Application of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by ESL Students in Pakistan's Higher Education

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Abstract:
Learning vocabulary is a crucial component of learning any language, but it's crucial for students studying English as a second language (ESL). Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are methods that students can employ to increase their vocabulary and acquire new words. Research on the usage of VLS by ESL students in Pakistani higher education is becoming more and more extensive. This study has demonstrated that ESL students in Pakistan are aware of and somewhat use VLS. There is evidence, nevertheless, that suggests students could be making better use of VLS. According to one study, the most common metacognitive tactics employed by Pakistani ESL students included considering ways for learning vocabulary and keeping track of their own progress. They did, however, employ cognitive methods less frequently, such as deducing new words' meanings from context. A different study discovered a favourable relationship between vocabulary performance and VLS use. This implies that pupils with higher vocabulary knowledge likely to be more proficient users of VLS. The results of this study indicate that greater instruction in VLS is required for Pakistani ESL students. Students may learn about various VLS kinds, their efficient use, and how to select the best VLS for certain learning objectives as part of this training.

Keywords: *Qur'an, Sunnah, Hadith, Islamic law, Islamic theology, Islamic ethics, Islamic worship.*

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Introduction

Developing one's vocabulary is essential to learning a second language. It is essential not just for communication facilitation but also for understanding and expression. The strategies that students employ to acquire vocabulary grow more crucial as they work through the challenging process of learning a language. Vocabulary learning techniques (VLS) have been found to be quite helpful in facilitating effective vocabulary acquisition and retention. Despite the large number of research that have looked at VLS under various conditions, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the vocabulary learning strategies employed by ESL students in Pakistani colleges. This study aims to close that gap by offering insights into the unique language and cultural context of Pakistan. There are several components to languages, including phonology, morphology, and the lexicon; but, as demonstrated by Bowen et al. (1985) and McCarthy (1990), vocabulary is the most unique and important component. One of these components—vocabulary—is necessary for effective communication and learning. Thus, mastering vocabulary is essential for Second Language Learners to engage in meaningful and fruitful communication (Beglar & Hunt, 1995; Luppescu & Day, 1993).

Beyond only knowing the definitions of words, vocabulary also includes how words are arranged in a language, how someone goes about using and expanding their lexicon, and the relationships that exist between words and phrases. Learning a word's meaning in its whole as well as its definition is implied by expanding one's vocabulary. A word's frequency, register, collocability, syntactic structure, semantic component, potential meanings, and similarity to terms in one's home tongue are all considered aspects of word knowledge (Nation, 2001).

Language learners in ESL classrooms are typically passive learners since they only listen to their teachers without actively learning terminology. This casual attitude towards vocabulary learning is blamed for learners' incapacity to identify and utilise the proper lexical items to convey their ideas. Furthermore, educators typically employ the same pedagogical approach. But while some students continue to struggle, others succeed. The cause of this failure might raise concerns about the methods of instruction. While a certain set of instructional techniques may be beneficial for certain kids, it may not be for others. In addition to the tactics that teachers use to teach, students also develop a repertoire of skills and use a range of strategies to acquire language during the process of learning a language. Numerous research back up learner methods, which are important for second language acquisition. These tactics seek to quicken language acquisition while helping ESL students develop autonomous and self-regulatory behaviour.

We cannot ignore the integral part of VLSs given the importance of vocabulary in learning second languages. In the context of teaching foreign languages, VLSs are typically seen as a subset of LLSs (Oxford, 1990; Schmidt, 1997). These are "actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students use, often unconsciously, to improve their progress in apprehending, internalising, and using the L2" (Oxford in 1990). Successful vocabulary acquisition is strongly correlated

with vocabulary learning tactics. Success is defined as making the acquisition process more beneficial, self-directed, and adaptable to new environments. Both the language learning research and the vocabulary learning strategies research cite studies that demonstrate how successful learners use a set of certain tactics that are strongly correlated with their success relative to less successful learners. Accordingly, vocabulary learning strategies are defined as any system that affects the process through which lexical items are acquired, stocked, retrieved, and used, while language learning strategies are defined as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). (Schmitt, 1997). All students take advantage of VLSs in one way or another, but the majority of them do it unknowingly and without realising it.

Previous studies on vocabulary acquisition focused solely on vocabulary items and ignored vocabulary learning. As of late, VLSs have become more and more popular.Research on VLSs has improved our understanding of the language learning process and has shown that learners tend to become independent and self-regulatory.

Most educational institutions in Pakistan still utilise the antiquated grammar translation approach (Warsi, 2004), and there is a dearth of language learning strategies used, forcing students to memorise vocabulary words without understanding how they are used. As a result, pupils' passive vocabulary expands without them being aware of it, and they are unable to use it to develop their speaking and writing skills. In addition to the grammar translation method and antiquated teaching techniques, students are learning English through literature, inexperienced English language instructors, antiquated textbooks, memorization advocacy, a lack of adequate language resources, condensed class periods, and packed classrooms. These are all the reasons why students do poorly.

The primary focus of the English language curriculum and teaching approach at the Higher Secondary School level is solely on reading and writing skills. Even though textbooks use both direct and indirect approaches, translation is the primary way used to teach a large amount of content. The students' writing abilities are then assessed using a variety of methods, including grammatical knowledge, translating into first and second languages, selecting synonyms, and answering questions. As a result, students use their primary and target languages interchangeably in their thought processes. While students are aware of the significance of vocabulary items in language learning, most are not familiar with vocabulary learning systems (VLSs) that help students acquire lexical items. As a result, pupils acquire the vocabulary words mechanically and employ a limited number of learning strategies.Their language skills continue to be inadequate as a result.

Theoretical Framework 1IDS

While some people seem to be at a beginner's level, others nearly reach native-like skill in a FL. While some second language learners advance extremely slowly and appear to be doing so efficiently, others advance very slowly and with significant difficulty. Their heterogeneity is the reason behind this. Their personalities and actions differ. These IDS are "enduring personal

characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree," as stated by Dörnyei (2005). Regarding their proficiency in acquiring a language, learners differ greatly from one another. Despite a notable distinction, this is precisely the situation with regard to the learning of both first (L1) and second (L2) languages. When it comes to learning a first language, kids vary in how quickly they pick it up, but everyone eventually masters it—the exception being those who don't grow up in a supportive environment. When it comes to learning a second language (SLA), learners differ in both how quickly they pick it up and how well they eventually master it—some reaching native-like proficiency while others fall well short. These variables have been broadly divided into three categories: emotive, cognitive, and social.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

LLSs are a subset of vocabulary learning techniques that eventually make up general learning strategies (Nation 2001).As a result, the concept of VLSs comes from that of LLSs (Catalan 2003). According to Cameron (2001), VLSs are the actions that language learners take to help them understand and commit the lexical objects to memory. Catalan (2003) defines VLSs in terms of information related to the mechanisms (procedures, systems) used for learning vocabulary items as well as actions or operations students take (a) to search the meaning of unfamiliar lexis, using Robin's (1987), Wenden (1987), Oxford (1990), and Schmitt (1997) as the functional definition in her research. (b) to store them in long-term memory; (c) to recall them at will; and (d) to use them orally or in writing.

Stern (1975) looked at the LLSs that the "good language learner" used and found that they were not the same as those used by the "poor learner." He listed eleven theoretical characteristics that could identify a proficient language student (Stern, 1975, p. 316): 1) A positive or personalised learning style; 2) An active learning mechanism for the task; 3) An open-minded and ongoing approach to the target language and a connection with its speakers; 4) Technical proficiency in the language; 5) Plans and strategies for experimentation and planning that aim to develop the new language in a systematic way as well as the sequential revision of this system The pursuit of meaning continuously; 7) preparation for practise; 8) practise using the language fluently in real-world conversation; 9) self-awareness and critical awareness of language use; and 10) growth of the target language as an alternative reference system and instruction in English thought processes. Ahmed (1989) identified five categories of learners who use particular techniques. "Good learners" are conscious of what they are learning, understand the value of gaining contextualised vocabulary, and can draw semantic connections between recently learnt and previously taught L2 words. (Ahmed 1989, cited in Schmitt, 1997, p. 202); in contrast, "poor learners" use a limited number of tactics, lack comprehension of how to acquire new words, or fail to connect newly learned words with previously learned ones. (Schmitt, 1997, p. 202, citing Ahmed, 1989).Going back to the "good" versus. "poor" student, according to research (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Stern, 1975). Sanaoui (1995) distinguished between two

groups of learners: those who plan their vocabulary acquisition by engaging in a greater variety of activities independently, going over and repeating the target words, and those who take a completely different approach.

Schmitt (1997) found that vocabulary acquisition tactics seem to be employed more often than language learning strategies. He goes on to say that vocabulary learning techniques are used more frequently than techniques for social interaction, oral presentation, and listening comprehension.

Methodology Participants

200 Pakistani students enrolled in higher secondary schools were chosen at random for the current study.

Instruments

For this study, Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is employed. Memory strategies (9 items), cognitive strategies (14 items), compensatory strategies (6 items), metacognitive strategies (9 items), emotional (6 items), and social strategies (6 items) make up the six categories into which the methods are grouped in the SILL. It collects data on each component pertaining to a learning technique using a five-point Likert scale, which goes from "never or almost never" to "always or almost always." Vocabulary tests were another instrument utilised in the study to assess students' performance in terms of lexical competence.

Conclusion

Comprehending the vocabulary acquisition process of Pakistani ESL students with VLS might be a valuable resource for educators, curriculum architects, and legislators. It is possible to include naturally appealing VLS into instructional strategies to increase the effectiveness and enjoyment of vocabulary learning. The importance of context-specific research is demonstrated by this study, which aims to support ESL instruction and learning in Pakistan.

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