PERSONAL WORD LISTS:
STRATEGY TO BUILD LEARNERS' VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges second or foreign language learners find during the process of learning a language. One way to alley the burden is to assist students in becoming independent learners during the process of vocabulary learning. It could be achieved through instructing learners to apply vocabulary learning strategies as efficient as possible. The main pursuit of the present article is to suggest a vocabulary learning strategy for training EFL learners in acquiring the target words. The vocabulary learning strategy meant here named Personal Word Lists. This strategy helps the learners to enrich their vocabulary acquisition considering the multiple forms of strategies, such as cognitive, memory, metacognitive, activation and affective strategies. The multiple forms of those strategies are implied through note-taking, imagery mediation, background knowledge relations, semantic mapping/elaboration, senses, rehearsal and encoding strategies. In doing so, the basic concepts of vocabulary learning strategies and rationale or sample for strategy application are presented. It is assumed that this strategy may lead the learners to reach meaningful representation and enhance their vocabulary acquisition.
Keywords: Personal Word list, Vocabulary Learning, EFL

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran kosakata adalah salah satu tantangan utama pelajar bahasa asing / kedua yang ditemukan selama proses belajar bahasa. Salah satu cara untuk mengatasi beban adalah membantu siswa menjadi pembelajar mandiri selama proses pembelajaran kosakata. Ini dapat dicapai melalui menginstruksikan para siswa untuk menerapkan strategi pembelajaran kosakata seefisien mungkin. Pengejaran utama dari artikel ini adalah untuk menyarankan strategi pembelajaran kosakata untuk melatih peserta didik EFL dalam memperoleh kata-kata target. Strategi belajar kosakata yang dimaksudkan di sini bernama Daftar Kata Pribadi. Strategi ini membantu pembelajar untuk memperkaya akuisisi kosakata mereka dengan mempertimbangkan berbagai bentuk strategi, seperti kognitif, memori, metakognitif, aktivasi, dan strategi afektif. Berbagai bentuk dari strategi tersebut diimplikasikan melalui pencatatan, mediasi citra, hubungan pengetahuan latar belakang, pemetaan semantik / elaborasi, indra, latihan dan strategi pengodean. Dengan demikian, konsep dasar dari strategi pembelajaran kosakata dan pemikiran atau sampel untuk aplikasi strategi disajikan. Diasumsikan bahwa strategi ini dapat menyebabkan peserta didik mencapai representasi yang berarti dan meningkatkan akuisisi kosakata mereka.

Kata kunci: Daftar Kata Pribadi, Pembelajaran Kosakata, EFL

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is central to language and significant to language learners, especially to English language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning. Without a sufficient vocabulary, a person cannot communicate effectively. According to Zimmerman (as cited in Subekti and Lawson, 2007) vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to typical language learners. Moreover, Gupta and MacWhinney (1997) argued that learning new words was one of the most crucial processes in human development and considerable recent research has given attention to the importance of the investigation of foreign language vocabulary acquisition (Abrams and Walsh, 2014).

However, having a limited vocabulary is also a barrier that prevents learners from learning a foreign language (Zhihong, 2000). Vocabulary learning is assumed as one of the most challenging problems faced by the language learners. There were some research findings showed that English language learners found some obstacles in mastering the language due to the limited acquisition of vocabulary which affect their language learning skills (Abrams and Walsh: 2014, Adam: 2013, Asgari: 2011, Subekti and Lawson: 2007, Ellis, 2005). Besides, the writer also admits that during her teaching experience, she often finds that her learners are" stuck" to learn English because of the limited vocabulary.

Due to the facts that emerge a concern of vocabulary learning and acquisition problems, numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises and practice have been introduced into the field to teach vocabulary (Fudhla: 2013, Abrams and Walsh: 2014, Hatch and Brown, 1995). It has been suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Ghazal, 2007). One of the ways thoughtfully to overcome the vocabulary-learning related problems is by assisting the learners with learning strategies.

The term of learning strategies has been widely known throughout the years. Studies on language learning strategies started in the mid 1960 (Asgari, 2011). Nevertheless, Oxford (2003) defined language learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations"(p.8). Language learning strategies encourage

greater overall self-direction for learners. Self-directed learners are independent learners who are capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning and gradually gaining confidence, involvement and proficiency (Oxford, 1990). Thus, it seems that by applying certain language learning strategy, it may lead the learners to successful language learning.

A particular learning strategy used by language learners for the acquisition of new words in the language learnt is called 'vocabulary learning strategy (VSL)' (Gu, 1994). Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2001 cited in Ghazal, 2007). The effectiveness and use of vocabulary learning strategies is one factor affecting the success of second / foreign vocabulary acquisition. Clearly then, vocabulary learning strategies focus on helping learners to "bring words alive" for their language needs.

Hence, based on the significance attributes of vocabulary learning strategies in the process of vocabulary learning and enhancement, the present paper aims at proposing a strategy for vocabulary learning instruction in English as foreign language (EFL) contexts, namely "Personal Word Lists". In doing so, the writer provides some theoretical concepts of vocabulary learning

strategy, followed by the rational explanation and samples of "Personal Word Lists" strategy. It is assumed that by assisting the learners with this kind of strategy, the learners may enrich their vocabulary acquisition.

DISCUSSION
Rational of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS)

Vocabulary Learning strategies are steps taken by language learners to acquire new words in the target language. As have been stated above that Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) are part of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in which they are part of general Learning Strategies (LS). Consequently, in deriving the theoretical and basic concepts of VLS, the principles of LLS are inserted. Generally speaking, there are a lot of definitions and classification of LLS which influence the classification and taxonomies of VLS. For example, O'Malley (1990) declared the use of 24 strategies employed by learners of English as a second language in the United States. They divided these strategies into three main categories: "Metacognitive", "Cognitive", and "Socio-affective" strategies. In fact, there is another accepted classification as suggested by (Oxford, 1990). She distinguished between the direct and indirect strategies.

Oxford (1990) explained that the direct strategies include the Memory, Cognitive and Compensation strategies. The Memory strategies are the mental process to store and retrieve new information. The Cognitive strategies are strategies to enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means, ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. The Compensation strategies allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge (p. 37). As for the Indirect strategies, there are Metacognitive strategies which allow learners to control their own cognition; Affective strategies which help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes; and Social strategies which help leaners to learn through interaction with others. (p. 135).

Schmitt (1997) in Asgari (2011) acknowledged that there is an interrelationship between VSL and LLS. He said that in addressing vocabulary learning strategies, one should not lose sight of its correlation with language learning strategies. As the consequences of this inter-relationship of VLS and LLS, Gu and Johnson (1996) list foreign and second language vocabulary learning strategies (F&SLLs) as metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies.

Metacognitive strategies consist of selective attention and self-initiation strategies. F&SLLs who employ selective attention strategies know which words are important for them to learn and are essential for adequate comprehension of a passage. Learners employing self-initiation strategies use a variety of means to make the meaning of vocabulary items clear. Cognitive strategies in Gu and Johnson's taxonomy entail guessing strategies, skillful use of dictionaries and note-taking strategies. Learners using guessing strategies draw upon their background knowledge and use linguistic clues like grammatical structures of a sentence to guess the meaning of a word. Memory strategies are classified into rehearsal and encoding categories. Word lists and repetition are instances of rehearsal strategies. Encoding strategies encompass such strategies as association, imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, and contextual encoding as well as word structure (i.e., analyzing a word in terms of prefixes, stems, and suffixes). Activation strategies include those strategies through which the learners actually use new words in different contexts. For instance, learners may set sentences using the words they have just learned (Gu and Johnson, 1996).

Besides, Schmitt (1997) in Asgari (2011) identified vocabulary learning strategies into five sub-categories: (1)

Determination strategies: they are individual learning strategies; (2) Social strategies: they are learners learn new words through interaction with others; (3) Memory strategies: they are strategies, whereby learners link their learning of new words to mental processing by associating their existing or background knowledge with the new words; (4) Cognitive strategies: they are strategies that do not engage learners in mental processing but is more mechanical means and (5).Metacognitive strategies: they are strategies related to processes involved in monitoring, decision-making, and evaluation of one's progress.

Personal Word Lists: Some Basic Concepts

The idea of proposing Personal Word List Strategy was originally inspired from a guidance for teachers to help learners acquire LLS, namely *English Second Language Strategies for Advanced Learners in Grades 4-12*. This was a curriculum guide designed by Department of Education, Newfoundland, Labrador. The writer was interested to one specific strategy which instructs the learners to list new vocabulary in their notebook, followed by providing the meaning of the words. The basic principle of this strategy was only writing the new words and the meaning in different pages. For example, the first page is for writing the new words, and the second page (should be behind the first page) is for the meaning of the words. So, the learners are required to memorize the meaning of the words without looking at the meaning behind.

Having inspired by this strategy, the writer adds some ideas to develop the use of word lists in this guidance for VLS. The writer assumes that there is no word which has the fixed meaning due to the different context will lead to the different meaning. It supported by Hatim and Munday (2004) who argued that every word has a bundle of meaning. So, it will be better for the learners to avoid memorizing one fixed meaning for one word, especially if the meanings are taken for dictionary. Moreover, Ellis (1995, p.11-12) said that there is no longer use of dictionary as the only way to find meanings. He found that the learners properly failed to use dictionaries because of the naïve strategy of substitution: after finding the unfamiliar word, they look for a familiar word or phrase among the definitions and then simply substitute the new word for this familiar word or phrase. For example, one fifth-grader who looked up the unfamiliar word *erode*, found the familiar phrases *eat out* and *eat away* in the definition and, generating the frame "Our family eats out a lot", produced the creative use of the new word: "Our family erodes a lot"!

The ideas to develop this strategy are taken from the basic concepts of VLS as stated above. The ideas are using: (1) Cognitive strategies (where leaners' guessing and note-taking strategies are involved), (2) Memory strategies (where leaners' rehearsal and encoding strategies such as imagery, visual, association are involved), (3) Metacognitive strategies (where leaners' selective attention and self-initiation are used), (4) activation strategies (where leaners know where and when they may use the words), and (5) affective strategies (where leaners' attention, emotion and attitude are required). The writer believes that the more strategies used, the better the learning will be. In addition, it may lead the learners to be actively participated in the learning process.

Simply speaking, here are some ideas added to "Personal Word Lists":

1. The use of Note-taking strategies.

This strategy acquires learners to note the new words in their note-book followed by any information related to the words. Gu (1994) stated that students learn better vocabulary through note-taking which commit words to memory. Keeping a record of new words provides a reference tool for review and a place to look for words.

2. The use of multiple forms of encoding strategies.

Encoding strategies can be said as strategies to "sign something" to other related things. The encoding strategies used in Personal Word Lists are the imagery mediation (visual, image, picture), semantic elaboration/mapping, and contextual encoding. Gu (1994) also stated that the use of encoding strategies help learners learn better vocabulary since it automates the use of new words in language contexts. Ellis added that the use of imagery mediation as one of "deep strategies" may forge the linkage between L1-L2 (1995, p.14)

3. The use of background knowledge.

Although the learners do not know the meaning of the words, they may find the meaning of the words through their background knowledge in their memory (Asgary, 2011).

4. The use of structuring a sentence.

The learners may create a sentence or dialogue by using the new words. They may also write their comments about the words.

5. The use of senses.

The learners may create or write the meaning base on their senses, such as the sights, hearing, smelling, tasting and so on. Although the use of sense may not help the learners to create the meaning for abstract words, but it will be very useful to help the learners to find a

deeper understanding of concrete words meaning. The use of sense in this strategy is due to the assumption that the more senses are involved, the better the learning.

Personal Word Lists: How to Use

The procedures to apply Personal Word Lists are not quietly different with the original one. The learners need to have a notebook where they will list the new words. They have to list every new word they find during their learning process, no matter where they are, inside or outside the classroom. Whenever they have a new word or any unfamiliar words or phrases, they will write it in their notebook and try to seek the meaning by using the concepts explained above. More or less, here are the steps to use Personal Word Lists:

1. Teacher explains that he/she will introduce a strategy of vocabulary learning to the learners.

   The introduction or explanations of a certain strategy to the learners are crucial. It is in order to make they know what they are going to do and what benefits they are going to have from the strategy. In this case, the strategy is Personal Word lists to enrich their vocabulary acquisition.

2. Teacher asks the learners to have a notebook to write the new words or phrases.

   The teacher asks the learners to have a thin note book (or they may even have or adapt it with any electronica devices, such as smartphone, tabs, etc). The students may divide the notebook into two parts, one is for the new words and another is for the meaning. The parts may be the first page is for the new words and the second one is for the meaning and so on, or take the first half-part of their notebook as for the new words and the second half-part as for the meaning.

3. Teacher explains how to write the new words.

   Whenever the learners come across the new words, they should write it in the "new-words-part". The learners should number the words in order to help them to seek the meaning in another part.
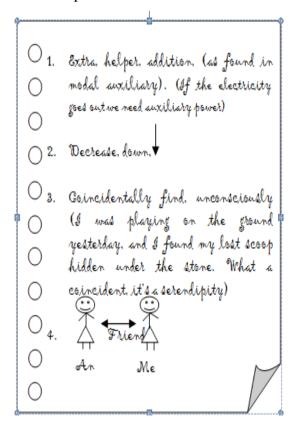
   For example:

   1. Auxiliary
   2. Decline
   3. Serendipity
   4. Camaraderie
   5. Pentagon
   6. Blabber
   7. Shriek
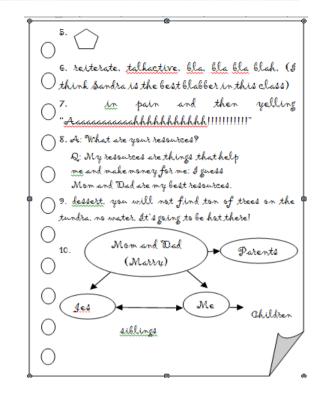   8. Resources
   9. Tundra
   10. Siblings

4. The teacher explains how to find or create the meaning of the words.

As the learners add words to the first page and number them, the teachers then explain to the learners how to put a clue, such as a meaningful sentence, language contexts, a sketch or a definition, picture or image, semantic mapping or elaboration, comments, any background information, any senses information, and so on the back of the sheet. It will be better if it is written in the target language.
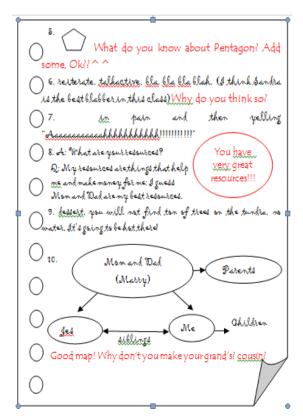
For example:

5. Teacher instructs the learners to check the clue of the words only whenever it is really needed

6. Teacher may sometimes check the learners' note-book to see whether they had done the right things, or to evaluate, to give comments or feedback to what the learners had written.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

In the present paper, it is argued that vocabulary is an important ingredient and an essential part of second or foreign language learning. Language learners need a wide array of target language words to be able to tackle successfully both production and comprehension activities in the second or foreign language. One way to help learners to enhance their knowledge of L2 vocabulary is through equipping learners with vocabulary learning strategies. The strategy proposed in this paper is Personal Word lists which assumed effective to lead the learners to be independent and successful in second or foreign language learning. The multiple forms of words-meaning relations offered here are assumed efficient to help learners to reach meaning representation and enhance their vocabulary acquisition. To this end, teachers should consider the learners' willingness and readiness to receive trainings and think of the most appropriate way to introduce the strategies.

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