

Vocabulary Teaching & Learning

In Vietnam, English was integrated into the primary education curriculum since 2003 and was taught from grade 3 with a duration of 70 hours per year. It is considered a compulsory foreign language and one of the conditions for consideration and recognition of high school graduation (MOET, 2010). Despite efforts to teach and learn English in Vietnam, recent statistics shows that, after more than two decades of teaching English as a compulsory subject, Vietnam is still facing a crisis of quality. According to the confession of the former head of the Vietnam's National Foreign Languages 2020 Project—Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020, after more than ten years of teaching, I have observed that students still can not communicate in English effectively.

Vocabulary is one of the important language elements that support the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing for learners of an English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language. No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of the second language are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in a second language just cannot happen in any meaningful way. In reality, Vietnamese EFL teachers often teach vocabulary in the traditional way, which involves writing a list of new English words on the board and providing Vietnamese translations. The focus is typically on single words, which are often chosen based on glossaries in textbooks and reference books. Students are often left on their own and rarely get the chance to use the words that they have learnt.

In terms of the vocabulary learning strategies employed by students at Nguyen Trai High School, the students moderately used all vocabulary learning strategies. Of all the vocabulary learning strategies, determination and social strategies were the most commonly used. The most often mentioned determination strategy was using a bilingual dictionary, and the most popularly listed social strategy was group work activities. Metacognitive strategies, surprisingly, were the least frequently used.

For teachers, being aware of students' current use of vocabulary learning strategies could help in the planning of subsequent vocabulary instructions. Given that "bilingual dictionary" was the most frequently used determination, teachers may take the opportunities to guide students on how to make the best use of these strategies. For example, students should not only look at the first translation text, but they should pay attention to the part of speech. Besides, they should also look at the collocations and examples offered in the dictionary to understand more about the word. Since "group work" is the most frequently used social strategies among student participants, teacher may also maximize students' vocabulary learning through effective use of group work in class. For instance, teachers may organize activities to facilitate students' interactions and opportunities to use vocabulary to remember longer. Collaborative vocabulary learning strategies that teachers may consider using in the classroom may include Collocation, word association recitation, word guessing games, etc.

Online Profile

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