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Title:

**Investigating Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards
Using the Context Clues to Facilitate Vocabulary Acquisition**

The Case of EFL Master Students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

A Dissertation submitted to Mohamed KHEIDER University of BISKRA in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Language Sciences.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to

The source of my hope, happiness and inspiration, my beloved **mother** whose never-ending prayers and encouragement were always the reason of my success.

My precious **father** for his constant support and endless love.

My wonderful **sisters** and **brothers** for their valuable piece of advice.

My adorable **nieces** and **nephews**.

All my dear **friends**.

Declaration

I, DJELLOULI DELLA Khaoula Fatiha , do hereby solemnly declare that the work I am going to present in this thesis is my own, and has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree.

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Abstract

Since all the languages are based on words, mastering a foreign language is highly associated with mastering its vocabulary. However, it was noticed that many English as a foreign language (EFL) learners face difficulties in studying such language due to the lack of vocabulary. The present study attempted to investigate teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of the context clues technique to facilitate learners' vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, it aimed to identify which technique is mostly used by students when they encounter new words while reading. Besides, the present inquiry sought to determine if the context clues technique relies on the learners' current level of vocabulary. In order to reach reliable conclusions, the researchers opted for the mixed-methods approach in which an interview for 5 EFL teachers and a questionnaire for 40 Master students at the University of Biskra were used. The findings of the current investigation revealed that both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of context clues as a technique that contributes to the development of learners' vocabulary knowledge and acquisition. Moreover, it was determined that most of Master students rely on their guessing abilities to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words while reading. Finally, teachers confirmed that the effectiveness of the context clues technique highly depends on the learners' word-stock.

Keywords: Vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition, context clues, EFL learners.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a foreign language

ELT: English language teaching

SAW: Semantics Analysis of Writing Approach

KW: Key word

LW: Left word

RW: Right word

L2: Second language

R: Receptive

P: Productive

%: Percentage

&: And

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General introduction

Introduction

Nowadays, learning the English language is tremendously significant due to its current position as the world's lingua franca. Therefore, because of this importance, many people tend to study it as a speciality at the tertiary level. For the purpose of being academically proficient and successful, EFL learners have to have a good command of the four foundational language skills of writing, speaking, listening and reading. Additionally, for attaining this objective, EFL learners have to have a solid foundation of the English language vocabulary since the latter is considered as the bridge to higher levels of language proficiency. Vocabulary acquisition is crucial in learning a foreign language as it makes the learning process easier by enabling the learners to understand every single new word that they hear or read, and permitting them to use the target language effectively in different contexts.

While reading, learners may encounter many new English words; therefore, reading texts can be considered as one of the rich-input environments that foster the development of learners' vocabulary. Accordingly, one of the strategies that can be used to help learners acquire new words from context while reading is the context clues. The present study suggests the use of the context clues technique to facilitate EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. Particularly, it aims to investigate how EFL teachers and learners perceive the use of the aforementioned technique.

1. Statement of the problem

Vocabulary can be considered as the basis of the language and one of its most major components. Having sufficient vocabulary knowledge is highly significant for those EFL learners who desire to obtain high academic achievements. Therefore, many researchers

emphasized this point showing the role of students' big lexical items stock in the learning process. Scholars such as Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989) (as cited in Maximo, 2000), stressed the importance of vocabulary, they claimed that "First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem" (as cited in Alqahtani, 2014)

Vocabulary learning is not an easy task, mainly, for non-native speakers. According to our personal modest experience and classroom observation, learners with inadequate vocabulary have breaches in both productive and receptive skills. In many instances, those learners encounter difficulties in expressing their ideas (speaking and writing), understanding what others say (listening), or in comprehending reading passages due to their ignorance of the meaning of certain unfamiliar words. Particularly, while reading, for acquiring and decoding the meanings of new lexical items many students tend to opt for using effortless techniques such as checking their electronic dictionaries, neglecting the context clues they found in texts. Thus, the present study suggests the use of context clues as an effective technique that can enhance and enrich EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge and acquisition.

2. Significance of the Study

The present study seeks to raise the students' awareness of the importance of vocabulary knowledge in the process of learning a foreign language, and it attempts to come up with a new technique that contributes to the development of learners' word-stock.

3. Aim of the Study

The present inquiry aims to investigate the teachers' and students' attitudes towards using the context clues strategy in order to enrich the English language vocabulary in an advanced level.

4. Research Questions

This thesis relies on the following questions:

- Do teachers have positive attitudes towards using context clues as a strategy that facilitate vocabulary acquisition?
- Do Master students have positive attitudes towards using context clues as a strategy that facilitate vocabulary acquisition?
- Which technique do Master students usually use to understand the meaning of new words?
- To what extent does the context clues strategy depend on the learner's current level of vocabulary?

5. Research Hypotheses

The present research is based on the following hypotheses:

- We hypothesize that teachers would have positive attitudes towards using the context clues strategy to facilitate students' vocabulary acquisition.
- We hypothesize that students would have positive attitudes towards using the context clues strategy to facilitate vocabulary acquisition.
- We hypothesize that master students tend to use the electronic dictionaries to understand the meaning of new words.

- We hypothesize that the context clues strategy sometimes depends on student's current level of vocabulary.

6. Research Methodology

The researchers used the qualitative approach to acquire and gather data for this dissertation. Moreover, the researchers planned to derive information from many materials relevant to their field of interest which is a new and a fresh area in their department as far as they are concerned. In addition, they used the quantitative approach which dealt with measurements and numerous data to cater for both theoretical and applied research. The results of the questionnaire and the interview are included in the thesis.

7. Research Methods

In order to gather data, the researchers used the following research instruments:

1. A questionnaire was designed to investigate the attitudes of Master (one) students towards the use of the context clues technique to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In addition, it was used to determine which strategy they tend to use to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words while reading.
2. An interview was conducted to explore EFL teachers' perceptions towards the use of the context clues technique to foster learners' vocabulary acquisition. Also, it was intended to investigate, from the teachers' perspectives, the relationship between the context clues technique and the learners' current vocabulary level.

8. Limitations of the study

According to the previous studies, the context clues are one of the techniques that can be used to improve learners' vocabulary acquisition. At the very beginning, and with a

different sample (students in an advanced academic level 'Master '), the researchers intended to conduct a quasi-experimental research for the purpose of replicating those studies and comparing the results. However, due to time restrictions, the present research took another turn. It became a descriptive study in which merely a questionnaire and an interview were used to investigate teachers' and students' attitudes towards using the context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In addition, and as a result of the time limitation, the present study has missed one of its most important stages, that is the piloting stage.

9. Structure of the Study

The present dissertation will be consisted of two main parts, the theoretical part and the practical part. The theoretical part is divided into two chapters. The first chapter which is entitled 'Vocabulary Acquisition' will attempt to cover some elements of vocabulary such as its definitions, its types, and its importance, etc. The second chapter, named 'The Use of Context clues in Learning Words and Meanings', will first deal the importance of Semantics in teaching and learning a foreign language. Then, it will discuss the use of dictionaries in teaching and learning a foreign language. Finally, it will demonstrate the role of context, particularly; the role of context clues in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. The last chapter which is concerned with the practical part that was included to reach the aims of the present research will analyze, summarize, and discuss the findings of the utilized data collection tools (the interview and the questionnaire).

Chapter One: Vocabulary

Acquisition

Introduction

Vocabulary is an inseparable part in foreign language learning and its great significance is undiscussable in language teaching and learning. Harmer stated that "if language structure makes up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh" (as cited in Haixia and Zhaohui, 2015, p.394). Subsequently, the linguistic field has witnessed a great interest in vocabulary acquisition; many researchers have done several works that investigate its aspects. Therefore, in this chapter we will provide the reader with definitions of vocabulary, its types, and its breadth and depth in relation to foreign language learning. Then, we will illustrate how vocabulary is important. After that we will spot light on vocabulary teaching/learning and the common vocabulary teaching techniques that are adopted by teachers in EFL classrooms. Finally, we will conclude the chapter with some strategies that support vocabulary development.

1.1. Vocabulary Definitions

Vocabulary knowledge is central in learning a foreign language and can be considered as the key element for using the basic language skills appropriately. Owing to the importance of vocabulary, many researchers and scholars attempted to give it a definition. According to Neuman and Dweyer (2009), Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively: words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary). To put it in another way, knowing the words of the target language is the main tool for communicating and understanding others. Besides, Richards and Renadya (2002) emphasized the same point stating that "vocabulary is the core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen,

read, and write "(p.255). That is to say, using the productive and receptive skills of the language effectively entails having a solid base of vocabulary.

Ur (1996, p.60) suggested that "vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than just a single word: for example, post office, and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea". In other words, vocabulary is the words that are taught in the foreign language classrooms. In addition, it can consist of more than one word, like compound nouns (In grammar compound nouns are described as nouns that consist of two or more existing words, like seafood, airport, or notebook). These are usually named as closed or solid compound nouns. Generally compound nouns are connected with a hyphen: vice-president, president-elect, and phone-call are some examples of hyphenated compound nouns. Similarly, Richard and Schmidt (2010) believed that vocabulary is " a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words and idioms" (p.629).

Vocabulary is defined as the breadth, depth, and variety of all the words, concepts or specific terms we know: the words we use, recognize, and respond to in acts of communication, speaking, and listening (Vacca et al., 2008, as cited in İltter, 2019).

When it comes to defining vocabulary Kamil and Heibert (2005) stated that:

Generally, vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. What complicates this definition is the fact that words come in at least two forms: oral and print.

Knowledge of words also comes in at least two forms, receptive - that which we can understand or recognize - and productive - the vocabulary we use when we write or speak. (p.3)

According to the aforementioned definitions, we can sum up that vocabulary refers to the knowledge of words (lexical knowledge) and their meanings in oral and written language

in receptive and expressive forms whose proper acquisition has a pivotal role in developing learners' competencies in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (listening comprehension).

1.2. Types of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most challenging processes that the learners go through while learning a foreign language due to the fact that having a good command of lexis entails the learner to have a knowledge about it, for instance, distinguishing between its types. Researchers in the field of linguistics concurred to divide, renowned vocabulary knowledge based on the scope of its use in the skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking. Thus, they parted vocabulary knowledge into productive and receptive vocabulary (Laufer, 1998; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002).

1.2.1. Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge

According to Nation (1990) receptive vocabulary knowledge refers to the ability of understanding and recognizing the lexical items while listening (what a word sounds like?) or reading (what a word does look like?). That is to say, it is the conscious awareness of the form of a word and bringing its meaning back when listening or reading it. Webb (as cited in Heidari, 2019) defines receptive vocabulary knowledge as the ability to identify the form of a word and to specify a synonym for it. In this type of vocabulary, the learner does not make use of the words that he can be familiar with, s/he merely store it. Therefore, receptive vocabulary can also be labelled as passive lexicon.

1.2.2. Productive Vocabulary Knowledge

Nation (as cited in Emam, Mohamed, Abdelhaq & Za'za, 2020) stated that productive (expressive, active) vocabulary knowledge involves the learner's potentiality to transmit his

thoughts and messages to others through speaking or writing and retrieving and using the proper spoken and written forms of the words.

At length, Laufer (1998) reported that there are two types of productive vocabulary knowledge, controlled and free productive knowledge. Controlled productive knowledge means the ability to generate words, phrases, expressions due to a given cue, while free productive knowledge refers to the spontaneous use of words in the absence of prompts for this particular word, such as learners' free composition.

Comprehensively, Nation (2001) asserted that knowing a word in relation to receptive and productive knowledge involves knowing its form, meaning and use. He summarized his point in the following table:

Table 1.1. *Aspects of knowing a word (Adapted From Nation, 2001, p 40-41)*

Form	Spoken	R P	What does the word sound like? How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R P	What does the word look like? How is the word written and spelled?
	Word parts	R P	What parts are recognizable in this word? What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
	Form and meaning	R P	What meaning does this word form signal? What word form can be used to express this meaning?

Meaning	Concept and referents	R P	What is included in the concept? What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	R P	In what patterns does the word occur? In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	constraints on use (register, frequency ...)	R P	Where, when, and how often would we expect to meet this word? Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Many researchers compared between the learners' productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge. Laufer (1998); Webb (2008); Zhong and Hirsh (2009) (as cited in Zhong, 2016) found that second language learners' receptive vocabulary size is bigger than their productive vocabulary size. In line with the previous mentioned researchers, Shin (2011) and Nizonkiza (2016) studies' results displayed similar findings which indicated that the productive lexicon is less than the receptive one.

It has been argued that an appropriate production of a word is more difficult than its reception, since producing it faultlessly requires correct spelling, pronunciation, grammatical use, and correct association with other lexical items. In agreement with the aforesaid, Nation (2001) stated "In general, it seems that receptive learning and use is easier than productive learning and use, but it is not clear however why receptive use should be less difficult than productive" (p.42). As a way of illustration, in some cases, learners can grasp new words while listening, but when it comes to writing; s/he makes mistakes due to his/her poor knowledge of these words' written patterns.

Table 1.2. *A summary of studies focusing on receptive and productive vocabularies sizes, (adapted from Hajiyeva, 2015, p.33)*

Background	Participants and learning context (word families)	Receptive vocabulary size (word families)	Productive vocabulary size (word families)	Study
Turkish	First-year university students	4.485	3.017	Ozturk, 2012
Chinese	English secondary-level learners	3.738	2.826	Zhong&Hirsh, 2009
Serbian	First-year English majors	2.506	2.427	Danilovic& Grujic, 2014
Japanase	University undergraduates	2.236	1.537	Waring, 1997
Azerbaijani	First-year English majors	2.091	866	Hajiyeva, 2014
Hebraic	High-schoolleavers	1.900	1.700	Laufer, 1998

1.3. Vocabulary Breadth and Depth

Vocabulary was the main concern for researchers who devoted efforts to study it rigorously, particularly to examine its dimensions. Researchers named these dimensions as the breadth and the depth of vocabulary.

Anderson and Freebody (1981) differentiated between these two dimensions asserting that vocabulary breadth refers to "the number of words for which the person knows at least some of the significant aspects of meaning" (p. 93). Whereas, vocabulary depth is "the quality or depth of understanding" (p. 93 as cited in Li and Kirby, 2014). In addition, Nation (2001) claimed that the breadth of vocabulary is viewed as the size of vocabulary. In a few words, it means the number of words which a learner knows at a particular level. While the depth of vocabulary as proposed by Qian (1998, 1999) is the measure of how well a learner knows a word (as cited in Teng, 2014). For more details, Richards (1976) stated, knowing a word profoundly involves knowing its frequency in speech and writing, the limitation of its use according to the situation, the associated syntactic behavior, form and derivation, its relationships with other words and its semantic value.

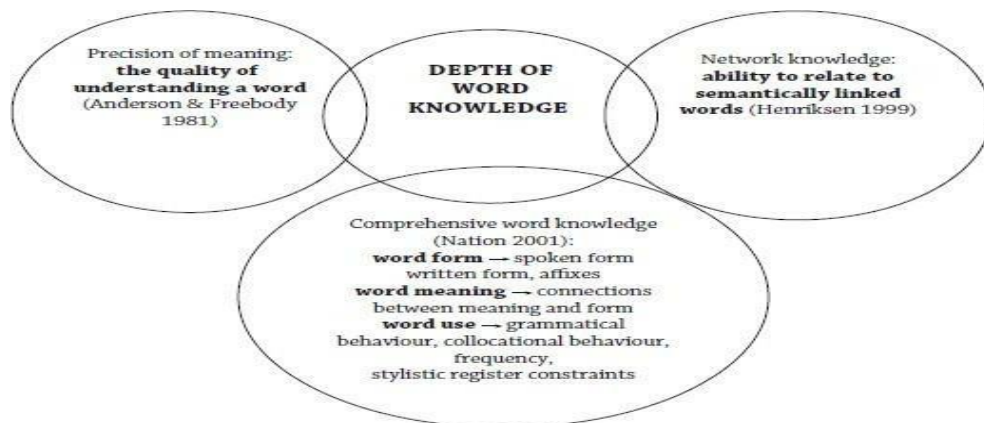


Figure 1.1 Conceptualization of the depth of word knowledge (adapted from Doczi & Kormos, 2016 p.10)

In order to foster English language proficiency, learners should have an adequate vocabulary size. In this respect, Transparent Language (2018) indicated that "of all the factors contributing to language proficiency, vocabulary size is by far the single most significant factor, accounting for anywhere from 50% to 70% of proficiency gains depending on the language and the skill being studied "(n.p.). According to a research conducted by Nation and Waring (1997), learners are not obliged to acquire all the words of the English language which are estimated as 54,000 word families due to the fact that achieving this objective is difficult even for the native speakers. Thus, for effective communication in simple conversations learners need to know 2,000 word families ; 2,000-3,000 for efficient language output (writing and speaking) ; 3,000-5,000 to read genuine (authentic) texts ; 10,000 for difficult university textbooks and 15,000 to 20,000 for having equivalent educated English native speaker's vocabulary (ibid, as cited in Arab, Bouhass ,2020).

1.4. Importance of Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is indispensable in learning a foreign language as long as without words learners can not transmit what they want to say or what they want to convey as ideas and thoughts. With good vocabulary mastery, English language learners will have the ability to deliver messages without feeling stuck because of wondering what vocabulary should be used in a specific communicative situation. Wilkins (1976) pointed out that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015). In the same vein, Pickett (1978, as cited in Reguig, 2019, p. 7) stated "this brings me to the subject of vocabulary learning, which to me always seems the key to any language. I am quite happy to pronounce badly and make grammatical mistakes but there is no escape from learning words " (as cited in Hedge, 2002, pp. 110-111).

In another version, learning grammar is not foremost as much as learning vocabulary. Even if learners make grammatical mistakes, they find themselves able to convey messages. However, without lexical items this process becomes impeded.

Thornbury (2002) illustrated the importance of vocabulary and how learners perceive it through their answers of the question *how would you like to improve your English?*

- Oral is my weakness and I can't speak a fluent sentence in English. Sometimes, I am lack of useful vocabularies to express my opinions.
- My problem is that I forget the words soon after I have looked in the dictionary. For example when I read a English book.
- I would like to improve my vocabulary. I have the feeling that I always use the same idiomatic expressions to express different sort of things.
- I'd like to enlarge my vocabulary (this word I also had to find in dictionary). Too often my speaking is hard caused by missing words.

Adapted from Thornbury (2002) p.13

All in all, large vocabulary knowledge has an inevitable role in the development of the other language skills, it affects how well learners read, write, speak and listen; accordingly, it can be considered as a springboard for learners academic success. Thus, teachers and learners should take into consideration the instruction and learning of this aspect.

1.5. Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

1.5.1. Vocabulary Teaching

Based on their critical importance, vocabulary teaching and learning are prerequisite in EFL classrooms. However, for a long time the former and latter were neglected. There was a high emphasis on teaching the structure of language in EFL classrooms through the adaption of some teaching approaches that target and prioritize the language form (grammatical structure) such as the Direct method and Audio-lingualism (Thornbury, 2002).

After decades, the value of lexis became more recognized in ELT especially with the emergence of the communicative approach in the 1970s, many specialists, teachers, and course designers became interested in vocabulary acquisition. For instance, in 1984, Swan and Walter in the introduction of their *Cambridge English Course* wrote “vocabulary acquisition is the largest and most important task facing the language learner”. Course books also started to introduce activities and syllabi that urge vocabulary learning such as integrating lexical syllabus and lexical chunks in EFL courses (ibid).

1.5.2. Explicit and implicit Vocabulary Teaching- Learning

1.5.2.1. Explicit Vocabulary Teaching-Learning

According to Fainman and Tokar (2019) explicit vocabulary instruction is:

A vocabulary learning activity where the learners consciously and intentionally learn the target vocabulary, such as when a student completing certain tasks is informed of the principal objectives, singles out new lexemes, focuses on them and resorts to a number of meaning inferring strategies. (p. 144)

In other words, explicit (direct) teaching of new words involves learning with awareness. Ellis (2001) indicated that explicit instruction is a planned method that includes the utilization of tasks that are designed to elicit forms selected by the teacher. Besides, Dimas (2009) suggested that explicit vocabulary teaching may involve the use of word lists, handbooks and textbooks to increase learners' vocabulary.

Based on a psychological perspective, "the more one manipulates, thinks about, and uses mental information, the more likely it is that one will retain that information" (Schmitt 2000, p.121). Hereby, in order to recall a new learned lexical item, the learner should be actively engaged to the deep processing of the new information.

As stated by Schmitt (2000) a well planned vocabulary program should blend explicit teaching with some tasks that enable the learner to acquire new words incidentally. Through a direct instruction learners at the beginning would learn all the words until they have the sufficient vocabulary knowledge that enables them later to use unfamiliar words which they encounter in different context. After this primary level, an incidental learning should be included in the program properly.

1.5.2.2. Implicit Vocabulary Teaching-Learning

Learners in the process of indirect lexis teaching acquire new words from the context without any intention to learn them. This implies that the new lexical items are by-products items. Implicit (incidental) learning is usually associated with learning from the context. Teachers and researchers asserted that extensive reading contribute to the development of learners' vocabulary and make the incidental learning more fruitful through helping the learners in gaining more vocabulary knowledge from the context (Marzano, 2004, as cited in Benyahia, 2020).

1.6. The Relationship between Vocabulary and Reading

Researchers have asserted that reading and vocabulary knowledge are inextricably linked. Generally, learners with satisfactory stock of words have greater understanding of texts. Hence, vocabulary is one of the key factors that contribute to successful reading comprehension. In support of this assertion, Researchers stressed the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, claiming that having a larger vocabulary makes the understanding of the text easier (Carlo et al., 2004 as cited in Karbalaei, Amoli2, & Tavakoli, 2012). In the same line of thought, Nation (2001) claimed that "vocabulary

knowledge is one of the best predictors of learners' ability in reading comprehension " (as cited in Djuarsa, 2017, p.41). Simultaneously, through the exposure to new words while reading learners can incidentally acquire a plethora of new lexical items in different contexts. On this point, Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) declared that "The amount of reading is important to long-term vocabulary development" (as cited in ReadNaturally, n.d, n.p).

To put it briefly, vocabulary and reading are two major components of the language which serve the development of each other reciprocally.

1.7. Vocabulary Teaching Techniques

It is assumed that vocabulary is viewed as an integral part in learning a new language. The use of which is based on the use of words; hence, teaching vocabulary is a requirement in EFL classrooms. Teachers of the target language may have questions in mind about which technique to adopt for attaining effective presentation of the new lexical items and to gain the desired results in the end of the teaching-learning process. In this regard, Berne and Blachowicz (2008, as cited in Alqahtani, 2015) claimed that recent studies show that teaching vocabulary may be challenging as many instructors are not certain about the most appropriate practice in vocabulary teaching. For this reason, teachers should be well-trained to adopt techniques that fit the learners' current level, (vocabulary level), needs, and time availability. Based on this assumption, researchers such as Grain and Redman (1986) categorized vocabulary teaching techniques into three main types, visual techniques, verbal techniques and translation techniques.

1.7.1. Visual Techniques

1.7.1.1. Visuals

These include flashcards, photographs, blackboard drawings, wall charts, and realia (objects that relate classroom teaching to real life). These means are generally used to deliver meaning of new vocabulary items. In the same spirit, Wright (1986) encouraged the use of this technique affirming that "the potential of visuals is so great that only a taste of their full potential can be given" (p.6). Visuals are effective for teaching real (concrete) items of vocabulary for example actions, activities (like sport, movements verbs), jobs, food, furniture (Grain and Redman, 1986). Moreover, visuals can urge students to interact, for instance, the teacher can use an image that illustrates sporting activities to present items such as *climbing*, *swimming*, *skiing* and then ask students if they have already practiced this activity.

1.7.1.2. Mime and gestures

This type of techniques is used to incorporate lexis with mime and gestures for evolving the meaning of particular vocabulary items. Furthermore, these visuals make remembering the meaning of new words easier, especially for the learners who are visual or kinesthetic learners (learning styles). As stated by Grain and Redman (198) "mime and gestures are often used to supplement other ways of conveying meaning" (p.73). For instance, when teaching an item as 'to swerve', the teacher may build a situation and illustrate it through using the blackboard as well as gestures to guarantee learners' understanding of the new concept.

1.7.2. Verbal Techniques

1.7.2.1. The Use of Illustrative Situations (Oral or Written)

Illustrative situations are most practical and appropriate for teaching abstract items. Sometimes, learners find it difficult to understand the abstract concepts; thus, teachers use

more than one situation (context) to make sure that they have properly transmitted the information to the learners and make it more intelligible and memorable for them.

1.7.2.2. The Use of Synonyms and Definitions

The synonyms technique is commonly used with beginners (learners with low level) to facilitate vocabulary acquisition at the first phase of the learning process and help them to understand the meaning of new words straightforwardly. For example, to clarify the meaning of *miserable* the teacher may use very sad as a synonym. Based on Grains and Redman (1986) point of view, definition alone is not always ample to convey meaning, so teachers in this situation should give examples as well.

1.7.2.3. The Use of Contrast and Opposites

Contrasts and opposites are also useful to make learners grasp what a new item means. A new word such as *sour* is simply illustrated by contrasting it with the word *sweet* that is familiar for the students. However, it is crucial to provide the context in which this is acceptable. Sugar is sweet and lemons are sour while the opposite of sweet tea is not sour tea (Grains and Redman, 1986).

1.7.3. Translation

Lan (2008) argued that " translation from L1 to L2 offers an opportunity for learners to apply what they have learned before –such as, vocabulary and sentence structure – into practical use " (as cited in Ismail and Samardali, 2017, p.65). In the same vein, Grain and Redman (1986) argued that translation can be an effective way for conveying the meaning of new words. In addition, it saves the time that the teacher will spend on futile explanation in English. However, the overuse of translation should be avoided in EFL classrooms due to the fact that it may lessen students' motivation and affect the development of listening skill.

1.8. Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary knowledge has a crucial role in reading comprehension. Lopez (2009) proposed several strategies that develop learners' word-stock before reading, during reading, and after reading.

1.8.1. Word trees

Word trees can be a useful strategy that helps the learner to understand how words can be formed from word base and root words. To integrate this activity in the classroom, the teacher should write on single cards the root word or base word and their meaning, then other words that include that part.

1.8.2. Semantic Feature Analysis

According to Amer (2019), semantic feature analysis (SFA) " helps students grasp the “uniqueness” of individual words and aids students in their reading development by increasing their personal and academic vocabulary" (p.2). Through this strategy, the learner can know if there is a relationship between the lexical item and the other features that have been identified. In this activity the instructor asks the learners to pinpoint the keywords in reading selection and link these words to the important concepts of the text (Reading Educator, 2005).

1.8.3. Semantic Maps

Semantic maps can be a very effective technique that permits the development of EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge as well as the activation of their previous knowledge about certain topics. Antonacci (1991) claimed that "semantic mapping is a visual strategy for expanding vocabulary knowledge by presenting categorized words related to one another.

Semantic mapping is an effective strategy to build up schema or prior knowledge in learners "(as cited in Elahi, 2017, p.2).

1.8.4. Dictionaries

Dictionary usage might be one of the potential vocabulary learning strategies that are used by students to learn new English words. Ostensibly, dictionaries come in printed or electronic forms, bilingual or monolingual. Currently, electronic dictionaries are one of the most popular electronic materials that are used by English language learners for gaining familiarity with unknown words. As stated by Bataineh (2014):

That using electronic dictionaries to enhance vocabulary learning maybe highly beneficial because it motivates EFL students, stimulates their enthusiasm, enriches the educational environment, emphasize the individual's needs, and reduces the stresses and anxieties associated with learning a foreign language by making vocabulary and abstract concepts more accessible and easier to understand. (p. 158 as cited in Hakim, Abidin & Bahari, 2018)

However, there are several studies which discouraged the use of dictionaries in the classrooms for several reasons. For instance, Thornbury assumed that dictionaries may hamper contextual guessing abilities and learner may waste time on translation, if the dictionary is bilingual (Abonughaim, 2019).

1.8.5. Context Clues

Context clues are explicitly taught reading strategy on which learners depend to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words. As reported by Tuyen and Huyen (2019) " it is very significant for students to learn a new word from a context to improve their vocabulary and understand the message in the text " (p.1343) . When students encounter an unknown word,

they usually tend to look for other words that are in the same sentence or in surrounding sentences that supply them with hints (clues) through which they can figure out what that words mean, as a result, they acquire a new vocabulary item. Examples, synonym, antonyms, definitions are examples of context clues.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter we attempted to give a general overview of vocabulary concept as a fundamental aspect of any language that a person have the desire to learn. In other words, the English language can not be mastered without acquiring abundant vocabulary knowledge. Accordingly, teachers should use different techniques that help the learners to boost their word-stock, so they would be able to make use of the English language effectively in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Thus, researchers have given importance to vocabulary and have devoted efforts to propose many strategies that may improve the latter.

**Chapter Two: The Use of
Context Clues in Learning Words
and Meanings**

Introduction

While reading a text in a foreign language or a question in achievement test, learners may encounter new words whose meaning is difficult to be understood. As it is known, the use of dictionaries is banned in examinations. Thus, learners should find an alternative strategy that they can use whenever they come across a difficult word. Since learning words and their meaning go hand in hand, researchers suggested the use of context clues as a technique to learn words and figure out their meanings. Therefore, this chapter will emphasize mainly on the meaning of words and how it can be determined through the use of context clues. First of all, in this chapter we will deal with semantics in foreign language teaching and learning as it is one of the linguistics subfields that studies meaning. Then, we will discuss the use of dictionaries in EFL teaching and learning. Next, we will shed light on the use of context to determine the meaning of words through providing readers with its definitions, types, and importance. After that, we will introduce the context clues, their types and how they should be taught as well as the factors that affect guessing from context. Finally, we will end this chapter with the strengths and weaknesses of using the context clues.

2.1. Semantics in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

In linguistics, meaning can be considered as the chief interest of many scholars and researchers as long as learning a foreign language requires understanding the meaning of its words. Accordingly, the study of the relationship between words and how we derive meaning from them was introduced to the field of linguistics under the name of semantics. Teaching semantics to EFL learners is highly significant for many reasons. For instance, in Beyersdorfer and Schauer's view (1989), semantics can enhance the writing skill by implementing the semantic analysis of the writing approach. Students may improve and

strengthen their word knowledge by analyzing English lexical synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, collocations, and connotations through the adoption of the Semantics Analysis of Writing Approach (SAW). Moreover, according to Alsayed (2019), the study of Semantics improves learners' understanding and makes them aware of word senses, sentence connections, speech (written or oral) and context, etc. More importantly, it enables learners to learn new vocabulary items and how to use them effectively in the social and interactional situation (context). Clearly, since semantics is the study of meaning, it helps learners to know the sense of what they learn as novel lexis. Yet, a question may arise, according to linguists who are interested in semantics, what is the best way to learn the meaning of new vocabulary. As claimed by Coulston (1991) "a major implication of semantics in ELT noted here is that meaning is context-specific" (p.8-10). In addition, he asserted that although word or vocabulary lists are useful, they are insufficient. Words and phrases can have a variety of meanings, which teachers and learners should be aware of. Therefore, considering that meaning is context-specific, teaching new lexis in context is a requirement.

2.2. The Use of Dictionaries in Teaching and Learning a foreign language

Dictionary has always had a special position among the materials that are widely used in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language. Therefore, researchers attempted to study its use in EFL classrooms and how it can affect the learning process.

2.2.1. Definitions of Dictionary

Many definitions of the dictionary were suggested by researchers. For instance, Sarigul (1999) described this tool as "a reference book containing the words of a language usually alphabetically arranged, with information on their forms, pronunciations, functions,

meanings, etymologies, spellings and idiomatic uses"(p.153). In a similar way, Al-Bulushy (2012) claimed that:

Dictionary is derived from the word "diction" which means style. It is a simple tool which helps us to pronounce, respell and check grammar. It gives meanings to words that cannot be understood, or words that have more than one meaning. Besides meaning, it also provides information on the reader syllables, intonation and pronunciation of words (as cited in Rohmatillah, 2016, p.188)

In simple words, the term 'dictionary' refers to a book that lists the lexical items of a particular language in an alphabetical order. Besides, it provides learners with information about the origins, possible senses and uses of words, and how they are spelled and pronounced.

2.2.2. Types of Dictionaries

According to Rohmatillah (2016), the number of languages that are used in the dictionary determines its type. Nation (2000) classified dictionaries into three types : monolingual, bilingual, and bilingualised. The monolingual dictionary clarifies a word's meaning only through the use of the target language (one language is used), for example English-English dictionary, while the bilingual dictionary is a dictionary that translates or explains the foreign words through the use of another language, usually the learner's mother tongue. According to Laufer & Melamed (1994), the bilingualised dictionary (semi-bilingual) is a new type of dictionaries that includes the two types of information (monolingual and bilingual). To clarify, a bilingualised dictionary such as English-English-Arabic dictionary, explains words through using both explanations in the target language and

equivalents in the learner's native language. In addition, Heshmatifar and Amirian (2013) pointed out that dictionaries can be printed (paper dictionaries) or electronic.

2.2.3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Dictionaries

The use of dictionaries can be considered as a dilemma for EFL teachers due to its various advantages and disadvantages which are as follows:

2.2.3.1. Advantages of Using Dictionaries

Considering their benefits, dictionaries are supposed to be one of the most practical means that are utilized in EFL classrooms. Bishop (2000) and Chan(2011) remarked that using dictionaries helps learners to improve their knowledge of the language and their skills and enables them to know the meaning of the new vocabulary items (as cited in Tulgar, 2017). In the same spirit, Benousassan (1983, p. 341) emphasized that using dictionaries while reading is "an integral part of the reading process", as long as they facilitate for the reader the process of decoding unfamiliar lexical items' meaning, confirming their guessed meaning based on contextual information, and learning more about these lexical items, such as their other different meanings and uses (as cited in Hamdi, 2015). Furthermore, it was proven that dictionaries support learners' vocabulary acquisition (Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996; Knight, 1994; Luppescu & Da, 1993), as well as they make learners' understanding of the text easier (as cited in Amririan & Heshmatifar, 2013).

2.2.3.2. Disadvantages of Using Dictionaries

Although the use of dictionaries is considered beneficial by some researchers, there are other researchers and scholars who have opposing points of view concerning dictionaries. Sarigul(1994) stated that the meaning of words changes according to the context in which

they are used; therefore, relying only on the meaning found in the dictionary to determine what an author means by a particular word in a specific context is not always useful. Consequently, it is not always reliable to use the dictionary while reading. Besides, reading may be tedious when the dictionary is excessively used. As claimed by Summers(1988) and Scholfield (1982), the frequent consultation of the dictionary can be regarded as a disruptive behavior that may affect negatively the readers' concentration, impedes the reading activity and makes it a process of word-by-word decoding in which the entire meaning of the text may be missed (Hamdi, 2015).

2.3. Determining Words' Meaning from the Context

Context has always been of interest to researchers who consider it as a necessary component in understanding the meaning of new words. Firth began working on linguistic corpora in the 1930s, and he noted that "the entire meaning of a word is always contextual, and no study of meaning away from a complete context can be considered seriously" (Firth 1935, p.37, as cited Porto, 2009). Therefore, many researchers associate the study of words' meaning with the context.

2.3.1. Definitions of Context

Throughout many decades the notion of context has been defined from different views and by several philosophers, scholars, researchers, and linguists. Etymologically speaking, context originated from the word '*contextere*' which means: to put together, interweave join together, compose meanings (Hufford, 2013 as cited in Tarrisi, 2020). Thus, we can understand that both context and meanings are interdependent. Generally, context refers to the situation, circumstances, or particular setting within which an event takes place

(Alleydog.com, 2020 as cited in Tarrisi, 2020). However, in this study, what is more significant is the context of words, sentences, or texts.

From a linguistics point of view, Ronald and McCarthy (1988) stated that context within the text can be viewed as morphological, syntactic and discourse information, such as information about the text's topic. In addition, they highlighted the importance of background knowledge of the subject matter to the reader as it can facilitate the text processing (decoding a text) and help the learners to have an idea about the lexical items that will be included in the text.

The concept of context according to Mercer (2002, p.20) refers to context as "a mental phenomenon that consists of whatever information listeners (or readers) use to make sense of what is said (or written)" (as cited in Khanfar, 2018). In this sense, context is the information that listeners or readers rely on to understand what they receive as input (spoken or written).

Among the most important definitions of context is that of Miller and Leacock (2000); they viewed context as immediate linguistic surroundings in which a certain word exists; it may be hidden within its neighboring members in the text. Thus, they categorized context into two types: local context and topical context (as cited in Khanfar, 2018)

To sum up, according to what has been presented so far, context refers to the linguistic environment of a word, i.e., what surrounds a particular word, it can be a sentence, one paragraph, or several ones, or the topic of the text itself. Without the latter, the meaning of new lexical items can be misinterpreted; however, with it, it may be easily understood.

2.3.2. Types of Context

Coming across a new word while reading is inevitable, especially for EFL learners. Accordingly, learners should take advantage of the available context through looking for words or sentences that precede or follow the unknown word or using their knowledge about the topic discussed in the text in order to figure out what this word means. On this account, Miller and Leacock (2000) (as cited in Dash, 2008) classified context into two types : Topical context and local context. The local context refers to one or two words that precede or succeed the key word (KW) (the unfamiliar word), while the topical context refers to the subject matter of the text in which the KW occurs. Yet, Dash (2008) in his study, claimed that in certain readings, the contextual information provided by the aforementioned context types may be sufficient, but, in fact, these are not enough for making the learner understand the intended or all the possible meaning's variations of a new word (KW). Hence, in order to obtain more information, Dash (2005a) (taking into consideration the above-mentioned types) argued to divide context into four broad types: Local context, Sentential context, Topical context, and Global context (as cited in Dash, 2008).

2.3.2.1. Local Context

According to Dash (2008), the local context refers to the KW's immediate surroundings in a sentence, which includes its immediately preceding and succeeding words. The word before (left), the key word, the word after (right) (=LW1+ KW + RW1) form a lexical block, within which the KW is considered as the principal member and the LW1 and the RW1 as supporting members. Ibid claimed that the contextual meaning of the KW will be retrieved through a systematic interpretation of the lexical block since its members create a network of semantic relationships from which the KW's intended meaning is inferred by

combining the LW1 and RW1's meanings. Therefore, in many cases, the local context can help the learners to decipher the unfamiliar word's meaning.

2.3.2.2. Sentential Context

Sentential context refers to the sentence in which the KW appears. It provides syntactic information through which the learner can determine if there are any words in the sentence that have a syntactic relation with the KW explicitly or implicitly. The sentential context enables the reader to realize if there is a change in the KW's meaning as a result of its relation with the other members (words) that are placed distant from it. That is, those words may be detached from the key word (located far away within the sentence). Dash (2008) asserted that identifying the members with whom the KW maintains a special kind of semantic relation in the sentence is considered as a difficult task. Thus, learners should read carefully the sentence and try to look for those words that may contribute to the disambiguation of words.

2.3.2.3. Topical Context

Topical context refers to the subject matter discussed in the text. It has been argued that the meaning of words changes according to the topic of the text. For instance, the meaning of the word *shot* varies from one topic to another, it may mean 'firing', 'drinking', 'hitting a ball by bat', 'kicking a ball', 'putting a ball in the net', 'distance between a player and the hole', 'taking a snap', 'giving an injection' (Dash, 2004 as cited in dash, 2008). Hence, the topic plays a significant role in determining the meaning of words.

2.3.2.4. Global Context

In some cases, linguistic information may be not enough for attaining an effective interpretation of new word's meaning; therefore, what we need is an information from the real word. In this respect, Dash (2008) claimed that "The meaning of the KW is not only related to the meanings of other words occurring within local context, sentential context, and topical context, but also to extra linguistic reality surrounding the linguistic acts undertaken by language users" (p.28). In other words, knowledge about the extra linguistic reality (what is beyond the bounds of language) is really required when the linguistic context does not fully serve the novel words' interpretation.

2.4. The Importance of Context

Many researchers and linguists have acknowledged that the use of context can be of paramount importance. Sternberg (1987) argued that:

Throughout their lives people are exposed to countless numbers of words in context through limitless sources such as course books, newspapers, family members, friends, lessons, films, television and soon. If people learn only a small number of words encountered in such contexts, they can have a huge vocabulary and there is no other way to learn this many words. (as cited in Selcuk, 2006, p.22)

That is, learners can increase their vocabulary knowledge through getting involved in various activities in which they can encounter new words in different contexts. It must also be noted that context contributes significantly to learners' understanding of the meaning of new words. On this point, Eskey (2002) asserted that " words do not give meanings to sentences as much as the sentences give meanings to words "(as cited in Selcuk, 2006, p.22). In addition to learning new words, context also plays an important role in learning the

grammar of the language. For instances, in teaching tenses, instructors always put verbs in sentences owing to the fact that the meaning of tenses can not be understood unless it is contextualized. Thus, EFL learners should be aware of the significance of context especially when it comes to learning new words and determining their meaning.

2.5. Context Clues

Previous studies have acknowledged that one of the methods that enables the learners to make use of the context while reading is the context clues strategy.

2.5.1. Definition of Context Clues

According to researchers and teachers, *context clues* is one of the common strategies that can be used to help readers in understanding the meaning of difficult or new lexis found within the written materials. In their study, Mauliza, Samad, and Erdiana (2019, p.82) defined context clues as "guessing or determining the meaning of unknown words in a passage/text using words or phrases around them ".In other words, figuring out the meaning of unusual words can be achieved through the use of what surrounds them as words or phrases.

Referring to the views of Harris and Hodges (1995 as cited in Rasinski et al., 2008), the context clues are described as a technique that readers use to know the meaning of a novel word relying on its neighboring terms, phrases, sentences, or illustrations which provide direct or indirect hints about its meaning (as cited in Wilson, 2013).

In same vein, Nordquist (2020) suggested that synonyms, antonyms, examples, definitions or any type of information that exists close to a new or difficult word and help the reader or the listener to divine its meaning are called context clues.

As noted earlier, *context clues* is one of the strategies that EFL learners can use to infer unfamiliar word's meaning through making use of its surrounding lexical items that may come in the form of synonyms, antonyms, definitions, restatements, etc. Besides, after making correct inference, new words may be added to the learners' word-stock.

2.5.2. Types of Context Clues

One of the most significant studies that dealt with context is the one conducted by Sternberg and Powell (1983, as cited in Read, 2000). In their research, they attempted to divide context into two types, internal context and external context. What is meant by the latter is the semantic information that is available in the text and found near to the unknown vocabulary item. On the other hand, the former refers to the morphological structure of the words (how words are formed), it involves prefix, stem, and suffix. In addition, they asserted that for each kind of context there are mediating variables which determine if the reader will use the available clues in the text effectively or not. More details about these kinds of context and their mediating variables will be presented in the following table:

Table 2.1. *Components of a theory of learning words from context (Adapted from Sternberg & Powell, 1983, as cited in Read, 2000, p.55)*

EXTERNAL CONTEXT		INTERNAL CONTEXT
Types of contextual clues	Explanation	Types of contextual clues
Temporal cues	when/how often/for how long does X (unknown word) occurs ?	Prefix cues

Spatial cues	where X can be found ?	Stem cues
Value cues	how valuable or desirable is X ? what do people feel about it ?	Suffixcues
Stative descriptive cues	what are the physical features of X(size, shape, colour, ,odour, feel, etc.)	Interactive cues (where two or three word parts convey information in combination)
Casual/enablementcues	what causes X or enables it to occur ?	/
Class membershipcues	what class of things does X belong to ?	
Equivalence cues	what does X mean ? what does it compare or contrast to ?	
Mediating variables of The External context		Mediating variables of the Internal context

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The number of occurrences of the unknown word. *The variability of contexts in which multiple occurrences of the unknown word appear. *The density of the unknown words. *The importance of the unknown word to understanding the context in which it is embedded. * The perceived helpfulness of the surrounding context in understanding the meaning of the unknown word. * The concreteness of the unknown word and the surrounding context. * The usefulness of prior knowledge in cue utilization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The number of occurrences of the unknown word. *The density of the unknown words. *The importance of the unknown word to understanding the context in which it is embedded. *The usefulness of the previously known information in cue utilization.
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To make the idea clearer, Sternberg and Powell (1983) (as cited in Walters, 2005) provided an example that includes some types of contextual clues :

*At dawn, the **blen** arose on the horizon and shone brightly.*

The sentence carries a temporal cues (*at dawn*), giving an information about the time of a *blen* appearance, a spatial cues (*on the horizon*) telling where a *blen* may appear, a functional descriptive cues (*arose* and *shone*), indicating what a *blen* can do, and a stative descriptive cues (*brightly*), describing a *blen*'s property (ibid). The word *blen* here probably refers to the sun.

In addition to the aforesaid, Nuttall (1982, p.66-68), Sternberg &Powel (1983, cited in Read,2000, p.54-55), and Fengning (1994, p.31) (as cited in Rahmani, 2007), Reading(2005)

suggested that context clues that readers can find in reading passages or texts can be classified into several types as described below :

2.5.2.1. Morphological Clues

Learners can decipher the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary items not only through looking for clues outside the word, but also inside it, i.e., examining its meaningful parts (morphemes). Accordingly, having an adequate morphological knowledge and using it effectively while reading can make unknown word decoding much easier. Regarding this assumption, Nagy and Anderson (1984, as cited in Hunt and Begler, 2005, p.12) claimed that over 30% of the written words are formed through adding a derivational affix or through inflecting and that words that consist of more than one morpheme are guessable based on the meaning of those morphemes(words parts). Using morphological clues that are found in simple lexical item entails the reader to divide it into roots and affixes (prefixes or suffixes), while in compound words, the reader should divide them into simple parts (as cited in Rahmani, 2007)

Example 1 : Babies are born healthier when their mothers have good *prenatal* care.

The word *prenatal* here is parted into the prefix (*pre*) that means before and (*natal*) which is the stem that refers to birth, so *prenatal* means before birth (ibid, p.74)

2.5.2.2. Definition and Description Clues

Sometimes, the author writes a statement (definition or explanation) after or before an unknown term to make its meaning intelligible. Definition and description clues involve words such as 'that is', commas, dashes and parentheses.

Example: Martha is a *curator*, a person who is responsible for looking after a museum's collections (Wasatch, n.d., n.p.)

2.5.2.3. Synonyms and Antonyms Clues

Synonym is a word that has the same or the approximate meaning as another lexical item, while antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning of another word. The author may associate the unknown word with a synonym or an antonym through which the reader can figure out what is meant by that unknown word.

Example 1: Be careful driving when the road is wet and *hazardous*. It is only safe when it is dry (Read 180, n.d., n.p.)

The word *hazardous* is the antonym of safe.

Example 2: Flooded with spotlights- the focus of all attention- the new miss America began her year-long reign. She was the *cynosure* of all eyes for the rest of the evening (Anhaw, 2013, p.11)

The word *cynosure* means the focus of all attention.

2.5.2.4. Comparison and Contrast Clues

Comparison and contrast are the acts of demonstrating similarities or dissimilarities between persons, things or ideas. This type of clues may include: but, in contrast to, unlike, however, instead, even though, although, like, similarly, in the same way ...etc.

Example: The ancient *mammoth*, like other elephants, is huge.

The phrase *like other elephants* points out that the *mammoth* is a type of elephant.

(Rahmani, 2007, p.75)

2.5.2.5. Restatement Clues

Restatement refers to the act of saying something again using different words, phrases, sentences to make your discourse (written or spoken) more comprehensible. Hence,

authors use this kind of clues to clarify the meaning of novel words. Or, that is to say, that is, in other words, etc., are example of restatement clues.

Example: Check to see that you have *packed adequate rations*; that is, be sure you bring enough food (Jeffery, 2018, n.p.)

2.5.2.6. Example Clues

In this case the examples provided by the writer can help the reader to understand the meaning of unknown terms or concepts. For instance, such as, for example, are considered as example clues.

Example: **Celestial** bodies, including the sun, moon, and stars, have fascinated man through the centuries (Reading, 2005, n.p.)

“Celestial” are object that we observe in the space (sky)

2.5.2.7. Cause and Effects clues

Sometimes the author shows cause and effect relationship that is related to the meaning of the new lexis. Words that may denote cause and effect clues are “since,” “so,” “because,” “therefore,” “as a result,” “consequently,” etc.

Example: She wanted to impress all her dinner guests with the food she served, so she carefully studied the necessary *culinary* arts.

It can be understood that *culinary* means the art of food cooking, preparation, and serving (ibid, n.p.)

2.5.2.8. Surrounding Words

In some cases the above mentioned types of clues are not available in the text, thus, the reader should make an educated guess (an inference) based on the words which surround the unfamiliar word.

Example: Basma whispered to me : " we need to go right now, i fed up with her *vapid* topics."

‘Vapid’ means ‘uninteresting.’

2.6. Teaching The Use of Context Clues

Learners should be aware of the importance of the context clues, accordingly, introducing the context clues strategy and teaching learners and training them how to make better use of it is required in EFL classrooms. Boushey and Moser (1956) proposed some steps that should be followed to teach the use of context clues during reading.

First of all, an introduction of context clues lesson should take place at the beginning of the session by the teacher. Secondly, he should clarify for the students the concept of context clues, provide them with their kinds, and explain the steps that they should follow to determine the meaning of new words. In the reading activity, learners may encounter unknown words that are difficult to be understood. The first thing they have to do is to look for clues in the available context. If they find a contextual hint (clue), they are asked to re-read the sentence silently. Then, they should deduce the meaning of the unclear lexis through using the context clue that they have found. After that, if the learners could not guess the meaning of the word or the whole sentence in which it exists, they can opt for other strategies such as consulting their dictionary (as cited in Hamoudi, 2017).

Other procedures for teaching the context clues technique were suggested by Clarke and Nation (1980). According to these researchers, the first step is that learners are asked to examine the unfamiliar word in order to determine to which part of speech it belongs (is it a noun, verb,...etc). The second step is that they are asked to check the sentence or the clause in which the target word is written, i.e., to study its immediate linguistic environment. The

third step is to scrutinize the broader context (beyond the level of the clause and the sentence). The fourth step is to ask them to predict the meaning of the new word. The last step involves letting the learners to check the meaning of the word by examining its morphology, it may have affixes and roots that may provide a hint to the word's meaning ; subsequently, substituting the unknown word by the guessed word in order to see if it makes sense, if it does not, then, the learners can use the dictionary (as cited in Alasaawi, 2013).

In addition, Clarke and Nation (1980) proposed other practical procedures for instructors to aid learners guess effectively. Firstly, the instructor writes the steps on the board. Next, the instructor should select a word from the context to be inferred by the learners in groups or pairs. Then, in a group of four learners, the instructor asks each one of the students to focus on one step. Finally, the instructor should repeat these procedures many times until learners become ready to go through all the steps on their own.

Thornbury (2002) recommended approximately the same steps of Nation and Clarke (1980), yet only the last one is different. According to him, the reader should not directly use his dictionary when the above steps fail. He claimed that if the reader want to confirm the guess, he should read on. Then, he added that if the guess is not confirmed and the word is significant to the comprehension of text, the reader is asked to repeat all the steps. If the word is not really significant, the reader can continue reading the text. Perhaps later on, the sense of the unfamiliar lexical item will become clearer. In Thornbury's view, if all the steps do not work, the last thing the reader is recommended to do is to consult the dictionary.

To summarize, guessing words' meaning from the context is a vital sub-skill of reading which any language learner has to develop during the learning process. Yet, we should take into consideration that there are some factors that determine learners' success or failure in making use of this sub-skill.

2.7. Factors that Affect Guessing from Context

Kaivanpanah and Alavi (2008) suggested that there are two types of factors that may influence guessing from context, reader-related variables and text-related variables. Variables that are related to the reader include:

2.7.1. Vocabulary knowledge

The large amount of words that the learner has helps him to accurately guess the meaning of words from context. Sternberg (1987) stated that when the ratio of unknown words is great the learner will be incapable of using the available clues in the text. John (2008) reported that this technique can be effective only when the reader knows at least 95% of the lexis in a passage (as cited in Hamilton, 2012). Thus, solid vocabulary knowledge is needed in deriving words' meaning.

2.7.2. Knowledge of grammar

In order to better use the textual hints, learners should have a good command of grammar. (Paribakht & Wesche 1999; Paribakht 2004). In the view of Kelly (2000), if the learner knows one form of a word, he may understand the meaning of this word when it comes in different forms. The meaning of the Polish verb *strzelac* (to shoot) can be easily inferred, if the noun *strzelba* is already familiar to the learner.

2.7.3. Language proficiency

Appropriate use of context is impacted by the level of language proficiency. Advanced learners depend more on using guessing strategies than beginners and intermediate learners because their knowledge of the known words while reading aids them to understand what they come across as unknown words and makes them feel confident of their ability to infer accurately.

2.7.4. Attention to details

There are some learners who tend to ignore the presence of new words believing that those words are not of great importance to the general comprehension of the text, or supposing that they know what those words mean, but in fact they do not (Laufer 1997; Hulstijn *et al.* 1996).

2.7.5. Cognitive and mental effort

According to Fraser (1999), Paribakht and Wesche (1999) learners' potentiality to deduce is influenced by their mental and cognitive engagement in reading. In this respect, Paribakht and Wesche asserted that "the mental activities that learners engage in when they encounter a new word, their focus of attention, and the nature and depth of their responses to new lexical information influences what is (or is not) understood and what may be learnt" (p.199-200).

2.7.6. Reader characteristics

Readers' variables such as background knowledge, prior information about the subject matter, past learning experiences, imperative knowledge, the tendency to use the context successfully, interest, meticulousness (attention to details), in Parikhnat's view, all have an influence on the learning process. In addition, there are variables that are related to the text itself which are as follows :

2.7.7. Word characteristics

As Mondria and Wit-de Boer (2001) noted, word's characteristics involve:

The part of speech, the degree of concreteness or abstractness, the transparency of word structure, the likelihood of interference, the degree of correspondence between the referential meaning of the foreign word and the word in the learners'

L1, the resemblance between word form and word meaning, the frequency of the equivalent word in readers' L1. (as cited in Kaivanpanah and Alavi, p.80- 81)

Accordingly, having an ample knowledge about a new word mainly knowledge about what was mentioned above as features is important owing to the fact that it may facilitate for learners to deal with this word.

2.7.8. Text characteristics

One of the reasons that makes learners fail in guessing accurately is the difficulty of the text. Complicated language, very long sentences, overuse of embedded or relative clauses, the use of uncommon vocabulary are the causes that make a text more challenging to the readers.

2.7.9. The presence of contextual clues

In order to be assisted while guessing the meaning of unknown words, learners should examine the context in which this word occurs, i.e., to search for available hints in the text. Supporting this claim, Liu and Nation(1985); Haynes (1993); Paribakht and Wesche (1999) concurred that accurate guessing requires the existence of adequate and explicit semantic and linguistic clues. According to Paribakht (2005), contextual factors involve the repetition of the unfamiliar lexical item, its significance to the text understanding, the closeness of unknown words to each other, passage or text length, vocabulary item's features, and the clearness of the clues.

2.7.10. Topic familiarity

When learners are familiar with the subject that a text discusses, they will have more chances to be successful in guessing the meaning of the new words. Thus, Guessing will be

impeded if the subject is new to the learner or abstract or technical (such pure scientific texts).

2.8. Strengths and Weaknesses of Using Context Clues

It has been argued that the context clues play a significant role in the process of vocabulary acquisition. Many researchers hold different opinions concerning its use as some approved of its advantages and others revealed its drawbacks.

2.8.1. Strengths of Using Context Clues

Adopting the context clues technique can contribute to students' progress in the learning process. Several researchers acknowledged that context clues can be considered as one of the most effective word- learning strategies. As claimed by Chung (2008), Wilson(2013); Ebrahimian and Nabifar (2015); Malik (2016) (as cited in Fudhla, Solusia, &Oktoviandry, 2019) many new vocabulary items can be added to learners' word- stock through reading and particularly by using the context clues that surround the new lexical items. In addition to developing learners' vocabulary knowledge, it enables learners not only to acquire linguistic information of new words such as phonetic, syntactic and semantic rules, but also to know how these words are used appropriately in different situations (contexts) (Amirian, 2012)

2.8.2. Weaknesses of Using Context Clues

Despite the strengths of using the context clues technique, there are some inquiries which revealed some of its shortcomings. Fudhla, Solusia, and Oktoviandry (2019) asserted that using context clues is effective only for advanced learners and it is too difficult for learners who have lower levels. This means that beginners or learners with modest level of language proficiency may fail in using the context clues technique effectively. Read(2000)

pointed out that if the learner has a very limited vocabulary range, he will encounter a large number of tricky words that disable him to benefit from the context clues in the text. Besides, Kelly(1990) argued that even if the learner is able to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words, the procedures of this task are time consuming.

Conclusion

To conclude, learning new words requires learning their meaning. Therefore, in this chapter we have revealed the importance of context clues as one of the most recommended word-learning strategies that English language learners should use in order to build up a rich repertoire of words and to cope with unfamiliar words while reading. Although studies have shown that learners are not always successful users of this technique owing to what was mentioned as factors (such as their level of language proficiency), it is still considered as one of the strategies that can affect positively the foreign language learning process.

Chapter Three: Field Work and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the fieldwork of the current research. Firstly, it introduces the literature review of research methodology and research methods. Besides, it describes the research methodology of the current study, as well as a literature review of the used data collection tools. Moreover, it presents the analysis and the summary of the data gathered through the questionnaire and the interview followed by the general discussion of the findings that provided us with the answers of the present research questions.

3.1. Research Methodology and Research Methods

3.1.1. Reviewing the Literature of Research Methodology and Research Methods

- **Definitions of Research Methodology**

The concept of research methodology was defined by many researchers. Schwardt (2007) defined research methodology as a theory that shows how a study would be conducted and proceed. It examines all the aspects of the study approach such as the principles, assumptions, and procedures(as cited in Onen, 2020) .

In Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi's view (2013), research methodology is the science that studies how a research should be approached. They added that the plan on which researchers rely while giving descriptions, explanations, expectation of the problem under investigation is called 'research methodology'.

In the same line of thought, Kothari (1990) asserted that 'research methodology' refers to the scientific analysis of how an investigation is carried out. Through it we examine the procedures that a researcher adopts to investigate his or her research topic, as well as the reasoning behind them.

- **Definitions of Research Methods**

According to Study Smarter (2016) methods are the techniques that the researcher use to collect data. Research methods may include interviews, surveys, focus groups, experiments, case studies, observational studies, and online data collection, etc. Rajasekar et al. (2013) argued that:

Research methods are the various procedures, schemes and algorithms used in research. All the methods used by a researcher during a research study are termed as research methods. They are essentially planned, scientific and value-neutral. They include theoretical procedures, experimental studies, numerical schemes, statistical approaches, etc. (p.5)

In the same vein, Kothari (1990) claimed that research methods are what a researcher utilizes as tools in his research work. He added that these methods can be classified into three categories. The first category involves the methods that are used in order to gather data. The second category is concerned with the statistical procedures that are utilized to build up links between the data and the unknown. The third category is the techniques that are adopted to assess the findings' validity and accuracy.

- **The Difference between Research Method and Research Methodology**

Many researchers and scholars have drawn distinctions between research methods and research methodology as these terms might be confusing for some students or novice researchers. According to Goundar (2012), the first difference between these two terms is that the research methods are the techniques by which the researcher carries out an investigation into a topic, while research methodology is the examination of these techniques. Concerning their aims, Goundar (2012) argued that research methods seek to

find solutions for the studied problem. However, research methodology attempts to find the most appropriate and effective techniques that can be utilized to arrive at a solution for a given problem. In terms of scope, Kothari (1990) asserted that research methods are merely a part of the research methodology. Thus, research methodology's scope is broader than that of research methods. Namely, research methodology is not concerned only with the methods used in the research process, but also with the rationale of the study, the definition of the given research problem, the formulation of the hypotheses, the gathered data, the methods used to analyze the data and the reason(s) behind using these methods.

Thus, it may be concluded that the research methods are only a part of the research methodology which is the basis of the research process that helps the researcher to conduct his investigation in an appropriate and correct manner.

3.2. The Current Study Research Methodology

3.2.1. The Research Approach

The researchers in this study opted for the mixed-methods approach. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p.7) defined the mixed-methods approach as a "research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study " (as cited in Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009, p.176).

The mixed-methods approach was chosen due to the descriptive nature of the study, the used data collection tools (the questionnaire and the interview) that generated both qualitative and quantitative data and the researchers' attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied research problem. Furthermore, the aforementioned approach

was implemented to test the projected hypotheses and answer the questions of the research topic under investigation.

3.2.2. Population and Sampling

The population of the present study constituted of 174 Master (one) students of language sciences and 57 EFL teachers at the university of Biskra. The researchers chose Master (one) students because of their familiarity with the context clues since they have studied it in their first semester, as well as the researchers aimed to investigate advanced students' attitudes towards the use of this technique to learn new words and to understand their meanings. Among the 174 students enrolled in the first year master classes, we decided to have 40 students as a sample. We opted for non-probability sampling to select a convenience one. In Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison's words (2007, p.113-114):

Convenience sampling – or, as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling – involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time.

Following this, the reason behind our choice is that this type of sampling is the most suitable one for our case and especially in the current conditions of our study.

However, the sample of 5 teachers was selected through another type of non-probability sampling which is the purposive one. According to Robinson (2014, n.p.) purposive sampling is an "intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon". Therefore, the researchers chose one teacher of language mastery since he taught the context clues as a part of the first semester

lessons, three teachers of reading as the context clues exist in reading passages, and one oral expression teacher since vocabulary teaching is one of the main objectives of such courses.

3.2.3. Reviewing the Literature of The used Data Collection Tools

In order to collect data the researchers in this study designed a questionnaire for EFL master (one) students and an interview for EFL teachers.

3.2.3.1. The Questionnaire

- **Definition of the Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is one of the data collection tools that enables the researcher to gather data from individuals about a given topic. According to Kumar (2011, p.145), the questionnaire refers to "a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. In a questionnaire the respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then write down the answers". In the same vein, Roopa and Rani (2012) asserted that a questionnaire is a set of questions that are asked to people in order to gather statistically meaningful data about a certain issue. In addition, Aryal (2020) also described the questionnaire as a document that involves questions and various types of things that are designed by the researcher in order to collect data for analysis. Ibid claimed also that the questionnaire is considered as a written interview, and its format depends on its type. In this respect, he classified the questionnaire into three types, structured questionnaire, unstructured questionnaire, and quasi-structured or semi-structured questionnaire.

The structured questionnaire is a questionnaire that consists of close-ended items, i.e., the possible answers are already predetermined by the researcher. This type of questionnaire is commonly used in quantitative researches. On the other hand, the unstructured questionnaire is a questionnaire that is comprised of open-ended items, i.e., the respondents

are free to write their answers in their own words. This type is commonly used in qualitative researchers. The semi-structured questionnaire is a type of questionnaire in which both open-ended and close-ended items are used interchangeably. Semi-structured questionnaires are commonly used in social science research, such as our case.

- **Advantages and Disadvantages of Questionnaires**

- **Advantages of Questionnaires**

According to Rahman (2020) and Debois (2019) questionnaires have many advantages which are as follows:

- ❖ Rich data can be collected in an easy manner through questionnaires, mainly through unstructured questionnaires.
- ❖ The researcher can gather data from respondents who live far away through posting the questionnaire on social media sites.
- ❖ The answers are forthright and anonymous, they make the respondents feel free to provide the answer they want especially when the questions are sensitive and touch the ego of the respondents.
- ❖ Conducting a study with a questionnaire saves time for the researcher, i.e., it is less time consuming.
- ❖ The questionnaire does not have time limits. Respondents can answer the questions whenever it is convenient for them.
- ❖ The questionnaire gives quantitative data to researchers. Quantitative data can be used to accept or reject projected hypotheses. Researchers may simply quantify the findings of the surveys using either manual methods or statistical softwares (SPSS).

- **Disadvantages of the Questionnaire**

Although questionnaires have advantages, Debois (2019) and Rahman (2020)

claimed that the questionnaires also have some drawbacks which are as follows:

- ❖ Vague or confusing questions can not be clarified in questionnaires.
- ❖ The format or the style of the questionnaire may be unattractive which may lessen the respondents' motivation to answer.
- ❖ The questionnaire may be inappropriate for some respondents which may result in low response rate. In addition, if the questionnaire is posted online, many people may refuse to answer it.
- ❖ Collected data through questionnaires may be useless owing to the fact that sometimes the respondents misinterpret the questions.
- ❖ While answering a questionnaire, respondents may skip some question, especially when the questionnaire is printed. Online questionnaires solve this problem through involving the feature of *required answers*.

3.2.3.2. The Interview

- **Definitions of the Interview**

The interview is considered as one of the common methods used in researches to gather data from people through a verbal conversation. In this sense, Burns (1997, p.329), defined the interview as a verbal exchange in which an interviewer attempts to extract information, beliefs, or perceptions from another person. It is often conducted through a face-to-face meeting, and sometimes through the phone (as cited in Kothari, 2011). Similarly, Cannell and Kahn (1968) suggested that the interview is " a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant

information, and focused by him or her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation. " (as cited in Mahmud & Rahim, 2002, p.1). Mathers, Fox, and Hunn (1998) asserted that as the questionnaire, there are three types of the interview, structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

Structured interviews involve pre-planned and close-ended questions which are asked to all the interviewees in the same order. Answers, also, are pre-coded, i.e., the respondent is limited to those answers predetermined by the interviewer. Similarly, in the semi-structured interviews, the questions are pre-determined, but asked to the respondents (interviewees) in a flexible order. In this type of interviews, the questions are both close-ended and open-ended and the interviewer can probe the interviewee to get appropriate answers. On the other hand, the unstructured interview is similar to a natural conversation. The questions in the unstructured interview are open-ended and asked to the participants in a flexible order. In some cases, the interviewer asked new questions as a result of the interviewee's response.

- **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Interview**

- **Advantages of the Interview**

Quad (2016) and Desai (n.d.) suggested that the interview as a research method has several advantages which are as follows:

- ❖ Interviews are considered as one of the techniques that can provide useful data for the researcher when he could not observe the participants directly.
- ❖ Compared to other methods such as questionnaires, interviews often provide a high proportion of responses.
- ❖ The interview is a much more flexible method as the questions can be reformulated when needed.

- ❖ The interviewers will provide unbiased and honest answers, if the interview's questions are formed effectively.
- ❖ The interviewer can observe the facial expressions and gestures of the interviewee which helps him to assess the meaning of the replies. For instance, when the interviewee looks hesitant while answering, the interviewer may then ask another indirect question to obtain an answer which is more accurate and certain.

- **Disadvantages of the Interview**

Using the interview is not always effective, Quad (2016) and Desai (n.d.) proposed that interviews also have some weaknesses which are as follows:

- ❖ In some cases, the interviewee provides dishonest answers owing to his attempt to only satisfy the interviewer.
- ❖ The results of the interview may be affected by the human equation. Sometimes the interviewer has a specific bias towards the topic of the research, he may then ask some questions to assure his beliefs and views unintentionally.
- ❖ Effective interviewing requires establishing a good connection with the respondent and managing the interview environment in a way that encourages open and honest replies. This is usually challenging, it needs time, expertise, and, in some cases, money.
- ❖ There are some interview equipment which are expensive, and its usage necessitates a high level of technical expertise from the interviewer.

3.3. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

3.3.1. The Students' Questionnaire

3.3.1.1. Aims of the Students' Questionnaire

In line with the purposes of the present inquiry, the questionnaire aimed to investigate the students' attitudes towards the use of the context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition, and to explore which technique is mostly used by master students when they encounter new words while reading.

3.3.1.2. Description of The Students' Questionnaire

In this investigation, the researchers have designed a semi-structured questionnaire in which they asked the participant 15 questions ordered from general to specific and varying from close-ended questions to open-ended ones. The questionnaire was divided into three sections which are described as follows:

- **The first section :**

The first section consisted of three items that involve two close-ended questions and one open-ended question. Through this section, the researchers aimed to gather general information about the participants such as their gender, the reason behind their choice of studying English, and their level of proficiency in this language.

- **The second section**

This section was devoted to investigate the participants' perceptions concerning vocabulary acquisition. It included six questions, four close-ended and two open-ended. The first question was introduced to determine if master (one) students face difficulties in studying English, here, the students were required to answer this question through selecting one of three options. The options were 'Yes', 'No', and 'Not really'. The first question was followed by another one which is concerned with specifying what kind of difficulties that the students who answered with 'Yes' have. The second question sought to investigate to what extent, and how, vocabulary acquisition is important to master (one) students. In the

third question, students were asked to evaluate their English vocabulary level. The fourth question was designed to ask the students to select the main techniques used by their instructors to teach them new words, while the fifth question was designed to ask them to select the techniques that they use to learn new words by themselves. Finally and due to the researchers' doubt that the students may be unfamiliar with the terms of intentional and incidental vocabulary learning, they introduced one definition of each term beforehand to avoid the misinterpretation of the sixth question. This question aimed to determine the way through which the students prefer to learn new words, particularly through intentional learning, or incidental learning, or through both ways. In this question, students are required to justify their answers as well.

- **The third section**

Likewise the sections described above, the third section comprised six questions which are both open-ended and close ended. The main aim of this section was determining students' attitudes towards the use of context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. The first question was a rank order scale one in which the students are asked to order the proposed techniques from the most used to the least used according to what they usually do when they find an unfamiliar word while reading. The second question aimed to determine the frequency of students' correct guessing of new words' meanings, and the reasons that lead to the correct or the wrong guessing through asking them to justify their answers. Before dealing with the questions that serve the gist of the research aims, the researchers added a definition of the context clues in order to activate students' background knowledge about this technique. Thus, in the third question, the students were asked if their teacher encourages them to use this strategy. The fourth question aimed to investigate their attitudes about the

context clues, and the justification of their attitudes. The fifth question focused on selecting the advantages of the context clues. The last question was devoted to students' suggestions about the research topic.

3.3.1.3. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

Due to time limitation, the piloting stage of our data collection tools was not conducted in this study. Consequently, the questionnaire was examined only by the supervisor. After receiving his feedback, there were some modifications in the questionnaire. Some questions were reformulated and some options were added. Following the convenience sampling method, and with teachers' permission, the researcher distributed the final draft of the questionnaire to the available students who were studying on April 20th and 22th, and Mai 24th during their TD sessions.

3.3.1.4. The Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Personal Information

Item01. Gender

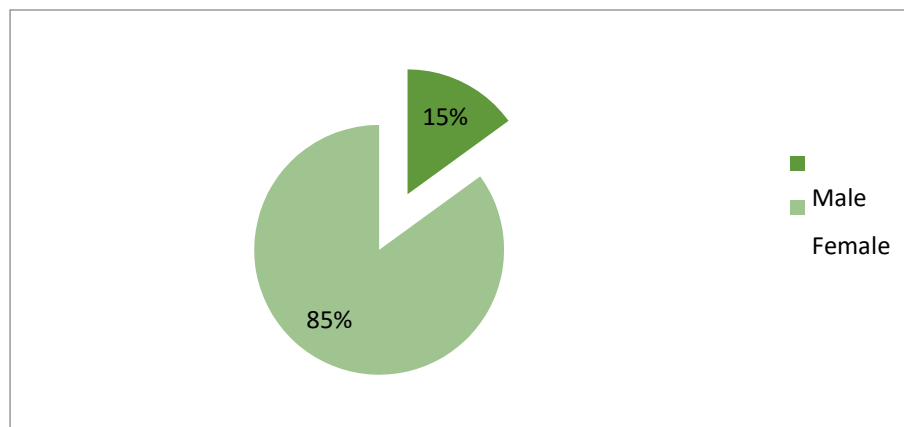


Figure 3.1 Participants' Gender

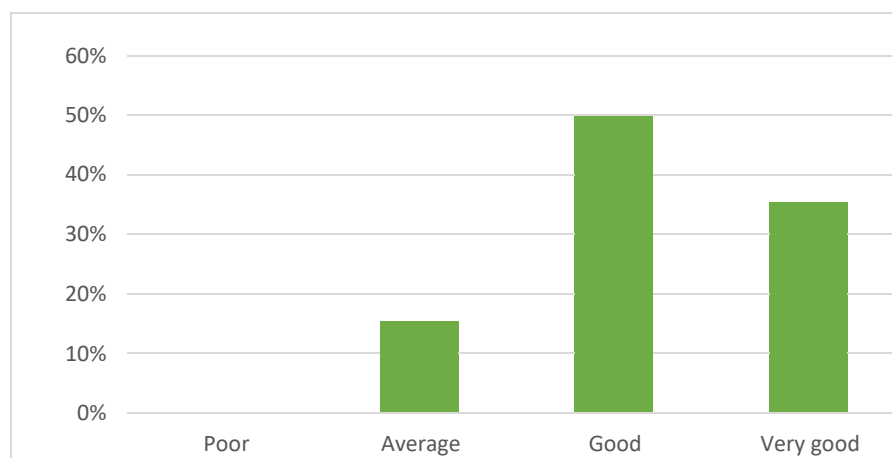
The above figure (Pie Chart) demonstrates that 85% of the participants in our sample are female. However, males represent only 15% of the sample.

Item 02. Your choice of studying English at the University was:

Table 3.1 *Students' choice of studying English*

Choice	Personal	Parental	Others	Total
Students' number	37	1	2	40
Percentages	92.5%	2.5%	5%	100%

In order to answer the aforementioned question, the respondents had three options to choose. As the above table shows, 92.5% of the respondents have chosen studying English based on their personal choice, 2.5% of them have chosen it due to their parents choice, and 5% of them, or 2 respondents as the table demonstrates, provided other reasons. For instance, the first respondent claimed that " *because I need it in my domain*", while the other respondent said that " *I chose it as the last choice in the list*". This denotes that the majority of the respondents liked to English language and had the desire to study it.

Item 03. How do you consider your level in English?**Figure 3.2** Students' level at English

According to the illustration of the histogram, no one of the participants (0%) declared that his level of English is poor. Yet, an estimated percentage (15%) of our sample considered their level as average. Additionally, half of the respondents (50%) asserted that their level is good. Finally, 35 % of them believed that their level of English is very good. Based on the statistics of the histogram, the participants of the current study have a good level in the English language.

Section two: Vocabulary Acquisition**Item 04.** Do you face difficulties in studying English?**Table 3.2.** Frequency of encountering difficulties in studying English

Option	Yes	No	Not really	Total
Students' number	19	7	14	40
Percentages	47,5%	17.5%	35%	100%

This question aimed to determine if the participants face difficulties during their studies. As the table demonstrates, 19 students (47,5%) answered with ‘Yes’. This indicated that 47,5% of the participants have difficulties in studying English. While, 14 students (35%) provided an indefinite answer. They were not sure if they have difficulties or not as they answered with ‘ Not really’. Lastly, 7 of them asserted that they do not face any difficulties.

The researchers asked a follow up question to gather further information about the students’ difficulties. The question was as follows:

- If yes, where do you have these difficulties? (**you can tick more than one option**)

Table 3.3. *Students’ difficulties in studying English*

Option	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Spelling	Total
frequency	6	21	4	6	37
percentage	16.22%	56.75%	10.81%	16.22%	100%

According to the frequencies and their estimated percentages, the lack of vocabulary is the main difficulty of the respondents as it was selected 21 times with a percentage of 56,75%. In addition to vocabulary, some respondents have selected grammar and spelling 6 times with a percentage of 16.22%. However, only 10.81% of them claimed that they have difficulties in pronunciation. Statistically speaking, the major difficulty of the participants lies in vocabulary.

Item 05. According to you as a foreign language learner, vocabulary acquisition is

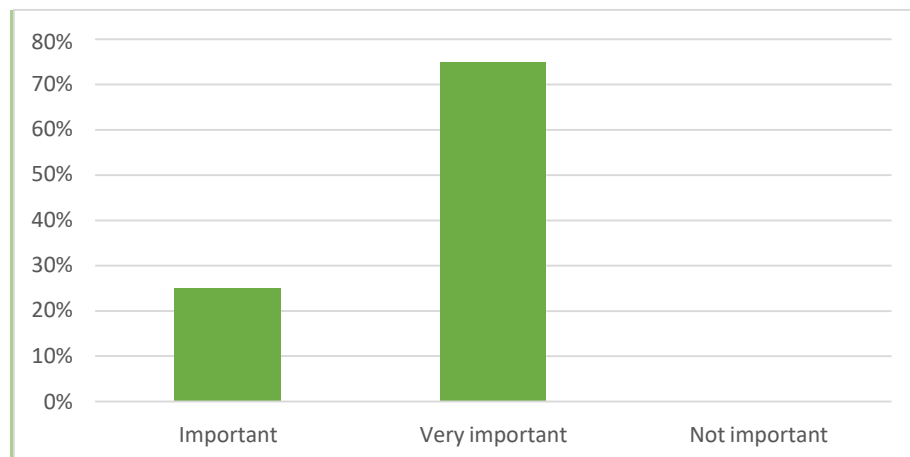


Figure 3.3 The importance of vocabulary acquisition

As the figure illustrates, none of the participants declared that vocabulary acquisition is not important. 75% represents the majority of the responses, and reveals that vocabulary acquisition is very important in learning a foreign language. While, 25% of the respondents argued that it is important. Therefore, all the participants emphasize the high importance of vocabulary acquisition. According to the participants' justifications, vocabulary knowledge is the basis of learning a foreign language. They asserted that large vocabulary knowledge helps them to speak, write, and read effectively, as well as to understand the meaning of oral discourses easily. In brief, rich vocabulary knowledge is the key for students' success in learning a foreign language.

Item 06. How can you evaluate your English vocabulary level?

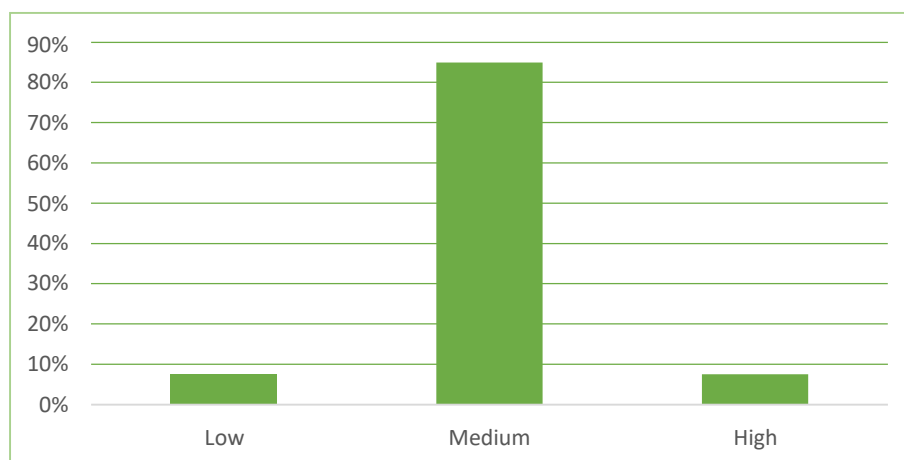


Figure 3.4 Students' English vocabulary level

The histogram results display that the majority of the respondents (85%) possess a medium level of vocabulary knowledge. 7% of the participants claimed that they have a low level of vocabulary. While, an equal estimated percentage of the respondents (7%) asserted that their level of vocabulary is high. According to the aforementioned data, the majority of the participants have a modest vocabulary knowledge.

Item 07. What are the main techniques that your teacher uses to teach you new vocabulary items? (you can tick more than one option)

Table 3.4. Techniques used by the teachers

Choice	Visual techniques	Verbal techniques	Translation	Total
Frequency	11	37	16	64
Percentages	17,20%	57,80%	25%	100%

According to the numerical data represented in the table above, 17,20% of the sample have selected the verbal techniques (synonyms, antonyms, guessing from context) as the

techniques that EFL teachers use to teach them new vocabulary items. 40 % of the participants agreed that EFL instructors opt for translation too. However, 27.5% of them claimed that their teachers use the visual techniques (black/white board drawing, realia, mime and gestures). It can be concluded that the dominant techniques used to teach vocabulary in EFL classrooms are the verbal techniques.

Item 08. What do you usually do to improve your vocabulary knowledge?

Table 3.5 *Students' vocabulary-building activities*

Option	Reading(books, novels ...)	Listening(songs, Podcasts...)	Watching (tvshows...)	All of them	Total
Frequency	10	19	19	13	61
Percentage	16,40%	31.15%	31.15%	21,30%	100%

The frequencies presented in the table above indicate that the students have chosen both listening (songs, podcasts, etc.) and watching (movies, TV shows, etc) 19 times with the estimated percentages of 31.15%. Additionally, 10 of them with a percentage of 16.40% have selected reading as an activity that contributes to their vocabulary development. Finally, 13 participants (21,30%) admitted that they boost their vocabulary knowledge through all the suggested activities.

Item 09. How do you prefer to learn new English vocabulary?

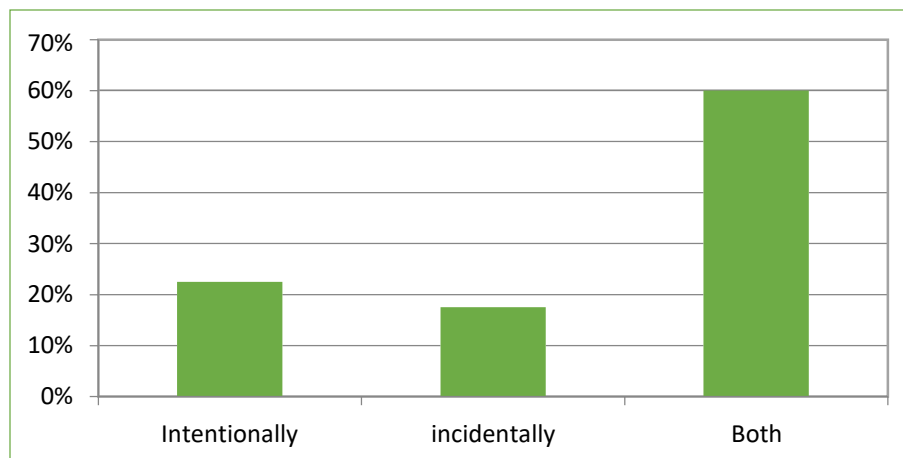


Figure 3.5 Students' preferred learning vocabulary method

This question sought to identify if the students prefer to learn words indirectly through input-rich environment, i.e., learning from context such as from extensive reading, or through direct teaching by the instructor, or through both methods. As the above histogram reveals, 60% of the students prefer to learn vocabulary through both incidental and intentional learning. 20% go for the direct instruction from the teacher. However, 17.50% prefer the incidental vocabulary learning.

❖ **Some students justifications of the selected method**

The researcher asked the participants to justify their tendencies towards the selected method. Therefore, some of their justifications are presented as follows:

❖ **Intentional learning**

Students who selected intentional learning said :

Respondent1: " *since I'm English student I always learn new words from my teacher*"

Respondent 2: "*Ii find it more motivating then incidental learning*"

Respondent 3: "*because I keep remembering it by using it inside the classroom and in my revision. "*

Respondent 4 : *"I don't have time to read because of my work. I think it's more enjoyable and varied "*

❖ **Incidental Learning**

Students who opted for incidental learning argued :

Respondent 1: *"Because this way of studying helps the learner better in getting information and knowledge. I feel like I learn indirectly without efforts"*

Respondent 2: *"Incidentally because this helps while reading and deducing the meaning of words"*

Respondent 3: *"When I encounter a new vocabulary by accident (from movie/ song/book...) it is much easier for me to remember it because it doesn't feel like I'm forced to learn it. "*

Respondent 4: *"The input that comes unconsciously will be stored in the long-term memory."*

❖ **Both methods**

Students who prefer to learn new words through both methods claimed:

Respondent 1: *"Both, because intentionally will be faster and incidentally will be funny and good and stick in the mind more."*

Respondent 2: *"Because I can not rely only on the teacher "*.

Respondent 5: *"Teachers sometimes provide us with the academic vocabulary that we need and incidentally because we can learn the colloquial vocabulary of the natives so both complete each other."*

Respondent 4: *" While reading books I most of the time infer the meaning. Thus, this is unintentional, and sometimes I need to check some difficult words in the dictionary. "*

Section three: Students' Attitudes towards Using Context clues Strategy

Item 10. Order the following techniques from the most used to the least used according to what you usually do when you encounter an unfamiliar word while reading.

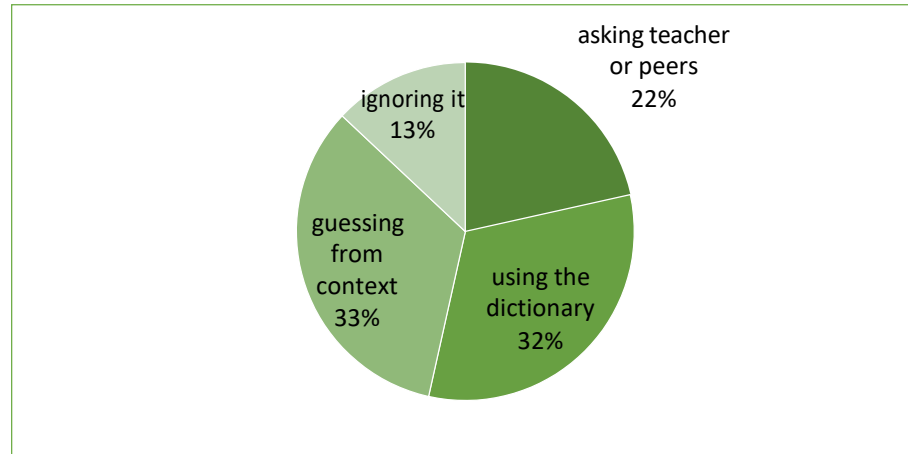


Figure 3.6 Ranking of techniques from the most used to the least used

Asking this question to the respondents is of high importance as one of the research questions is concerned with the techniques that students use to determine the meaning of new vocabulary. Based on calculations of the rank function in Excel, the strategy of guessing from context was ranked the first with an estimated percentage of 34%. Furthermore, 32% was given to the use of the dictionary, thus, it was ranked as the second technique. Additionally, asking teachers and peers was ranked as the third technique used by the students with a percentage of 21%. Finally, the percentage of 13% is assigned to ignoring the unfamiliar words which was the students' last selected option.

Item 11. How often do you make correct guessing of new words' meaning?

Table 3.6. *Frequency of making correct guessing*

Option	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Number of students	02	36	02	0	40
Percentage	5%	90%	5%	0%	100%

As shown in table 3.6, a large proportion of 36 students (90%) claimed that they sometimes make correct guessing of the meanings of the new words. Additionally, two students (5%) said that they always make correct inferences. However, two others (5%) claimed that they rarely predict the correct meaning of unfamiliar words.

In order to determine the factors that affect students' guessing, the researchers ask them to write down the justifications of their answers.

❖ **Some of the Students justifications are as follows :**

❖ **Students who always guess the correct meaning of new words**

Respondent 1: *"The words that surround the new words, such as synonyms, antonyms, always help me to guess the meaning of these words. "*

Respondent 2: *"Due to my large vocabulary knowledge I always guess the meaning of words."*

❖ **Students who sometimes guess the correct meaning of new words**

Respondent 1: *"Because I'm not really competent of all the words, my vocabulary is medium"*

Respondent 2: *"If the context is easy and clear for me i will guess a lot of words but if the context is hard and new for me i will guess it wrong. "*

Respondent 3: *"Because many scientific words even you try to guess but you don't really reach the exact meaning"*

Respondents 4: *"When I master the subject of the text, I guess correctly, but if the domain of the text (context) is difficult and not familiar I don't guess correctly."*

❖ **Students who rarely guess the correct meaning of new words**

Respondent 1: *"I guess only when I'm obliged to get the meaning in exams or tests, and that when I don't have the dictionary. "*

Respondent 2: *"It depends, if the sentence is not simple, I can't guess correctly."*

Item 12. Does your teacher encourage you to use the context clues strategy to understand the meaning of new words?

Table 3.7. *Teachers' encouragement of the use of context clues*

Option	Yes	No	Not really	Total
Students number	39	0	1	40
Percentages	97,5%	0%	2.5%	100%

The percentages in table 06 reveal that the majority of the students (97,5%) asserted that their teachers support the use of the context clues to understand the meanings of new words. However, only one of the participants (2.5%) provided an uncertain response (not really).

Item 13. How do you find the use of context clues strategy to acquire new words?

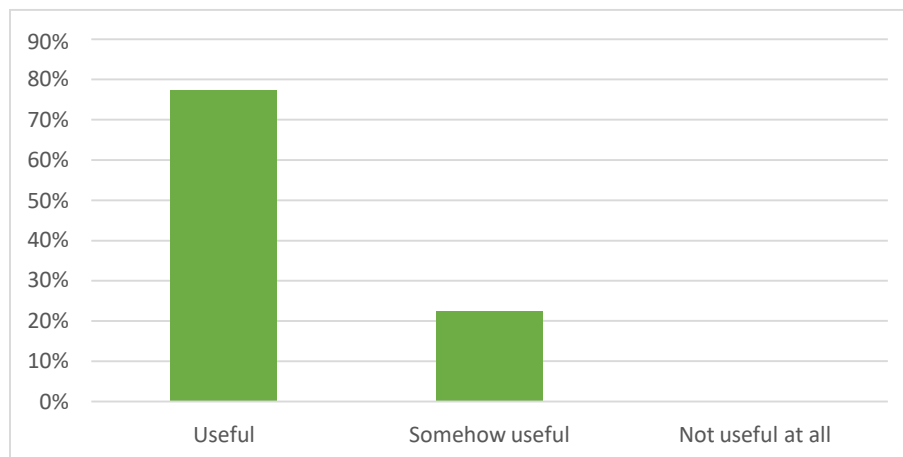


Figure 3.7 Students' attitudes towards the use of context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition

This question was designed to determine the students' attitudes towards the use of the context clues as a strategy that can facilitate the acquisition of new English vocabulary. The answer of this question plays a crucial role in the current investigation. As figure 08 shows, 77,50 % the respondents find the context clues as a beneficial strategy that facilitates vocabulary acquisition. 22,50% of them find it somehow beneficial. Yet, none of the respondents reported that it is an un useful strategy. Accordingly, the majority of the students have positive attitudes towards the use of such a strategy.

The aforementioned question required a follow-up sub-question in which participants should provide us with the rationale of their attitudes. The following statements represent some of the students' justifications.

❖ **Justifications of the students who have chosen the option " Useful"**

Respondent 1: *"it helps us to acquire new words and to use them correctly. "*

Respondent 2: *"it saves time and develops our mental abilities to understand new words."*

Respondent 3: *"it saves time and energy while reading. It is a good technique to learn new vocabulary. "*

Respondent 4: *"i think it is a thought provoking way of learning which makes it both intriguing and interesting for the students as well as it is very helpful in examinations."*

Respondents 5: *"it helps me to predict the accurate meaning of words and to use these words later in my speaking and writing. It is better than skimming the dictionary, because if you check every word you may lose time and the control of understanding the whole passage."*

❖ **Justifications of the students who have chosen the option " Somehow Useful"**

Respondent 1: *"Because it does not work all the time, sometimes we need to use the dictionary"*

Respondent 2: *"when we do not understand the main and the important words of the texts we can fail in guessing."*

Respondent 3: *"because sometimes we can't guess the right meaning so that we will acquire the wrong meaning."*

Respondent 4: *"sometimes the context is not well elaborated."*

Respondent 5: *"it is somehow useful because sometimes we can not understand the meaning if we do not understand other words in the context, or if it is not from our domain."*

Item 14. What are the major advantages of using the context clues strategy?

Table 3.7. *Advantages of using the context clues strategy*

Option	Learning new vocabulary items	Using words in context appropriately	Improving reading comprehension	All of them	Total
Frequency	6	2	7	30	45
Percentage	13,33%	4,44%	15,56%	66,67%	100%

This question aimed to investigate how the technique of context clues helps learners in their study of the English language. Referring back to the frequencies and the percentages in the table above, students have chosen the option of learning new vocabulary 6 times with a percentage of 13,33%. In addition, the answer of using words in context appropriately has been chosen twice (4,44%) by the students. Furthermore, the participants have selected the option of improving reading comprehension 7 times (17,56%). While, the highest number of frequency (30 times) refers to the option of all of them. This indicates that the use of context clues helps the majority of the participants in learning new words and using them in context appropriately, as well as in improving their reading comprehension.

Item 15. if you have any suggestions, please write them down

This item was devoted to the ideas and suggestions that the students have concerning the research topic. Only five (5) participants have provided some suggestions. Three (3) of the participants added some other benefits of the context clues, while the other two participants had some suggestions that are related to EFL teaching.

❖ **Students' suggestions**

❖ **Advantages suggested by the students**

Respondent 1: *"Context clues help me to gain more confidence and become less anxious in front of new vocabulary. "*

Respondent 2: *"It saves time in exams. "*

Respondent 3: *"I prefer context clues more than dictionaries, because it is an easy way to learn words and less time consuming."*

❖ **Students' suggestions concerning teaching**

Respondent 1: *"It's important for the teachers to encourage students for such activities as it is a very helpful way of learning new vocabulary. "*

Respondent 2: *" I wish teachers use this strategy more in education to make learning English easy, enjoyable, and to increase the level of students. "*

3.3.1.5. Summary of the Students' Questionnaire Data Analysis

According to the analysis of the questionnaire, the majority of Master students face difficulties in their study of English due to their average level of vocabulary knowledge. In spite of this, and from their perspectives, vocabulary acquisition is of tremendous importance in the process of learning English as a foreign language. In this respect, students claimed that vocabulary is the foundation of studying a language since it is the means of communication and the complementary aspect of the development of the four language skills. In their views, a large vocabulary knowledge enables them to speak fluently, to write creatively, and to listen and read effectively. In addition, they considered the latter as the major factor of their academic success. Accordingly, the majority of the students attempt to improve their English lexicon intentionally from the teacher's instruction and incidentally through different

activities such as reading books and novels, and especially through watching movies and listening to English songs and podcasts. The majority of master students preferred learning new words through both intentional and incidental learning as they believe that the two methods complete each other and both are necessary in learning a foreign language. For them, intentional vocabulary learning is quick and straightforward, while incidental learning is enjoyable, rich, and less restricted, as well as beneficial in terms of acquiring new words in different contexts.

As any foreign language learners, master students come across many unfamiliar words while reading. In order to understand the meanings of these words, students claimed that they use the four techniques that were proposed by the researchers. According to the majority, the first technique that they use is guessing the meaning of words from the context, the second technique is using the dictionary, the third technique is asking teachers or peers, and the last one is to ignore these words and carry on reading. Moreover, the majority of the students asserted that their guessing from context is not always successful due to several reasons, such as the lack of vocabulary, the difficulty of the context, or their unfamiliarity with the subject matter of the text. Despite the fact that not all of them make correct guessing of words through the use of the context clues technique, the majority of the students have positive attitudes towards it when it comes to acquiring new vocabulary. They argue that it helps them in enlarging their vocabulary knowledge, in using the words appropriately in different contexts, in enhancing their reading comprehension, and in examinations. However, some of the participants claimed that the context clues is somehow useful since it does not work all the time as stated before. Finally, some of them emphasize the role of this technique

claiming that teaching the use of the context clues should be involved more in the EFL teaching process.

3.3.2. The Teachers' Interview

3.3.2.1. Aims of the Interview

The interview was designed to get deeper understanding of the research topic at hand. Particularly, this interview was conducted to investigate teachers' attitudes towards using the context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In addition, the researchers sought to determine if the utility of the context clues strategy is related to the learners' word-stock or not.

3.3.2.2. Description of the Interview

The present interview belongs to the category of semi-structured interviews. Using this research instrument was crucial in the present study as it serves the research objectives and helps us to answer two of the research questions. In terms of the interview paper layout, it consisted of the title of the paper, a short paragraph that introduces the title of the present study and a final statement that shows our appreciation for the interviewees contribution. This paper was used as a guide that helps the researchers to conduct the interview properly. In terms of the number and type of questions, the interview was made up of 9 questions which were open-ended and close-ended. In additions to the questions of the interview, and according to the answers of the interviewees, the researchers used other short questions and some probes in order to gain in-depth answers. The probes that were involved in the interviews came in the form of silence, nodding the head, saying *Yes !, Mmm, Great...* and sometimes the researcher added questions such as *How ?, What do you think about that ?*

As mentioned earlier, the number of the interview question was 9. The first question was designed to know how EFL instructors regard the importance of vocabulary teaching to EFL learners. The second question dealt with the effect of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension. The third question attempted to investigate the contribution of reading texts to vocabulary development. The fourth question sought to know the most beneficial method of learning vocabulary. In The fifth question, teachers were asked if teaching vocabulary is included in their instructional practice. The sixth question is concerned with the strategies that the teachers use to teach the meaning of new vocabulary items. The seventh question which is one of the most important questions aimed to determine the teachers' attitudes concerning the impact of context clues on learners' vocabulary acquisition. In the eighth question, teachers were asked if their learners are aware of the context clues strategy or not. The last question was concerned with the relationship between such a strategy and the learners' vocabulary knowledge.

3.3.2.3. Administration of the Interview

The teachers who were selected to be interviewed were all asked for their endorsement to participate in this interview beforehand. In addition, the researcher has asked the interviewees for their permission to record the interview through using her personal mobile. Recording the interviewees was of great help to the researcher as it facilitates the interview transcriptions and analysis.

The five teachers were interviewed over a period of two weeks. The duration of the interviews varies from five to twenty minutes.

3.3.2.4. Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

Item 01. How important is vocabulary teaching to EFL learners?

Interviewee A: *"No doubt that it is very important, because in learning a language one needs to have equipments and those equipments are represented in a form of vocabulary. So, if you have a wide range of vocabulary, you can write, you can speak you can listen and understand and you can read and understand. "*

Interviewee B: *" It is extremely important, if students do not have a good vocabulary bank, they will not be able to speak, to read, to write, or to do anything. "*

Interviewee C: *" Is very important, because it is the vehicle of communication. You can not do anything without vocabulary. Even if you have a rich background of knowledge concerning a certain topic, but you don't have the words to express your ideas this will cause you a communication breakdown. "*

Interviewee D: *"Vocabulary is very important for second language learners, because it helps them to communicate and to develop their language skills. Vocabulary is the main tool they will use in their learning. "*

Interviewee E: *"Vocabulary is the skeleton of learning a language. It is impossible to learn a language without knowing its various vocabularies. So, in order to communicate effectively, we need to have a large amount of vocabularies. "*

By asking this question, the researchers sought to know how teachers perceive the importance of teaching vocabulary. According to the answers, all the teachers concurred that teaching vocabulary is highly significant to EFL learners as it plays a cardinal role in the success of communication and in the development of writing, speaking, listening and reading.

Item 02. According to you, does vocabulary knowledge impact reading comprehension?

How?

Interviewee A: *"Of course, reading comprehension relies mainly on understanding words existing in the passage. So, suppose that a learner who doesn't have enough vocabulary, this will obstacle his comprehension. So vocabulary is the key of comprehension. "*

Interviewee B : *"Of course it impacts it. if students do not have a rich background concerning vocabulary while reading they find themselves obliged to refer to the dictionary at every novel word which hinder their understanding of the text itself and sometimes makes them bored than they stop reading. "*

Interviewee C: *"Yeah, reading and vocabulary are two main elements that complete one another. Reading is considered as the main source of new vocabulary and without vocabulary we can not understand the reading passages. "*

Interviewee D: *"Yes of course, the vocabulary inventory of each student is very important to the extent to which they comprehend the text. The bigger is the vocabulary of the student, the easier they will read the text, the easier they will deal with difficult words. "*

Interviewee E: *"Yes of course, vocabulary knowledge impacts reading comprehension, simply because students who have vast vocabulary can easily comprehend different texts'".*

This question was designed to determine to what extent vocabulary knowledge can affect the understanding of texts. The answers provided by all the interviewees reveal that large vocabulary knowledge is the key to reading comprehension.

Item 03. Does reading texts increase learners' word-stock?

Interviewee A: *"We increase words stock via different ways. One way is via reading. So, when we read, we get to know different sentence structures, different writing styles, and more importantly, we get to know new words. "*

Interviewee B: *"Of course. If students read a lot using proper strategies, they will learn at least a new word every day, so, this will enrich their word stock. "*

Interviewee C: *"Yes, it is the main source of new vocabulary. Probably you have seen the books of Krashen, he emphasized on the role of reading in acquiring or enriching vocabulary. So, whenever you get exposed to a passage in a given language, you will build a good solid of vocabulary, because you are are going to get exposed to different expressions, different idioms, phrasal verbs, and different structures. So, it is a rich source of new vocabulary. "*

Interviewee D: *"It depends, I usually like to go one level above the level of learners. If the learners are intermediate, I go for slightly higher level of vocabulary. I don't think any text can help students. Usually, you need the input+1, this is one of the rules of Steven Krashen, in order to make them understand the new vocabulary based the inventory they already have. Using this rule of input+1 especially for teachers help them to advance the knowledge of the learners. "*

Interviewee E: *"Yes of course. Reading increases learners' word stock because learners need an input. "*

The responses of the interviewees indicate that reading texts can be a rich source for developing the vocabulary of EFL learners. However, **Teacher D** had a different point of

view that was based on Krashen's rule of learning vocabulary. He supposed that students learn new words through reading only if the text is beyond their current level of vocabulary.

Item 04. In your opinion, is vocabulary better learned through intentional learning or incidental learning? Please, justify your answer.

Interviewee A: *"Both ways work, whether it is intentionally or incidentally learning vocabulary occurs. In addition, it depends on the learner's purpose and level. For example, beginners learn vocabulary from pictures, while advanced learner may learn it intentionally, like I need to know what this word mean, so, i check it in the dictionary. So, both works. "*

Interviewee B: *"Both. Vocabulary can be learned following both. Sometimes, while reading, learners try to figure out the meaning of the new words which they face accidentally and then they acquire them, and sometimes they intentionally read about that word and they acquire it. So, if they lead to the same goal, both are useful. "*

Interviewee C: *"For me, both of them are important to build up the vocabulary knowledge, either through direct teaching, or indirect teaching . For me as a teacher, i try to present new words by working with both methods. "*

Interviewee D: *"I think incidental learning is way better than intentional learning because there is the element of motivation. The intentional learning might be some stress or resistance for the student or the learning material does not accommodate the level of the student. "*

Interviewee E: *"For me it is both, because learning can be intentional or incidental, so both are required, and both are very useful in learning. "*

According to the interviewees (**A, B, C, and E**), learners can take profit from both intentional learning and incidental learning in order to enrich their vocabulary repertoire. **Interviewee A** emphasizes the learner's level and purpose of learning when it comes to the usefulness of these two methods. In line with **Interviewee A**, **Interviewee B** claimed that learning vocabulary can take place incidentally and intentionally. For instance, students can acquire words due to their attempt to guess the meaning of unfamiliar word while reading, or due to their willingness to gain familiarity with that particular unknown word, i.e., to read about it as **Interviewee B** said. However, **Interviewee D** preferred the incidental vocabulary learning, because he thought that direct instruction, particularly, the pedagogical materials may mismatch the learner' interest or level. As a result, students may fail in learning new words.

Item 5. Is teaching vocabulary part of your instruction practice?

Interviewee A: *"It is a partial element. The course i teach which language mastery isis not a vocabulary course, but vocabulary is a partial element. "*

Interviewee B: *"yes it is. "*

Interviewee C: *"Yeah, since I'm a teacher of reading, i try to present at least 10 words by a session. I try to use interesting topics in order to attract students' attention, sometimes I use a vocabulary preview, sometimes I provide them underlined words and ask students to provide the meaning the synonyms the antonyms. "*

Interviewee D : *"Yes, I try to introduce new words in each session, and in each context. i try always to develop the vocabulary of the learners."*

Interviewee E: *"Of course, in reading, one of the main objectives is to help learners build their vocabulary."*

According to the interviewees' claims, teaching vocabulary is an integral part in their instructional practice. Additionally, the interviewees consider increasing learners' vocabulary as one of the goals of the teaching process.

Item 06. What are the strategies that you use to teach new lexis?

Interviewee A: *"The contextualization of the words. Learners learn better from a context, because words are more memorized and retained through contextual learning. "*

Interviewee B: *"So far, we are basing ourselves on understanding words through context, because everyone can just take the dictionary and check words. Students usually find the easy way to do things. So, we are focusing on teaching words through context more than the dictionary."*

Interviewee C: *"Well, there are many strategies that I use to present new lexis. I use language games, miming, flashcards and guessing from context. "*

Interviewee D: *"My main strategy is to present the new vocabulary within a context where students can understand the word and where it is used. I try to introduce authentic materials so the learners can hear or listen or read the words in a particular context. "*

Interviewee E: *" Through giving them synonyms and antonyms. "*

Most of the interviewees agreed that the meaning of words should be taught through context. Besides, **Interviewee C** added some other strategies. For instance, miming, flashcards, and language games are used in her classes. Furthermore, **Interviewee D** focuses

on the use of authentic materials for a better understanding of the contextual use of words. Yet, **Interviewee E** provided only synonyms and antonyms to explain the meanings of words.

Item 07. Will using context clues as a teaching strategy affect positively learners' vocabulary acquisition?

Interviewee A: *" I agree, because in the current course that I teach, I found that student learn better new items via contextualization or via context clues. So many difficult words and can not be learned unless are put in the context. Depending merely on dictionaries, learners will not have effective acquisition of vocabulary, because it going to be forgotten easily. "*

Interviewee B: *"Of course, if they get used to rely on themselves, making some efforts, some brain exercises to understand words, they will acquire more than one word. "*

Interviewee C: *"Using the context clues is a necessary part of vocabulary instruction, and I think that teachers as well as students need to always work with this. Based on my modest experience, learners learn a lot of words from the context. "*

Interviewee D: *"Yes, presenting context clues and giving a word with words similar to them help the learner understand the value of that particular word and they might use it in the future. "*

Interviewee E: *"It depends. It effects it positively when the learners are independent and active, but negatively on learners with poor level. "*

Positive responses were given concerning the effect of the context clues on vocabulary acquisition by all the interviewees except **interviewee E**. He believed that the context clues effect depends on the type and the level of the learners.

Item 08. Based on your teaching experience, do you think that learners are aware of the significance of context clues as a strategy to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to acquire them?

Interviewee A: *"At the beginning many of them are not aware, I have we noticed in the beginning of course learners check their dictionaries, but by time, through familiarity of context clues, especially via practices students tend to look for clues in the text but this still needs frequent practice to get automatically with this, otherwise students will go back to their early habit which is checking their dictionary. "*

Interviewee B: *"Some of them use it, and some of them are lazy to use this strategy or they do not know that they can figure out the meaning of words. "*

Interviewee C: *"It depends on the student. As you know we have different types of students. For example, strategic learners tend to use more strategies comparing to unstrategic learners. "*

Interviewee D: *"It depends on the learners. In my experience, advanced learners try to look for similar words and try to guess the meaning. Here, i mean advanced learners in terms of the level not the year of their studying. However, beginners might fail as they might look at the dictionary, but advanced learners value the context where words were presented, they rely on their vocabulary, they are confident. "*

Interviewee E : *"Frankly speaking, I think to some extent that they are not aware, maybe there some, I can not say 100% but the majority are not of the students are not aware. "*

Referring back to the interviewees' declarations, not all EFL students realize the importance of context clues and its role in acquiring words and their meanings.

Item 09. In your view, does the usefulness of context clues rely on learners' vocabulary size? Whatever is your response, please justify.

Interviewee A: *"Relying only on context clues will not be effective unless the learner have a good background of vocabulary knowledge."*

Interviewee B : *"Yes, because sometimes even when they practice this, we ask them to look for words around the word that they can't understand, sometimes they understand and sometimes they don't even understand the words around it because they don't have rich vocabulary. "*

Interviewee C: *"The vocabulary size has a great importance on the context clues. When you have a rich vocabulary you can use the nearby sentences or words to understand the vague words."*

Interviewee D: *"From my experience, I think it is highly related to the student' level. The more students' vocabulary is developed, the more they can rely on the context clues."*

Interviewee E : *"Yes of course. If the students who have a huge amount of vocabularies they can make inferences, they can learn through context clues, but those who have a limited number of vocabularies I'm sure that they will not be able to learn."*

All the interviewees emphasize the relationship between the learners' vocabulary level and the utility of context clues, asserting that good users of this strategy are those who have a solid basis of the English language lexicon.

3.3.2.5. Summary of the Teachers' Interviews Collected Data

Based on the analysis of the teachers' answers in the interview, vocabulary is one of the most significant language elements whose teaching to English language learners is a requirement. According to the interviewees, in order to be able to understand the spoken form of the language, to write, speak, and read effectively, learners should have a solid foundation of English vocabulary. For the sake of enlarging the vocabulary knowledge, teachers asserted that learners should vary their methods of learning words. In particular, learners should take advantage of both, what they receive as new words from the teacher, and what they acquire fortuitously from different contexts. Additionally, and for the same objective, each of our interviewees endeavors to develop learners' vocabulary through presenting in each session new words through using different strategies such as flashcards, language games, etc. The majority of interviewees asserted that the use of context, particularly the use of context clues, will affect positively the learners' vocabulary acquisition. Although teachers put high emphasis on the context clues to teach new words, they think that not all the learners are aware of the significance of a such strategy. According to them, only advanced, independent, and strategic learners value and realize the importance of learning words through using the context clues. Finally, EFL teachers stress the effect of the large vocabulary knowledge on the success of the aforementioned technique as they believe that the more words the students have, the more they are successful in using the context clues that are available in the texts.

General Discussion of the Current Study Findings

What was mentioned earlier is merely the summary and display of the data gathered by means of the two research instruments, i.e., the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview. Therefore, this part deals with the discussion of the findings in relation to the present research questions which are as follows:

1. Do teachers have positive attitudes towards using context clues as a strategy that facilitate vocabulary acquisition?
2. Do Master students have positive attitudes towards using context clues as a strategy that facilitate vocabulary acquisition?
3. Which technique do Master students usually use to understand the meaning of new words?
4. To what extent does the context clues strategy depend on the learner's current level of vocabulary?

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Earlier research suggests that teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of context clues to learn new vocabulary (Khanfar, 2018), while another study demonstrated that learners have positive attitudes concerning the latter as well (Hamdoudi, 2017).

In line with the previous studies, the results of the current investigation questionnaire and interview have clearly indicated that both students and teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of the context clues strategy to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the results show that the two first hypotheses are confirmed. The findings of the questionnaire reveal that the majority of the students usually guess the meaning of words from the context

in which they exist, while the second technique that they use is to consult the dictionary. Thus, the hypothesis that suggested consulting the dictionary as the most used technique by master students is rejected. Regarding the relationship between the current vocabulary level of the students and the context clues strategy, EFL teachers answers demonstrate that both of them are highly related. As reported by the teachers, learners with advanced vocabulary levels can benefit from the context clues more than who have lower levels. This conclusion strengthens the results of Fudhla, Solusia, and Oktoviandry (2019) who asserted that the context clues technique is effective for learners with high level of language proficiency and challenging for those who have a poor vocabulary knowledge.

To sum up, the current investigation findings demonstrate that context clues is considered as an effective strategy that helps advanced learners to acquire new words, to know how to use these words, and to improve the learners' reading comprehension.

Conclusion

To conclude, the final chapter has emphasized the presentation and the discussion of the main results of the used research instruments. The findings of the present study determined guessing from the context as the most used technique by master students when it comes to deciphering the meanings of new words while reading. Furthermore, the results confirm the positive attitudes of Master students and EFL teachers towards the use of context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In addition, other findings indicated that context clues technique is more useful for learners with advanced levels of vocabulary knowledge.

General conclusion

A large vocabulary knowledge can be considered as the cornerstone of the language, and the main element that can pave the way for learners' academic success. It is cardinal for

the learners to have at least an acceptable level of vocabulary knowledge since the process of learning a foreign language always demands the use of words. For instance, EFL learners use vocabulary to communicate their knowledge, ideas, and express themselves, as well as to understand others. Owing to the great importance of the latter, many researchers, linguists and scholars believed that vocabulary acquisition is a worthy topic of research, and therefore many of them attempted to find techniques that contribute to its development. On this point, in the present study, the researchers suggested the use of the context clues technique to facilitate learners' vocabulary acquisition.

The current study was composed of three chapters. The first chapter dealt with vocabulary, its definitions, its types, its importance, the depth and the breadth of vocabulary, teaching and learning vocabulary, the relationship between vocabulary and reading, as well as the common techniques used to teach vocabulary and the common strategies used to support the development of the latter. The second chapter was concerned with learning words and meanings from the context. At the beginning, this chapter shed some light on Semantics in foreign language teaching and learning, as well as it discussed the use of dictionaries in teaching and learning a foreign language. Moreover, and more importantly, it dealt with the definitions of context, its types, its importance, and the definitions of context clues and their types. Furthermore, the second chapter emphasized teaching the use of context clues, the factors that affect guessing from context, and finally, the advantages and the disadvantages of the context clues technique. The third chapter was devoted to the fieldwork of the study. It dealt with the literature review of research methodology and research methods, the research methodology of the current investigation and the literature review of the used data collection tools (the questionnaire and the interview). In addition, it

provided the readers with the analysis, the summarization and the discussion of the findings that answered the present research questions.

Regarding the answers of the research questions, the findings of the study indicated that both EFL teachers and Master students (advanced learners) have positive attitudes towards using context clues to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In addition, it was revealed that learners tend to use the context to guess the meanings of new words. Finally, EFL teachers claimed that the context clues technique relies on the students' current vocabulary level.

To conclude, since vocabulary acquisition is one of the most significant aspects of learning a foreign language, teachers should provide learners with effective techniques that can help them to increase their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the context clues were suggested as a technique that can facilitate learners' vocabulary acquisition.

Limitations of the Study

The factor of time is highly important while conducting a study. The latter has affected the current research as follows:

- Testing the feasibility of the designed data collection is considered as one of the essential stages of any research work. Unfortunately, due to time constraints the researcher has not conducted the piloting stage.
- At the very outset, the researcher decided to conduct an experiment in order to well measure the effects of the context clues technique on learners' vocabulary acquisition, but because of the limited time the study was only a descriptive one.

Recommendations

The present research has several recommendations for EFL students and teachers which are as follows:

Recommendations for Teachers

- Teachers should try to instill a love of reading in their learners especially in the first year since reading can improve learners' vocabulary and develop all the language skills.
- Teachers of reading course should find interesting topics and appropriate teaching material, particularly appropriate texts that fit the level of their learners.
- Teachers should focus more on improving the learners' vocabulary knowledge at all the levels due to the fact that even Master students still have the problem of the lack of vocabulary.

- EFL teachers should supply their learners with effective techniques that can expand their vocabulary, for instance, the context clues technique.
- Because of the several advantages of the context clues strategy such as increasing learners' word-stock, predicating the meaning of difficult terms in examinations, improving reading comprehension, the learners' awareness concerning the latter should be raised by the teachers.
- In fact, the use of context clues to guess the meaning of words is somehow challenging in the beginning, so teachers should allocate time to train their students to use this technique.

Recommendations for Students

- Students should devote efforts to develop the vocabulary knowledge as it the core element of the foreign language learning process.
- EFL students should make reading a habit because books, novels, or whatever they can read is considered as one of the most important rich-input environments that foster vocabulary acquisition.
- Students should find appropriate techniques that promote the development of English vocabulary.
- Students should be aware of the clues that are available in texts because they are of great help when it comes to learning words and meanings from the context.
- EFL students should train themselves to use the context clues technique in order to be successful guessers of new words' meanings.
- By accustoming to relying on themselves, mainly on their guessing abilities, students become more confident in front unfamiliar words especially in the achievement tests.

Suggestions for Further Researches

Based on the limitations of the study, the researchers recommend future researchers to conduct a quasi-experimental study in order to measure and describe the effects of the context clues on advanced learners' vocabulary acquisition. Besides, and for the purpose of generalizing the results, the quasi-experimental recommended study should be conducted with a large number of participants. Finally, and since context clues facilitate for the readers new words' meaning understanding, a further research that investigates the effectiveness of context clues in reading comprehension can also be suggested.

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Appendices

A Questionnaire for Master One EFL Students

Section One : Personal information

Dear students,

1. Gender

This questionnaire is one of the data collection tools designed for a Master

dissertation entitled *Investigating Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards*

Using Context clues to facilitate Vocabulary Acquisition. You are kindly

requested to answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate answer(s)

in the corresponding box(es), and providing full statements whenever it is

necessary.

3. How do you consider your level in English ?

All the information you provide will remain confidential and used only for

research purposes.

a. Poor b. Average c. Good d. Very good

Section Two : Vocabulary acquisition **Thank you for your time and**

4. Do you face difficulties in studying English ?

a. Yes b. No c. Not really

If yes, where do you have these difficulties? (**you can tick more than one answer**)

a. Grammar c. Vocabulary

- b. Pronunciation d. Spelling

5. According to you as a foreign language learner, vocabulary acquisition is

- a. Important b. Very important c. Not important

Justify your answer please

.....
.....
.....

6. How can you evaluate your English vocabulary level ?

- a. Low b. Medium c. High

7. What are the main techniques that your teacher uses to teach you new vocabulary items ? (**you can tick more than one answer**)

- a. Visual techniques (black/white board drawing, realia, mime and gestures)
b. Verbal techniques (synonyms, antonyms, illustrations, guessing from context)
c. Translation

8. What do you usually do to improve your vocabulary knowledge ?

- a. Reading (books, novels, articles...etc.)
b. Listening(songs, podcasts, radio...etc.)
c. Watching(movies, Tv shows, documentaries)
d. All of them

NB : Intentional vocabulary learning refers to learning new words through direct instruction from the teacher (word list, textbooks activities,etc)

Incidental vocabulary learning refers to acquiring new words unintendedly through performing other activities such as extensive reading(reading for enjoyment), .i.e learning words from context

9. How do you prefer to learn new English vocabulary ?
- a. Intentionally
 - b. Incidentally
 - c. Both

Whatever is your answer, please justify it

.....
.....
.....

Section Three : Students' attitudes towards using Context Clues strategy

10. Order the following techniques from the **most** used to the **least** used according to what you usually do when you encounter an unfamiliar word while reading
- a. Asking teachers or peers
 - b. Using of dictionary
 - c. Guessing from context
 - d. Ignoring it

11. How often do you make correct guessing of new words' meaning ?
- a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Rarely
 - d.

Never Please, justify your answer.

.....
.....
.....

An Interview For EFL Teachers

Dear teachers,

This interview is designed as a data collection tool for the purpose of gathering information that are highly necessary for a master dissertation. The interview attempts to investigate teachers' attitudes towards using the context clues strategy to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, we will be very appreciative and grateful if you could answer the following questions.

Thank you very much for your time and

Questions :

1. How important is vocabulary teaching to EFL learners?
2. According to you, does vocabulary knowledge impact reading comprehension? How ?
3. Does reading texts increase learners' word-stock?
4. In your opinion, is vocabulary better learned through intentional learning or incidental learning? Please, justify your answer.
5. Is teaching new vocabulary items part of your instructional practice?
6. What are the strategies that you use to teach the meaning of new lexis?
7. Will using context clues as a teaching strategy affect positively the learners' vocabulary acquisition?
8. Based on your teaching experience, do you think that learners are aware of the significance of context clues as a strategy to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to acquire them?
9. In your view, does the usefulness of context clues rely on the learners' vocabulary size? Whatever is your answer, please justify it

Thank you

ملخص

نظراً لأن جميع اللغات تعتمد على الكلمات، فإن إتقان لغة أجنبية يرتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بإتقان مفرداتها. ومع ذلك، لوحظ أن العديد

من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) يواجهون صعوبات في دراسة هذه اللغة بسبب نقص في المفردات. حاولت الدراسة الحالية التحقيق في مواقف المعلمين والطلاب تجاه استخدام تقنية أدلة السياق لتسهيل اكتساب المتعلمين للمفردات.

بالإضافة إلى ذلك، هدفت إلى تحديد الأسلوب الذي يستخدمه الطالب في الغالب عندما يواجهون كلمات جديدة أثناء القراءة. إلى جانب ذلك، سعى هذا التحقيق إلى تحديد ما إذا كانت تقنية أدلة السياق تعتمد على مستوى الحالي لمفردات المتعلمين. من أجل الوصول إلى استنتاجات موثوقة، اختار الباحثون نهج الأساليب المختلطة حيث تم استخدام مقابلة مع 5 اساتذة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية واستبيان لـ 40 طالب ماستر في جامعة بسكرة. كشفت نتائج التحقيق الحالي أن كلاً من المعلمين والطلاب لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه استخدام أدلة السياق كأسلوب يساهم في تطوير معرفة المفردات لدى المتعلمين واكتسابها. عالوة على ذلك، تم تحديد أن معظم طالب الماستر يعتمدون على قدراتهم التخمينية لمعرفة معاني الكلمات غير المألوفة أثناء القراءة. أخيراً، أكد المعلمون أن فعالية تقنية أدلة السياق تعتمد بشكل كبير على مخزون كلمات المتعلمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات، اكتساب المفردات، تقنية أدلة السياق، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.