

Strategies for teaching vocabulary at “Combatientes de Tapi” high school



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Strategies for teaching vocabulary at “Combatientes de Tapi” high school

Estrategias para enseñar vocabulario en la escuela secundaria “Combatientes de Tapi”

Estratégias para o ensino de vocabulário no ensino médio “Combatientes de Tapi”

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Abstract

The present study describes how English language teachers apply strategies for teaching vocabulary. It was performed with Primer año de bachillerato students, class “D” at “Combatientes de Tapi” high school from January to May 2019. The purpose of this work is to explore the use of vocabulary teaching strategies. The type of this study is qualitative of exploratory level. The research was carried out with a population of thirty-five students. The qualitative method employed was the ethnographic. A non-participatory observation technique was used since the researcher plays a passive role; the data collection instrument was a check-list designed by the researcher. After the analysis of the data, it was obtained that teachers usually apply four teaching vocabulary strategies that adjust to the needs of the students.

Keywords: Strategies; teaching; vocabulary.

Resumen

El presente estudio describe cómo los profesores de inglés aplican estrategias para enseñar vocabulario. Se realizó con estudiantes de Primer año de bachillerato, clase "D" en la escuela secundaria "Combatientes de Tapi" de enero a mayo de 2019. El propósito de este trabajo es explorar el uso de estrategias de enseñanza de vocabulario. El tipo de este estudio es cualitativo de nivel exploratorio. La investigación se realizó con una población de treinta y cinco estudiantes. El método cualitativo empleado fue el etnográfico. Se utilizó una técnica de observación no participativa ya que el investigador juega un papel pasivo; El instrumento de recolección de datos fue una lista de verificación diseñada por el investigador. Después del análisis de los datos, se obtuvo que los maestros generalmente aplican cuatro estrategias de vocabulario de enseñanza que se ajustan a las necesidades de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Estrategias; enseñanza; vocabulario.

Resumo

O presente estudo descreve como os professores de inglês aplicam estratégias para o ensino do vocabulário. Foi realizada com os alunos do Primer año de bachillerato, classe “D” na escola

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“Combatientes de Tapi”, de janeiro a maio de 2019. O objetivo deste trabalho é explorar o uso de estratégias de ensino de vocabulário. O tipo deste estudo é qualitativo de nível exploratório. A pesquisa foi realizada com uma população de 35 estudantes. O método qualitativo empregado foi o etnográfico. Foi utilizada uma técnica de observação não participativa, uma vez que o pesquisador desempenha um papel passivo; o instrumento de coleta de dados foi uma lista de verificação elaborada pelo pesquisador. Após a análise dos dados, obteve-se que os professores geralmente aplicam quatro estratégias de vocabulário de ensino que se ajustam às necessidades dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Estratégias; ensino vocabulário.

The Problem

Vocabulary learning can be enhanced when the learner’s attention is directed consciously to vocabulary items or strategies. Given the mass of words potentially available to learners, there is no way they can learn them all. It would therefore be more useful to teach them strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words. If we wish students to continue learning efficiently after class and to be able to cope confidently without teacher support, then we should equip them with the skills to do so; directly instructing students in vocabulary learning strategies is recognised as a way to empower students to take control of and responsibility for their own learning.

Some students already use strategies; however, they often do so unconsciously, and vocabulary learning strategies are more likely to be effective when their use is conscious and directed. . Thus, the aim here is not to teach a single set of strategies used by supposedly “good” learners or to exemplify supposedly “good” strategies. Rather, it is to help students, as unique individuals, become aware of their own strategy use and the range of potential strategies available for learning vocabulary. In reading, vocabulary knowledge is essential to comprehending text. When students do not understand at least 90% of the words in a text, they do not adequately understand what they read.

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In our local teaching environment, teachers usually teach vocabulary when students read a short story or when teaching skills for writing, mainly. New words appear during reading or listening and the teacher’s requests to guess the new vocabulary from the reading or listening context. Students usually use a bilingual dictionary to look for the new word. Students, when acquiring new vocabulary, may fear because they have generalized linguistic deficiencies, memory deficits, poor word learning strategies, or any combination of the three (Baker, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995).

These students typically require more explicit instruction and intensive practice in order to master key vocabulary. Effective strategies for learning vocabulary help students understand and learn new words, make sense of new vocabulary by integrating it with what they already know.

There are four types of vocabulary: listening vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, reading vocabulary, and writing vocabulary. Vocabulary, or word meaning, is one of the keys to comprehension. (SD Dept. of Education, 2006). One way students develop vocabulary is indirectly through reading, listening, and speaking.

Experts in the field believe that vocabulary learning should not be left to chance. A student’s background knowledge and prior experiences play a large role in vocabulary development. As students build connections between known words and unknown words, they develop a deeper understanding of their reading. Thus, the more experiences children have with reading or being read to before they enter school, the more background knowledge they have to support the understanding of their reading.

Research on vocabulary instruction reveals that vocabulary can be learned indirectly, although some vocabulary must be taught directly. Indirect vocabulary learning refers to the vocabulary that is learned through the process of hearing and seeing words, through conversations with older siblings or adults, through being read to, and through experiencing reading on your own.

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Direct vocabulary learning occurs through explicit and meaningful instruction that goes from decoding individual words to understanding the meaning of the word and to be able to make sense of the word to use it in normal conversation and in writing paragraphs and essays.

Unidad Educativa Combatientes de Tapi is located in the eastern part of Riobamba city. It is a public school; students attend during the morning. School population is 2 004 students: 251 male, and 753 female. 70% of students come from the city; 10% of them come from the rural area, and 20% come from other city. There are 90 teachers. 28 male and 62 female. All the teachers in the school own a bachelor degree in teaching. Only 30% owns a master’s degree. There are 11 English language teachers; all of them are women. 11 teachers own a bachelor’s degree in the language teaching area.

24 students live with their parents, one lives just with his father, eight live with their mother, and two live with another relative. 25 students live with a family composed by one and five members, and ten students live with a family among six and ten members. 33 students say their parents work in different occupations. At home, 10 students have books, four students have books and internet, 20 students have books, internet and computer. One student has nothing at all. These are the types of problems students commonly have: Relations with their classmates: 9

Relations with the teachers: 10 Family relations:5 Low performance in different subjects: 11 Vocabulary is a problem because if the students do not have a good baggage of vocabulary they hardly can communicate efficiently. Many students also have to write in English, especially for examinations, so again it makes sense to look at a corpus that includes the kinds of texts students will have to write. It is possible to see, for example, whether an item of vocabulary is used by everyone in all kinds of situations, or mostly by people who know each other very well, or mostly in more polite situations with strangers.

The topic was chosen because it enriches the fields of methodology of teaching the foreign language as it was necessary to know the strategies the teacher use for teaching vocabulary.

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In this research the teaching strategies for teaching vocabulary were studied so students can acquire and increase their vocabulary usage in English.

This study provides experience for the observed teacher in how to use her knowledge about strategies, and for myself that I have had the opportunity to get knowledge about the different strategies for teaching vocabulary for my teaching practice.

This research is important from the academic point of view because words are learned through direct instruction, where students learn words through a structured approach. Thus, I consider that vocabulary teaching should be designed to support students’ word learning through a combination of approaches to teaching, direct instruction, and incidental word learning.

From the methodological point of view this work is important because the different tools for gathering the information were totally designed by the researcher. From the personal point of view the researcher has learned that knowledge of words is acquired incidentally, where vocabulary is developed through immersion in language activities.

The purpose of this research was to analyze the strategies that the teacher uses when teaching vocabulary during her classes. The result of this research will enhance the methodology for teaching vocabulary.

Importance of the problem

Why is vocabulary development such an important aspect of a student’s academic life? Learning words does not occur in a vacuum; that is, learners do not acquire meanings of words in isolation. All learning both personal and academic occurs within the sociocultural environment of the home, community, and classroom. This research work was developed to enrich the fields of methodology of teaching the foreign language as it was necessary to know the strategies the teacher use for teaching vocabulary. The present project was done because the researcher had accessibility to the field in which I realized my pre professional training activities.

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This research is important from the academic point of view because words are learned through direct instruction, where students learn words through a structured approach. Thus, I consider that vocabulary teaching should be designed to support students’ word learning through a combination of approaches to teaching, direct instruction, and incidental word learning. From the methodological point of view this work is important because the different tools for gathering the information were totally designed by the researcher.

From the personal point of view of the investigators, they have learned that knowledge of words is acquired incidentally, where vocabulary is developed through immersion in language activities. Words are also learned through direct instruction, where students learn words through a structured approach. The direct beneficiaries are the English language teachers at Unidad Educativa “Combatientes de Tapi” This research was possible to develop due to the researchers count on the scientific knowledge about methodology to carry out the study.

English vocabulary is enormous and grows steadily with technological and cultural assimilations. Who has not been frustrated that vocabulary building in textbooks is limited to memorization of individual words? Teachers want their students continue to learn vocabulary when they are out of class. Vocabulary learning is an important and indispensable part of any language learning process. When students need to acquire new vocabulary they struggle because they may have generalized linguistic deficiencies, memory deficits, poor word learning strategies, or any combination of the three. These students typically require more explicit instruction and intensive practice in order to master key vocabulary (Baker, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995).

Effective strategies for learning vocabulary help students understand and learn new words, make sense of new vocabulary by integrating it with what they already know, and remember the meaning of words when encountered at a later date or in new material.

Understanding the nature of vocabulary is important to the process of selecting appropriate instructional strategies that enable students to master the vocabulary they need to learn to read and to read to learn. A teacher’s thoughtful consideration of the content, purpose, and methodology related to vocabulary instruction is critical to the academic achievement of students who struggle

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to learn, understand, recall, and use new vocabulary meaningfully. The definition of the problem has three parts: the first part involves de description of the general scenery in which the problem is present; it is to say Unidad Educativa "Combatientes de Tapi."

Macro level (the school)

Unidad Educativa Combatientes de Tapi is located in the eastern part of the city. It is a public school; students attend during the morning. School population is 2 004 students. There are 1 251 boys, and 753 girls. 70% of students come from the city; 10% of them come from the rural area, and 20% come from other cities. There are 90 teachers. 28 are men and 62 are women. All the teachers in the school have a bachelor´s degree in education. Only 30% owns a master degree. There are 11 English teachers; all of them are women. The 11 teachers have a bachelor title in the language teaching area.

Meso Level (the course)

This research pretends to explore and analyze the strategies that the English teacher uses for teaching vocabulary in English. After applying a survey to the 35 students of Primer año de bachillerato, we have gotten the following information which is important to understand the problem. The students attend to the day school. 24 students live with father and mother, one lives just with the father, eight live with the mother, and two live with a relative. 25 students live with a family that are composed among one and five members, and ten students live with a family among six and ten members. 23 students have access to a cell phone. Two students do not have access to a cell phone. 28 students live in their own house and seven students live in a rented house. 33 students say their parents work in different occupations. Only two students say their parents do not work. 20 say their mothers work. 15 contestants say their mothers do not work.

Seven students say their fathers provide the economic resources for living. Three students answered their mother provide the economic resources. 25 students say, both father and mother provide economic resources for home expenses. At their home 10 students have books, four students have books and internet, 20 students have books, internet access and a computer. One

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student has nothing at all. 28 students have specific place at home for studying and seven do not have a place to work.

In English, one students considers himself excellent; one, very good; seven; good and 23 fair.

26 students said they do like to learn English and nine said they do not like to learn English

Students’ main interests are:

Going out with Friends: 9

Their studies: 9

Sports:13

To read: 2

To watch television: 2

During their free time students devote, for:

Studying: 8

Sports: 8

Chating in a mobile device: 7

Sleeping: 3

Watching television: 1

Resting: 8

33 students devote two hours and half for watching television. 33 students dedicate 2.5 hours in a

day for navigating on Facebook.

Micro Level (the problem)

During the interview the English language teachers asked about how the students learn new vocabulary, and the reflections go as follow:

The students do not have reading habits, their reading skills are poor, students do not like to read. The students have little knowledge of vocabulary in Spanish. In English there is an evident lack of vocabulary.

In a previous class observation, the researchers noticed that the teachers in the institution devoted just few minutes to teach vocabulary; basically, it was four class minutes. During two class observations, the teachers provided the meaning of new words in a couple of minutes, or requested the students to look up the meaning in a bilingual dictionary.

One of the strategies is to use phrases like “What’s the word for ----- in English?,” “How do you say ----- ?,” and “What does ----- mean?”

Indirect Vocabulary Learning

Indirect vocabulary learning refers to the indirect way children learn the meanings of most of the words through everyday experiences with oral and written language. The following are some of the ways children can learn indirectly: engaging students in daily conversations. When children are engaged in conversations with others, especially with adults, they hear the repetition of the words and how these words are used in regular conversation. The more oral language experience children have, the more words and meaning of these words they will learn.

Reading aloud daily to students

Reading aloud should be a daily practice. Providing opportunities to study particular unknown or unfamiliar words and engaging the children in conversations related to the book provides them

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opportunities to relate to prior knowledge and experience or to build background when there is no prior knowledge. Providing time and opportunities for students to read on their own.

Direct Vocabulary Learning

Direct instruction is also important because it helps students learn difficult words that can guide them to a better comprehension of the reading. Usually these words can be related to a specific subject and are not part of the student’s daily instructional vocabulary experiences. The following are some guidelines that can help with direct vocabulary instruction:

Teaching specific vocabulary words before the reading

This practice can help students learn new words and comprehend the text. Using the vocabulary taught in different contexts. The more students use the words in different contexts during various periods of time, the more they are likely to learn the words. Repeating vocabulary exposure. The more children see, hear, read, or write specific words, the better they learn these words. Repeated exposure to words in different texts promotes active engagement and increases comprehension.

How many words are there and how many do we need to teach?

It’s almost impossible to say exactly how many words there are in English. Estimates for native speakers vary between 12,000 and 20,000 depending on their level of education. One estimate is 10 that a native speaker university graduate knows about 20,000 word families (Goulden, Nation, and Read, 1990), not including phrases and expressions.

Counting words is a complicated issue. Let’s begin with the question what do we mean by a word? Look at these members of the word family RUN: run, runs, running, ran, runner, and runners. Should we count these as one “word” or six? How do we count different uses of the same word? For example, is the verb run the same in run a marathon as in run a company? Is it the same as the noun a run? How do we deal with idiomatic uses like run out of gas, feel run down, or a run of bad luck? And, of course, new words are being added to the language all the time; the Internet

especially has given us lots of new words like podcast, netizen, and blog, as well as new meanings such as surf as in surf the web.

Try to learn 20 000 words, for a foreign learner, is a very difficult task. So, for example, learners who know the most frequent 2,000 words should be able to understand almost 80 percent of the words in an average text, and a knowledge of 5,000 words increases learners’ understanding to 88.7 percent (Francis and Kucera 1982).

From the previous literature, it seems important to identify what the most frequent 2,000 to 5,000 vocabulary items are and to give them priority in teaching. On the other hand, students need to become self sufficient learners. It is unlikely that teachers can cover in class the huge number of vocabulary items that students will need to use or understand, so it is equally important to help students with how to learn vocabulary as well as with what to learn.

What kind of vocabulary to teach?

It is necessary to consider what type of English to teach. This is American or British English, or different types of language like conversation, newspapers, business English, and academic English. To use a corpus in designing a syllabus, the first thing to decide is what kind of English we want to base our material on, because different corpora will give us different words and often different uses of words to teach. For example, the word nice is in the top fifteen words in conversation, but it is rare in written academic English, occurring mainly in quotations of speech from literature or interviews. Another example is the word see, which has the same frequency in conversation and written academic English, but different uses.

In academic English, see is mostly used to refer the reader to other books and articles. In conversation, see has a greater variety of uses including the expression I see, which means “I understand”. For most students in general English courses, the priority is speaking, so for these students it makes sense to base much of the syllabus on a spoken corpus. Many students also have to write in English, especially for examinations, so again it makes sense to look at a corpus that includes the kinds of texts students will have to write.

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Most of the examples can be taken from conversations found in the North American spoken corpus, which is part of the Cambridge International Corpus. The Corpus can tell us about vocabulary essentially: Frequency: Which words and expressions are most frequent and which are rare Differences in speaking and writing: Which vocabulary is more often spoken and which is more often written Contexts of use: The situations in which people use certain vocabulary Collocation: Which words are often used together Grammatical patterns: How words and grammar combine to form patterns Strategic use of vocabulary: Which words and expressions are used to organize and manage Discourse Frequency.

A list from the Corpus of the most frequently used words can give us lots of interesting information about the spoken language. I is the most common word; the five most common verbs (apart from parts of the verbs be and have) are know, think, get, go, and mean; the most common nouns are people, time, and things; the most common adjective is good. We can also see which words are more common than similar or related words: Yeah is more frequent than yes; little is more frequent than small; some plurals like things, years, kids, and children are more frequent than the singular forms (thing, year, etc.). The list raises questions such as: Why are the adverbs just and actually more frequent than grammatical items like doesn't? Why is something more frequent than anything, everything, and nothing?

How can we use this information in teaching materials? Frequency lists are useful to help us make choices about what to teach and in what order. For example, we can see that many idioms are rare, so we can teach them later in the language program. On the other hand, we can see which items in a large vocabulary set (colors, types of music, clothing, health problems, etc.) people talk about most and teach those first, leaving the less frequent words until later. The way that frequency information is used in corpus-informed materials can be almost invisible, but some of this frequency information is fun to know and can be used in guessing game activities in class.

For example, have students guess what weather expressions people in North America use most (It's cold, It's hot) or ask them to brainstorm a list of clothing that can be used with the phrase a pair of, then guess which are most frequent (shoes and pants). So, in a basic course, should we teach all the words in the top 2,000 word list and in the order in which they appear? It may not be

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possible to use all the items in the list, for a number of reasons. Some may be culturally inappropriate, not suitable for class, or just difficult to use until students have more English.

Also, the communication needs of students may be different from those of the people whose conversations are recorded in the Corpus. For example, a word like homework, a frequent word in any classroom, comes toward the end of the top 2,000 words, whereas words like supposed, true, and already, which are in the top 400, might be challenging for elementary learners. Frequency information, while important, is only a guide.

Differences in speaking and writing

Corpus tools can give us information about how frequent a word is in different corpora, so we can compare the frequency of vocabulary in, say, newspapers, academic texts, and conversation. For example, the word probably is about five times more frequent in conversation than in newspapers and ten times more frequent in conversation than in academic texts. On the other hand, however is eight times more frequent in newspapers than in conversation and over twenty times more frequent in academic texts than in conversation. Looking at such differences, we can see whether to present vocabulary items like these in a written or spoken context.

Contexts of use

The Corpus includes information about speakers and situations in which conversations take place. It is possible to see, for example, whether an item of vocabulary is used by everyone in all kinds of situations, or mostly by people who know each other very well, or mostly in more polite situations with strangers or work colleagues, etc. Information like this from the Corpus enables us to present vocabulary appropriately and to point out to students examples of more formal usage such as Goodbye vs. Bye and, perhaps more importantly, very informal usage such as using the word like for reporting speech (I was like “Hey!”) or the expression and stuff (We have a lot of parties and stuff).

Collocations

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The term collocation generally refers to the way in which two or more words are typically used together. For example, we talk about heavy rain but not heavy sun, or we say that we make or come to a decision, but we don't do a decision. So, heavy rain and make a decision are often referred to as collocations and we say that heavy collocates with rain, or that heavy and rain are collocates of each other.

With collocation software we can search for all the collocations of a particular word, that is, all the words that are used most frequently with that word and especially those with a higher than anticipated frequency. This is particularly useful for finding the collocation of verbs like have, get, make, and do, which are often referred to as delexical verbs. These are verbs which don't have a (lexical) meaning of their own, but take their meaning from the words that they collocate or are used with.

For example, the verb make has a different meaning in each of the expressions make a cake, make a decision, and make fun of, so it is sensible to teach verbs like these in expressions, as collocations, instead of trying to identify and distinguish basic meanings, which is difficult and, in many cases, almost impossible.

Grammatical patterns

It may be worth teaching students an easier formulation of Wilkins's (1972) view that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” The grammar of vocabulary The Corpus can show us the grammatical patterns that vocabulary forms – or the grammar of vocabulary, (O'Dell 1997). This is very helpful with verb complements, i.e., items and structures that must follow or that usually follow any particular verb, such as objects or infinitive verbs. It can answer questions about what forms are used after certain verbs when our intuition fails us.

Let's take the example of questions with the verb mind:

Do you mind . . . ? and Would you mind . . . ? Without looking at a corpus, four basic patterns

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seem equally possible:

Requests Example

Do you mind + . . . ing Do you mind helping me for a second?

Would you mind + . . . ing Would you mind helping me for a second?

Asking for permission Example

Do you mind + if Do you mind if I leave early today?

Would you mind + if Would you mind if I leave (or left) early today?

Strategic vocabulary

Teachers are familiar with the kinds of words and expressions that writers use strategically to organize written texts, from simple conjunctions like and and however, which organize ideas within and across sentences, and adverbs such as first, secondly, etc., which list ideas within a paragraph or text, to expressions such as in conclusion, which signal that the text is about to end. Written texts are easy to find in newspapers, books, on the Internet, etc., as models for teaching or our own writing.

Another issue to consider is which vocabulary we want students to be able to use when they speak and write (their active or productive vocabulary) and which we want them to be able to recognize and understand but not necessarily produce (their passive or receptive vocabulary (Melka, 1997) Students often feel frustrated that they can understand more than they can produce, but explaining this issue of active versus passive knowledge as a normal part of learning can be reassuring. When you assign vocabulary lists to learn, why not include some passive vocabulary items and discuss with students which items they need to learn “for understanding” and which they need to learn really well so that they can use them.

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Additionally, even from the elementary level, it is important to include in vocabulary lessons not just single words, but also larger “chunks” such as collocations, phrases, or expressions, even whole sentences, as well as strategic vocabulary (Sökmen (1997)). By building up a stock of expressions as well as individual words, students can assemble the language they need to communicate more fluently.

Methodology

Type of Research

When working with social sciences like education, psychology, anthropology, etc., researchers are interested in studying human behavior and the social world inhabited by human beings, found increasing difficulty in trying to explain human behavior in quantifiable, measurable terms. Qualitative research attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world. This is a qualitative research because it:

- Tends to focus on how people or groups of people can have (somewhat) different ways of looking at reality (usually social or psychological reality).
- Takes account of complexity by incorporating the real-world context – can take different perspectives on board.
- -Focuses on reports of experience or on data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically.
- Focuses on description and interpretation.

Level of Research

This research was an exploratory study because:

- This is the most useful (and appropriate) research design for those projects that are addressing a subject about which there are high levels of uncertainty and ignorance about

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the subject, and when the problem is not very well understood (i.e. very little existing research on the subject matter).

- Such research is usually characterized by a high degree of flexibility and lacks a formal structure.
- The main aim of exploratory research is to identify the boundaries of the environment in which the problems, opportunities or situations of interest are likely to reside and to identify the factors or variables that might be found there and be of relevance to the research.

Qualitative Research Method

The ethnographic method was used because a literature review was first carried out.

Experience was gained through participation, listening, and recording experiences & data (ethnographic description)

Explain where you were and how you went about your task of understanding (background to the study)

This study took two weeks for gathering the information, during the second and third week of January 2017.

Population and sample

The investigators chose this population because at this high school there exists a program to enrich reading comprehension that implements an interactive book with interesting topics to motivate the students. For this reason, we chose a class with poor scores rather than the others.

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The investigators noticed that the student’s books of fantasy and amazing adventures were not attractive, they preferred real and love stories.

For the problem definition, the problem was defined at a macro level first. For doing this, the "Combatientes de Tapi" high school was considered. After that, primer año de Bachillerato "D" was observed and analyzed (meso level). Finally, the problem was defined at a micro level which deals with the strategies that English language teachers apply when teaching vocabulary. The macro level information was gathered through an interview to the secretary and the inspector of the institution. The information at meso level was gathered through a survey applied to the students. Among the seven qualitative research methods, the ethnographic method was chosen due to the observation to the Primer año de Bachillerato students enrolled in class "D". Also, the researchers had the opportunity to observe the teaching instruction, with emphasis on strategies for teaching vocabulary.

For data collection, the researchers had access to academic records of students, the syllabi and the analytical plan of the subject. The school administrator gave all the support to apply the survey and interview the secretary staff to gather information about the school. There was support from every member in the school for this research reaches a good ending.

Results

Since many lexical items in a language have more than one meaning, learners were instructed how to reduce multiple options by elimination. Scanning all of the definitions in the entry before deciding which is the one that fits was a good idea. After choosing a seemingly reasonable sense from the definitions in the entry, the students needed to understand the definition and integrate it into the context where the unknown was met. Reference materials, primarily a dictionary, can be used in a receptive or a productive skill in language learning.

However, since we likely have insufficient time to consult a dictionary during the process of speaking and listening, more look-up work happens during reading and writing. A common situation is that, for example, when a learner meets an unknown word in the text and fails to infer

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the meaning through context, they might be advised to consult a dictionary. Looking up a word in a dictionary is “far from performing a purely mechanical operation” (Scholfield 1982, p.185).

Conclusions

The findings have shown that the senior high school English language teachers involved were aware of a range of vocabulary learning strategies which have been identified in relevant literature based on their personal learning experience, including both direct and indirect vocabulary learning approaches. Besides that, a small proportion of the participants also acquired some pertinent knowledge through self-study from ELT publications or teacher preparation education. Oral repetition, extensive reading, self-testing and a variety of partially contextualized vocabulary learning activities were rather popular among the teachers.

Without adequate guidance and sufficient practice on dictionary use in class, it is likely that some students are not able to make use of the reference material wisely as a facilitator in their independent learning. The English teacher in this survey indicated a slight preference of a bilingual dictionary to a monolingual one to be consulted by their students in language learning.

Readers and listeners use guessing strategies all the time. Since many words are homonyms or homographs, part of the comprehension process depends on inferring the correct and appropriate meaning in context

Recommendations

Teachers should provide opportunities to increase verbal interaction in classroom activities to help ensure that students are exposed to as many different types of authentic language as possible and allow students opportunities to practice using the target language. Planning for more group and pair work during lessons would help to do this.

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Vocabulary teaching should be designed to support students’ word learning through a combination of approaches to teaching, direct instruction, and incidental word learning.

Exercises that ask students to guess word meanings from context should be done in class so that the teacher can give immediate feedback. Another option is to have the students do these exercises on a computer-based program that gives immediate feedback.

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