

Strategies and Attitude in English Vocabulary Learning of Grade 11 Filipino Students

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Abstract

Vocabulary study is one of the most emphasized English lessons among senior high school students since it is viewed as the fundamental key to exceling in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Along with Filipino, English is the official language of the Philippines. As a result, it is considered the Filipinos' second language and is the medium of instruction in the majority of school topics. While all teachers appear to be preoccupied with understanding their students' English vocabulary performance, particularly in subjects like English for Academic and Professional Purposes, Reading and Writing, and Oral Communication, a better understanding of their students' vocabulary learning strategies and attitudes toward learning vocabulary should be given much more attention. As a result, the goal of this study is to provide useful references for future research on Filipino senior high school students' vocabulary learning practices and attitudes toward vocabulary acquisition. This researcher will also recommend some more relevant and important research that should be conducted in order to gain a better grasp of the subject of study.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning strategies, Vocabulary learning attitude, Vocabulary learning issues

1. Introduction

The ever-increasing amount of new vocabulary terms can be difficult to learn at the appropriate rate, making vocabulary a key source of dissatisfaction in language learning. Additionally, vocabulary development is required for efficient communication and higher levels of competency. "Little can be conveyed without grammar; nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary," Wilkins (2012) stated after a long period of neglect and a focus on grammar in English language classrooms, vocabulary teaching and learning has finally received the attention it deserves for effective learner vocabulary development (ELT). Learning vocabulary, on the other hand, is challenging since each competency level requires a significant number of

high frequency vocabulary items, and their usage is often complicated, with several meanings and collocational applications. According to Nation (2013), basic word knowledge consists of knowing the form and meaning, and it then expands to encompass linguistic and semantic properties that span the categories of meaning, form, and use.

Gardner (2013) also mentioned that a large vocabulary is required for successful second/foreign language acquisition. Learners who have a good vocabulary may communicate effectively and perform well in the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is a necessary basis for later language acquisition as well as real-world communication. As a result, the more language a learner grasps, the more skilled expressions he or she can produce. Furthermore, language experts understand that vocabulary knowledge and reading ability are inextricably linked.

Furthermore, second and foreign language learners grasp the importance of vocabulary right away. When it comes to vocabulary learning, however, each situation is unique. Because the alternatives for target-language input, output, and interaction are limited in the setting of foreign language acquisition, Tseng & Schmitt (2018) believe that using motivated and successful learning techniques is critical for vocabulary learning. A lack of vocabulary knowledge was revealed to be a major factor in learners' resistance to being exposed to reading and listening skills in both foreign and second language learning situations.

Successful language learners have also been described as those who build language learning techniques and practices. Cook (2013) justified that the process of vocabulary development will take place in light of giving learners opportunities to first be introduced to new words and their meanings, and then to be placed in situations where they must retrieve, recall, and use the target vocabulary items across a variety of settings and circumstances.

However, Kayi-Aydar (2018) acknowledged that vocabulary growth is multidimensional, needing not just knowledge of word meanings but also pronunciation, spelling, grammatical features, connotations, morphological alternatives, and semantic linkages. When English learners are scaffolded and led, they can successfully develop vocabulary.

Meanwhile, the extent of one's vocabulary can predict eventual reading success and overall academic accomplishment. Because pupils are likely to come across 100,000 words that they are unfamiliar with, those who have a strong vocabulary find reading easier and improve their vocabulary as they read. Kindle has defined this term (2011).

Despite its importance, Roe, et al. (2011) pointed out that learning and teaching language is one of the most difficult abilities to master. This problem could be caused by bad schemata. Students with less prior knowledge, according to the Schema Theory, have more difficulty learning new terms. They may also be affected by the Matthew Effect, which occurs when pupils who do not read well do not read, resulting in a lack of vocabulary building opportunities.

According to Cruz (2015), vocabulary knowledge is important in the Philippines, especially for senior high school students, in order to meet the Department of Education's (DepEd) competences and to endure additional reading demands, which are mainly intellectual. The core, applied, and even specialized subjects, whether pupils are enrolled in TVL or academic strand, are among the senior high school subjects that require a lot of reading and language skills. The same subjects focus on skills that are required to grasp tertiary-level English studies. However, not all tertiary students have been prepared to meet the requirements. Poor vocabulary is caused by a variety of circumstances, including poverty, a lack of exposure to meaningful discourse, vocabulary instruction, and poor reading. Students struggle with fluency, standardized testing, and reading in general as a result of their weak vocabulary. As a result, the researcher came to the conclusion that in order to grow one's vocabulary, one must first grasp vocabulary acquisition techniques and attitudes, as well as the importance of both strategies and attitudes in vocabulary improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learning a language through vocabulary learning

According to Easterbrook (2013), learning a language is a long, complex, and gradual process in which knowledge about the language is acquired, stored, retrieved, and used. Learners use language learning strategies (LLSs) to attain this goal, which are defined by Oxford (2020) as specific activities, behaviors, stages, or techniques that students frequently use to increase their progress in gaining second language (L2) abilities and competency. Internalization, storage, retrieval, and use of the new language can all be aided by these tactics.

Cohen (2011) defined LLSs as thoughts and behaviors that language learners actively choose and operationalize to help them carry out a variety of activities from the beginning of their learning to the most advanced levels of target language (TL) performance.

Similarly, Griffith and Cansiz (2015) proposed the following definition: acts chosen (either consciously or unconsciously) for the purpose of language learning and regulation. Despite various discrepancies in definitions (mental activities vs. actions, conscious vs. automatic behaviors), LLSs are valuable tools for learners to improve their language acquisition efficiency. Based on the criteria provided above, the author of this article believes that LLSs (with VLSs as a subclass) are actions or mental processes that learners utilize actively to support and regulate their own learning.

Schmitt (2015), on the other hand, created a thorough taxonomy of VLSs. These were classified into two groups: discovery techniques, which are used to figure out what a word means, and consolidation strategies, which are used to remember what a term means when it comes up again. In turn, learners' discovery techniques were classified into determination strategies (using a dictionary, context clues, or structural understanding of the word to identify the meaning of a new word on their own) and social strategies (when learners ask someone who knows for the meaning).

Easterbrook (2013), Cohen (2011), Griffith and Cansiz (2015), and Schmitt (2015) have all emphasized the difficulty of acquiring a language through vocabulary learning. This is a time-consuming process that must be injected with the appropriate approaches or methodologies in order to succeed. It's also been argued that learning a language is impossible without first acquiring vocabulary.

2.2 Vocabulary learning strategies

The use of methods is required when learning a vocabulary. Learners use social strategies (such as practicing the meaning of new words in a group), cognitive strategies (which include repetition and mechanical methods such as using word lists and flashcards to study vocabulary), memory strategies (which involve using imagery or grouping to link the word to be learned with existing knowledge), and metacognitive strategies (which include planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning), according to Webb & Webb.

As a result, teachers should create opportunities for students to meet words in a variety of situations (Webb & Nation, 2017) and train them to apply effective VLSs tactics (Alqahtani, 2015), as these pedagogical actions contribute to enhancing students' vocabulary competency. In this approach, regardless of the amount and quality of direct vocabulary instruction they get in the English language classroom, learners can contribute actively and independently to the growth of their vocabulary both inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore, the usage of tactics is influenced by a variety of factors in the learning environment, including the teacher, students, classroom, parental support, and social and cultural norms (Gu, 2013). The learner's linguistic proficiency and maturity play a significant effect. Younger learners or novices typically utilize shallower tactics, while more cognitively developed learners or those with higher degrees of competency use deeper strategies (Cohen & Apehek, 2011).

Furthermore, studying vocabulary is the first stage in learning a language. It is also a constant part of language learning (Gifford, 2013). According to Thornbury (2012), vocabulary development continues long after the grammar system is in place. Zimmerman (2019) also described language learning as a lifelong process. In interviews, personality tests, and even many competitive exams, vocabulary aids in judging a person. It was discovered that the vocabulary test and overall intelligence had a substantial relationship.

According to Gifford (2013), a person with a greater breadth and depth of vocabulary has a greater ability to communicate and understand a conversation, and is therefore regarded intelligent. Any language's vocabulary is essential. Even a slight change in pronunciation can easily fool listeners. It is also necessary for effective communication when using language skills.

Gifford (2013) has discussed the relationship between vocabulary and linguistic abilities. Reading and listening vocabulary is a type of vocabulary that aids comprehension of linguistic material while reading and listening. Reading vocabulary is the most extensive since it aids in recognition and understanding.

The situational and nonverbal hints, on the other hand, encourage listening vocabulary. Furthermore, reading material has a substantial influence on vocabulary and understanding (Curtis, 2016). Writing and speaking vocabulary are two types of vocabulary that are utilized in written and oral communication. Users' verbal thoughts drive writing vocabulary, yet speaking vocabulary is erroneously used due to a lack of understanding of nuances that are compensated by non-verbal indications. Vocabulary is vital for the advancement of four language abilities as well as efficient communication, whether it is receptive (passive) or productive (active) (Gifford, 2013).

Finally, there is no one-size-fits-all method or mix of strategies that can be determined to be the most effective. Instead, each student must choose tactics that are appropriate for their learning environment and requirements. However, it is the instructor's responsibility to abandon traditional vocabulary teaching methods, which are still widely utilized in many EFL settings around the world, and in which the teacher is the sole authority and source of all knowledge, and learners are merely passive recipients (Ali & Zaki, 2019).

To summarize, Webb & Nation (2013) stated that there are four ways for learning vocabulary: one that involves mingling with people, another that uses the brain and memory, and a fourth that involves planning and evaluation. In terms of cognitive and memory methods, Alqahtani (2015) concurred with Webb & Nation (2013), it is a wonderful approach to understand and memorize a vocabulary by repeating words over and again.

Gu (2013), on the other hand, agreed with Webb and Nation (2013) in that vocabulary development is primarily a social activity. They feel that acquiring vocabulary should be done in groups rather than individually. Cohen and Apeh (2011), on the other hand, argued that methods are determined by learners' capacities. They believe that younger students should use simpler tactics, whereas older students should employ more advanced ones. Vocabulary learning is a step-by-step process, according to Gifford (2013), Thornbury (2012), and Zimmerman (2019). They believe that mastering vocabulary is critical to a student's success in school. Curtis (2016) and Ali & Zaki (2019) both agreed that knowing and comprehending terminology, whether spoken or written, qualifies someone as competent. All of these authors have a common belief. Learning vocabulary is a two-way process in which the teacher professionally instructs and the pupils actively and truly study.

2.3 Attitude in Vocabulary Learning

According to Vasu and Dhanavel (2015) students believe vocabulary is a critical component in their capacity to perceive and express themselves clearly in oral communication. Even if the book contains one or two unfamiliar terms, children should be able to comprehend it without difficulty. In written communication, pupils may prefer to express themselves using common terms rather than formal sentences. Second, language learners prefer to learn from their peers as well as through mobile phones, laptops, the Internet, and SMS. Third, female students employed more resources to acquire language than male students. As a result, the study demonstrates how students' attitudes about vocabulary learning are influenced by gender and media. In general, pupils understand the importance of vocabulary and the need for vocabulary learning resources.

There was also a report that looked into the vocabulary attitudes of students. Students' attitudes are unaffected by their ambitions, according to the data (academic vs. leisure). Whatever the goal, university students were enthusiastic about vocabulary approaches. Previous research has related positive attitudes regarding reading texts to the application of cognitive and metacognitive learning approaches, as well as perceived task worth. Positive attitudes among university students predict learning motivation and academic success, whereas negative attitudes predict motivation and academic success in the opposite direction (Mega, et al., 2014).

Finally, Vasu and Dhanavel (2015) and Mega, et al. (2014) place attitude in vocabulary learning at the top of their lists. They believed that no language learning could take place without a positive attitude toward it. When it comes to acquiring vocabulary, attitude is so important that if it is compromised, learning success may never happen.

2.4 Alignment of the Language and Literacy Domains with the 5 sub-strands

Finally, Vasu and Dhanavel (2015) and Mega, et al. (2014) rank attitude as the most important factor in vocabulary development. They believed that learning a language was impossible without a favorable attitude toward it. When it comes to learning new words, attitude is so crucial that if it is harmed, learning success may never occur. At progressively demanding and advanced levels, the abilities, grammatical items, structures, and other types of texts will be taught and repeated. Using this method, students can progress from the fundamentals to greater levels of language proficiency (Department of Education, 2016). The alignment of the language and literacy domains with the five sub-strands of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Alignment of the Language and Literacy Domains with the 5 sub-strands

Integrated Language Arts Domains	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	VIEWING
1. Oral Language	✓	✓			
2. Phonological Awareness	✓				
3. Book and Print Knowledge			✓		
4. Alphabet Knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Phonics and Word Recognition	✓		✓	✓	
6. Fluency		✓	✓		
7. Spelling			✓	✓	
8. Writing and Composition	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9. Grammar Awareness & Structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10. Vocabulary Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Reading Comprehension 11.1 schema & prior knowledge 11.2 strategies 11.3 narrative text 11.4 informational text			✓	✓	✓
12. Listening Comprehension	✓	✓			
13. Attitudes towards language, literacy and literature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14. Study Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The 5 macro-skills in English are required for alphabet knowledge, vocabulary development, attitude toward language, literacy, and literature, and study strategies, as illustrated in the table above. If a learner succeeds in growing his or her vocabulary skills, these 5-macro skills are also much improved. This is where we can see how vocabulary learning, as well as techniques and attitude, are all valued in the K-12 English language learning curriculum in the Philippines.

3. Conclusion and Implication

This research looked at the most recent vocabulary learning strategies and attitudes studies, publications, and research papers. Aside from that, numerous related factors are highlighted, such as reading and listening abilities, which are both important skills in vocabulary learning. Following the completion of this work, the author hopes that English teachers, especially those in the senior high school department, would utilize it as a tool to promote awareness of the present issues that students face when studying vocabulary. The author kindly offers this work as a reference to English teachers who find it useful in better understanding their students' vocabulary learning attitudes and practices.

The author wanted to include all relevant literature to fully comprehend students' vocabulary learning strategies and attitudes, which could be very useful in developing innovative projects and interventions to ensure that students achieve their full potential in learning English vocabulary, which is a stepping stone to mastering all other English skills. However, the researcher noticed that there are fewer studies that focus on the most recent or "state-of-the-art" strategies of students in vocabulary

learning that have emerged from the modular distance modality that most schools in the Philippines use, and what might be the emerging attitude of students in vocabulary learning given the new normal set-up of teaching and learning processes.

Following the foregoing, it is suggested that English language teachers consider upgrading their pedagogical abilities in vocabulary instruction by attending seminars/workshops on the most up-to-date teaching strategies that will withstand the test of time in the new standard education system. Students' insights from these experiences should be implemented in a real-world setting to reduce challenges with language acquisition.

Finally, all of the associated literatures offered only discussed basic studies undertaken by teachers to better understand their students' vocabulary attitudes and methods. Despite the fact that these literatures provide a clear perspective on students' strategies and attitudes toward vocabulary learning, the author did not come across anything that mentioned an innovation or project initiated by a researcher or teacher to address concerns about students' vocabulary learning. That becomes a very important target for future research.

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