helped them to get the meaning in the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

### **1.5.2. The Direct Method (DM)**

The direct method which emerged at the end of nineteenth century came as a reaction to the grammar translation method. It was based on the idea of linking meaning to the form directly without translation. The learners are supposed to imitate and practice the target

language until they become fluent speakers. According to this method, vocabulary can be acquired naturally through interaction (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.11) that is, the meaning can be directly taught through the target language (Schmitt, 2000, p.11). Besides, as Zimmerman (1997) argues, the direct method teaches concrete vocabulary either through pictures or physical demonstration. However, abstract vocabulary is presented by grouping it according to a topic or via the association of ideas (as cited in Schmitt, 2000, P.12).

### **1.5.3. The Audio-Lingual Method**

The audio-lingual method or the Army method was the dominant method in the US during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In this method, foreign language learning is a process of habit formation. This approach emphasizes fluency over accuracy, and the new grammatical points and vocabulary are presented through dialogues. According to Zimmerman (1997), “because the emphasis in Audio-lingualism was not on teaching structural patterns, the vocabulary needed to be relatively easy, and so was selected according to its simplicity and familiarity” (as cited in Schmitt 2000, p. 13). That is; the new words are selected according to their simplicity and familiarity. Moreover, vocabulary in this approach was given a secondary position and taught mainly as a support for functional language use (DeCarrico, 2001, p. 729).

### **1.5.4. The Lexical Approach**

The lexical approach is a way of analyzing and teaching language focusing on the idea that it is made up of lexical units rather than grammatical structures. According to Thornbury (2002, p. 112), “a lexical approach to language teaching foregrounds vocabulary learning in the form of language combinations (or chunks)”. Thornbury (2002:115) demonstrated the most important types of chunks that can be used for teaching purposes which are as follows:

- Collocations - such as widely traveled; rich and famous.
- Phrasal verbs- such as get up; hold on.
- Idioms, catchphrases and sayings- such as get cold feet; mind your own business.
- Sentence frames- such as would you mind if ...?; what really gets me is ...
- Social formulae- such as talk later; have a nice day.
- Discourse markers- such as once upon a time; I take your point.

Additionally, Lewis claimed that students should concentrate on the mastery of fixed chunks, semi-fixed chunks, lexical phrases, collocations, and idiomatic expressions which shape an essential part of the language (as cited in Thornbury, 2002, p. 115). Moreover, Thornbury (2002) denotes that teaching the language is based on the following principles:

- The syllabus should be organized around meanings.
- The most frequent words encode the most frequent meanings.
- Words typically co-occur with other words.
- These co-occurrences (or chunks) are an aid to fluency (Thornbury, 2002, p. 112).

### **1.5.5. The Communicative Approach**

The communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to language teaching that describes how students can communicate effectively. According to Richards & Rodgers (1986, P. 64), “the origins of communicative language teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s” the main focus of this approach is the communicative competence, and vocabulary was given a secondary position.

### **1.6. The Importance of Vocabulary**

In the field of foreign language learning, vocabulary is considered as one of the most important elements. It is seen as the raw material for all thoughts and feelings to be expressed and conveyed through the medium of language. In fact, many authors have stressed the importance of vocabulary in language teaching. Bowen et al (1985, P, 322) and McCarthy (1990, P. iix) indicate that the single, biggest component of any language course is vocabulary. This is consistent with Nation (1990, p.2) who sees vocabulary as being the most essential aspect in language learning.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that in any good language learning classroom, both vocabulary and grammar are important, but as a comparison between the two terms, vocabulary is much more essential and it should receive more attention. This argument has been confirmed by many authors. Allen (1985, p.5) for example, indicates that in best classes both grammar and vocabulary are important and should not be neglected, but vocabulary has to be taught first. Besides, Wilkins, (1972, p.111), also supported this idea saying “without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. As cited in.

Moreover, Nation (2001), as cited in (Alqahtani, 2015), argues that vocabulary knowledge is related to the language use. That is, the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge is related to the language use, and the use of language enables the learner to increase his own knowledge of vocabulary. To summarize, vocabulary is of crucial importance. Learners need vocabulary knowledge to achieve success in their classroom, their social life and their continuing acquisition of the target language.

### **1.7. Steps to Effective Vocabulary Teaching Instruction**



According to Marzano (2004, P.91), an effective vocabulary instruction requires six steps. He indicates that a regular classroom instruction provides the context for these steps.

### **1.7.1. The Teacher Provides a Description, Explanation, or Examples of the New Term**

During this step, the teacher explains and describes the new term and gives some examples. Marzano (2004, p.91) stated that conversational description, explanation and examples are very important for learners when acquiring a new term. He also indicates that for each term the teacher would present the features that form the description. Although the teacher's description might be informal, it should involve all the main elements that make the word comprehensible.

### **1.7.2. Students Restate the Explanation of the New Term in Their Own Words**

Stheal (1999) as cited in Marzano (2004), notes that "The goal of vocabulary learning is to have students store the meanings of the words in their long-term memory...". In this step, the teacher presents the new term and the learner should restate it in his own word. The learners are asked to give their own explanation based on what the teacher gives them. Additionally, they should construct their own understandings in different ways. (Marzano, 2004, p.94)

### **1.7.3. Students Create a Nonlinguistic Representation of the Term**

In this step, the student is asked to represent the information given by the teacher non-linguistically. After the two first steps, students have already created their own linguistic descriptions of the term. Then after reaching this point, students create a nonlinguistic representation of the term. These representations are in the form of graphic organizers, pictures or pictographs. (Marzano, 2004, p96)

#### **1.7.4. Students Periodically Do Activities that Help Them Add to Their Knowledge of Vocabulary Terms**

According to Marzano (2004, p. 98), students have to do a lot of activities and tasks in order to interact with vocabulary terms in different ways. The most useful activities used in this step are the following:

- Make a distinction between the terms.
- Classifying terms.
- Generating metaphors using terms.
- Generating analogies using terms.
- Revising initial descriptions or nonlinguistic representation of terms.
- Using the understanding of roots and affixes to deepen knowledge of terms.

#### **1.7.5. Periodically Students Are Asked to Discuss the Terms with One Another**

During this step, the teacher is supposed to organize students into groups and ask them to discuss the term with each other. This may help the students interacting using the new terms. Additionally, in order to make the students interested and excited about the discussion, the teacher might ask each group a set of questions. These questions might direct students to terms they find interesting. (Marzano, 2004, p. 101)

#### **1.7.6. Periodically Students Are Involved in Games That Allow Them to Play with Terms**

According to Marzano (2004, p.102), students can use games as a tool to improve their vocabularies. He stated that they can play with new terms in a variety of ways. As cited in Marzano (2004), Johnson, Von Hoff Johnson, and Schlichting (2004) defined 8 types of word play. Similarly, Marzano and Christensen (1992), demonstrate 15 types of games for

vocabulary development. Using games as an activity plays an important role in making learners stimulated and interested in learning vocabulary terms.

### **1.8. Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary**

The past two decades have witnessed a big rush toward the teaching of vocabulary, especially within the area of foreign language. Virtually all of the teachers that are involved in the domain of second/foreign language teaching are aware of the significant techniques they can use. Using these techniques, the teacher should take into account several factors like content, time availability, its value to learners and so on. In this context, Bester, Ellis and Girard (1992), as cited in Alqahtani 2015, present some of the teaching techniques which are as follows:

#### **1.8.1. Using Objects**

In this technique, the teacher uses demonstrations, realia and visual aids. These tools help much in making learners better remember and memorize new vocabulary items; because the human brain can easily remember pictures and visual things (Takac, 2008). Moreover, Grains and Redman (1986), as cited in Alqahtani (2015, p. 26), stated that real objects technique is appropriately employed for beginners or young learners especially when presenting concrete vocabulary. If the vocabulary item has its concrete noun in this case objects are used to present the former.

#### **1.8.2. Drawings**

The teacher can use drawings either on the blackboard or use flashcards, the latter can be re-used again and again. This technique helps more young children in understanding and realizing the main points that they deal with in the classroom (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 27).

### **1.8.3. Using Illustrations and Pictures**

The use of pictures relates the student's background knowledge with the new knowledge helping them to learn new vocabulary items easily. There are a lot of vocabularies that can be presented through the use of pictures and illustrations. Thus, this technique is considered as one of the most effective techniques in making the ambiguous meaning of words clear. The list of pictures may include posters, flashcards, wall charts, magazine pictures, board drawings, stick figures and photographs. (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 27)

### **1.8.4. Contrast**

The teacher explains the meaning of new words to the learners through contrasting them with their opposites. For example, contrasting the adjective "good" with its opposite "bad" will enable the learner to remember the meaning of each of them easily. However, contrasting means showing the difference, whereas many studies have shown that vocabulary is best acquired by showing synonyms. According to Wilson (1991), learning about synonyms is important also because this is how dictionaries are organized. Putting bilingual dictionaries aside, monolingual dictionaries essentially use words to explain words, and in this process, synonyms are often used (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015, p. 27).

### **1.8.5. Enumeration**

According to Harmer (1991), enumeration is a group of items the regular listing of which can bring up the meaning of a word. For instance, by saying the word "clothes" and listing the different types of clothes (a dress, a skirt, trousers, etc) the meaning of the former will be clear (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015, p. 28).

### **1.8.6. Mime, Expressions and Gestures**

According to Klippel (1994), “mime or gesture is useful if it emphasizes the importance of gestures and facial expression on communication. At the essence, it can not only be used to indicate the meaning of words found in reading a passage, but also in speaking activity as it stresses mostly on communication” (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015, p. 28). Teaching gestures can be in different forms, whether hand gestures, facial expressions, body movements, etc. Besides, teaching gestures also help the learner in the process of memorization. In this light, many teachers in foreign language areas declare that through teaching gestures learners can easily retrieve the word that goes hand in hand with the former.

### **1.8.7. Guessing From Context**

According to Dubin (1993), guessing from context as a way of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in unedited selections has been suggested widely by L1 and L2 reading specialists (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 29). Moreover, according to Nation and Coady (1988) as cited in Alqahtani (2015), there are two types of contexts the first is the context within the text which includes morphological, semantic and syntactic information in a specific text, while the second one is the general context or non-textual context which is the background knowledge the reader has about the subject being read. According to Chesla (2004), context refers to the words and sentences that surround a specific word or item and clarify its meaning. Consider the following example:

I admire Arun’s candor, but sometimes he can be a bit too honest.

Candor means:

a) Attitude.

- b) Frank, sincere speech.
- c) Readiness to judge or criticize others.
- d) Comfort speaking in front of people.
- e) Irritability.

From the context of the sentence, only “b” can be the correct answer since the speaker tells us that Arun is too honest, which means that the word candor means frank, sincere speech. Arun told what he thinks frankly and sincerely.

### **1.8.8. Eliciting**

This technique is more motivating and memorable by simply giving students a list of words to learn (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 29).

### **1.8.9. Translation**

As cited in Alqahtani (2015, p. 29), even if translation does not motivate learners to think about the meaning of words, it could be effective for teachers because it saves time (Cameron, 2001). Moreover, there are a lot of words that need to be translated from one language to another (either from L1 to L2 or from L2 to L1).

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, vocabulary teaching and learning is essential for the successful acquisition of a foreign language. It is one major issue that has been defined and described by many scholars. One way to best know how vocabulary has developed through time is to highlight its historical background and how it has been taught in the different methods and approaches to language teaching. Another point that has been tackled in this chapter is how much

vocabulary is important for any language, the different effective steps involved in learning it and some significant techniques that teachers can use to successful teaching of vocabulary.

## **Chapter Two: EFL Learner's Vocabulary Problems.**

### Introduction

#### 2.1. Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning

##### 2.1.1. Linguistic Features of Lexical Items

##### 2.1.2. The Influence of First and Other Languages

##### 2.1.3. The Incremental Nature of Vocabulary Acquisition

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##### 2.1.5. The Organization and Development of the Second Language and Mental Lexicon

##### 2.1.6. The Source of Vocabulary (Exposure to Linguistics Input)

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#### 2.2. Difficulties Faced by Students when Learning Vocabulary

##### 2.2.1. Pronunciation and Spelling

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##### 2.2.4. Meaning



2.2.5. Range of Connotation and Idiomaticity

2.3. Solutions to Vocabulary Learning Difficulties

2.3.1. Providing Rich and Varied Language Experience

2.3.2. Teaching Individual Words

2.3.3. Teaching word -learning strategies

2.3.4. Fostering Word Consciousness

Conclusion

## **Introduction**

Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of any language, because without vocabulary learners will not be able to understand and use the language. Thus, The EFL learners are in need of enhancing their stock of vocabulary in order to develop their language proficiency. However, many challenges and difficulties are facing learners when they try to acquire a new vocabulary. Hence, this chapter presents the major factors that affect vocabulary learning. Then, it examines the main difficulties that face EFL learners when they acquire vocabulary. Finally, it gives some solutions to help learners solving their problems.

### **2.1. Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning**

Learning a foreign language is affected by many factors. Takac (2008) listed a number of different factors.

#### **2.1.1. Linguistics Features of Lexical Items**

According to Takac (2008, p.4), when we talk about linguistic features of lexical items, three main issues are taken into consideration. The first issue is that linguists have not got agreed on a specific definition of 'word'. For instance, while, (Carter, 1992:4) defines a 'word' as "... any sequence of letters bounded on either side by a space or a punctuation mark". Or as "the smallest meaningful unit of language", Bloomfield defines it as "a minimal free form". (As cited in Takac, 2008, p.4), the second issue that should be discussed is the variation of vocabulary forms. The vocabulary of any language consists of a wide range of lexical forms. Such as morphemes, both free and bound (e.g. laughter, unbelievable), compounds (e.g. bus conductor), idioms (e.g. to bit the dust), and other expressions, such as trinomials (e.g. sick and tired), catchphrase (e.g. they don't make them like that anymore), greetings (e.g. how do you do). The third issue which is to be taken into account is that

lexical items cannot be isolated from each other. Additionally, Laufer (1997) mentioned other factors that affect vocabulary acquisition like pronunciation, orthography, length, morphology, similarity of lexical forms, and grammar (as cited in Takac 2008).

### **2.1.2. The Influence of First and Other Languages**

Takac (2008, p.8), stated that the role of the first language (L1) in the process of vocabulary acquisition differs depending on the equivalence between languages. In some situations, it may facilitate the acquisition of second or foreign language vocabulary. In other situations, it may create problems. This may happen when reviewing and utilizing previous items, or as an attempt to develop a complex lexical item that has not been learned as a unit. By doing contrastive analysis one can anticipate the difficulties caused by L1 that learners may face when acquiring the target language. According to (Ringbom, 1987:135), the learner's approach to L2 learning is based on "equivalence hypothesis": the learner tends to assume that the system of L2 is more or less the same as in his L1 until he discovered that it is not. (As cited in Takac 2008)

### **2.1.3. The Incremental Nature of Vocabulary Acquisition**

A word is an abstract unit that consists of different components. It is characterized by several dimensions (i.e. phonological and orthographic, morphological, syntactic and semantic). All of these components have an influence on the learning of lexical items and make the vocabulary acquisition more difficult and complex. (Takac, 2008, p.10)

### **2.1.4. The Role of Memory in Vocabulary Learning and Acquisition**

According to Takac (2008, p.10), memory can influence vocabulary acquisition because it has a crucial role in keeping the obtained words. Learners forget some components of knowledge in both long-term and short term memory. The considerable amount of new words

obtained by the learners is forgotten over a period of time. Thornbury (2002) has set a number of principles that make the transfer of the learning material into the long-term memory easier including multiple encounters with the lexical item, preferably at spaced intervals, retrieval and use of lexical items, cognitive depth, affective depth, personalization, imaging, use of mnemonics and conscious attention. Similarly, (Schmitt, 2000) stated that the acquisition of vocabulary should follow the above mentioned principles. (As Cited in Takac, 2008)

#### **2.1.5. The Organization and Development of the Second Language and Mental Lexicon**

The development of language is also influenced by mental lexicon and how the second language is developed and organized. The mental lexicon is ‘a memory system in which a vast number of words, accumulated in the course of time, has and been stored’, (Hulstjin, 2000, as cited in Takac, 2008). This system should be well structured because it gives the learner the capacity to store and retrieve huge number of words in their memory. Many researches about the L2 mental lexicon item have been conducted and aiming at explaining how the words are organized and extracted in the mind. The findings of those researches show that the L2 words are stored separately from that of L1; however, both L1 and L2 lexicon are in communication. (Takac, 2008, p. 11)

#### **2.1.6. The Source of Vocabulary (Exposure to Linguistics Input)**

Carter (1992) as cited in Takac (2008), stated that the main source of vocabulary for native speakers is a large range of contexts that facilitate the process of experimenting, confirming, expanding and narrowing down the lexical nets. This process is not based on direct instruction; rather it is based on incidental learning. At first, the learner does not have a

wide range of knowledge. Thus, he should learn new lexical items using synonyms, definitions, translation or illustrations. (Takac, 2008, P. 16)

### **2.1.7. Individual Learner Differences**

Using vocabulary learning strategies is one of the most important items that play a vital role in the process of learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategies actuate the explicit instruction that involves many different aspects, such as noticing the new word, selective attending, context based inferencing and storing into long-term memory (Ellis, 1994, as cited in Takac, 2008). However, the individual learner differences also have a big influence such as fear of failure, motivation and attitudes towards vocabulary learning (Takac, 2008, p.17).

### **2.1.8. The Role of the Teacher and Vocabulary Teaching Strategies**

The role of the teacher and the teaching strategies of vocabulary also have a big influence on vocabulary acquisition. The process of teaching was based only on predicting the meaning from context and using dictionaries whereas using definitions and translating words were rarely used. While teaching vocabulary teachers apply a great number of strategies and use a wide range of activities. For Hatch and Brown (2000, p. 401, as cited in Takac, 2008), teaching strategies are the things that teacher does in the classroom in order to facilitate the learning process. Seal (1991, as cited in Takac, 2008), stated that a comparison between planned and unplanned vocabulary teaching is made. Unplanned vocabulary teaching strategies is the reaction of the teacher when the learner need some help in the learning process in which it is implicit and indirect instruction. Whereas, the planned vocabulary teaching is direct, explicit and clearly defined (Takac, 2008, p. 18).

### **2.1.9. Presentation of New Lexical Items**

During the process of presenting a new lexical item, the learner is mostly a passive recipient of linguistic facts. The teacher gives both the form and meaning of the lexical item. The meaning can be presented verbally or non-verbally. The most useful ways that are involved in this presentation are the following:

- Contextualizing the lexical item.
- Relating an L1 item to its equivalent in L1.
- Providing a definition of the meaning.
- Connecting the meaning to real object.
- Active participation of learners in the presentation.

Additionally, the form of a lexical item can be presented in different ways:

- Using oral drills.
- The use of phonetic transcription.
- Presentation of graphic forms.
- Helping the learners in spelling words. (Takac, 2008, p. 19)

### **2.1.10. Review and Consolidation of Lexical Items**

One of the factors that also influence the acquisition of vocabulary is review and consolidation of lexical items. It has been stated that the lexical item should be consolidated in long-term memory. According to Schmitt (2000, as cited in Takac, 2008), it is necessary to review the lexical item immediately after initial learning and then at gradually increasing intervals. The teacher gives the learner the chance to practice and relate words in different ways and then to retrieve from memory and use them for all language skills. The most useful activities used in this process are the following:

- Loud repetition of words.
- The use of illustrations of meaning and images.
- Giving personal examples by relating the word to real events.
- Linking the new words to the already known words (Tacak, 2008, p. 21)

## 2.2. Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners when Learning Vocabulary

One might think that the acquisition and learning of vocabulary is a simple issue. But, in fact, it is a big and very complicated one. There are many problems and difficulties that learners face and suffer from during this process. Thornbury (2002), tackled some of the problems that learners face when learning vocabulary, which are as follow:

### 2.2.1. Pronunciation and Spelling

One major difficulty that EFL learners encounter when learning vocabulary is the problem of pronunciation as well as that of spelling. Many studies and researches shows that the more difficult words to pronounce are the more difficult ones to learn, Thornbury (2002, p. 27) stated that among the difficult words there are the ones that contain consonant clusters such as breakfast, crisps, strength. Likewise, McCarthy (2010:5), asserts that one big problem with learning English is that the pronunciation of words is not predictable. Some well known examples are the following:

<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>
Cough	/kɒf/ rhymes with off.
Tough	/tʌf/ rhymes with buff.
Though	/ðəʊ/ rhymes with go.
Through	/θru:/ rhymes with you.

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 Bough
/baʊ/ rhymes with now.  


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Table 01: Words and pronunciation

As Thornbury (2002:27), denotes in his book “How to teach vocabulary” sound spelling mismatches are major causes of errors of pronunciation or spelling, the thing that makes a word difficult to learn. A further difficulty that Thornbury has mentioned within spelling is words that contain silent letters such as, foreign, listen, honest.

### 2.2.2. Length and Complexity

According to Thornbury (2002, p. 27. 28), “Long words seem to be no more difficult to learn than short ones. But, as a rule of thumb, high frequency words tend to be short in English, and therefore the learner is likely to meet them more often, a factor favoring their learn-ability ...”. That is, long words are not difficult to be learned. But what makes them less learnable is that short words are more frequent and useful for learners, the factor that makes them more learnable than long ones. The different positions where stress takes place in polysyllabic words can also be considered as a problem that EFL learners face.

### 2.2.3. Grammar

The grammar associated with words is also a problem particularly if it is different from that of their L1 equivalent. For instance, the Spanish learners of English presume that “explain” follows the same pattern as both Spanish explicar and English tell, and say “he explained me the lesson”. Additionally, another difficulty that can be added to grammar is whether a verb like love, hope or enjoy is followed by an infinitive or an -ing form such as (to run) or (running). Furthermore, the grammar of phrasal verbs is of a particular problem since



some phrasal verbs are attached whereas others are not. For example, she looked after her father / she looked it up (Thornbury, 2002, p. 28).

#### **2.2.4. Meaning**

Overlapping in word's meanings makes learners confused. An example of the case is the verb "make" and "do": we can say you make the breakfast and make an appointment. But, we say you do the housework and do a questionnaire. Words that have more than one meaning can also be problematic for learners such as, since and still. Thus, learning one meaning of the word may inhibit learning and accepting another different meaning (Thornbury, 2002, p. 28).

#### **2.2.5. Range of Connotation and Idiomaticity**

According to Thornbury, (2002, p.28), words that are used numerously in different contexts are commonly considered easier than their equivalents that are less used. For example, the verb 'put' is a wide-ranging verb, compared to 'impose' and 'place'. Likewise, 'thin' is a bet than 'skinny', 'slim' or 'slender'. A further difficulty within vocabulary learning, are words that have style constraints as well as connotations such as very informal words (chunk for throw, swap for exchange). Idioms or idiomatic expressions can also be problematic for learners than words that have transparent meanings.

### **2.3. Solutions to Vocabulary Learning Difficulties**

Since vocabulary is one of the essential components of any language, learners need to learn it. However, they encountered many difficulties and problems when doing so. According to Graves, August, and Jeannette (2013, p. 4-5) some of the solutions that may help the learners develop their vocabulary knowledge and solve these problems are the following:

### **2.3.1. Providing Rich and Varied Language Experiences**

According to Graves, et al. (2013, p.4) a good way to increase learners' vocabularies is to make them involved in varied language experiences. By using this method, learners will be able to acquire vocabularies through the four language skills. According to (Beck, Mckeown, & Kucan, 2003, as cited in Graves, August, and Jeannette, 2013), students in the primary grades start learning new words through the use of listening and speaking skills, so that they contribute to the progress of their vocabularies. In addition, according to ( Applebee, langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Beck & Mckeown, 2006; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, as cited in Graves, August, and Jeannette, 2013), learners are in need to use authentic conversations, so that they can discuss a lot of different topics and connect what they have been taught in school to their real-world issues. Moreover, after the intermediate grades learners are more advanced and they have a rich vocabulary. Hence, they use the reading skill as the main language experience to enlarge their vocabularies more and more. (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998 as cited in Grave, August, Jeannette, 2013)

### **2.3.2. Teaching Individual Words**

According to Graves, et al. (2013, P.4), teaching individual words is another approach that helps learners develop their vocabularies. Basically, the number of vocabulary learners will achieve at the end denotes that we cannot teach them all the words they need. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should not teach the students some of the words. According to (Beck, Mckeown, & Omanson, 1987; Graves, 2009 a; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986, in Graves, August, Jeannette, 2013), research has shown a good deal about effective and ineffective approaches to teaching individual words. Hence, Vocabulary instruction is more effective when giving the learners both definitional and contextual knowledge; when they

process the new words meanings as well as when they experience multiple encounters with words.

### **2.3.3. Teaching Word-Learning Strategies**

Graves, August, and Jeannette (2013, p.5) state that teaching word-learning strategies is one of the essential approaches that help students build their vocabularies. According to Bauman, Fount, Edward, and Boland, (2005) Carlyle, (2007) (in Graves, August, Jeannette, 2013), using the parts of words to unlock the meaning of unfamiliar words is one widely suggested strategy, and it is well-supported in research. Moreover, learners' knowledge about the use of affixes, and the use of roots to comprehend the different members of word families, for example, indicate, indicates, indicated, indicating, indication, and indicator may reduce the number of words the students need to acquire. Additionally, another suggested strategy is using context to infer word meaning. For that, Stenberg (1987 in Graves, August, and Jeannette, 2013) pointed out "most vocabulary is learned from context". Thus, if learners' capacity to use context to gather word meanings develops, they will increase their vocabularies.

A third suggested strategy is the use of dictionaries and similar reference tools. Students need help when coming to more effectively using these tools (Graves, 2006; Stahl & Nagy, 2006 in Graves, August, Jeannette, 2013). Another task ELLS need to master is dealing with multiword units. Finally, for Spanish along with others whose native language shares etymological roots with English, learning to use cognate knowledge can be a powerful word-learning strategy (August et al, 2005; Bravo, Hiebert, & Pearson, 2007; Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005, in Graves, et al, 2013).

### **2.3.4. Fostering Word Consciousness**

For Graves, et al. (2013, P.5) the last important approach that helps learners grow their vocabularies is fostering word consciousness. So that, learners have an interest of learning the words and their different meanings. According to (Graves & Watts-Taffe; 2008; Scott, Skobel & wells, 2008, in Graves, et al. 2013, p. 3), the term word consciousness includes a cognitive along with an effective stance towards words and integrates meta-cognition about words as well as motivation about learning words, and a deep and permanent interest in words.

Further, the students who are word conscious are the ones who use the four language skills. These learners appreciate the power of words, they are able to comprehend why some words are used in the place of others, and they are aware about the meaning of words that could be used instead of those chosen by the writer or the speaker. According to Scott and Nagy (2004 in Graves, et al. 2013, p.3), when the learners are aware of the words around them, it means that that they have knowledge of the recognition of communicative power of words, the differences between spoken and written language forms, and an interest in learning and using new words. To sum up, Students learn a huge number of words through the listening and reading skills. This creates a positive disposition among them towards word learning. Word consciousness occurs at many levels of complexity, and it has to be fostered among students.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, since vocabulary teaching and learning is not an easy process, learners face many challenges when they try to acquire it. In this line, the present chapter discussed the main factors that affect vocabulary learning. It has also put light on the difficulties that EFL

learners face when learning vocabulary. Finally, it highlighted some solutions to those difficulties.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

### Introduction

#### 3.1. Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.1.1. The Sample

##### 3.1.2. Aims of the Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.1.3. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.1.4. Description of the Student' Questionnaire

##### 3.1.5. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

#### 3.2. Teachers' Interview

##### 3.2.1. The Sample

##### 3.2.2. Aims of the Teachers' Interview

##### 3.2.3. Conducting the Teachers' Interview

##### 3.2.4. Description of the Teachers' Interview

##### 3.2.5. Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

#### 3.3. Discussion of the Results

##### 3.3.1. Discussion of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.3.2. Discussion of the Teachers' Interviews

### Conclusion

**Introduction:**

Having reviewed the related literature about vocabulary teaching and learning as well as vocabulary learning difficulties that EFL learners face, the next step is to set out the practical study to achieve the aim of this study which is to investigate the vocabulary learning difficulties faced by EFL learners, a Questionnaire was designed and administered to First year EFL learners, and an Interview was conducted with some teachers at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia- Jijel University, Department of English. This chapter defines the research design in terms of the sample, the aims, the administration and the description. Additionally, it provides a detailed analysis of the results obtained through the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview.

**3.1. Students' Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a research instrument which consists of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. It is often designed for statistical analysis of the answers. The obtained results of the questionnaire can be collected as a table or a graph or both. We use the questionnaire as a research instrument in our study, because it provides a convenient way of gathering information from a target population.

**3.1.1. The Sample**

The population of this study is First year LMD Students, at the Department English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. The sample of the present study consists of 100 students selected randomly from the existing population.

**3.1.2. Aims of the Students' Questionnaire**

This Questionnaire is designed to investigate the vocabulary learning difficulties that EFL learners encounter, and to try to discover the main reasons and factors behind these difficulties.

### **3.1.3. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire**

Because we could not work with the whole population, this questionnaire was administered to one hundred (100) First year LMD students from different groups. It is worthy to mention that the questionnaire administered at the end of April 2018, at different classes of First year students including Grammar, Linguistics, Oral and Written expression sessions. During the distribution of the questionnaire, we were present to provide any necessary explanation. At the end of the distribution, all the questionnaires were returned.

### **3.1.4. Description of the Students' Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is divided into two sections. Each section includes open-ended questions, closed questions as well as multiple-choice questions. Sections are structured as follows:

Section One: General Information (Q1- Q6): This section contains six (06) questions; they are designed to collect general information about learners and their interest in English.

Section Two: Vocabulary learning difficulties (Q7-Q15): This section is composed of eight questions. It includes questions about vocabulary learning difficulties that first year LMD students face.



### 3.1.5. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

#### Question 01: Gender

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
Male	20	20
Female	80	80
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 01: *gender*

This table reveals that the percentage of female students is higher than that of males. The participants in our study were (80%) females and (20%) males. The results reflect the fact that girls vastly outnumber boys in the department of English.

#### Question 02: How long have you been studying English?

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
08 Years	81	81
09 Years	05	05
10 Years	14	14
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 02: *Period of studying English*

In this question students were asked how long they have been studying English. The findings show that the majority of students (81%) have been studying English for eight years, (14%) of them have received English courses for ten years, while the remaining students (05%) responded that they have been learning English for nine years. Having been studying English for eight to ten years, the participants are supposed to have an acceptable background in English and its vocabulary.

#### Question 03: How would you classify your English proficiency level?

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
High	13	13
Above average	27	27
Average	58	58
Low	02	02
Total	100	100

Table 03: Students' proficiency level of English

In this question the subjects were asked to classify their English proficiency level as high, average, above average or low. The results in the table show that (13%) refer to their level as high; (27%) of the students are of above average level; (58%) describe their English proficiency level as average; against two percent who admit that their level is low. We deduce that most of the students have a high self-esteem so that they claimed that they have an average proficiency level.

**Question 04:** Are you satisfied with your vocabulary knowledge?

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
Yes	20	20
A little	70	70
No	10	10
Total	100	100

Table 04: *Students' satisfaction towards their vocabulary knowledge*

In this question the students were asked if they are satisfied with their vocabulary knowledge. The answers are varied in the way that (20%) of them answered with yes; (70%) of the population answered by a little. Whereas, (10%) the students said that they are dissatisfied with their vocabulary knowledge. From the results shown above, it can be concluded that the majority of the students are not completely satisfied with their vocabulary knowledge. This may relate to the difficulties they encounter when learning or using new vocabulary items.

**Question 05:** Are you interested in learning new vocabularies?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	99	99
<b>No</b>	01	01
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 05: *Students' interest in learning vocabulary*

This question was asked to investigate the students' interest in learning new vocabulary items. (99%) of the answers were positive, the majority of the population answered by (yes). Whereas, only one student (01%) answered by (no). This means that the majority of students like to learn and acquire new vocabularies.

**Question 06:** According to you, how much is learning vocabulary important in developing your language proficiency?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Very important</b>	95	95
<b>Important</b>	05	05
<b>Not important</b>	00	00
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 06: *Students' perceptions of the Importance of vocabulary in developing their language proficiency*

All the answers to this question were positive. That is, all the students answered that vocabulary is important in developing their language proficiency. While (95%) of the population claimed that vocabulary is (very important), only five percent of them said that it is somewhat important. Finally, no student considered that vocabulary learning is not important. These results indicate that the majority of students are aware of the importance of vocabulary in developing the language proficiency.

**Question 07:** Do you find learning vocabulary difficult?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	80	80
<b>No</b>	20	20
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 07: *The difficulty of learning vocabulary*

The aim of this question is to find out whether students encounter difficulties when learning vocabulary or not. The results show that most of the students (80%) considered learning vocabulary difficult. This may be due to many factors. Only (20%) of the population revealed that learning vocabulary is not difficult.

#### **Explain why?**

The learners were then asked to justify their answers. The following are some of the justifications which were provided by the ones who answered (no):

- Learning new vocabularies is not that difficult, it only needs concentration.
- If you want you can, nothing is difficult you just need to have the desire to do things.
- There are different available resources that facilitate the learning processes.
- Because of the technological developments nothing is difficult.

It is very important to note that the majority of student who responded by yes justified their answers as follows:

- Learning vocabulary is difficult because of the problem of memorization, the majority of students claim that they cannot memorize a huge number of words with their pronunciation, spelling as well as their different uses.

- They get confused in words' meanings.
- The complex nature of some words makes learning them difficult.
- Lack of time, they claim that they do not have sufficient time to learn new vocabularies.
- The Grammar of words.
- Lack of practice and reading.
- The appropriate use of words.

According to the majority of learners, the major cause behind finding learning new vocabularies difficult is memorization.

**Question 08:** what kind of difficulties do you face when learning new vocabulary? (More than one answer is acceptable)

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>a. Pronunciation</b>	03	03
<b>b. Meaning</b>	10	10
<b>c. spelling</b>	02	02
<b>d. Length and complexity</b>	09	09
<b>e. Range of connotation and idiomaticity</b>	02	02
<b>f. Grammar</b>	00	00
<b>a+b</b>	08	08
<b>a+c</b>	04	04
<b>a+d</b>	05	05
<b>a+e</b>	01	01
<b>a+b+c</b>	03	03
<b>a+b+c+d</b>	01	01
<b>a+b+c+e</b>	01	01
<b>a+b+c+f</b>	02	02
<b>a+b+d+e</b>	01	01
<b>a+b+e</b>	02	02
<b>a+b+f</b>	02	02
<b>a+c+d</b>	02	02
<b>a+c+f</b>	01	01
<b>a+d+e</b>	01	01
<b>b+c</b>	05	05
<b>b+d</b>	14	14
<b>b+d+e</b>	06	06
<b>b+d+f</b>	01	01
<b>b+e</b>	02	02
<b>b+f</b>	02	02
<b>c+d</b>	03	03
<b>c+d+e</b>	01	01
<b>c+f</b>	03	03
<b>d+e</b>	02	02
<b>e+f</b>	01	01
<b>total</b>	100	100

Table 08: *Students' difficulties in learning vocabulary*

In this question, the students were asked to cite the difficulties they face when learning vocabulary. The results drawn from this table reveal that the highest percentage (14%) is given to meaning and length and complexity (b+d). Meaning (b), represents a real difficult

aspect that (10%) of the population encounter. Moreover, nine percent of the students claimed that their problems in learning vocabulary are related to length and complexity (d), eight percent of them restricted their problems to pronunciation and meaning (a+b). Furthermore, six percent of the subjects encountered (b+d+e) as the major difficulties they face whenever they try to acquire vocabulary. Meaning and spelling (b+c) together are causing difficulties to five percent of the population, pronunciation and spelling (a+c) are also difficulties that four percent of our population encountered while learning new vocabularies. The remaining percentages (3% to 1%) represent those students who opted for more than one aspect.

It is quite clear that the aspects of meaning pronunciation, as well as the length and complexity of words are major difficulties that the majority of students face when they try to acquire new vocabulary items.

**Question 09:** according to you what makes a word easy or difficult to learn?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>a. Similarity to first language</b>	19	19
<b>b. Similarity to English words already known</b>	36	36
<b>c. Appropriate use</b>	31	31
<b>a+b</b>	03	03
<b>a+c</b>	02	02
<b>b+c</b>	09	09
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 09: *Factors that make a word easy or difficult to learn*

The results in table nine show that the students' opinions vary concerning what makes a word easy or difficult. We notice that (36%) of the population consider the similarity to English words already known (b) as the major factor that makes a word easy or difficult.

Another proportion of the population (31%), believe that the appropriate use (b) is a factor that contributes to the difficulty or the easiness of words. Moreover, (19%) of the students' opted for similarity to first language (a), nine percent (09%) of students claim that similarity to English words already known and the appropriate use (b+c) affect their vocabulary learning ability. Finally, the remaining subjects believe that the similarity to first language and the similarity to English words already known (a+b) as well as the similarity to first language and the appropriate use (a+c) can affect vocabulary learning.

Therefore, it can be concluded that similarity to English words already known as well as the appropriate use of words are the major factors that affect students' vocabulary learning and make it easy or difficult.

**Question 10:** Which of the following language skills do you focus on when learning vocabulary? (More than one answer is possible)

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>a. Listening</b>	41	41
<b>b. Reading</b>	40	40
<b>a+b</b>	19	19
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 10: *The major language skills that students focus on when learning vocabulary*

In this question students are asked about the language skills they focus on when learning vocabulary. (41%) of the subjects said that they focus more on the listening skill. On the other hand, (40%) of them chose reading as the major skill they focus on. Whereas, the rest of the population (19%) claimed that they focus on both listening and reading.

**Question 11:** What are the techniques that teachers use to teach you new vocabulary items? (More than one answer is possible)



<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>a. Using objects</b>	08	08
<b>b. Illustrations and pictures</b>	08	08
<b>c. Guessing from context</b>	19	19
<b>d. Translation</b>	10	10
<b>a+b</b>	04	04
<b>a+b+c</b>	01	01
<b>a+b+d</b>	05	05
<b>a+c</b>	05	05
<b>a+c+d</b>	02	02
<b>a+d</b>	07	07
<b>b+c</b>	09	09
<b>b+c+d</b>	03	03
<b>b+d</b>	06	06
<b>c+d</b>	13	13
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 11: *Techniques used by teachers to teach vocabulary*

In this question the students were asked about the techniques their teachers use to teach them vocabulary. As the results show, (19%) of the students selected Guessing from context (c), thirteen percent (13%) chose Guessing from context and Translation (c+d), (10%) selected Translation (d), nine percent choose Illustrations and pictures with Guessing from context (b+c) and eight percent of the population opted for Using objects (a) and the same percentage for Illustrations and pictures (b). The rest options; (a+b); (a+b+c); (a+b+d); (a+c); (a+c+d); (a+d); (b+c+d) and (b+d) were chosen by the rest of the population. That is according to students, guessing from context and translation, are the techniques that teachers used most to introduce new vocabulary items.

**Question 12:** Do you think that the difficulties you face when learning vocabulary are related to the techniques used by teachers?

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
Yes	45	45
No	55	55
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 12: *Students' opinion about the difficulties they face and their relationship to teachers' techniques*

This question was asked to find out whether the difficulties that learners face are related to the teachers' techniques or not. The results show that (55%) of the students believe that the problems they face while learning new vocabulary items are not related to the teachers' techniques. Whereas, the rest of the population (45%) responded by yes.

**Question 13:** do you think that the strategies used by the teacher are enough to develop your vocabulary acquisition?

Options	Subjects	Percentage %
Yes	23	23
No	77	77
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Table 13: *students' opinions about teachers' strategies and their contribution in developing vocabulary acquisition*

The table above highlighted that the majority of students (77%) said that the strategies their teachers use are not enough for developing their vocabulary acquisition and only (23%) of them said that they are enough. We can say here that students have to work on their own if

they want to develop their vocabulary package without relying only on what teachers gave them.

**Question 14:** what do you do outside the classroom to expand your vocabulary?

In this question, learners were asked to say what they do outside the classroom in order to expand their vocabulary. The majority of students who responded to this question listed the following strategies:

- Practicing the language everywhere at every time.
- Reading books, Novels and journals.
- Listening to English songs with lyrics.
- Watching English Movies, series, NEWS and TV shows.
- Subscribing in you tube channels for English teaching.
- Chatting in English with friends and native speakers.
- Trying to learn a new word each time.

**Question 15:** when you face problems in learning new vocabularies how do you usually solve them?

Similarly, in this question students are asked about the way they solve the difficulties they face when learning new vocabulary items. In fact, not all the students answered this question, but the ones who answered it provided almost the same answers which are as follows:

- Checking dictionaries.
- Asking teachers or colleagues.
- Memorizing new words.

- Try to use the difficult words in order not to forget them.

### **3.2. Teachers' Interview**

An interview is a verbal conversation between two persons. It is used as a research tool for the purpose of gathering information and data. We use the interview as a research instrument, because it is a good way to clarify teachers' views about the set subject.

#### **3.2.1. The Sample**

The population of this study is three first year teachers at the department of English Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University-Jijel. The sample consists of three teachers.

#### **3.2.2. Aims of the Teachers' Interview**

The aim of conducting this interview in this research is to complete the questionnaire data and integrate Teachers as a sample to provide good coverage of the subject. Hence, it was conducted in order to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' attitudes toward the vocabulary learning difficulties encountered by their students.

#### **3.2.3. Conducting the Teachers' Interview**

This interview was conducted with first year LMD teachers; it was done at the second semester of the academic year 2018 at department of English Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, it was conducted with three teachers. We met them separately so none of their answers would influence the other.

#### **3.2.4 Description of the Teachers' Interview**

The interview is a whole of ten (10) questions. A total of three teachers were invited to answer these questions. Each interview took 10 to 15 minutes and a number of questions

concerning vocabulary difficulties were asked. All the questions were open-ended to allow the teachers to give their opinions. The three interviewees were asked the same questions.

### 3.2.5. Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

**Q1:** How many years have you been teaching English?

- The first teacher said that she has been teaching English for six years.
- The second one said that she has been teaching English for two years.
- The third teacher said that she has been teaching English for three years.

The purpose of this question is to identify how many years teachers had been teaching English in order to determine whether teachers who are involved in this piece of research are experienced teachers or not. According to their replies, one of them have more than five years of experience which is more valuable for our investigation, however, the rest have less than five years of experience.

**Q2:** As a teacher of English do you think that the focus should be on vocabulary, grammar or both? Why?

This question seeks to find out the importance of vocabulary comparing to grammar. The first teacher stated, "Both of vocabulary and grammar are important because they are essential aspects of mastering the English language". Another teacher declared "both of vocabulary and grammar are important and the focus should be on both of them". She added "you can have the vocabulary but you do not know how to deliver it and how to speak it without grammar". She also said, "Vocabulary helps in communication and it works like an engine, and grammar helps in directing the student and show him/her what to say and how to say it". One of the teachers gave more importance to vocabulary, she stated: "The focus should be more on vocabulary, grammar is simpler and it is just a matter of applying rules".

Through this question, it is revealed that most of the teachers focus on both vocabulary and grammar. That is, they agree that vocabulary is not just important, but essential in mastering the English language.

**Q3:** Since vocabulary is an important component of any language, how often do you teach it?

This question was posed to know how often the interviewed teachers teach vocabulary. Generally, the teachers' answers were approximately the same. They stated that vocabulary teaching should be a part of teachers' everyday instruction. One teacher answered this question saying "I devoted the whole semester teaching vocabulary, this may help my students to enlarge their vocabulary". Another teacher declared "I teach vocabulary on a daily basis, in every lecture, whatever a word comes to my mind or a vocabulary that I think it may help my students, I write it on the board, give its meaning and ask them to practice". The remaining teacher shares the same opinion: "I teach vocabulary in every lesson, I try to teach student the new vocabulary in an indirect way, in my explanation I use new words and I make the learner guess the meaning from the context".

Therefore, vocabulary teaching receives a great deal of teachers' attention. This may reflect their awareness of its importance.

**Q4:** Which language skill do you focus on more when you teach vocabulary?

The aim of asking this question was to find out which skills the teachers rely on when they teach a new vocabulary item. The respondents' answers to this question were almost the same. One of them said, "I focus on speaking and reading and I do not focus on writing because in order to write you have to read a lot". Another teacher shared the same idea: "I focus on listening, speaking and reading; I do not focus on writing because in writing you produce the vocabulary that you have learned". The same respondent added, "Reading is

important because when you read, you come across new vocabulary. And through listening to audios or videos, you catch new vocabularies, and you use it later in practice through speaking”. The remaining teacher answered this question by saying: “I focus on listening and speaking and sometimes on reading, and I do not focus on writing because after using the first three skills, the student will be able to write”.

According to the teachers’ answers, we noticed that most of them focus on listening, speaking and reading when teaching vocabulary; they do not focus on writing because it does not serve their aims.

**Q5:** Which techniques do you usually use when you teach vocabulary?

This question was asked to get information about the methods teachers use to teach vocabulary. The teachers’ responses to this question were varied. One teacher said, “The methods I use to teach vocabulary vary, I tend to focus on the communicative approach using communicative games, listening tracks, telling a story and others. It depends on the aim and the vocabulary I want to teach”. Another teacher declared “I use authentic materials for instance, pictures, oral drills, games and many others”. The other teacher said: “I encourage my learners to guess the meaning of the word from the context, and sometimes I use drills and pictures to demonstrate the meaning”.

From the answers above, it is clear that teachers use different methods in teaching vocabulary. They try to demonstrate the meaning of words for their students and enrich their vocabulary knowledge using games, videos and audio records.

**Q6:** Have you ever noticed that students face difficulties when they try to acquire new vocabulary?

Answering this question, all the respondents admitted that their students face difficulties while learning vocabulary. One of them said, “yes most of the time, they face many difficulties”. Another teacher said, “of course my students face a lot of problems when they try to learn new vocabulary”. The other teacher also declared that her students encounter some difficulties when acquiring vocabulary.

**Q7:** Could you give some examples?

This question attempted to analyze the different difficulties that learners encounter when learning vocabulary. The teachers here gave different examples, one of them said, “My students have a problem with the words that have the same literary meaning, they also have difficulty with the terms that have different interpretations, as well as idioms which they find very hard and complex to learn”. Another teacher declared “The length and complexity of words are the major difficulties that face my learners, the spelling of words is also one big problem that my learners encounter”. Another teacher stated, “The usage of the word is one of the problems that face my students. Sometimes the learners use the vocabulary they learned wrongly, they find the word quite hard especially if they do not have previous knowledge about it”. She also stated that her students always forget the words she teaches them because they do not practice.

Generally, the teachers’ responses reveal that the majority of students face problems when learning vocabulary. Among these problems they include: the length and complexity, the spelling and the problem of forgetting words.

**Q8:** According to you what are the common reasons behind your learners’ failure in acquiring vocabulary?



This question seeks to explain the reasons that make the learner frailer in acquiring vocabulary when the teachers were asked about the causes behind their learners' failure in acquiring vocabulary, most of the respondents declared that the majority of their students are de-motivated and they do not practice. One teacher said "most of my students are lazy. They do not include the new vocabulary in their daily conversations. Moreover, they forget quickly and they do not rehearse what they acquire". Another respondent declared: "the causes behind my learners' failure in acquiring vocabulary are the lack of reading, they rarely read something in English they focus on speaking and they do not know that speaking comes the last, they have to read a lot because when you learn a vocabulary item you cannot produce it without background information". Another teacher stated: "most of my students feel afraid when they try to learn a new vocabulary, they are not motivated, they are lazy and they do not practice the things they have learned".

We can conclude that the learners' failure in learning new vocabulary items is related to their attitudes toward vocabulary acquisition.

**Q9:** how do you try to amend their weaknesses in vocabulary acquisition?

This question seeks to show the teachers' efforts in helping their student to overcome their problems when acquiring vocabulary. The answers of the respondents were varied. Each teacher uses her own way to enhance her learners' vocabulary and to solve their problems. One of them confessed, "whatever vocabulary I teach them, I relate it to use and practice because practice is better, whatever a new word I teach them, I ask them to practice whether by writing a dialogue or by writing a short story". One of the teachers uses a different method. She declared: "I encourage my students to make mistakes because they are going to learn from their mistakes by self-correct; I also encourage them to read and listen a lot". Another teacher said, "First, I try to encourage them to practice, but when they do not, I do

not bother myself to repeat the same orders every time because I think that the learners are responsible”.

Overall, the teachers’ responses to this question disclose that all the teachers try to solve their learners’ difficulties using different ways. Most of them stressed on practice because they think it is the best way to amend learners’ weaknesses.

**Q10:** Could you suggest any activities that may help students improve their vocabulary outside the classroom?

The question aims at showing the major things that learners have to do outside the classroom to enhance their vocabularies. The answers to this question were approximately the same. The respondents stated that the learner should practice outside the classroom using the words they have learned in their daily conversations. One teacher said, “Students have to make online conversations, they have to read a lot, for example reading journals, books, novels or short stories, they should watch movies and listen to songs, and maybe naming all the things they see outside”. Another teacher has a similar opinion “learners need to handle conversations, they have to listen to songs and discover new words from their lyrics, why not taking notes in small copybooks in order not to forget the words they learn, checking dictionaries to know the different meanings of the word, without forgetting that they ought to read a lot”. The third teacher suggested that learners need to make groups and talk and why not making online chatting with native speakers, and she stressed on native speakers because she thinks that they use a lot of words.

Generally speaking, learners’ practice outside classroom play a vital role in developing ones’ vocabulary and expand their package of words.

### **3.3. Discussion of the Results**

#### **3.3.1. Discussion of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire**

The results of the students' questionnaire have revealed many facts concerning students' opinions about vocabulary learning and the difficulties they face when they try to acquire it. Basically, the majority of students state that they are interested in learning new vocabularies, and that acquiring vocabulary is of crucial importance in developing their language proficiency level. However, many students demonstrate that they face difficulties when learning new vocabulary items. Among these difficulties are the aspects of meaning as well as that of length and complexity of words. Additionally, the techniques and strategies used by teachers, such as translation and guessing from context are not sufficient for them to develop their vocabulary acquisition. To expand their vocabulary knowledge outside the classroom, the majority of students state that they rely on the reading technique; reading books, Novels, NEWS papers; watching videos and subscribing in You Tube channels for teaching English. Finally, when the learners were asked about how they usually solve the challenges they face in learning vocabulary, nearly all of them state that they use dictionaries or they ask a More-knowledgeable person.

Consequently, the analysis of the students' questionnaire reveals that First year students are interested in acquiring vocabulary but they face a lot of challenges during the process of acquisition.

#### **3.3.2. Discussion of the Results of the Teachers' Interview**

The analysis of the Interview which was conducted with teachers at the Department of English, Mohammed Soddik Ben Yahia University-Jijel, Discloses the following notes:

- Through the analysis of teachers' responses, it was found that teachers adopt different methods in teaching vocabulary.
- According to teachers, the majority of their students face difficulties when learning vocabulary.
- The teachers state that most of their learners are de-motivated to acquire vocabulary.
- The respondents' answers reveal that most of the students do not practice the new vocabulary. And this is the major reason behind their failure in acquiring vocabulary.
- Teachers are reported to use different ways in order to help their learners overcoming their problems in vocabulary acquisition.
- Finally, teachers suggest a number of activities that may help the students improve their vocabulary outside the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter tackled the practical side of the study in hand. It provided information about the population sample, the data collection tools, a detailed analysis of both the questionnaires' and the interviews' results and it presented also the results' discussion. The obtained results of this chapter have led to the conclusion that vocabulary is a very important element in the language and that EFL learners face a variety of difficulties during the process of acquiring vocabulary.

### **General Conclusion**

In this research three main questions were raised; the first one was: do EFL learners face difficulties while learning vocabulary? The second one was: what are the main difficulties that EFL learners face when learning vocabulary? And the last question was: what are the main factors behind vocabulary learning difficulties?

The results obtained from both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview revealed that most of students face difficulties when learning vocabulary including: difficulties in spelling meaning pronunciation and length and complexity of words and that the similarity to English words already known and the appropriate use of words are the major factors behind the difficulties learners face. All in all, the results of this study confirm the hypothesis and demonstrated that the majority of first year EFL learners at the department of English, Mohammed Saddik Ben Yahia University in Jijel face difficulties when learning vocabulary.

### **Pedagogical Recommendations:**

The literature review about vocabulary and vocabulary learning difficulties in addition to the findings of our study enlightened us to propose some pedagogical recommendations to the teachers as well as learners. Hence, in order to make the process of vocabulary teaching and learning more successful and in order to develop the students' vocabulary acquisition the following recommendations are proposed.

- Teaching the form of new words; together with the pronunciation and spelling so that the learner knows how a word sounds as well as how it looks like.
- Teaching the words' meanings including connotations, appropriateness, denotation, since many learners find the aspect of meaning problematic.
- Many students find the length of words troublesome that's why word formation (like; derivations, inflections) should be taught.
- Teaching the grammar of new words.
- Teachers should teach vocabulary on a daily basis.
- Learners have to try to develop their vocabulary acquisition and work on themselves without relying on what teachers give them in the classroom, since the results of this study show that the majority of students claimed that the vocabulary teaching strategies used by teachers are not enough to develop their vocabulary acquisition.
- It is better for teachers to use different vocabulary teaching techniques and strategies that go hand in hand with the learners' level and needs.

- Teachers should encourage students and help them to memorize new words through the use of different activity types. Because the results of the study show that the majority of students find memorizing new words troublesome.
- Students have to care about their vocabulary difficulties and try to solve them.
- Students should interact with their classmates inside and outside the classroom using the new vocabularies they have learned.

At the end, we can say that vocabulary learning difficulties can be treated and solved through the participation of both students and their teachers by giving attention to vocabulary acquisition.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

During the time of conducting our research, some problems have been arisen and caused difficulties for us. These limitations are as follow:

- The sample of teachers ( only three teachers).
- Time constraint was one of the major faced problems, especially when it comes to the practical part particularly the analysis of students' questionnaire, it was very time-consuming.
- The lack of primary resources in our library was another problem that has been faced throughout the course of conducting our study.

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## Appendix A

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear Students,

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire as a part of a mater research entitled "Exploring Vocabulary Learning Difficulties facing EFL Learners" case study: First Year LMD students of English Language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. Please mark (X) in the appropriate box. Your contribution is too important for the present research, please do it seriously and sincerely.

Miss: Kitouni Ilhem &

Mecharah Wafa

Department of languages

English Section

Faculty of Letters &amp; Languages

University of Jijel

**Questions:** Tick (X) in the appropriate answer (sometimes more than one answer is possible) or give the full answer.

**Section one: General information:**

1. Gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
2. How long have you been studying English?  
..... Years
3. How would you classify your English proficiency level?
  - High
  - Above Average
  - Average
  - Low
4. Are you satisfied with your vocabulary knowledge?
  - a. Yes
  - b. A Little
  - c. No
5. Are you interested in learning new vocabularies?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. According to you, how much is learning vocabulary important in developing your language proficiency?
  - a. Very important
  - b. Somewhat important

- c. Not important

**Section Two: vocabulary learning difficulties**

7. Do you find learning vocabulary difficult?

- a. Yes   
b. No

Explain why

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. What kind of difficulties do you face when learning new vocabulary? (more than one answer is acceptable)

- a. Pronunciation   
b. Meaning   
c. Spelling   
d. Length and complexity   
e. Range of connotation and idiomaticity   
f. Grammar

9. According to you what makes a word easy or difficult to learn?

- a. Similarity to first language   
b. Similarity to English words already known   
c. Appropriate use

10. Which of the following languages skills do you focus on when learning vocabulary?

(More than one answer is acceptable)

- a. Listening   
b. Reading

11. What are the techniques that teachers use to teach you new vocabulary? (More than one answer is acceptable)

- a. using objects
- b. Illustration and objects
- c. Guessing from context
- d. Translation

12. Do you think that the difficulties you face when learning vocabulary are related to the techniques used by teachers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Do you think that the strategies used by the teachers are enough to develop your vocabulary acquisition?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. What do you do outside the classroom to expand your vocabulary?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

15. When you face problems in learning new vocabularies how do you usually solve them?

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix B

### Interview guide

**The institution:** The University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel.

**Interviewers:** Kitouni Ilhem and Mecharah Wafa.

**Interviewee(s):** Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3.

This interview aims at exploring the vocabulary difficulties faced by EFL learners. Your response will remain confidential and will only be used to achieve the aims of our Dissertation. We could be very grateful if you would provide sincere answers to the questions.

### Questions:

- 1- How many years have you been teaching English?
- 2- As a teacher of English, do you think that the focus should be on vocabulary, grammar or both? Why?
- 3- Since vocabulary is an important component of any language, how often do you Teach it?
- 4- Which language skill do you focus on more when you teach vocabulary?
- 5- Which Techniques do you usually use when you teach vocabulary?

- 6- Have you ever noticed that students face difficulties when they try to acquire new vocabulary?
- 7- Could you give some examples?
- 8- According to you, what are the common reasons behind your learner's failure in acquiring vocabulary?
- 9- How do try to amend their weaknesses in vocabulary acquisition?
- 10- Could you suggest any activities that may help students improve their vocabulary outside classroom?



## Résumé

Le but de cette étude est d'explorer les diverses difficultés rencontrées les étudiants de la langue Anglaise dans l'apprentissage de vocabulaire. Il a proposé comme hypothèse, que les étudiants de première année LMD au département d'anglais à l'université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia-Jijel, les ont rencontrées plusieurs difficultés. Ces difficultés sont peut-être manifester au niveau de langue et complexité du mot, la prononciation ou le sens. Et afin de recueillir des informations pour cette étude : deux méthodes différentes de recherche ont été employées, à savoir : le questionnaire et l'entrevue. Le questionnaire a été distribué aux 100 étudiants, il vise à découvrir les attitudes des étudiants vers les difficultés qui l'ont face. En plus de cela, l'entrevue a été effectuée avec trois enseignants au but de chercher à acquérir une meilleure compréhension du sujet. Les résultats de l'étude prouvent que l'hypothèse de cette dissertation est partiellement confirmée.

### الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مختلف الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في تعلم المفردات، الفرضية التي اعتمدت في هذه الأطروحة هي أنّ طلاب السنة الأولى ل م د فرع لغة انجليزية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيي تواجههم العديد من الصعوبات عند تعلم المفردات الإنجليزية، من الممكن أن ترتبط هذه الصعوبات بطول وتعقيد الكلمات، معناها، أو طريقة نطقها، ومن أجل جمع المعلومات اللازمة لهذه الدراسة تم توظيف استمارة للطلاب ومقابلة للمدرسين. وزعت الاستمارة على مائة طالب من قسم السنة الأولى وذلك لجمع آرائهم حول هذه الصعوبات، كما سعت المقابلة للحصول على آراء المدرسين للمزيد من الفهم حول الموضوع، وقد أكدت النتائج المستنبطة من تحليل الاستمارة والمقابلة صحة الفرضية السالفة الذكر.