Some strategies to study English vocabulary

Nguyễn Hiệp Thanh Nga*, Huỳnh Thị Bé Hậu*

*Trường Đại học Tây Đô

Abstract: *In the current globalization trend, English is the most commonly used language. In Vietnam today, English is not only a tool to connect with the world but also considered the key to success. For English learners, using language skills fluently requires a rich vocabulary. Vocabulary is the foundation for effective language acquisition. This article aims to provide some vocabulary learning strategies to expand vocabulary and improve language abilities for learners. They are (1) memory strategies, (2) word meaning learning strategies, (3) goal setting strategies, and (4) practical application strategies.*

Keywords: *Some, strategies, study, English, vocabulary*

1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning is an essential part of language learning. It is also central to language teaching and is of great importance to language learners. According to Hatch and Brown (1995), vocabulary is a collection of words that language users utilize in various ways. The learners' development is typically indicated by their vocabulary knowledge. However, learning vocabulary is difficult for many reasons: vocabulary is easy to forget, vocabulary has too many meanings, vocabulary is too much, and vocabulary is difficult to apply. These make the use of English skills difficult. Having right strategies can provide invaluable support to learners, helping them overcome language barriers and achieve academic excellence.

2. Some strategies to study English vocabulary

2.1. Memory strategies

Memory is a psychological process closely related to the whole of human psychological life, but not everyone is lucky to have a good memory. If students have good techniques, it is easy to understand words deeply.

2.1.1. Word association

Word association is a useful strategy to aid in remembering and understanding new words. This strategy is about connecting a new word with one or more familiar words, concepts, or experiences to facilitate memory and recall. By creating meaningful connections between words, students can improve their vocabulary retention. According to Prihatini (2020), "The initial word presented is termed the stimulus word, while the first word that comes to mind upon encountering the stimulus word is known as the response word." For example, when saying the word "sun" we can imagine related words that illustrate this word such as "shine, bright, day, light..." words relate in meaning, context or experience. This demonstrates the associative nature of vocabulary in our mental vocabulary.

2.1.2. Mind map

A mind map is a visual presentation technique that helps organize information in order; it shows the relationship between parts of a whole. It consists of a central concept from which related ideas branch, creating a structured and interconnected diagram. "It can be used in nearly every activity where thought, planning, recall or creativity are involved." (Buzan, 1989). In learning vocabulary, mind maps facilitate students' better understanding and memory through visual interaction and contextual learning. Besides, creating and reviewing mind maps involves drawing, writing and organizing, stimulating the brain more effectively than just passively reading. The use of colors, images and symbols in mind maps also helps students create memorable associations, thereby enhancing their memory. Furthermore, the process of creating mind maps creates positivity for students. It requires learners to think carefully about word relationships, organize information logically, and express their thoughts visually. This active engagement promotes deeper learning and memory than passive learning methods. To create a mind map, some basic steps should be taken as (1) choose a specific word or topic to be the central concept for the mind map; (2) draw a center button; (3) draw the main branches from the central node; (4) add sub-branches.

2.1.3. Self-assessment of vocabulary

Analyzing and speculating on the importance accompany with necessity and frequency of word usage are really of great significance in expanding vocabulary. These strategies allow students to focus their efforts on learning vocabulary that is most relevant and frequently used in their field, thereby saving time and improving their practical use of language. By prioritizing vocabulary that is essential and commonly used, students can enhance their language proficiency more efficiently. For example: A business student might prioritize learning terms like "profit," "revenue," "market analysis," and "investment," which are crucial in business contexts. This strategy helps students focus on vocabulary classes that have high frequency of use and are important to their field. In addition, self-assessment of one's language skills followed up by reflections on learning outcomes raises learner awareness of language use and leads to developing learner responsibility and autonomy.

2.2. Word meaning learning strategies

To know the meaning of words, students used to look up the dictionary, but the dictionary is just a tool to look up meanings, not a vocabulary store. Therefore, vocabulary is only known but cannot be used in practice and is only in short-term memory. There are some ways to help students actively cram vocabulary with consciously researching thinking methods that achieve high efficiency.

2.2.1. Guessing word from context

In the realm of language acquisition, encountering unfamiliar vocabulary can often pose a challenge for learners. Guessing word meanings from context serves as a powerful tool, enabling language learners to decode unknown words encountered during reading or listening tasks. "Learning from context is taken to mean the incidental learning of vocabulary from reading or listening to normal language use while the main focus of the learners' attention is on the message of the text." (Nation, 2001) By leveraging contextual clues inherent within the text itself, learners can infer the meaning of words without the need for external assistance such as a dictionary. For example: In a sentence like "The dog barked loudly as the mail carrier approached." The word "barked" provides a clue about the meaning of the unknown word "approached", learners can infer that "approached" likely means "moved nearer" based on the context of a dog barking at someone coming closer. In short, through guessing word

meanings from context, students can learn and know many meanings of words.

2.2.2. Learning roots and affixes

Before looking up new vocabulary in the dictionary, students try to guess its meaning by looking at the root through the suffixes and prefixes. Prefixes have the effect of changing the semantics of the original vocabulary (such as from positive to negative) or to express opinions, etc. For example, the word "comfortable" means "snug", the prefix un- comfortable means the opposite of comfortable. Suffixes have the effect of changing the word type of the original vocabulary, such as turning a noun into a verb or adjective. For example: continue (verb) - continuity (noun) - continuous (adjective). Roots and affixes help students decode and decipher the meanings of new words, even if they are in an unknown or unfamiliar language, because they sound and look similar. The knowledge of roots and affixes has been proven to help students of all ages and in a variety of fields of study (Vance, 1991). Researching the origins of new words can help brains analyze deeply and remember vocabulary better.

2.2.3. Synonym learning strategy

Synonym learning strategy is to use synonyms to enhance vocabulary acquisition by helping learners understand and remember new words through their relationship with known words. This approach can be particularly effective in improving learners' language proficiency because it provides a variety of ways to express similar ideas and gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and nuances of words. Using this strategy in the simplest way is that after knowing the meaning of a word, students can think of some words that can replace it. For example, when knowing the meaning of the word "happy", students can think of a synonym such as "joyful", "pleased". These not only help students expand their vocabulary but also enable them to use language more flexibly and accurately. The integration of these complementary methods ensures a robust and multifaceted approach to vocabulary acquisition, ultimately fostering better language proficiency and communication skills.

2.3. Goal setting strategies

Setting goals helps students identify what they want to achieve. Goals help students focus on what is important and ignore what is not. Moreover, goals help students devote their energy to learning words directly related to their language usage goals. Goals

can also measure students' progress, helping to boost their motivation to learn more.

2.3.1. Set deadline goal

The goals are more effective when students set them within a specific time frame. This is because deadlines force students to figure out the best way to achieve their goals in the shortest time possible without compromising the quality of their learning. Self-imposed deadlines foster a sense of control and responsibility, which can enhance intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. By setting deadlines, students can create a future point in time where they can look back and check how much they have learned and how much more they still need to learn which enhances students to achieving goal

2.3.2. Set a final goal

Embarking on the journey of learning a new language requires clarity about the learners' purpose and direction. To do this, students can consider questions such as Why do I want to learn this language? What doors will open for me if I can speak fluently? These questions act as a compass, guiding learners toward the ultimate goal - the main driving force behind their investment of time, resources, and effort in language acquisition, but language learning goals should not be rigid. They can develop over time, adapting to learners circumstances and aspirations. A goal that initially seems like a distant dream then gradually becomes a tangible goal with effort and planning. It is important to stay open and flexible in students' goal setting, allowing for adjustments along the way.

2.4. Practical application strategies

Practical application is a valuable vocabulary learning strategy. Applying newly learned words to real-life contexts helps reinforce understanding and memory. The simplest way to apply vocabulary in practice is to integrate vocabulary into students' daily habits and activities.

2.4.1. Writing strategy

Writing plays a fundamental role in acquiring and remembering vocabulary. Through written language, learners have a tangible platform to experiment with new words. To begin, learners can integrate newly learned vocabulary into basic sentences, emails or diaries. Over time, writers can challenge themselves to use these words in more complex structures, such as paragraphs in an essay. This progression not only strengthens understanding but also nurtures students'

confidence in applying vocabulary. Furthermore, seeking feedback from peers or teachers provides greater insight into the effectiveness of word use, facilitating continuous improvement in vocabulary and language skills.

2.4.2. Speaking strategy

Conversations provide valuable opportunities to apply students' newly learned vocabulary to real-life situations. By incorporating new words into daily discussions, learners actively practice using them in context. Conversations require to recall and apply vocabulary naturally, thereby strengthening learners understanding and enhancing their memory. Speaking frequently exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary in context, leading to better vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, participating in conversations allows for immediately getting feedback and corrections. This allows learners to hone their language skills and develop a deeper understanding of how words function in communication. In addition, conversations promote fluency and confidence in using language. By regularly engaging in dialogue, learners become more comfortable expressing themselves and articulating their thoughts.

3. Conclusion

The role of vocabulary when learning English is very necessary. Vocabulary plays a decisive role for the process of learning foreign languages. Improving vocabulary proficiency contributes to overall language competence, helping learners engage more fluently and confidently in language interactions. In order to learn vocabulary effectively, it is extremely important to use a thoughtful vocabulary learning strategies as (1)memory strategies, (2) word meaning learning strategies, (3) goal setting strategies, and (4) practical application strategies.

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