Investigating Learners’ Attitudes towards Using Contextual Clues in Guessing Foreign Language Words’ Meaning

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Language Sciences and Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Dedication

“In the Name of Allah, the most Compassionate and the most Graceful that has empowered me and blessed me to finish this work,

all the praise is due to Him alone

This work is dedicated to:

My family.

My father, your belief in me, patience, love, and strong support made my way to success

I love you “baba”.

My grateful mother whose love strengthens me, your praying to Allah for me really helped me to reach the entire degree in my life,

I love you “Mama”.

May God protect and keep them for me.

To my lovely Brothers: Djalel and his wife

Sami

To my Grandfather and his wife, may Allah bless them; I wish that I could satisfy your desire to be a successful person.

To my dearest and best friend Khaled for helping and believing in me.

To my friends: Khawla, Wafaa, Houda, Lamis and Selma.

To my soul mate Friend: Leila.

To all my teachers.
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Abstract

Vocabulary is one of the most tricky and complex aspect to foreign language learners. It is a difficult aspect that requires great efforts from students and needs specific strategies that can be provided by teachers to achieve an acceptable level of vocabulary learning. However, students in the English department seem to skip new words or over-rely on the dictionary when encountering them in a reading passage. In addition, teachers do not always attempt to raise students’ awareness to use the appropriate strategies. Among these strategies, context clues can guide learners to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words. On this basis, the present study aims at investigating the learners’ attitudes towards using context clues to help them in guessing words’ meaning. The study has adopted a questionnaire for learners to collect the necessary data required for answering a number of issues. After the analysis of the data, the results come to confirm hypothesis that the use/practice of words clues as a strategy, has a significant effect on learners’ acquisition of vocabulary. This strategy help in making learners understand effectively the meaning of unfamiliar words. Therefore, teachers are urged to definitely adopt this pedagogical strategy.

Key Words: Vocabulary knowledge, the context clues, vocabulary acquisition
List of Acronyms

3Cs: Convey, check and consolidate.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

FL: Foreign Language.

FLL: Foreign Language Learning.

GFCs: Guessing from Context Strategy.

i.e.: That is to say

IQ: Intelligence quotient

KW: Key Word

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

Pre: Prefix

Q: Question

%: Percentage

&: And
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الملخص
Statement of the Problem

Language is built on words. These words enable the reader to speak, read, write, and listen. In particular, a rich repertoire of vocabulary is significant in the academic success of the learner. Accordingly, vocabulary in learning a foreign language (FL) has always been one area of researchers’ interest. Actually, it is agreed that vocabulary learning and teaching plays a very important role in English. One of the major language aspects that depend on vocabulary is reading. While reading, learners may encounter unfamiliar words. Most of them have problems in comprehension because of the lack of lexis. Therefore, language learners use a variety of strategies in order to decode, retain, assimilate and understand reading passages, such as ignoring unknown words, consulting a dictionary, or guessing word meaning from context to facilitate the learning of new words. Among these strategies, lexical inferringing is considered as a compensation strategy to aid reading comprehension. It is known as the most important strategy used in decoding the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the present research is to investigate teachers’ attitudes towards using context clues in guessing FL words’ meaning. The investigation also tries to shed some light on the significance of contextual guessing strategy in enhancing EFL learners’ vocabulary acquisition.
Research Question and Hypothesis

Do EFL learners have a positive attitude towards using context clues in guessing FL words’ meaning?

Basically, the proposed hypothesis is developed to answer the research question:

EFL learners would have a positive attitude towards the use of context clues in guessing words’ meaning.

Means of Research

The practical part of this study is based on designing a questionnaire for teachers. It contains a number of questions related to the theoretical background. The participants are EFL teachers of the English department, Larbi Ben M’Hidi University. The sample consists of 24 teachers who were randomly selected. They were asked to answer questions and give their opinions about the importance of using context clues to facilitate acquiring new vocabulary.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation consists of two chapters. The first chapter represents the theoretical background of the topic. It introduces the strategy of using context clues in guessing words’ meaning. In addition, it discusses the vocabulary problem in general and its relation to reading comprehension in particular. This chapter also tackles the strategy of inferring the meaning, the kinds of context clues, the reasons of using contextual clues, and the way students will train in using this strategy along with the importance of vocabulary, word mastery, and word difficulties. The second chapter differs in content since it deals with the practical part of the research.
Chapter One: Context Clues and Vocabulary Learning

Section One: Context Clues

Introduction

When attempting to figure out the meaning of a new word, it is often useful to look at what comes before and after that word. The surrounding words can give readers helpful context clues about the meaning of new words. “Context clues”, “contextual clues”, “context cues” or “context evidence”, whatever name they have, they imply learning the meaning of a word through its use in a sentence or a paragraph relying on context clues which are used to understand the meaning of new or unfamiliar words. (Orfass, 2014). This section attempts to provide a definition of a context, context clues, covering the different kinds of clues available for guessing, in addition to procedures of teaching vocabulary through context clues. It then looks at how learners can be trained to become skillful at guessing from context. Finally, advantages and disadvantages of using context clues are also addressed.

1.1.1 Definition of Context

Many definitions can be found about context, but we have only chosen some of them which are important to the present work.

Shepherd (1983, p.45) asserted that “a context is a sentence, paragraph, or longer unit of writing that surrounds a word, and determines its meaning”. It can be as short as a sentence or as long as several paragraphs, and it will usually contain unknown words.

Neil Mercer (2000, p.20) says that “a context is a mental phenomenon that consists of whatever information listeners (or readers) use to make sense of what is said (or
written).” The context here refers to the sentence or paragraph where the unfamiliar words appear, which provides the reader with information to make sense of them.

A context is the circumstances form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood or the parts that immediately precede and follow a word or a passage and clarify its meaning. (Concise Oxford English Dictionary 2001, p.6496).

A context of an idea or event is the general situation that relates to it, and which helps it to be understood, i.e. a context can support a range of meanings when a form is used. It eliminates the possible meanings to that context.

Miller and Leacock (2000) have defined context as immediate linguistic environment in which a particular word occurs; it may be hidden within neighboring members of a word used in a piece of text. They have classified context into two types: local context refers to one or two words immediately before and after the key word; topical context refers to the topic of the text where the key word (kw) has been used.

Words uncover their meaning through context, words that surround them, or situations that we used. In speaking situations, context is often a matter of tune and gesture.

As what we have seen above, we can state that a context is the incorporation of many elements: words in a sentence within a given speech, time, place, circumstances, tone, voice, and gesture.

1.1.2 Definition of Context Clues

There are many techniques that can be used in presenting a new vocabulary. One of these techniques is contextual clues or context cues. “Contextual clues is a technique of inferring meaning of unfamiliar words or simply look at the relationship between the
unfamiliar words with the words, clauses, sentences, or paragraphs” (Nation, 1990, p.31). This is what we call guessing meaning from context.

As what we have been discussing before, contextual evidence helps the learner to guess the meaning of the new words. It is often based on teaching the meaning of new words by having them used in different contexts surrounding the words. To understand the meaning of unknown or new words, learners need to recognize the information closer to the topic surrounding the word. By using contextual cues, the teacher can present the language in a pleasant sphere because it helps him/her to explain and clarify the meanings of difficult words by giving explanation in the preceding or very next sentence in simple language.

Harris and Hodges (1995) assume that the determination of the meaning of the new word depends on the surrounding words, phrases, sentences, even from illustration which can offer the direct or indirect meaning. As we shall see, however, we need to look at guessing from context which occurs under realistic and favourable conditions. Firstly, we need to consider guessing where learners already know a large amount of words in the text. This is necessary for learners to be able to use the clues to guess the new and unknown words (Liu & Nation, 1985). Studies have shown little success in guessing and set up conditions that make inferring words’ meaning workable (Laufer & Sim, 1985).

The choice of words to be examined must take into account the learner knowledge and not take into consideration the intuition or the irregular selection of words from the text if the choice of words was not carried out properly. Cook (1940) and Watts (1963) have found that if some learners can guess large numbers of words successfully, then most of them are likely to be able to develop their skills, thus there is a distinction in the ability of learners to guess from context. Although context cues can be classified into different
categories on the basis of different criteria from several angles, these classifications mentioned above are not contradictory. There are always some inter connections between them.

1.1.3 Kinds of Context Clues

One of the most important works that attempted to determine and classify the contextual clues that readers may use in trying to infer meaning of unknown words is what Sternberg and Powell (1983) suggest. If you look at this classification shown below, you can notice that there are two kinds of context. The external context refers to the kind of semantic information, but the internal one includes the morphological structure of the word such as affixation. For both types, there are mediating variables. The following table will give more details of these kinds in addition to the other kinds.

---

**External context**

**Contextual cues**

- **Temporal cues**
  - when/how often/for how long does X (the unknown word) occur?
- **Spatial cues**
  - Where can X be found?
- **Value cues**
  - How valuable or desirable is X? What do people feel about it
- **Stative descriptive cues**
  - What are the physical features of X (size shape, colour, feel, etc.)
- **Functional descriptive cues**
  - What are the purposes of X? What is it used for?
- **Causal/enablement cues**
  - What causes X or enables it to occur?
- **Class membership cues**
  - What class of things does X belong to?
- **Equivalence cues**
  - What does X mean? What does it compare or contrast to?
Mediating Variables

✓ The number of occurrence of the unknown word

✓ The variability of contexts in which multiple occurrences of the unknown words appear

The density of unknown words

✓ The importance of the unknown words 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

INTERNAL CONTEXT

Context Cues

➢ Prefix cues
➢ Stem cues
➢ Suffix cues
➢ Interactive cues (where two or three word parts convey information in combination)

Mediating Variables

✓ The number of occurrence of the unknown word

✓ The sense of the unknown words
✓ The importance of the unknown word understanding the context in which it is embedded

✓ The usefulness of previously known information in cue utilization

(From Sternberg & Powell as cited in Read, 2000, p.55)

Nuttall (1982, pp. 67-68), Sternberg and Powell (as cited in Read, 2000, pp. 54-55), and Frenguing, Yang (1994, p. 39) have summarized the different types of contextual clues that may be available in a particular text in the following:

1.1.3.1 Morphological Cues

By examining the internal morphological features of the target word, students can guess the meaning of new terms. The majority of words consist of more than one morpheme, so when readers face such words, they can divide them into roots and affixes (prefixes or suffixes), As in case of complex words to understand their meaning.

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

Here, the word prenatal is divided into the prefix (pre) which means before and the stem (natal) which means birth, therefore, the whole word means before birth.

1.1.3.2 Definition Cues

Sometimes, there is a definition that appears in the text either before or after the new word. Definition is a formal statement of the exact meaning of a word or an exact description of the nature, scope, or meaning of something. With the definition given, we
can find the meaning. Clues to definition include “that is”, commas, dashes, and parentheses.

Example: Tono, my uncle’s son, is my cousin.

So, from the definition given we know that cousin is a child of our uncle.

1.1.3.3 Synonym vs Antonym cues

The writer pairs the unknown word with a synonymous words with the same meaning, or other closely related words, or even an antonym which is the opposite of that word.

Example1: We had never seen such a large cave; it was simply enormous.

-The term enormous is a synonym of the word large.

Example 2: To be pretty and not plain, affluent and not poor, represents status in certain social groups.

-We note that pretty and plain are opposites. We can assume that affluent is the opposite of poor.

1.1.3.4 Comparison/Contrast Cues

Comparison usually shows the similarities between persons, ideas, and things, and contrast is the state of being strikingly different from something else in juxtaposition or close association. They usually include words such as: like, unlike, similarly, in the same way, but, however, in contrast, instead, even though, although...etc.

Example1: The ancient mammoth, like other elephant...

-The phrase like other elephants indicates that mammoth is a type of elephant.
Example 2: The cotton is **light** but the stone is heavy.

- If we know that heavy means weighty, so the contrast of it is light.

### 1.1.3.5 Restatement

It means that writers may use other words, phrases, or sentences to provide the meaning of difficult words. It describes the word again or formulates it in a different way. Some key words of restatement include: *i.e.* or that means, that is to say, in other words, or. Example: The surface of Africa consists mainly of plateaus or large flat areas although these occur at different levels.

- The unfamiliar word is plateaus, and the key word is or, and the meaning is large flat areas.

### 1.1.3.6 Examples of Cues

The author provides examples, additional explanations or summaries to help readers understand the meaning of the unfamiliar word. The word is cleared up by giving an example. Signal words include: *such as*, *like*, *for example*, *for instance*, *is/are*, *ect.*

Example: The archeologist found different amulet, such as a rabbit’s foot and bags of herb.

### 1.1.3.7 Punctuation Cues

Readers can use punctuation clues to infer the meaning of unknown words such as quotation marks (showing that the word has a special meaning), dashes (opposition), parentheses or brackets (enclosing a definition), and italics (showing that the word will be defined), commas, semicolons, or colons.
Example: The use of computers to handle text, or word processing, was foreseen in the 1950’s.

-In this example, the unfamiliar word is to handle text and the signal punctuation is the comma, thus, the meaning of handle text is word processing.

1.1.3.8 Cause/Effect Cues

In this case, the meaning of an unknown word depends on the cause/effect relationship with other words in text. It has some signal words like: as a result, accordingly, because, since, consequently, for this reason, hence, if…then, etc.

Example: Since no one came to the first meeting, attendance for the second one is mandatory for all staff.

1.1.3.9 Surrounding words

The surrounding words may help to understand the new terms better than the other cues. Sometimes it will be difficult to find any key words as stated above; therefore, they may look around the new or unfamiliar words and try to guess at them.

Example: On Saturday morning, most streets are very crowded, so students came to study late because they were trapped in traffic.

-The unknown word trapped can be inferred from other words (very crowded).

1.1.4 Procedures of Teaching Vocabulary through Context Clues

There are many ways of teaching vocabulary and presenting the meaning of new items. The process of teaching vocabulary through contextual clues has been specified as follows:
a) Pre-teaching

-Greeting students: the teacher comes to classroom and students greet him/her

-Informing the students that they are going to study context cues.

-Classifying the handouts of the materials to students

b) While-teaching

-Helping students find and choose reading and listening materials of appropriate difficulty.

-Demonstrating the materials and presenting by examples each type of cues; illustrations (pictures, realia..), context (story of sentence in which the item occurs).

-Matching a given synonym with a word in the text.

-Providing words before reading, then seeing if the learner can use context to find meaning of the words.

-Testing the students’ comprehension by training them in guessing from context, by filling blanks with the suitable words.

-Developing awareness of text features that could help guessing in order to improve their reading skills, so they read fluently and with good comprehension.

c) Post-teaching

-Giving them feedback and asking them whether they have questions.

The teacher should have good techniques for teaching vocabulary. Contextual cues technique has been chosen as a way to support vocabulary development and help struggling readers to build word identifications and the development of figuring out word
meaning (Allen, 1998). The ways described above are ranked in order to improve and help students in learning vocabulary because when a reader has common knowledge and background information with context, it is easier for them to learn, and it encourages them to give deliberate thoughtful attention to vocabulary items (Nation, 2000).

1.1.5 Training to Use Contextual Clues

Training students to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words using the context cues is helpful for their reading comprehension. Carnine et al., Kameenui and Coyle (1984) have given learners training on guessing from context by teaching them a rule “when there’s a hard word in a sentence, look for other words in the story that tell you more about that word” (pp. 188-190). The rule was not as important as the practice in bringing about improvement.

Inferring words’ meaning from context is a complex activity relying on a range of skills and types of knowledge. It is a sub-skill of reading, listening, and it relies heavily on learners’ ability to read and listen with a good level of proficiency. Learners should work with texts where at least 95% of the running words are familiar to them. This will allow them to have access to the cues that are there (Nation, 2001)

Guessing words from context needed to be taught in classrooms. Students, especially advanced learners, are recommended to learn how to guess in the best place for this acquisition which is the classroom. Hence, teachers were supposed to be trained on how to teach students how to guess in an effective way. Van Parrern and Schouten Van Parrern (1981) suggested another strategy for L2 teachers to train learners on inferring the meaning of new words, throughout a framework of linguistic knowledge. In addition, Clarke and Nation (1980, pp. 250-256) suggested another strategy to learn how to guess from context:
- Ask students to decide a part of speech of the target word.

- Ask them to concentrate on the immediate context of the word within a sentence or a clause.

- Encourage them to extend their focus to a wider context.

- Let them check the meaning whether by checking the part of speech; if the word has a prefix, root, or suffix, it might give a clue to the meaning; put the guessed word in the passage to see whether or not it is appropriate.

Moreover, they have suggested a practical procedure for teachers to help learners how to guess properly:

- The teacher has written the steps on the board then he has mentioned a particular word of the context to be guessed by the student in groups or pairs.

- The teacher asked them to focus on one step for each and repeat this until they became ready to do the whole process by themselves.

To sum up, training guessing from context is helpful for intermediate and advanced second language learners. Teachers may try them in classrooms in order to find out the most suitable strategy for their students.

1.1.6 Causes of Poor Guessing

A major difficulty faced when guessing words from context is the form of the word to be guessed. Laufer and Sim (1985) and Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) have found that L2 learners made many responses that were based on known words that had some similarities to the unfamiliar word. Laufer and Sim (1985) looked at the errors that learners made in trying to interpret an unsimplified text and described the faulty approach that
learners took to interpreting the text. They argue that guessing from context should not be focused on until learners have a sufficiently large vocabulary to support such guessing.

Wittrock and Doctorow (1975) found that if young native speakers read a story containing familiar words, and then read the same story again but with some unfamiliar words replacing the familiar one this has been to take a common sense of the issue and to see how the density of unknown vocabulary the learner can keep through reading words that have not been met somewhere else. The foundation of the familiar context on the first reading seemed to make it easier to learn the unfamiliar words later. So, an important factor affecting guessing from context is the similarities between learners’ first language and second language.

Saemon (1970) in a study of native speakers has found that “uncommonly known meanings of polysemous words were harder to guess from context when real word form was used, compared with the use of nonsense word” (p. 39), that is, the known form led learners towards a known but in an appropriate meaning. Li (1988) compared second language learners’ guessing from context in repeated original contexts through listening and reading and has found that greater successful guessing coming from reading.

1.1.7 Advantages and Shortcomings of Using Context

1.1.7.1 Advantages of Using Contextual clues

-The student does not have to memorize a list of words and definitions.

-They become aware of the meanings of words in different passages.

-They use the skill only when they come across difficult words in text, newspapers, novels and so on.
- They read and understand general vocabulary without needing precise definitions; general meanings usually enable them to continue reading.

- It encourages them to develop the quality of taking risks and make them more confident in their approach of reading.

- They read and understand precise meanings of terms on which they will be tested.

1.1.7.2 Shortcomings

In spite of the importance of using contextual clues on obtaining vocabulary meanings as discussed above, a lot of researchers have also criticized it. The students who have just enough vocabulary will face difficulties to understand the clues given in a sentence. Successful guessing meaning from context is related to the students’ vocabulary size.

Laufer (1997) insisted on the fact that there are certain words that cannot be guessed and make them difficult to interfere. For her, Contextual clues are not always available surrounding the new term. She argued with the finding of Kelley that:

Unless the context is very constrained, which is a relatively rare occurrence, or unless there is a relationship with a known word identifiable on the basis form and supported by context, there is little chance of guessing the correct meaning (Kelley as cited in Laufer, 1997, p.28).

So, the availability of inferring meaning from context clues is not always certain.

It is also difficult to guess if students do not have knowledge or they have no experience to decide whether the unknown word is a noun, verb, or adjective, etc. They
will be unable to choose the most suitable meaning of the unfamiliar word because they do not understand the clue. So finally they will look up the words’ meaning in a dictionary.

All in all, despite these impediments, using the contextual clues is still advocated by readers who need training in it to improve their ability in guessing words’ meaning.

**Conclusion**

In any list of vocabulary learning strategies, guessing from context would have to come at the top of the list. Although it has disadvantages of being a form of incidental learning (and therefore less certain) and of not always being successful (because of the lack of clues or inability of understand them), it is still the most important way that language users can use to increase their vocabulary. It deserves teaching time and learning time. A well-planned vocabulary development program gives spaced, repeated attention to this most important strategy.
Section Two: Vocabulary Learning

Introduction

Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a foreign language as one of the basic components of any language. It is considered as one of the major problems confronting by EFL learners, they cannot communicate their ideas as clearly as they would like to and they cannot grasp the ideas transmitted to them. In learning vocabulary, learners should practice it very often, and they cannot practice or build that language if they have a lack of vocabulary. So, without vocabulary, nothing can be learned or understood. It is the message itself.

The current section tackles the definition of vocabulary, different types of vocabulary in addition to different learning and teaching strategies. It discusses also the importance of teaching vocabulary in EFL classes. It examines its importance in relation to reading strategy. Finally, it deals with the word.

1.2.1 Vocabulary Definition

The ability to exchange ideas and reach successful communication in the target language is the first important concern for learners. Hence, It is a central to language teaching, and it is of paramount importance to a language learner (Bern & Blachowicz, 2008). Many definitions have been given by a number of researchers.

Vocabulary can be defined as “words we must know to communicate effectively, words in speaking (productive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary) (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009, p. 385).
- In another definition, vocabulary is “a list or set of words for a particular language, or a list or set of words that individual speaker of language might use” (Hatch & Brown, 1997, p. 244).

According to Mackey (1964) and Krakowian (1984), vocabulary is needed for the FL learners. Thus, they should grasp a lot of vocabulary before they are able to form the grammatical sentence of English, i.e. the term vocabulary does not only define a list of words which carry a set of meanings combined to form a comprehensible mean of communication, but rather it is a system of its own that functions as one of the main components on which the language lies. In the process of language itself, a good vocabulary is important in order to make it easy for the learner to comprehend reading passages. Further, Rivers (1970) states that it would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary; learning a language means learning its vocabulary.

Unfit, in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, “vocabulary is total of words, which (with rules for combining them) make up a language, and (range up) words known to, or used by a person, in a trade profession, etc.”

To sum up, we can say that vocabulary is defined as the knowledge of words and word meaning in both oral and print language in productive and receptive forms. To put it in another way, vocabulary refers to the type of words applied by students to read a text and comprehend it.

1.2.2 Types of Vocabulary

One of the most important challenges the learner face during the process of F.L.L is learning vocabulary. Before he/she uses a word correctly and fully, he has to know quite a bit about it, concerning the words that he/she has locked in his/her brain. Shepherd (1980, p. 1) has classified vocabulary into two categories: receptive and productive vocabulary.
The former refers to the words known when you hear them or read them. The productive vocabulary is defined as the words you use to express yourself, in speech or in writing.

### 1.2.2.1 Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge

Receptive vocabulary means the capability to recognize and understand a word when the learner hears or sees it in context, but he/she does not make use of those words in communication. Sometimes he/she can understand the meaning of that word only to a certain extent depending on the context. It is the vocabulary items that we can comprehend in reading context but do not use them in speaking and writing (Stuart Webb, 2008). Receptive vocabulary is also called (passive) lexical items because the learner receives only thoughts from others.

### 1.2.2.2 Productive Vocabulary Knowledge

Productive knowledge means the knowledge to produce a word when the learner can understand and pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing. In fact, learners can use these words in speech and writing well. Thus, productive vocabulary can be regarded as a process of active word because learners can generate words to express their thoughts and feelings to others (Webb, 2005).

The vocabulary knowledge has been classified by Schmitt (2004, p. 4) into both receptive and expressive (productive) knowledge competence. As he stated, receptive knowledge is carried out with both listening and reading skills, while productive knowledge is concerned with speaking and writing skills. Oller (1980) argued that there is no need to precisely separate receptive vocabulary from productive because learners should acquire the knowledge of vocabulary items receptively then use them productively.
1.2.3 Effective Strategies for Teaching/Learning Vocabulary

One of the problems that learners face while they are reading is how to deal with unknown vocabulary items which are key words in the text and vital for its comprehension. Scholars such as Nuttal (1982) and Nation (2005) suggested certain strategies for coping with this problem inside the classroom. Teacher-centered and learner-centered strategies.

1.2.3.1 Teacher-Centered Strategies

Students face new vocabulary at every session. Thus, teachers are required to adopt various strategies in order to decode those unfamiliar words. This contains unplanned and planned teaching vocabulary.

1.2.3.1.1 Unplanned and Planned Teaching Strategies

According to Seal (1991, p. 296), unplanned teaching strategy is defined as “the extemporaneous teaching of problem vocabulary items that come up without warning in the course of lesson”. There are three stages in the unplanned vocabulary teaching are referred to as the three Cs which are suggested by Seal (1991, p. 296): the stage of conveying meaning; the stage of checking the meaning; and the consolidation stage; is helpful to cover in the classroom. First stage, the teacher tries to transmit the meaning of word by using visual aids, giving synonyms, word relations and submitting contexts. Then, the teacher makes sure that students have understood the lesson by doing various activities. Finally, the teacher attempts to consolidate the information by getting students to use the word in the meaningful context.

Whereas, the planned teaching strategy is that “teacher goes into classroom with an item, or a set of vocabulary items that s/he has decided beforehand to teach during the course of the lesson” (Seal, 1991 p.298). Laufer (1997) and Schmitt (2000) suggested that
coping the essence vocabulary, and large sight (i.e. words whose form and meaning are recognized automatically, irrespective of contexts) help beginners break through the below-threshold plateau.

1.2.3.2 Learner-centered Strategies

It is helpful for learners to understand how they gradually learn words. Teachers should encourage them to actively construct links between new information and previously known information about a word. Here, the question that should be raised is how can learners deal with new words when the teachers’ instructions are absent? Many strategies are adopted by the learners when they read alone. These strategies are the procedures that learners can use to comprehend, learn or keep new information (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). Certain researchers have proposed some strategies to treat the problem of knowing the meaning of unknown words. These include ignoring the unknown words, using different kinds of dictionaries, and guessing the meaning from context. The first two strategies will be discussed, and the last one has been discussed in the first section.

1.2.3.2.1 Word Ignorance

One of the common strategies the learner uses when assigning the target meaning of unfamiliar words required to the comprehensive meaning of the sentence is to read the sentence without that word and think if the overall meaning is required. If the unknown word is stated several times, that word needs to be dealt with because it has to be a key to the main idea. Here, readers cannot get a general idea without knowing what it means.

Smith (2005) said:

It is not necessary for a reader, and especially not for beginners, to understand the meaning of everything they attempt to read...they always have the liberty to skip
passages and to ignore many small details, either because they are comprehensible or because they are not relevant to their interest or need. (p. 165)

So, for Smith, skipping words is something typical as long as comprehension will not interrupt. Of course, we are not going to remove all uncommon words; you skip only words whose meaning is not necessary to the comprehension of the text. This is considered as the first and basic word attack skill which can slow down the learner vocabulary enhancement and disrupts the flow of reading.

1.2.3.2 Dictionary Use

A dictionary is a very important tool for anyone to learn the meaning of new words as well as being a source of word information. Dictionaries can be used for a wide range of purposes, especially for learners reading for a special purpose. In fact, a dictionary is used to check spelling and look up to understand key words’ meaning (Nuttal, 1982)

Hunt and Begler (2005) suggest that students can learn how to identify the part of speech of an unknown word as well as contextual clues which are necessary for finding the most appropriate dictionary entry. In addition, dictionary use helps learning and comprehension, and it is particularly useful for learners who do not cope well with guessing from context. So, it is very essential for readers to recognize the dictionary symbols and abbreviations and use it effectively.

To sum up, Vocabulary teaching depends on teacher preparation and the student input. Teachers and learners should participate equally in the teaching and the learning process. Furthermore, Hatch and Brown (1995) and Zimmerman (1997) suggested the use of students’ self-outputting vocabulary as they all become independent vocabulary learners
and they are able to identify their needs and apply strategies to deal with each newly encountered word.

1.2.4 The Importance of Teaching Vocabulary in EFL Classes

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Teaching and learning vocabulary plays an essential role in learning a language; it helps students to master the language skills. Talking about the importance of vocabulary, Wilkins (1976) argued that: “…while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (pp. 111-112). So, people need to use words in order to express themselves in any language. Lewis (1993) went to argue that “Lexis is the core or heart of language” (p.89). Essentially, as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is important for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies. The reasons behind teaching vocabulary to EFL classes differ. One reason is that teachers are interested in making the comprehension of reading text easier. Another reason for teaching vocabulary is to develop the number of words that students can use in different areas. Researchers have increasingly turned their attention to vocabulary. Laufer and Nation (1999), Read (2000), Nation (2011) and others recognized that vocabulary acquisition has an importance in successful F.L use and plays an essential role in the accomplishment of spoken and written texts. Scholars like Krashen (1989) stated that “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”(p. 440) Consequently, language teachers and linguists have recognized the importance of vocabulary learning, and they are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively.
1.2.5 Learning Vocabulary through Reading

The first factor that must be controlled by the student if he/she wants to learn English is vocabulary. There have been many studies on the best ways of acquiring vocabulary. Knight (1994) believes that vocabulary is the single most essential aspect of FLL. It is accepted that learners with large vocabulary are more successful readers than those with limited vocabulary because insufficient vocabulary means that there are too many words in the text that the learners do not know, and they will certainly struggle to understand the writer’s message. Krashen (1989, 2004) stated that FL learners can obtain vocabulary through reading, and that exposing learners to understandable input that is slightly beyond their current level can result in successful language acquisition. Several studies on second and FL acquisition have showed that reading can help learners enhance their vocabulary knowledge through reading (Schmitt, 2006; Brown et al, 2008). These studies found that reading can be an important source for acquiring vocabulary.

Nation (2001) remarked that learning vocabulary from context maybe the most common way of learning vocabulary and the only option for ameliorating the language outside the classroom in FL contexts. In L1 reading, many studies show the strong relationship between vocabulary and reading. Stanovich (2000) created a strong evidence for a reciprocal causal relation between vocabulary and reading. That is, vocabulary growth leads to improved reading comprehension, and the amount of reading leads to vocabulary growth.

Anderson and Freebody (1981) exhibited a model which is specialized in the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. Heibert and Kamil (2005) have defined it as “Reciprocal links” (p. 33). The defined model is proving that the two elements have two related directions: the first one indicates that owning a large vocabulary
helps students to be better readers. The second one is that being a good reader also enlarges and spreads the students’ vocabulary.

**Figure 1:** The Cyclical Relationship of Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Enhancement (Heibert & Kamil, 2005, p. 33)

This model is a true and practical exemplification of “Mathew Effects” (the rich tend to be richer, the poor get poorer). The learners who maintain an expanded and large vocabulary are able to understand texts and gain new vocabulary. Both elements allow learners to improve their knowledge. Yet, poor vocabulary learners are not able to understand text. So, they tend to read less. If they read less, the less vocabulary will be gained (Heibert & Kamil, 2005).
1.2.6 Criteria for Choosing Words for Instruction

In order to teach vocabulary using either planned or unplanned strategies, teachers must choose what words they are going to teach. Marinak et al., (1997) have stated that all words need to be known in the reading passage. To know how to select the words to be taught, the following criteria should be incorporated: the first criterion urges the teachers to deal only with words that are essential for reading the passage and the second is that they teach the words that are useful for students to know.

1.2.6.1 Classification of words

Fries (1973) as cited in Arbainaya (2012) classifies English vocabulary or word into four types, they are:

1.2.6.1.1 Content Words

Content words are words that have meaning. They can be compared to grammatical words: a concrete noun (disease, insect), an action that is a verb (fly, reproduce), and the quality of things, that is an adjective (big, strong) and an adverb (kindly, slowly).

1.2.6.1.2 Function Words

Function words are also known as grammatical words, morphemes. Function words include determiners, for example (the, that), conjunctions (and, but), prepositions (in, of), pronouns (she, they), modals (may, could)...

1.2.6.1.3 Substitute Words

Substitute words are words which represent the individual thing or specific action. In other words, they are indefinite pronouns such as anybody, anyone, everybody, etc.
1.2.6.1.4 Distributed Words

Distributed words are words distributed in use according to grammatical matter as the presence of a negative such as: either, too, or yet.

1.2.7 Word Mastery

In order to understand a language, vocabulary is necessary to be mastered by the learner. Word mastery is needed to express our ideas and to be able to understand other people’s words. In order to “know a word”, Nation (1990) suggest that a native speaker should master the following: the meanings, collocations, grammatical behaviors, and frequency of the word. Gu (1994) reported that to know a word should at least include the form, the referential meaning, and the basic syntactic behavior of each word.

Determining the meaning of a word is not an easy task. It involves various aspects of knowledge as mentioned by Richard (1976). For him, knowing the word means how often you employ this word in speech or in writing. This also means knowing how you use this word according to different changes and situations. In addition, mastering a word means knowing the grammatical behaviors associated with this word, its form and various derivations. Furthermore, this includes knowledge, the semantic value and the different meanings associated with it. Richard (1976, pp. 25-27) underlined eight assumptions to know how to recognize a word:

- Its relative frequency in the language.
- Its register characteristics, which may include social, temporal and geographic variation, and field and mode of discourse.
- The syntactic behavior associated with the word.
- Its underlying form and the derivations that can be made from this form.
- The network of associations between that word and other words in the language, which may include such associative links as antonymy, synonymy, subordinate and superordinate classifications.

- Its semantic features and connotations.

   Nation (2005, pp. 583-591) has classified three aspects in knowing a word:

   - Know the word form (spoken, written or word part).
   - Know the meaning of the word (form and meaning, concepts of the word, what refers to, and knowledge of other words which can be associated with their meaning).
   - Know the use of that word.

   There is a difference between the recognition of the word when we heard or seen it and the capability to use it in our daily speech or writing.

1.2.8 Word Difficulties

Words are divided into four categories (Macfadyen, 2007): verb, noun, adjective, adverb. Readers usually think that new words are difficult to deal with and its difficulties block the reading comprehension. This is why they must find out why these words are difficult. Nutall (1982, pp. 76-79) has found that there are several factors that make words difficult to comprehend. These difficulties were grouped into seven types:

1.7.1.1 Idioms: consist of certain number of words which their meaning is not derived from individual words but from a whole set of words. Thus, students should be trained to use this type of words.

1.7.1.2 Transfer of Meaning: Sometimes, metaphors and other similar types of transfer meaning have serious problems to understand the meaning of the word. The reason for this does not mean what they seem to mean. Metaphors have always a hidden meaning.
1.7.1.3 Words with Several Meaning: Many words in English or any FL have more than one meaning. Each writer uses a certain word for a particular meaning, which is not in the common sense of the ordinary reader.

1.7.1.4 Sub-technical Words: describing terminology that is used in a non-technical manner but that has a more specific meaning in a technical or scientific field.

1.7.1.5 Super ordinate: a word which includes the meaning of another word or words. Nutall (1982) gives an example of this kind, the word “building” and its hyponyms: house, school, factory, cinema…etc.

1.7.1.6 Synonyms and Antonyms: this type of words may cause trouble where there is no exact synonym or contrast to another word.

1.7.1.7 Irony: the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning. Nutall (1982) said that “irony is probably the most difficult of all uses of language for the student to interpret” (p. 72).

Conclusion

In this section, we have seen the possible meanings which underlie the definition of vocabulary and vocabulary knowledge. We have also found that there are different strategies adopted by teacher and learner: teacher-centered strategies which include planned and unplanned vocabulary instruction and learner-centered strategies include ignoring unknown or difficult words and using dictionaries. We noticed also that true reading has the aim of comprehension (vocabulary). We have also dealt with the importance of learning vocabulary in enhancing comprehension of FL learners. Finally, we have seen different scholars’ views about mastering the word and its difficulties.
Section Three: Using Context Clues to Guess Foreign Language Words’ Meaning

Introduction

Vocabulary is very important to improve knowledge. The learner, in fact, cannot speak well if s/he does not acquire words. On the other hand, vocabulary is one major problem that EFL learners confront, especially in learning words. When used in a piece of text, it usually denotes only one meaning out of multiple meanings. Context clues represent one strategy that many researchers and educators have found to bridge the vocabulary gap. The current section discusses the use of context to determine word meaning. It also shows how to learn words from context in addition to different context variations in word meaning.

1.3.1 Use of Context to Determine Word Meaning

Using context clues in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words is the most strategy applied often by readers if they are available in the text. Struggling readers who do not do so should be given direct instruction on how to effectively look for clues or definitions. For example, part of the “click and clunk” strategy (Vaughni et al, 2001) taught students to follow these steps when they come across a word they do not know (described as a “clunk”):

- Reread the sentences with the clunk. Look for key words.
- Reread the sentence without the clunk. What word makes sense?
- Reread the sentence before and after the clunk. Look for clues.

The clues can be each of the following types of information included in the text: Morphological, definition, synonym or antonym, comparison or contrast, restatement, example, punctuation, cause and effect. Expository, nonfiction text (eg: school textbooks) tend to offer more context clues than narrative story text. One suggestion to aid students
understand the use of context is to provide them with terms “rich context”. Sometimes, the context provides direct explanation of the meaning of a new word:

Example: Up to this point we have been referring to the process in which light energy is used to make food, simply as the food-making process. But this important process has its own special name: photosynthesis. (In this example, the meaning of photosynthesis is stated directly in the previous sentences).

Sometimes, some information about unfamiliar words is provided in context, but it is not enough that the student is sure of its meaning:

Example: in order to gain active immunity to a disease, one of two things must occur either you calm down with diseases or you receive a vaccination (In this example the student may guess a vaccination has something to do with preventing diseases, but not enough information provided are to discern the full meaning of the word.)

Actually, the context can drive to misunderstanding, caused us to a “misdirective” (Beck et al., 2002)

Example: Sandra had won the dance contest, and the audience’s cheers brought her to the stage for an encore, “every step she takes is so perfect and graceful”, Ginny said grudgingly as she watched Sandra dance (Beck, Mckio & Kucan, 2002, p. 4). (In this example, the context might lead the reader to believe that Ginny liked or admired Sandra’s dancing, when in fact grudge means “a feeling of resentment or ill will.”)

Students need to know an alternative strategy if the context is nondirective or misdirective, most probably going to a source that provides information about words, such as a dictionary.
1.3.2 Learning Words from Context

The incidental learning of guessing from context is most important among all sources of learning vocabulary. This has been applied especially to native speakers who learn the first language. This must also be true for second language learners, but many of them do not try to experience the necessary conditions for this kind of learning to happen (Nation, 2000). The best ways to learn the word through context are by hearing and reading (Nagy & Herman, 1987). These methods have many advantages. There may be a rich context for conversation, and the speaker often has some sensitivity to the listener’s knowledge. By reading too, literate people learn most of their words. According to one estimate, even students who read relatively little, during the school year, will read about half a million words a year and are exposed to about 10,000 words a year they do not know (Nagy & Herman, 1987). Sternberg (1987) has discussed three processes about how learning from context takes place, the selective coding distinguishes between relevant information and irrelevant information when learning the word. Focusing on just first passage in which *hobbledehoy* has used is relevant to the meaning of the word that father rejects. Selective combination has to do with combining the clues into a workable meaning of a word, and selective comparison relates new information to background knowledge. In the absence of such knowledge, one might just as well think that *hobbledehoy* could refer to someone who has overly or who was injured in a war. Sternberg (1987) has suggested that there is a correlation exists because the number of words a person learning ability tested standard IQ tests.

1.3.3 Context Variation in Word Meaning

The criterion of parsimony becomes problematic as soon as in tries to account for different meanings, or shades of meanings, that words display on different occasions. A
number of psycholinguistic studies have appeared to show that the meaning of terms can vary according to context. For example, consider the meaning of the term nurse in the following example:

- Nurses have to be licensed.

- Nurses can be beautiful.

The first sentence has emphasized the fact that a nurse is a health professional whereas the second has emphasized the femaleness of nurses. Anderson and Ortony (1975) obtained evidence of the psychological reality of this difference in emphasis. They found that doctor was a better cue for recall of the second. Considering results such as the foregoing, Anderson (1976) proposed that a word does not have a meaning, but has rather a family of potential meanings. The meanings of the words in an utterance are further articulated in a process of inferential interpolation based on schemata which embody one’s knowledge of the world. The effect with respect to nouns is usually to limit the scope of reference to a subset of the cases which would be denoted. If the context is rich and if the message has processed deeply, a noun maybe identified with a single real or imagined thing. This process will be called instantiation…a close analysis will show that a word can have a somewhat different sense in each use.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, guessing words’ meaning from context is considered as one of the effective strategies in learning English vocabulary. Generally, it is found that context guessing is the most important skill used by most learners in decoding the meaning of unfamiliar words. The lack of vocabulary has been acknowledged as a FL learners’ source
of problem. So, students need to acquire new items consistently in addition to other strategies they may use too.

**Chapter Two: The Field Work**

**Introduction**

This chapter is the practical part of this research. It was made as an attempt to investigate EFL teachers’ attitudes towards the use of context clues in guessing foreign language words’ meaning. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the research design, the method used, sampling, and the procedure of collecting data. The second part contains the questionnaire analysis and the examination of the results obtained to evaluate the validity of the research hypothesis.

**2.1.1 Research Design and Methodology**

There are two methods that can be used to collect data information of a study, the descriptive and the experimental method. The present study followed a descriptive method by using a questionnaire as the means of data collection. It aims at finding the correlation between context clues and vocabulary learning. In the present study, a questionnaire was administered to teachers. It is more suitable in terms of time since respondents can easily answer the questions and give their conceptions towards the effect of using context clues strategy in enhancing vocabulary learning.

**2.1.2 Collecting Data and Sampling**

The questionnaire was distributed to teachers of the Department of English at Larbi Ben M’Hidi University, who, we believe have the sufficient experience that makes their ideas and answers beneficial for the aim of this study. The sample consists of 24 teachers that teach the different modules.
2.1.3 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 20 questions, which are closed and open-ended questions. Questions were arranged from the general to the most specific. The questionnaire is divided into five sections. Each section is designed to provide specific information to reach main aim.

Section One: Background Information (Q 1-Q2)

This section is an attempt to obtain background information about respondents. The first question is about the teachers’ academic degree, while the second one is about the teachers’ teaching experience.

Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Using Context Clues (Q 3-Q10)

This section consists of eight questions. It aims at collecting data about teachers’ opinions concerning using context clues strategy. The first question of this section is about whether or not teachers present new words in each session. In the next question teachers are asked to say what students do to get the meaning of unfamiliar words. The next question (Q5), asked to know the teaching opinion about the importance of using context clues in facilitating students’ reading comprehension. (Q6) is seeking to check the retention of guessed and given meaning. Then, (Q8) asked to see the teachers’ awareness about the importance of using this strategy in learning. Finally, (Q10) is looking for the teachers’ opinions about using context to deal with new words.
Section Three: The Importance of Learning English Vocabulary (Q 11-Q14)

This section is constituted of 4 questions. It aimed at discussing the importance of learning English vocabulary. Q11 and 12 are looking for teachers’ opinions about how much important learning English vocabulary is in addition to the ways they usually use while teaching vocabulary. Q13 and 14 are seeking to gather data about the main difficulties students may face with mastering vocabulary and the reasons behind these difficulties.

Section Four: Using Context Clues to Guess Foreign Language Words’ Meaning (Q15-Q19)

This section is related directly to the aim of the study. It consists of 5 questions. The first question aims at knowing whether teachers advise their students to use context in order to deal with unknown words. Q16 and 17 aim at investigating whether the use of context clues affect positively student’s vocabulary acquisition. Finally, Q18 and 19 seek to see how teachers encourage their students to use this strategy and to see at the extent of teaching vocabulary in context is important.
2.1.4 Analysis of the Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q.1. Degree held:

Table 1: Teachers’ Academic Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Teachers’ Academic Degree

As the table above shows, the majority of respondents (50.00%) have a Magister degree. In the second portion comes those who have Master (33.33%). In the last positions comes the degree of Licence, and PHD with (8.33%) for each degree. This means that the sample is representative since varying degrees made it possible to obtain relevant information.

Q.2. How long have you been teaching English?

Table 2:

Teachers’ Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Teaching Experience
The results show that 4 teachers who have the experience of teaching for more than ten (10) years. So their responses will be of great importance in comparison with others who have a short experience. It is noticed that (33,33%) of the respondents have experienced teaching for more than 05 years. However, the majority of teachers (50,00%) have been teaching from one to five years. Despite their little experience they could benefit and provide more reliable information concerning the topic.

**Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Using Contextual Clues**

Q.3. Do you present new words in each session?

**Table3:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Rate of Teachers who Present New Words in Each Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: The Rate of Teachers who Present New Words in Each Session
The results of table 3 show that the majority of teachers (87.50%) present new words in every session. While the minority of teachers (12.50%) have answered negatively in that they did not present new words in each session. That is to say, most of teachers are aware students’ need to gain new words from them to improve their vocabulary. This indicates that presenting new words in each session has a great importance for the FL learners.

Q4. When your student get across new words, do they?

Table 4: Techniques, Students’ Use while Getting across New words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use the dictionary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore these words</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the context to guess the meaning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a+b</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a+b+c</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a+c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 5: Techniques, Students’ Use while Getting across New words

The use of dictionary and ignoring words, (29,2 %) of the respondents said that they use these techniques and (20,83 %) of teachers are using only the dictionary. (16,67 %) of teachers use the context to guess the meaning. We noticed that not all teachers rely on the context. In contrast, most of them depend on dictionary to understand new vocabulary easily and recall them easily at any moment. However, (12,50%) of teachers used the three techniques separately. And (8,33%) used all of them while teaching. We can interpret those results by saying that teachers focus more on developing the students’ vocabulary acquisition using different techniques in addition to the guessing from context strategy. That is to say, most of teachers use only the dictionary as an easy tool.
Q.5. According to your experience in teaching, do you think that the use of context clues facilitates your students’ reading comprehension?

Table 5:
Teachers’ views about the Role of Guessing from Context Strategy in Reading Comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Teachers’ views about the Role of Guessing from Context Strategy in Reading Comprehension.

Through this question, it is aimed at finding out the teachers’ opinions about the effect of using Context on the students’ reading comprehension. The results above indicate that the high percentage (91.67%) agreed upon the fact that using context can facilitate the
students’ reading comprehension. While a low ratio (8.33%) have an opposite view. It is concluded that using context is suitable to most of teachers.

Q.6. Do you think that refined meaning is remembered more than given meaning?

Table 6: The Retention of Guessed and Given Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. The Retention of Guessed and Given Meanings.

The results presented on both table 6 and figure 7 are obtained from teachers to know their opinions whether guessed meaning is better retained than given meaning. The results
show that the majority of them (83.33%) asserted that guessed meanings are better remembered than given ones, and only (16.67%) stated the opposite view. From these results, it is noticed that since vocabulary is the core of any existing language, the issue of vocabulary acquisition as well as retention is the interest of many teachers.

**Q.7.** If yes, please explain

From the table above, and depends on the basis of teachers’ answers it is noticed that the majority of them agreed upon the fact that refined meaning is interesting because it requires an effort to be found. This can make it much remembered. Teachers justified their answers by referring to the cognitive ability to store information and remember them. Indeed, most of them stated that given meaning can be forgotten easily because the best retention is when a given word is explained. It depends on the importance of the word and the student’s memory.

**Q.8.** Are the students aware of the importance of contextual clues in guessing the meaning of unknown word?

**Table 7:**

**Students’ awareness about the Importance of Using Context Clues in Guessing Words’ meaning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9: **Students’ awareness about the Importance of Using Context Clues in Guessing Words’ meaning**

The results of table 8 show that (54.17%) of the respondents considered that their students are aware about the importance of using context clues in guessing words’ meaning. Others with a percentage (45.83%) say the opposite. From these results, we can deduce that a higher percentage of students are aware of the importance of context clues.

**Q.9. If yes, please justify**

This question is designed to get information on whether students are aware about the importance of using context clues in guessing words’ meaning or not. Approximately, half of respondents answered with yes. The respondents with (48.8%) of students are unaware of the importance of context clues, claiming that the use of dictionaries replace the use of context clues strategy. So, no need to apply any strategy just follow the easy, lazy way of using dictionaries.
Q.10. Do you support your students to employ the context clues while reading?

Table 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question is designed to get information about whether or not teachers encourage their students in using context clues while reading. Most of respondents answered with yes with the percentage of (79,17%). Others with (20.83%) have an opposite view because they generally use dictionary to check unfamiliar words’ meaning.

Section Three: The Importance of Learning English Vocabulary

Q.11. How much important you think learning English vocabulary is?
Table 9:

Teachers’ Perceptions about the Importance of Learning Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12: Teachers’ Perceptions about the Importance of Learning Vocabulary

The results show that the majority of the respondents (70.83%) stated that learning vocabulary is very important in addition to (25.00%) said the same thing that learning vocabulary is important. Whereas, (4.17%) denied its importance. We can interpret these results by saying that language teachers recognized the importance of vocabulary learning, and they are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively.
Q.12. How do you usually teach vocabulary?

**Teachers’ Ways of Teaching Vocabulary**

The way of teaching vocabulary differ from teacher to another. The majority of teachers think that there is a lot of ways of getting across the meaning of a lexical item. They use a clear context when the word is used and either describe it to the students or give them example sentences to clarify meaning further. Besides to other views there are an alternative ways of teaching vocabulary like:

- give them a few items and tell them to find the meaning, pronunciation and write an example with the word in.

- prepare worksheets and ask them to match words to definitions.

- review the vocabulary you teach through a game or activity and encourage your students to do the same at home

Q.13. Do your students have difficulties with vocabulary mastery?

**Table 10:**

**Students’ Difficulties with Vocabulary Mastery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 13: Students’ Difficulties with Vocabulary Mastery

As it is indicated in table 12, we noticed that (95.83%) of teachers claim that FL learners face difficulties with vocabulary mastery. However, (4.17%) of them stated that their students face problems of comprehension when get across new vocabularies. From the results bellow the difficulty of vocabulary is often depends on either unfamiliar words or topics.

Q.14. If yes, are these difficulties related to:

Table 11:

Teachers’ Views about Students Vocabulary Related-Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar words</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This question intends to illustrate more the issue of vocabulary problems. Teachers were requested to choose the main possible reasons behind these problems (see table 14 and figure15). We notice that (12.50%) out of the whole sample related these problems to unfamiliar words, (8.33%) related it to unfamiliar topics, and (79.17%) of them related it to unfamiliar words as well as unfamiliar topics. These results reveal the importance of vocabulary knowledge in facilitating reading comprehension or impeding it. Therefore, more efforts should be striven to overcome this hindering situation.
Section Four: Using Context Clues to Guess Foreign Language Words’ meaning

Q.15. When your students encounter new terms, do you advise them to use context?

Table 12:
Teachers’ Advising Students to use context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Teachers’ Advising Students to use context

This question aims at knowing if teachers may advise their students to employ context whenever they face unfamiliar word. From the results obtained in table 14, we observe that the great portion of our sample (91.67%) stated that they advise their student to use context clues in dealing with unfamiliar words. About (8.33%) of respondents answered with No. From these results, we can say that, teachers support this strategy because it appears that it is important to teach vocabulary through context.
Q.16. Will teaching context clues strategy positively impact the way students make up words’ meaning?

Table 13:

**Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Effect of Context Clues on Students’ Vocabulary Enhancement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16: The effect of using context clues on students vocabulary enhancement*

We notice that the majority of our sample (95.83%) answered with Yes. That means context clues technique has been chosen as a way to support vocabulary development on
figuring out word meaning. Others with the percentage of (4,17%) answered with yes. From the results above we can say that, most of teachers believe that context clues is an important way they may use to enhance students’ vocabulary enhancement.

Q.17. Using context clues enables students to acquire new words and this will be better remembered to strengthen the meaning in their mind.

Table 14:

Using Context to Acquire New Words and Remember them to Strengthen the Meaning in the Students’ Mind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 17: Using Context to Acquire New Words and Remember them to Strengthen the Meaning in the Students’ Mind

We notice that (41.67%) of the respondents do strongly agree, while (37.50%) agree with the idea of using context clues in acquiring new terms. (16.67%) are disagree. The lowest percentage strongly disagree. We may say that teachers state that context clues may support students to acquire vocabulary. The results indicate that this pedagogical strategy help students to acquire new words better and remember them later on.

Q.18. How can you teach students to use context clues to decipher vocabulary meaning?

This item is designed with the intention to know how can teachers teach their students to use the context clues to decode vocabulary meaning. Most of the respondents’ opinions on reading, they give texts with a certain number of unfamiliar words and ask learners to decode their meaning. Others tend to practice them, they invite them to read more books and watch English movies (Tasks and Practice).

Q19. Why is teaching vocabulary in context important?

Most teachers claim that using context clues is considered as a way which can help students get rid of using dictionary. Teachers think that vocabulary is a basic skill adopted by proficient /efficient readers. Thus, context clues is an important strategy that develop EFL students’ vocabulary learning. It will help them to become side independent all in all. Moreover, context clues give students practice both language long age and reading skill. In addition to that, students will tend to retain the meaning of words if they learn it by themselves in context.

Discussion of the Teachers’ Questionnaire research Results

The analysis of the teachers’ questionnaire has shown many results. We have found that the majority of our teachers are experienced. Most of them have been teaching English
for one to five years. This means that despite their little experience they can help us to get more views that will be sufficient in validating our study. Q4 denied that most teachers evaluate their students’ vocabulary learning through using context. We found that most teachers focus more on enhancing their acquisition without focusing on the technique they may find it easy or suitable. Q5 denied the importance of guessing from context in facilitating students’ reading comprehension. Q6 generally confirmed the idea of guessed meaning is better retained than given meaning. Q8 revealed the students’ awareness about the use of context in guess new terms meaning. Q9 justified this view. Q10 shows that the majority of teachers are supporting the use of context to understand the meaning while reading instead of checking dictionaries in every time. Q11 Q12 Q13 results demonstrating the importance of vocabulary learning and presenting ways of promoting it efficiently. Q14 explain the main problems can students’ encounter while reading. Q15 Q16 Q17 Q18 illustrate the teachers’ perceptions and views about the guessing from context strategy, how they support their students to enhance their vocabulary. Besides to the ways they may use in teaching vocabulary. Finally, Q19 proved the importance of teaching vocabulary through context.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, we have seen in this chapter the practical framework, the actual manipulation of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In the light of the data from teachers’ questionnaire, i. e. the real application of contextual guessing strategy in the EFL classroom to enhance vocabulary learning. The obtained results show that this strategy has really affected the learning of the target vocabularies. As a result, we confirm our hypothesis which states that using context clues improves EFL students’ vocabulary acquisition. We have seen the detailed discussion of the obtained results along with its possible explanation.
Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations which are stated as follows:

1. The data gathered from the small sample of the current study cannot be generalized to the whole population.

2. Concerning the research methodology, the researcher has selected at first to conduct an experiment in order to show the effectiveness of using context clues in enhancing EFL students’ vocabulary knowledge. But, a questionnaire has been used to collect data instead of an experiment because this has been done experimentally by other researchers.

3. Time constraints: Much more time would be more helpful to use different tools such as an experiment, a checklist, large samples of teachers and students and different contexts which could give our study different dimensions.

Pedagogical Implications

1. The teacher should give their students a technique to improve their vocabulary because the students are not allowed to use a dictionary any time they need especially in the final examinations, they read and understand the text without looking at dictionary.

2. Helping the student to find and to choose reading and listening material of appropriate difficulty.

3. Improving their reading skill to help them read fluently with a good comprehension.

4. Encouraging students to read a lot and helping them to gain a lot of comprehensible spoken input.

5. Proving training in guessing from context.
The researcher hopes that the techniques she mentioned above can help English teacher in teaching vocabulary. It is also hoped that this study can help the teacher to improve her students’ vocabulary through context clues.

**General Conclusion**

The present study aims at identifying teachers’ perceptions towards context clues and how these can be used to help students to acquire new vocabulary. This dissertation contained two main chapters: The first chapter is about the review of related literature which included three sections. The first section was about the core of this study, it has checked up the independent variable, context clues, examining the definitions looking at the nature of context, what kinds of context clues can be used to train learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, and some other important issues. As the first section, the second one dealt with the dependent variable, vocabulary. The definition of vocabulary, the importance of learning and teaching vocabulary, and some other issues related to vocabulary were also addressed. The third section tackles the relationship between the first two variables.

For our practical part, one means of data collection has been used, the questionnaire. We have administered one questionnaire for teachers. We aimed at gathering data about teachers’ conceptions and attitudes concerning. It dealt with the analysis, the results have obtained after analyzing and discussing the findings in the questionnaire confirm our hypothesis about the importance of contextual clues in improving learners’ vocabulary acquisition. Most teachers believe that words’ meaning can never be taken if these words are isolated from context they are used in, and they emphasize that vocabulary is usually taught through reading comprehension. Consequently, they manifested an awareness about
the use of contextual clues on guessing the meaning of new words. This indicates that this strategy is considered as an effective teaching tool which simplifies vocabulary acquisition.

At the end, the researcher hopes that this study shed some light on one of the vocabulary strategies which is ignored, especially by learners. So, it is time to give it the appropriate attention since it makes the learner more independent while struggling to understand unknown vocabulary.

**Suggestions for further research**

As a suggestion for future researchers, context clues can be one of the techniques in learning English for learners. So, it will be useful for the English teacher to teach vocabulary by using contextual clues because it is much more effective and then ask them to consult their own dictionary every time they find difficulty with a new word. In order to make the teaching of vocabulary effective, these are the most important ways to help the English teacher improve his teaching with context.

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Appendices

Appendix : Teachers’ Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

I will be extremely grateful if you could answer the following questions. You are asked to express your attitudes towards using contextual clues in guessing foreign language words’ meaning. Your answers are very important for the validity of this research. Please, tick (√) the choice that corresponds to your answer and make full statement wherever necessary.

Thank you in advance

Submitted by: Ms. khanfar Rachda
Field: Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Faculty of Letters and Languages

Section One: Background Information

Q1. Degree held :
   a) Licence
   b) Master
   c) Magister
   d) Ph.D

Q2. How long have you been teaching English ?
   a) 1-5
   b) 5-10
   c) More than 10 years

Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Using Contextual Clues

Q3. Do you present new words in each session?
   a)Yes
   b) No

Q4. When your student get across new words, do they:
Q5. According to your experience in teaching, do you think that the use of context clues facilitates your students’ reading comprehension?

a) Yes □  

b) No □

Q6. Do you think that refined meaning is remembered more than given meaning?

a) Yes □  

b) No □

Q7. If yes, please explain

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

Q8. Are the students aware about the importance of contextual clues in guessing the meaning of unknown words?

a) Yes □  

b) No □

Q9. If yes, please justify

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

Q10. Do you support your students to employ the context clues while reading?

a) Yes □  

b) No □

Section Three: The Importance of Learning English Vocabulary

Q11. How much important you think learning English vocabulary is?

a) Very important □  

b) Important □  

c) Not important □

Q12. How do you usually teach vocabulary?
Q13. Do your students have difficulties with vocabulary mastery?
   a) Yes  [ ]  
   b) No  [ ]

Q14. If yes, are these difficulties related to:
   a) Unfamiliar words?  [ ]
   b) Unfamiliar topics?  [ ]
   c) Both of them?  [ ]

Section Four: Using Context Clues to Guess Foreign Language Words’ meaning

Q15. When your students encounter new terms, do you advise them to use context?
   a) Yes  [ ]  
   b) No  [ ]

Q16. Will teaching context clues strategy positively impact the way students make up words’ meaning?
   a) Yes  [ ]  
   b) No  [ ]

Q17. Using context clues enables students to acquire new words and this will be better remembered to strengthen the meaning in their mind.
   A) Agree  [ ]
   b) Strongly agree  [ ]
   c) Disagree  [ ]
   d) Strongly disagree  [ ]

Q18. How can you teach students to use context clues to decipher vocabulary meaning?

Q19. Why is teaching vocabulary in context important?
Section Five: Comments or Suggestions

Q20. If you have any suggestions or comments which are relevant to our topic, feel free to write them in the space provided.
الملخص

لقد أثبتت الدراسات أن تعلم المفردات من أكثر الجوانب صعوبة وتعقيدا. وذلك يكون عن طريق العديد من الاستراتيجيات. وهذا ما لوحظ في معهد اللغة الإنجليزية أن الطلبة يفرطون في استعمال القاموس ويتجاهلون المفردات الجديدة التي تصادفهم أثناء القراءة بالإضافة إلى الإساتذة الذين لا يعرون اهتماماً لارشادهم إلى استعمال الاستراتيجية المناسبة. من الاستراتيجيات التي ترتقي بالتعلم للوصول إلى مستوى قبول من اكتساب مفردات جديدة. ولاحظ في معهد اللغة الإنجليزية ان الطلبة في استعمال القاموس ويتجاهلون هذه المفردات الجديدة التي تصادفهم أثناء القراءة بالإضافة إلى معظم الإساتذة الذين لا يعرون أي اهتمام لارشادهم إلى استعمال الاستراتيجية المناسبة. ومن بين هذه الاستراتيجيات توجد القرائن الدلالية والتي من خلالها يستطيع المتعلم فهم معنى الكلمات المعقدة من السياق. وعلى هذا الأساس تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استقصاء آراء الإساتذة في مدى فعالية استخدام هذه القرائن الدلالية من أجل مساعدة المتعلمين في تخمين معاني الكلمات. كي تحتفظ هذه الفرضية طرح هذا السؤال هل للطلبة موقف إيجابي حول استعمال هذه القرائن في تخمين معاني الكلمات. تم اتباع منهج الاستبيان لأسئلة اللغة الإنجليزية بمعهد اللغة الإنجليزية جامعة العربي بن مهدي من أجل التحقق من موقفهم من خلال مدى استعمالهم لهذه الاستراتيجية للمتعلمين ومدى فاعليتها في تخمين معاني الكلمات في نفس السياق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القرائن الدلالية، اكتساب اللغة، تعلم اللغة.
Résumé :

Le vocabulaire est l’un des aspects les plus complexes pour les apparents de langues étrangères. C’est un aspect difficile qui nécessite de grands efforts de la part des élèves et nécessite des stratégies spécifiques que les enseignants peuvent fournir pour atteindre un niveau acceptable d’apprentissage du vocabulaire. Les étudiants du départements d’anglais semblent cependant ignorer les nouveaux mots ou se fier au dictionnaire en outre, les enseignants n’essaient pas toujours de sensibiliser les étudiants à l’utilisation des stratégies appropriés.

Parmi ces stratégies, les indices de contexte peuvent guider les apparentants à trouver la signification de mots non familiers. Sur cette base, la présente étude vise à étudier les attitudes des apprenants à l’aide d’indices de contexte pour les aider à devenir le sens des mots. L’étude a adopté un questionnaire pour les apprenants afin de recueillir les données nécessaires pour répondre à un certain nombre de questions. Après l’analyse des données, les résultats viennent confirmer l’hypothèse que l’utilisation des mots est une stratégie. A un effet significatif sur l’acquisition du vocabulaire par les apprenants. Cette stratégie aide les apprenants à comprendre efficacement le sens de mots inconnus. Par conséquent, les enseignants sont invités à adopter définitivement cette stratégie pedagogique.

Les mots clés : l’apprentissage du vocabulaire, acquisition du vocabulaire, les indices de contexte.