

Vocabulary Learning Through Recycling Activities and Strategy Training

Aralıklarla Tekrarlama ve Strateji Eğitimi Yoluyla Sözlük Bilgisi Öğrenimi

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore learners' opinions on vocabulary instruction which incorporated vocabulary recycling activities and strategy training. The research was conducted with one intermediate level EFL class at Hacettepe University Preparatory School. After the target vocabulary items were selected, students were made aware of different vocabulary learning strategies and provided with opportunities to practice and recycle the selected vocabulary items through several activities incorporated into the instruction. The study offers some insights from learners into possible ways to improved vocabulary acquisition through strategy training and recycling activities. The results suggest that students' written and oral feedback provide a means through which a teacher can find students' attitudes toward the teaching-learning processes.

Key Words: Vocabulary learning strategies, recycling vocabulary, strategy training, students' feedback.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, aralıklarla tekrarlama ve strateji eğitimi yoluyla sözcük bilgisi öğrenimi üzerine öğrencilerin düşüncelerini araştırmaktır. Araştırma, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Hazırlık Okulu'nda orta düzey bir İngilizce sınıfı ile yürütülmüştür. Sözcükler seçildikten sonra öğrenciler değişik sözcük öğrenme stratejileri ile tanıştırmış ve çeşitli aktiviteler yoluyla bu sözcükleri aralıklarla tekrarlamaları için fırsatlar yaratılmıştır. Bulgular, öğrencilerin strateji eğitimi ve tekrarlama aktiviteleri yoluyla sözcük bilgilerini geliştirebileceklerini düşündüklerini göstermektedir. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerden alınan sözlü ya da yazılı geribildirimlerin öğretim-öğrenim süreçlerine karşı öğrenci tutumları konusunda öğretmene ışık tutabileceğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sözcük öğrenme stratejileri, sözcük tekrarlama, strateji eğitimi, öğrencilerin geribildirimi.

Introduction

Not being able to find the word you need to explain yourself is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language, as the quotations taken from two of the EFL learners who participated in this study highlight below: "I think language means vocabulary. Grammar comes later. If you don't know the vocabulary to express your ideas, you can't communicate with others though you know the grammar of the language."

"You have to know enough vocabulary to share your ideas with the others. Otherwise, you can't express your ideas and feelings. Grammar is just a formula. If you can't put the words into the correct places, the formula does not work. You can't even say 'I want some water'."

In the process of becoming proficient in a foreign language, the learner has to acquire various components of the language including the grammar, the sound system, and social rules of usage. Among these, vocabulary has frequently been recognized as one of the major obstacles in learning another language, especially by the learners themselves (Meara, 1982).

As Vermeer (1992, 147) recognizes, "knowing words is the key to understanding and being understood. The

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bulk of learning a new language consists of learning new words. Grammatical knowledge does not make for great proficiency in a language.” However, many language learners do not believe that they get enough opportunities to improve their vocabulary in language classes.

Actually, the neglect has not been characterized by the quantity of words. A vast amount of teaching time is consumed by explanation and definition of vocabulary items; students compile page upon page of vocabulary word-lists that they rarely have the opportunity to practise (Gairns and Redman, 1998). The result is that students cannot learn the words they are expected to know as they are usually left to their own devices and take on a very passive role.

Research into ELT suggests that frequency of using words in communication is a factor that affects the storage of words as the most frequently used items are easier to retrieve. There are some theories about why students forget the words. One of them, ‘the decay theory’, suggests that information in the memory falls into disuse unless it is activated fairly regularly. Thus, students need to practise and revise what they have learned. Otherwise, the new input will gradually fade in the memory and ultimately disappear (Gairns and Redman, 1998).

In the last two decades or so with, aware that language achievement depends predominantly on the individual learner’s endeavors, ELT specialists and syllabus designers have incorporated learning strategies into their teaching syllabus and emphasized that teachers’ basic concern when teaching a language should be “to make the learner a better learner” (Wenden, 1991, 2) by helping them learn how to learn. Hence, one of the most important components of vocabulary teaching involves fostering learner independence so that learners will be able to go beyond what they have been taught in class and thus will be more autonomous.

There have been several studies aiming to identify the strategies good language learners use (e.g., O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzares, Kupper and Russo, 1985). Learning strategies are defined as specific mental steps or operations that learners implement to learn (Wenden, 1991, 163). These strategies have been organized into categories by many researchers. Stoffer (as cited in Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997, 204-205), for instance,

proposed a classification of vocabulary strategies under nine groups through a factor analysis of his 53-item survey: strategies involving either authentic language use, physical action, or creative activities, strategies used to organize words or to create mental linkages, strategies used for self-motivation or to overcome anxiety, and memory or visual/auditory strategies.

There is no complete list of vocabulary learning strategies which will be effective in all contexts. Usefulness and effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies will depend on a number of variables, including learner characteristics, level of proficiency, context of teaching, task, text, and culture.

As regards the research on vocabulary learning strategies in Turkey, there are several studies to mention. Bozatlı (1998) designed a research study aiming at finding out the vocabulary learning strategies of successful Freshmen students of English at Middle East Technical University, and concluded that teachers could raise awareness of vocabulary in students and motivate them to identify these strategies. Another research study was carried out with 26 BUSEL (Bilkent University School of English Language) students by Bityityenerel (1999) to see the effects of strategy training on vocabulary at upper-intermediate level. In her study, she found out that after strategy training, the students employed the strategies of ‘creating mental linkages’ and ‘applying images and sound’ more than the other memory strategies. However, they did not work on the strategy of ‘employing action’, for instance drawing pictures, since they found the process childish and also because abstract words did not lend themselves to drawing.

It is also worth mentioning Saltuk’s (2001) research study into the vocabulary learning strategies of 8th grade students at TED Ankara College. In her study, she aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a vocabulary learning technique, RVPMPR (Recording Vocabulary with Personalised Meaning Representations) and diagnosing vocabulary learning strategies of the students. In her research, she found that the most preferred strategy was the metacognitive strategy of ‘keeping a separate vocabulary section’ in students’ notebooks and the least preferred one was the memory strategy of ‘using flash cards’. The study also revealed that the RVPMPR technique helped the students learn and remember the new words.

Method

A qualitative case study method leading to descriptive analysis of the data was followed. One intermediate level EFL class at Hacettepe University Preparatory School participated in the study. The participants were 27 students, 13 females and 14 males, who would follow 100% English-medium instruction in their undergraduate programs when they complete the English Preparatory School. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 20.

The study lasted 7 weeks. At the beginning of the study a vocabulary test based on the items the students would be expected to study in the proceeding units of their textbooks was given to the class. The aim of the test was to identify the vocabulary items to be included in the study. After the target vocabulary items were selected through the test, the students were made aware of different vocabulary learning strategies. Furthermore, they practised and recycled the 87 selected vocabulary items through the activities.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the students' opinions on the role of vocabulary learning in learning a foreign language?
2. What are the students' opinions on the recycling and strategy training activities incorporated into the instruction?
3. What are the students' opinions on the written and oral feedback received from them about the vocabulary activities?

Activities

The first step to understanding a word is to have a clear understanding of its meaning. Hence, all the words in the scope of the study were first presented to the students through various means such as visual aids, verbal explanations, restatements, gestures, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, translation, etc. Then, through recycling and strategy training activities incorporated into the instruction, students were encouraged to make repeated and active use of the words being learnt and discover their own vocabulary learning strategies. Classroom activities in this study were arranged to provide students with opportunities for a maximum amount of processing of the words so as to create a rich

instructional environment as Beck, McKeown, and Omanson (1987, 149) proposed. Following their suggestions, to promote deep processing of words and to provide rich vocabulary instruction, students in this study were required to manipulate words in varied and rich ways, for example by describing how they relate to other words and their own familiar experiences. The 21 activities incorporated in this study were aimed to foster an awareness of vocabulary learning strategies and to revise/recycle the target words:

a) Creating an awareness of vocabulary learning strategies:

After having carried out an extensive review of the literature on vocabulary learning strategies, the researchers designed activities to foster an awareness of several different vocabulary learning strategies while students learn the vocabulary items in this study. In these activities, the students were encouraged to notice and use different types of vocabulary learning techniques through various materials and were asked to apply those techniques either individually or in groups or pairs. In designing the activities, there was an attempt to cover all potential strategies within the framework proposed by Stoffer (as cited in Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997, 204-205):

1. Strategies involving authentic language use
2. Strategies involving creative activities
3. Strategies used for self-motivation
4. Strategies used to create mental linkages
5. Memory Strategies
6. Visual/auditory strategies
7. Strategies involving physical action
8. Strategies used to overcome anxiety and
9. Strategies used to organize words.

b) Revision/recycling of the target words:

Through the activities, the students had a chance to revise the words that they had practised so that they could remember and use them when they needed. During the study, the same target words were practised and revised regularly at least twice at different intervals, sometimes on the same day, sometimes one or two days later or even a week later.

Considering the individual learning preferences of different types of learners, in designing the activities, the researchers tried to vary activities to be able to address different types of learners. For instance, activity 1 required the learners to move around the class which is favoured by the kinesthetic learners, who enjoy and learn better by being actively involved in a task. Activity 2, however, was an individual work activity aimed at the individual and analytical learners, who are independent learners and who like problem solving and studying on their own.

Some other activities required group work, being aimed at the group learners who remember more and work more efficiently when they work with others. Yet, still some other activities involved both individual work to let the analytical and individual learners have some time to employ on their own, and pair or group work to give the group learners enough chance to share their ideas.

Data Collection Instruments

Students' written feedback: In relation to each activity done in the class, students were given guiding questions to help them reflect on the activities, and were asked to give their reactions to the recycling activities and their feedback on the learning strategies presented. The questions took both personal (emotional) reflections of the students with regard to their individual ways of learning in relation to each vocabulary activity, and their feedback on different aspects of the teaching/learning process (i.e., ways of learning new vocabulary, steps taken in carrying out tasks, etc.). Students were assured that they would not be given any grades on their feedback to encourage them to feel more comfortable and be honest when they expressed their ideas related to the activities.

The aim of including written feedback in the study was to help students reflect on their vocabulary learning and find and use the strategies that suit them best. They consciously evaluated whether a certain activity was useful for them or not, thus increasing their awareness of the learning process. It was also expected that this would provide an opportunity for students to recall at least some of the words studied in each activity.

A free writing for the feedback task was avoided after the results of similar studies by Murphey (1993), Gilpin (1992), and Ho (1992) were examined. There were several reasons to justify giving the students some questions to focus on while writing their feedback. One reason was that students might need considerable guidance in writing their reaction to the activities done in the classroom. Without some guidance, they might not know what to write about. Another reason was to ensure that students would consider both personal and more objective aspects of vocabulary teaching.

Interviews with students: In the 7th week of the study, group interviews in Turkish were held with 10 of the students. The students were interviewed in two focus groups, 5 at a time, in two sessions. The interviews were semi-structured, and were conducted using 11 guiding questions developed by the researchers to be able to answer the research questions of the study. All the interviews were audio taped and they were held in Turkish in order to make students feel more comfortable during the interview sessions. Almost all the students in the class were eager to participate in the interviews. However, only the students who were still available in Ankara at the time of the interview participated in the interviews.

Although the students had already been asked to reflect on their ideas about the vocabulary learning activities which were carried out in class through their written feedback, interviews with some of the students were considered to be necessary not only for data triangulation, but for several other reasons as well. The first reason was that the researchers wanted to get the students' ideas as to the efficiency of the study undertaken after the study was over as well. Another reason was that the students might not have had enough time to express their thoughts in relation to the activities in their written feedback. That was the idea the researchers had when they examined students' written feedback as there were some incomplete answers to some of the questions. One final reason was that the students may not have felt comfortable as they were given the feedback questions in English. Interviews in Turkish, then, would make them feel more comfortable and express any of their feelings related to the research undertaken.

Findings

The data for this study came from students' written feedback on the classroom activities and the group interviews. In analyzing the qualitative data obtained through the feedback sheets and the interviews, rather than a content analysis, a descriptive analysis procedure was followed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This enabled the researchers to tie research questions directly to the data. Where relevant, in order not to detract from the richness of the data and to reflect the participants' voices as vividly as possible, direct quotations will be used in presenting the findings. The students' responses to the feedback questions about the activities were not corrected in any way, as regards either meaning or grammar. They will be presented as they were written. Students' responses in the interviews were translated into English where necessary for reporting purposes. Findings will be presented in relation to the research questions.

The first research question aimed to explore students' perspectives on the role of vocabulary learning in learning a foreign language. Data collected through the interviews were used to answer this research question. All the students thought that vocabulary is very important in learning a language, and gave their reasons as follows:

"Vocabulary is very important. In fact, I think it is more important than learning grammar. If you don't know enough vocabulary you can't speak fluently and you can't express what you mean when writing something. If you take a look at a song, for example, you have to know the meanings of lots of words to understand it rather than the grammar of it."

"I think language means vocabulary. Grammar comes later. If you don't know the vocabulary to express your ideas, you can't communicate with others though you know the grammar of the language."

"You have to know enough vocabulary to share your ideas with the others. Otherwise, you can't express your ideas and feelings. Grammar is just a formula. If you can't put the words into the correct places, the formula does not work. You can't even say 'I want some water'"

As regards the difficulty in learning vocabulary the students said that they did not find it as difficult as they had once thought since they were more aware of the techniques that they could apply when learning vocabulary as a result of this study, and they also added

that they really needed to spend time revising the words in order to learn them. Some of their comments are as follows:

"If you find your way of learning, I don't think it is that much difficult. However, if the words are not used quite often, they are forgotten. I think, teachers should encourage the students to use the words practised by giving them some tasks."

"I used to find it very difficult and I thought I did not have the ability to learn words. However, when you said that everybody had a different way of learning and that perhaps we may not have found our learning methods yet, I felt quite relieved. In addition, you distributed several handouts related to different kinds of vocabulary learning strategies. I liked that a lot. I think I can read and apply them and find my own way of learning vocabulary."

"Not that much difficult but you have to spend time to revise them. However, when revision is expected to be done only by the students themselves, we get bored and give it up sometime later. However, when you, as a teacher give us a task to revise those words, we have to use them because we have no other choice and that makes the words more memorable in our minds. I think teachers should force the students to use the newly learned words in the classroom by creating activities which require the students to use them. It should not be only the students' responsibility to repeat what we have learned."

The second research question aimed to find the students' reflections/perspective on each activity incorporated into the instruction especially as regards the two components of this study, which were activities to train the students in a number of vocabulary learning strategies and activities to recycle the selected vocabulary. Data collected through both students' written feedback and interviews were used to answer this research question. All the students agreed that the strategies and the activities they had practised in and outside the class helped them learn and remember the words. One student's explanation in the interview as to why they thought so were as follows:

"They were very useful. Actually, we have mentioned this in our written feedback. For example, I really had difficulty in remembering phrasal verbs. I thought I could never learn them but now I can remember all of them. I think I will not forget them. In one of the activities, my group tried very hard to help me come up with the word

"on the tip of my tongue". I could not remember it at that time but from that time on, I did not forget it. In another activity, I was trying to define the word 'sensitive' to my friend Y.K., whose meaning I always confused up to that time. While explaining the word to him, I said that it was the word I always confused. He immediately came up with it and now I do not confuse it with the other words and I think I will never forget it."

All the students also agreed that the handouts related to vocabulary learning strategies were very useful but they added that they would have benefited more if they had been informed of them earlier. Some interesting comments students provided in the interviews were as follows:

"I found it very useful. In my opinion, knowing the strategies is very important. Let me give you an example: A swimmer knows how to swim. Most of us think we know how to swim as well. However, the swimmer knows the technique, that is, how to do it best but we only float in the water trying not to get drowned. If we know the correct way of doing things, I mean their techniques, we can deal with them easily. Even if you don't mention any vocabulary learning strategies to me, I can still learn vocabulary but that takes much more time and will be more difficult. For instance, I may look at every word that I do not know in the dictionary and note them down. However, if I know the grouping method, for example, and write the words under the same topics that will help me learn the words more easily and faster. The only difference between them is time and difficulty. Therefore, if we know about the strategies we can learn faster and more easily."

"I think it was very useful because before you mentioned them in class, I did not know some of the methods of learning words such as writing them on cards, grouping them under the same topic, brainstorming around a word/words etc. When I tried those methods several times, I found out that the words were more permanent in my mind. In the past, I used to think that I did not have the ability to learn English so I had difficulty in it. Now I know that I have to try many ways to find my way of learning vocabulary and I am more successful because I think I can learn words so I am able to learn them."

"I found it useful. I have always tried very hard to learn English and have done all the exercises in the books I have studied. Since the English education at my previous school was bad, I did not know that some of the exercises in our books actually aimed at teaching us some strategies to obtain vocabulary. I used to do them because the teacher used to ask us to do so. Now that I have known that there are some methods of learning vocabulary, I am much more careful when doing the

exercises trying to understand the technique behind them if there is any. In the past, I used to do the exercises the teacher told us to do. Now, I try to transfer the techniques we have practised in some exercises whenever I study English. For instance, when I read a story, I try to underline the new words sometimes in groups, sometimes list them under a topic, etc."

Some other students, however, commented that they had already been familiar with some of the techniques of learning vocabulary but did not have many opportunities to apply them in the classroom when they were in high school. However, they added that because those strategies were emphasized in the class especially during the study, they had to apply them. They also reported that they found them useful:

"To tell you the truth, vocabulary teaching and the number of vocabulary items that we study are quite the same but I have learned something new: collocations. Recognising which words are used with which ones and highlighting them whenever we see them were completely new to me. I think this strategy of learning vocabulary is very useful. We did not try these techniques in high school and I think that was a big loss."

"I have already been familiar with most of the techniques you have mentioned but have not used them a lot because nobody has forced me to use them before. However, when you said 'you cannot use your dictionaries', you checked whether we used it or not so I could not use it. Hence, I have developed my guessing ability. I already knew the technique but I was reluctant to use it because I was not sure of my ability to guess. Now I believe in and trust my ability to guess."

The last research question aimed to explore students' perspectives on the written and oral feedback received from them about the activities. Most of the students had positive opinions regarding giving feedback on the activities they had practised. Some sample answers were as follows:

"I liked it because I thought you cared about us. You try to teach us since you are a teacher but we are the learners and sometimes we can evaluate what is good or bad better than the teachers. I think there are things that teachers can learn from students."

"It is very nice that you try to get feedback from us. As we know, there are some teachers with their own strategies and they usually want their students to use those strategies without questioning them. I guess you

asked those questions to understand whether we had any difficulty with them or not. This makes me believe that we are important to you. That way, we as students like you a lot. I do not know whether this is another strategy but it works because both you and the students together decide on what to do or how to do something together and that makes learning more enjoyable."

However, two of the students in the interviews stated that though they believed in the benefit of writing feedback about the activities they sometimes did not want to do it because some of the questions were too long and sometimes they were very tired.

"I believe it is very useful and you do it because you care about us. However, some of the questions were too long and I was too tired. But we know you do it for the benefit of us. Therefore I answered the questions sincerely."

One of the questions in the interviews was related to the students' suggestions for vocabulary learning/teaching if they had any, including their comments on everything they had practised during the study. One of the students suggested a technique of his own to learn vocabulary using a dictionary, which he said he found to be very useful.

"I take a look at my English-English dictionary about 10 minutes every day. I just turn over the pages, take a look at one of the words that I am already familiar with, read its definition very carefully taking notice of the other words it is used with (for example the prepositions they are used with and their meanings). Then, I take a look at the word above it and the word below it and study them in the same way. I learn at least 5 new vocabulary items every day using this method. I really believe that I have improved my vocabulary through this method."

Another student suggested carrying out studies in groups every week, which he said he had found very useful when he was in high school:

"I would like to mention something that we did when we were in high school. We used to carry out a study in groups every week. At the end of every week we would come together with our group friends and prepare our study topic. Our topic was usually related to something we had already practised in the class so we were already familiar with almost all the vocabulary we needed to express ourselves. For instance, after we had studied a passage about a holiday resort, we used

to choose another holiday resort, cut pictures from magazines or newspapers related to it if we could find any and write about that place in our own words. The teacher would collect and correct them and choose some of them as the study of the week. Then they were hung on the walls of the class for a week. The other students would go around the room and read them. I can still remember many words from those studies."

As far as criticism is concerned most of the students commented that it would have been better if they had started doing this sort of vocabulary study earlier:

"I think we started doing such activities quite late. It would have been much better if we had studied 50 vocabulary items each month using such activities through the year."

"I wish we had started those activities earlier. I guess I will not forget the vocabulary we have practised lately."

Discussion

An examination of the students' written answers to the feedback questions and the interview data suggests the following:

1. The students thought it was very important to learn vocabulary when learning a language.
2. Most of the students found almost all the activities useful in improving their vocabulary. Even the students who did not want to join some of the activities reported that they had learned a lot from just observing the others.
3. They answered the feedback questions honestly believing that learning is a two way process and the teacher cares what the students think about the learning process.
4. They did not hesitate to report problems or suggestions related to the activities.
5. The students found it easier to learn words after the study as they were more aware of the strategies they can apply when they learn new words.
6. They were convinced that they should also do something outside the class to improve their vocabulary and some students reported that they were already doing this.
7. They thought it would have been much better if they had started this process earlier.

Words can be learned from explicit teaching or they can be learned incidentally. In either case, they need to be met numerous times before they are learned as forgetting seems to be an inevitable process, unless learners regularly use items they have learned. Therefore, recycling of learnt vocabulary is vital.

To become more aware of what works and what does not as regards vocabulary teaching/learning processes, teachers can get feedback from students. Through students' feedback, teachers can gain insights into what the students find more or less useful, difficult, enjoyable, etc. Asking students to give feedback about the activities in the learning/teaching process is advantageous for both students and teachers. Getting feedback from students will provide a better insight into teaching the target language. Murphey (1993, 10) claims that "from their feedback, both positive and negative, I could better judge what was working and what was not and then make more informed decisions." Through written feedback students can express their opinions, feelings and problems and frustrations that they have experienced during the course and the teacher who learns the attitudes of students towards the activities practised in the classroom can make better decisions with regard to the changes required in the learning environment.

Results

Based on the results of this study, the following generalizations can be made:

1. If a word has to be part of the learners' productive vocabulary, they must be given the opportunity to use it as often as necessary for them to be able to recall it at will. Therefore, teachers should design enjoyable, communicative activities for students to use and recycle the words as much as possible.
2. Games work well for practising vocabulary and add an element of fun, relaxation, and enjoyment to the lesson, thus motivating the students.
3. Students need a challenge to be involved in practising vocabulary, so teachers should add variety to teaching and practising vocabulary
4. Pair work and group work provide more opportunities for the use of new vocabulary

compared to the opportunities in teacher-led lessons despite the widespread impression that vocabulary learning is best achieved individually, parallel to what (Schmitt, 1997) suggests. They create an atmosphere of interest, confidence, and mutual support among students and allow shy or less advanced students to participate actively in the activities.

5. Students find it easier to learn words when they are made aware of the strategies they can apply. This is also the key for students to be able to improve their vocabulary learning outside the class.
6. Written and oral feedback provide a means through which a teacher can discover students' attitudes toward the work. That way, teachers can more or less know how things are working and adjust appropriately.

This study offers some insights into possible ways to improve vocabulary acquisition through strategy training and recycling activities. Studies on foreign language vocabulary learning have demonstrated the key role memory plays in vocabulary learning and the benefits of revision and repetition (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). If textbooks do not recycle words in a thorough way, then the classroom teacher should create opportunities in or out of the class for the learners to revise new vocabulary soon after initial meeting of it and recall it at increasing intervals.

However true it may be that students need to use the words to be learned as often as necessary for them to be recalled later, their capacity to learn words will function most effectively when students' individual differences as to how they learn are taken into consideration. Some students may be visual, whereas some others are auditory, kinesthetic or analytical. Learners have different learning styles and preferences and use different portions/combinations of their intelligences. If teachers cater for only one type of learner, then the others will fall behind. Hence, the teacher should vary his/her approach to teaching/learning activities in the class so as to ensure success.

To have a better understanding of the learning tastes of students, teachers can ask learners about their

attitudes towards the teaching/learning process in the language being taught. It is much safer than just guessing whether an activity has worked or not, for which of the students it has worked, for which it has not and what are the reasons for success or failure of the activities, and finally what can be done “ to develop materials and activities more suited to students’ levels, ways of learning and preferences” (Murphey, 1993, 7).

In order to be successful in learning a language, learners need to invest their time and effort and develop their own unique and individual pathways to success. This is what Brown (2001) calls ‘strategic investment.’ If our goal, as teachers, is to enable learners to eventually become autonomous learners in this era of learner-centered teaching, *strategic investment* and *strategy training* has a lot to offer.

To conclude, although vocabulary strategy research is a promising area of study that could be based on a strong theoretical framework, it is still in its infancy, as Ellis (1994) claims. Therefore, especially more longitudinal case studies are needed to provide deeper insights for language pedagogy.

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