

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING MEDICAL ENGLISH

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7764754>



ELSEVIER



Nabieva Mokhiba Magdaminkhodjaevna

Senior ESP teacher, Kimyo international university in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

E-mail: mokhibanabieva@gmail.com



Abstract: The acquisition of vocabulary is an integral part of learning a foreign language, in addition, it helps to comprehend and understand interactions with people and allows them to convey their thoughts to the interlocutor, as well as exchange information. This article dwells on the strategies which can be used for enriching learner's vocabulary and master a foreign language provided in this research. In addition, studying medical English involves not only developing basic skills, but also acquaintance with highly specialized vocabulary, which initially may seem difficult to understand and memorize. An appropriate strategy, approach and material chosen by the teacher can facilitate this process.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategies, Medical English vocabulary, vocabulary teaching methods, specific language

Received: 22-03-2023

Accepted: 22-03-2023

Published: 22-03-2023

About: FARS Publishers has been established with the aim of spreading quality scientific information to the research community throughout the universe. Open Access process eliminates the barriers associated with the older publication models, thus matching up with the rapidity of the twenty-first century.

Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, it is important to be fluent in foreign languages for several reasons. Apparently, language is one of the main means of communication through which people convey their thoughts, feelings and knowledge. In modern society, there are a huge number of different languages, however, according to recent studies; the most spoken language in the world is English, which is spoken by more than 1.35 billion people (Szmigiera, 2021). English is considered the language of education and the business world, in addition in areas such as science and technology.

Moreover, vocabulary building is an imprescriptible and reciprocal part of language learning and acquisition. Vocabulary is the number of words that is in an individual. This needs to be constantly improved by using various tools and trainings. Furthermore, it is vital to understand that vocabulary helps to formulate and expand thoughts that form the way of thinking. Continuous improvement in vocabulary leads to an improved quality of life. Adequate thinking and developed communication skills are qualities that are urgently needed in the modern era. People have the opportunity to have a competitive advantage in obtaining a position and achieving success in further career growth, and this makes it possible to meet interesting people and gain international experience and cultural exchange.

Literature review

Another important issue in terms of vocabulary learning relates to specific goals for which learners need to know a particular type of vocabulary. Fortunately, all words are not equally important in different stages of learning. Nation's (2001) division of vocabulary into four levels – high frequency words, academic vocabulary, technical vocabulary and low frequency words – indicates that some words deserve more attention and effort than others in different phases of language learning or for different purposes (Wang, Liang, & Ge, 2008).

Moreover, according to the research of the Nation (2001), he noted that high frequency words include all function words and many content words that provide the basis for establishing and maintaining everyday communication, also it covers a large proportion of the running words in spoken and written texts. Academic vocabulary, which is mainly called sub-technical vocabulary, is often found in academic texts in various disciplines. Content-specific or technical vocabulary is related to specialized fields, whereas low-frequency words rarely occur and do not belong to the aforementioned groups (Rogulj and Čizmić, 2018).

In addition, according to a study by Schmitt (2008) on vocabulary studies, he mentioned that it is estimated that 98% text coverage is needed to function well in both writing and speaking. In other words, effective oral and written communication requires knowledge of word families from 8000-9000 and a minimum of 6000-7000 (Rogulj and Čizmic, 2018).

Professors approach teaching and preparing class materials differently. According to the summary of (Strevens, 2014), who mentioned that there are two main alternatives offer themselves as an approach to the teaching of TTSE (Technical, Technological, and Scientific English). The first is to teach TTSE as a special-purpose course (ESP) after the learner has already learned 'common-core' English in a conventional course. The second is to produce an integrated course, in which the science or technology syllabus is taught with and through the language syllabus. Although he argued that providing ESP courses to students can be effective under certain circumstances, in addition to common-core English. Such courses can be highly specific; they can often be taught intensively over a short period; since the learners are usually adults with good motivation, they tend to cooperate with the teacher, to work enthusiastically, and to achieve a high rate of success (Strevens, 2014). However, he also noted that attention should be paid to the level of English proficiency of the participants. Before deciding on a special purpose course, a teacher must first make a realistic estimate of the average performance in English. Furthermore, in modern conditions, high requirements are imposed on the level of qualifications of any specialist. A very important and essential component of any study courses in English is knowledge of the required

level of English needed for this course. The study of a foreign language is associated with taking into account the peculiarities of professional thinking, the obligation of students, accompanied by the presence of their personal qualities. These aspects are important for the organization of the educational process in universities that conduct ESP courses for students.

Materials and Methods

Nowadays, teachers have the opportunity to use various sources to prepare materials for students; this implies the use of scientific articles, books, vocabulary, Internet sources and others, which can also visualize the material for better understanding. However, initially, it is necessary to motivate students to learn the language; in addition, the study of a foreign language for the specific purposes is complicated due to the structure of the educational process. Thus, a foreign language course must be subdivided into mandatory and optional. Compulsory study of a foreign language involves a learning process in which students form primary, general knowledge of the theoretical foundations of a foreign language of medical topics in general. At the same time, an optional language course is not compulsory, and the motivation of students plays a decisive role in choosing a course. In turn, professors of the department of foreign language should make every effort to contribute to the effectiveness of student learning by developing curriculum, preparing a full-fledged list of literature independent study, and, more importantly, trying to stimulate the desire for self-development of their students to get comprehensive knowledge and skills in the spheres.

Teaching and learning processes have to make it possible for the students to understand the meaning of their learning material. Students as the learning subject are the starting point in teaching and learning, which measure the success of the teaching learning process. Teaching and learning can be successful when the students can directly feel the advantages of learning materials by experiencing and learning it (Alqahtani, 2015).

Unfortunately, most of the latest studies are focused on general language learning strategies. Little attention has been given to vocabulary learning strategies and its relation to the variables like learning styles and reading comprehension (Kafipour and Naveh, 2011). However, the faculty of foreign languages understands the importance of learning vocabulary and integrating it into course learning.

Furthermore, teaching vocabulary is considered as one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student's

native language. They also have to take into account that teaching English for young learners is different from adults. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques. Teachers should be creative and be able to master the material in order to be understood by students, and make them interested. The teachers have to know the characteristics of his\her learners. They more over need to prepare good techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching (Susanto, 2017).

For teaching medical courses, and especially for expanding the vocabulary in English, lecturer is able to use MAWL (Medical Academic Word List). The MAWL, a medical academic word list based on a Medical RAs Corpus with 1 093 011 running words, has been compiled for the better learning and application of medical academic words in the discipline of medicine. Although a number of word lists of academic words in other disciplines have been reported, the MAWL has been so far the only list of academic words targeted exclusively on medical science. Furthermore, the MAWL was established in order to serve as a guide for medical English instructors in curriculum preparation, especially in designing course-books of medical academic vocabulary, and for medical English learners in setting their vocabulary learning goals of reasonable size during a particular phase of English language learning. (Wang, Liang, & Ge, 2008).

Moreover, the importance of using appropriate vocabulary was shown in the study of Tamimi Sa'd and Rajabi (2018), where were presented the clear implications to inform practice. As another research of Qian (2004) pointed out, unknown words can be perceived as potential obstacles to comprehension. It, therefore, follows from this statement that teaching effective VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies) will result in improved comprehension. Since, obviously, it is not feasible to teach all the vocabulary items of the target language (TL) to the students, it is then reasonable to predict that capitalising on teaching VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies) instead of spending too much time and effort on teaching vocabulary items themselves can result in more effective lexical learning. This conclusion is warranted and can also lead to learner autonomy in VL (Vocabulary Learning) as was mentioned out by Wei (2007). Additionally, the learners' slight tendency to use dictionaries is of significance with the implication that learners should be made aware of the value and importance of dictionaries in enhancing one's lexical repertoire (Tamimi Sa'd and Rajabi, 2018). Vocabulary enrichment plays a dominant role in learning English, and this process is indispensable and complicated. However, recognizing a large number of words does not mean that students will have strong communication skills. Nevertheless,

using words correctly and accurately is the key to the English language. When it comes to acquiring a new word, learners should not just focus on its meaning. Instead, they need to understand its precise definitions, phrases, derivatives, part of speech and pronunciation.

Furthermore, according to research of Schmitt (2007), it is important to focus on selecting of the most frequent, which are 2,000-word families certainly fall into the must-learn category. If learners wish to be able to read in English, then the vocabulary in the 2,000-5,000-frequency band could also be explicitly approached. Other than this, he suggested spend time on developing strategies that enable learners to work with unknown lower-frequency vocabulary on their own. In other words, he emphasized that lecturer should teach high-frequency vocabulary, because there is a high benefit for the cost, while teaching low-frequency vocabulary, which the learner will seldom meet, is not worth the cost. It is better to expend precious classroom time in teaching strategies to students so that they can tackle low-frequency vocabulary independently. In addition to this cost/benefit consideration, any single method of vocabulary learning will not address all of the word knowledge aspects that are required for full vocabulary use. Lecturer can explicitly address some aspects, like meaning and grammatical characteristics, but aspects like collocation, register, and intuitions of frequency are only ever likely to be mastered through extensive exposure to the target word in many different contexts (Schmitt, 2007). At the same time, the trainees themselves must determine the effectiveness of the strategy for themselves and automate their use. Also, Schmitt (1997) proposed several strategies for better leaning; these strategies are divided in 5 categories:

1. *Determination strategies* used by an individual when faced with discovering a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise.

- Analyse any available pictures or gestures
- Guess meaning from textual context
- Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)

2. *Social strategies* involve interaction with other people to improve language learning.

- Ask the teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word
- Learn and practice new words with a study group
- Interact with native-speakers

3. *Memory strategies* (traditionally known as mnemonics) involve relating new words to previously learned knowledge, using some form of imagery or grouping.

- Use semantic maps
- Use the keyword method

- Associate a new word with its already known synonyms and antonyms

4. *Cognitive strategies* entail manipulation or transformation of information about words to be learned, although they are not so specifically focused on mental processing as memory strategies.

- Written repetition
- Keep a vocabulary notebook
- Put English labels on physical objects

5. *Metacognitive strategies* include planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating the entire process of acquiring foreign language vocabulary. Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal)

- Test oneself with word tests
- Continue to study word over time.

Table 1.

Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies



Compared to other classification schemes, Schmitt's taxonomy is considered the most extensive. With regard to memory and cognitive categories, they have similar characteristics in that their goals are to help recall words through some form of language manipulation. However, Schmitt distinguished memory from cognitive categories, claiming that memory categories are more obviously linked to mental manipulation (Huh, 2009).

In addition, according to a study by Kabouha (2014), in which she argued that English for medical purposes is a demanding and thriving ESP (English for specific

purposes) sub-system that can use language learning strategies as they can facilitate the learning and acquisition of some of its aspects, especially vocabulary. Thus, in teaching medical vocabulary, she recommended that teachers should teach some strategies and guide students in using these strategies in the teaching process. Students should also try to learn how to use these strategies properly. Furthermore, she wants to develop other research that can be done on how to adapt these strategies in classroom teaching and learning and how to teach students to use vocabulary learning strategies effectively. Therefore, in light of the research findings, Kabouha (2014) recommends that teachers should raise student awareness, recognize the appropriate strategy for each situation, suggest different strategies, and let the students decide which ones are beneficial to them.

Moreover, to memorize a word, the simplest and most common are strategies such as repeating a word aloud or writing it repeatedly, creating a list of new words or flashcards with pictures or translations of words, learning cognates, using new words in context, in communication, and others. Also, according to the study of Susanto (2017), teaching vocabulary using pictures connect students' prior knowledge to a new story, and in the process, help them learn new words. There are plenty of vocabularies that can be introduced by using illustrations or pictures. They are excellent means of making the meaning of unknown words clear. However, in case of more sophisticated strategies include various mnemonic associations and word grouping. The association method is one of the most popular data mining methods. Also, association is an attempt to associate something with something in the broadest sense. That is, an association is a kind of virtual connection between two or more phenomena. These can be objects, feelings, thoughts, words, and other conditions, in which the recollection of one of them entails the appearance of another in imagination. For instance, a learner can associate the sound of a foreign word with the sound of a phrase in his native language, or song, in addition they can create a mental image of a word, or visualize a word in parts, or associate a new word with sensory objects or with the specification in which it was encountered.

Conclusion

Apparently, vocabulary learning strategies and other strategies for learning and memorizing vocabulary and methods of using them should be carried out systematically and responsibly. Lacking of practice and motivation can be the result of forgetting and losing the initially results of learning a foreign language. That is why implications for learners is an essential, and constantly repeating the material is required, that will help learners to speed up the process of evolving the lexical composition of foreign language, and enrich vocabulary with new words and make them a part of an active vocabulary. Learners should know that vocabulary plays a

prominent role in their L2 (second language vocabulary) acquisition and development. Learners should utilize efficient vocabulary learning strategies and resources to increase effectiveness in their vocabulary acquisition more actively. In essence, the more active they are in their vocabulary acquisition process, the more active readers and writers they will become. It is important to remember that effective storage of words will ultimately lead to effective retrieval of words: effective input always precedes effective output (Min, 2013.) In addition, there are numerous methods of learning vocabulary; however, their complex use can be more effective and efficient. Moreover, there are factors that have influence on strength of assimilation and retention of words of a foreign language in long-term memory. For instance: a logical way of memorizing vocabulary; a sufficient level of development of students' verbal and logical memory; the motivational factor in various forms; associative organization of lexical material in memory; memorizing lexical material as part of a semantic coherent text; understanding of the language system and a variety of speech practice. Lecturer needs to consider all factors that can help with choosing or creating special textbooks intended for teaching students, or with writing course lectures on the methodology of teaching a foreign language. Students gain many benefits during practice and vocabulary use as their thought process develops, as well as their ability to work independently and in pairs, and finally, their ability to objectively assess their knowledge and skills.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alqahtani, M. (2015). The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and how to be taught, *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 3(3), pp. 23-24.
- [2] Huh, J.H. (2009). Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use and Vocabulary Proficiency, *English Language & Literature Teaching*, 15(4), pp. 39-40.
- [3] Kabooha, R. (2014). Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Medical English Terminologies: The Case of Foundation Year Students at Ibn Sina Medical College, *English for Specific Purposes World*, 44(15), p.20.
- [4] Kafipour, R., and Hosseini, M.N. (2011). Vocabulary Learning Strategies and their Contribution to Reading Comprehension of EFL Undergraduate Students in Kerman Province, *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 23 (4), pp. 628-629.
- [5] Min, Y.K. (2013). Vocabulary Acquisition: Practical Strategies for ESL Students, *Journal of International Students*, 3(1), pp. 67-68.
- [6] Rogulj, J.K, and Čizmic, I. (2018). Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by Medical Students: Croatian Perspective, *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 7(2), pp. 47-48.

- [7] Schmitt, N. (1997). Vocabulary learning strategies. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 199-228). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Schmitt, N. (2007). Current Perspectives on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning, *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp.838-839).
- [9] Strevens, P. (2014). Technical, Technological and Scientific English (TTSE).
- [10] Susanto, A. (2017). The Teaching of Vocabulary: A Perspective, *Jurnal KATA*, 1(2), pp. 185-187.
- [11] Szmigiera, M. (2021): The most spoken languages worldwide in 2021, [Online], Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/> [Accessed 8th January 2022].
- [12] Tamimi Sa'd, S. H., and Rajabi, F. (2018). Teaching and Learning Vocabulary: What English Language Learners Perceive to Be Effective and Ineffective Strategies, *CEPS Journal*, 8(1), pp. 158-159.
- [13] Wang, J., Liang, S. L., & Ge, G. C. (2008). Establishment of a Medical Academic Word List, *English for Specific Purposes*, 27, pp. 445-446.