

Investigating ESL Vocabulary Learning Strategies: Teachers' and Students' Beliefs and Practices

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Abstract

This essay aims to investigate the perspectives regarding vocabulary learning strategies of ESL (English as a second language) learners at Bachelor's level in Public Sector Institutions in Lahore. ESL teachers' beliefs, views and practices are also sought out to assess the effectiveness of VLSs in the process of enhancing L2 vocabulary. Based on the aims of present study, the mixed methods design of research with the integration of cross sectional survey method was adopted. Data was collected through the implementation of two questionnaires, both for teachers and language learners. One hundred ESL students and twenty ESL in service teachers participated in this study. Two separate questionnaires for teachers and students were employed to elicit required information. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, SILL and Schmitt's Taxonomy for Vocabulary Learning were modified and adopted as the main theoretical frameworks to develop instruments for this study. The results have suggested that Memory strategies were acknowledged as most preferred vocabulary learning styles by the learners. Whereas, Meta-Cognitive strategies were found as least exploited vocabulary learning techniques. Overall, the learners were found as believers of multimodality, while acquiring L2 vocabulary. The teacher respondents were found aware of variety of vocabulary learning strategies. However, some teachers' beliefs were not found being practiced in the actual classroom, implying the gap between their beliefs and classroom practices. These discrepancies might be attributed to the different contextual factors. In order to overcome the said gap, recommendations are made to increase the learning outcomes of students through the incorporation of teachers' training to teach vocabulary learning strategies.

Keywords: beliefs, vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), vocabulary knowledge, ESL, taxonomy.

There are multiple factors which are involved in English language acquisition. No one can deny the importance of Vocabulary in the process of second Language learning. Learning of ESL lexical items is entirely different from L1 vocabulary development. Learning L1 vocabulary is a natural process as it is linked with every day needs. On the contrary, ESL vocabulary learning occurs mostly in instructional settings and the learners are given linguistic input about the meanings of the ESL words. Only knowing the meaning of a word is not enough. The knowledge of a word includes an understanding of its register, written and spoken forms along with its frequency, its grammatical behavior and collocation are known as the properties of “ Word knowledge”(Schmitt 5). One of the most observed reasons of students’ low language proficiency is lack of suitable word knowledge. It doesn’t only hinder students’ reading comprehension; even communicative competence is affected too. McCarthy also pointed out:

‘No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way.’(8)

It is observed that L2 vocabulary learning is not given an individual attention in classroom practices which ultimately becomes an unsolvable riddle for the ESL learners. In most of the cases, neither extra pedagogic measures to teach vocabulary nor the concept of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) is introduced in the ESL classrooms. Therefore, the students are not usually aware of the concept of Vocabulary Learning Strategies or sometimes they use them unknowingly. The need of lexical knowledge is multiplied due

to the fact that the grammatical errors may only result in comprehend able structures but the weak and faulty vocabulary hinders communication. Due to world's globalization, the need of communication among countries has further raised the importance of English language. Since, English Language has become a medium of communication and instruction in most parts of the world, the importance of English Language Teaching (ELT) is enhanced too. English has been taught in Pakistani schools from grade one onwards especially in Punjab. English language is implemented as a compulsory course for both students with English major and other major subjects.

ESL learners need knowledge of suitable and adequate words to express their intended point of view completely and correctly. At present, learners in Public Sector (Education), mostly consider acquisition of lexical knowledge as only a long list of words and their meanings in L1 (Urdu). Whereas, Nagy and Scott (270) in "Vocabulary processes" discussed five basic aspects of the knowledge of word: word knowledge is comprised of both affective and cognitive dimensions; the knowledge of word is incremental; one word carries multiple meanings; the knowledge of word is affected by the learner's ability to build the link between the newly learnt word and its meaning; and the word knowledge is also based on the awareness of the kind of the word, information about the user of the word and finally the purpose of the use of the word.

As soon as an unfamiliar word comes in the given text or in any other resource material, the process of comprehension stops and ultimately no learning takes place. It happens because new words are neither taught nor learnt with special focus on or through particular method or strategy. Usually it is a neglected area. Correct usage of the

words is another area in which ESL learners lack and cannot show any performance in and outside the classroom. This deficiency increases the anxiety level of ESL learners, which ultimately slows down the learning process.

As Gu in his case study, “Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Good and Poor Chinese EFL Learners” also highlights the importance of the vocabulary learning and the ways to acquire it, by concluding that:

‘It shows how the way students deal with vocabulary can, to a considerable extent, contribute to success or failure in foreign language learning. It was demonstrated that in order to succeed, one must take the dynamic nature of words into consideration so that the resulting interlanguage is made up of a vocabulary that is alive.’(17)

Through research in past, it is realized that language learning strategies are of immense importance in acquiring English language. Gu in his “Vocabulary Learning in a Second Language: Person, Task, Context and Strategies” defines learning strategies as:

‘A learning strategy is a series of actions a learner takes to facilitate the completion of a learning task. A strategy starts when the learner analyzes the task, the situation, and what is available in his/her own repertoire.’(3)

It is proved that when a learner follows certain strategies, becomes autonomous and a successful vocabulary learning takes place. Several studies have produced taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary Learning Strategies are further divided into different categories. Gu classified second language (L2) vocabulary learning strategies as cognitive, metacognitive, memory and activation strategies (3).

In other words broadly, “Vocabulary learning strategies, therefore, should include strategies for “using” as well as “knowing” a word.” (Gu3) Schmitt (8) in “Vocabulary Learning Strategies” improved vocabulary learning strategies based on Oxford(1990,43) into determination (not seeking another person’s expertise) strategies, social (seeking another person’s expertise) and though the remembering category comprises social, memorization, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies.

The milieu of present study is public sector education in Pakistan, where, English language has been included in our curriculum as second language and as a language of practice utility. The Public Sector female university, Lahore College for Women University and its affiliated colleges, Govt: Post Graduate Islamia College for women, Cooper Road, Lahore, Govt. College for Women Gulberg, Lahore, Govt. Postgraduate College For Women Samanabad, Lahore are the context of this study. In these institutions, the two years bachelors’ program is extended to four years with new avenues to be explored, Vocabulary development is one of them. In the newly designed course, ‘Language in Use’, Vocabulary learning is incorporated as major portion of the course content. Though English language is still taught for two years but the syllabus for two semesters is revised and has become more language based. This shift doesn’t deal only with the duration of the course, in fact, it encompasses the change in the ‘Aims and Objectives’ of the English Language curriculum. Previously, the Punjab University course was homogeneously, prescribed and implemented in all Public Sector Colleges of Punjab in two years English (language) compulsory program. But now, Separate modules and textbooks are designed to teach Grammar, Vocabulary, and all

four Language Skills etc. Since vocabulary is to be taught as a significant segment in the new course, therefore proper planning is to be done regarding the pedagogical process. It is realized that neither learning nor teaching of 'ESL Vocabulary' is successfully possible, without having any knowledge of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs). After the recognition of the complexity of learning English vocabulary, the question arises that what can be the best way to teach and learn ESL vocabulary. Keeping such objectives in mind, this study is designed to explore main Vocabulary Learning strategies to be used or practiced by ESL learner in our context. The current study began with the knowledge, derived from the previously conducted studies on vocabulary learning strategies.

Gu and Johnson carried out a study on 850 sophomore university learners with non-English majors in a university and traced the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies, the size of vocabulary and language proficiency. The data collected showed a positive and significant correlation between the meta cognitive strategies e.g. Selective Attention and Self-Initiation, and the test scores. It was also found that the mnemonic devices such as imagery, auditory and visual associations, semantic encoding strategies word list learning did not correlate with English language proficiency, but was highly correlated with vocabulary size. The findings of the study also showed that "students would benefit more if they aimed at learning the language skills rather than just remembering English equivalents of all Chinese words" (659).

Schmitt conducted a large scale survey study on Vocabulary learning strategies with 600 Japanese L2 learners of four different age groups: adult learners, university students, high school students and junior high school students. Schmitt investigated two

main things ,one was about the types of VLSs used by the Sample and second was that how much useful they were considered and then rated by the Sample students. About 85% of the sample was found to be positive about the usefulness of bilingual dictionary to get the meaning of second language word. Repetition strategies, both verbal and written were used and rated as the second and third favorite strategies to learn L2 vocabulary.

Sahbazian carried out a survey study with Turkish ESL learners, to find out, what particular steps, the sample take themselves in acquiring new English words. The results depicted that all the respondents were found in use of vocabulary learning strategies with different frequencies. Sahbazian's study concluded that the most popular approach to learn new ESL vocabulary items was to exploit memory, simple and direct cognitive strategies.

Mason tried to confirm the hypothesis that listening to stories helps to acquire L2 vocabulary, the efficiency level of such acquisition and its comparison with the teaching of vocabulary with direct instruction. A sample of sixty, first year students with English majors at a four-year -private college in Osaka, Japan, participated in this study and proved the Comprehension Hypothesis, which asserts that language is basically developed through the comprehension of messages.

Pigada and Schmitt attempted to prove that extensive reading can enhance learner's vocabulary acquisition more than any other method. They did a case study with a French learner. A list of 133 words was given to the only subject. It was examined that whether one month of extensive reading could improve the knowledge of spelling,

meaning and grammatical traits of the target words. In order to assess the improvement in the learner's lexicon, the method of a one-on-one interview was used by them. The results of the study emerged according to the expectations of the researchers as 65% of the target words were enhanced. Spellings were strengthened. Grammatical knowledge along with meanings was also improved.

It is also proved through previously conducted studies, that both the awareness and beliefs of language teachers regarding L2 vocabulary learning, extends considerable influence on their teaching practices in ESL classrooms. Further, it is also observed that the teaching styles and preferences, based on teachers' beliefs and doctrines directly affect the choice, regarding VLSs of L2 vocabulary learners and their comprehension of English language. The relationship between teachers' teaching behaviors and learners' learning ESL, and then learners' achievements of learning objectives cannot be denied. In past, teaching was not considered different from any other behavior. The Behaviorists, in 1970s viewed teaching as "the mastering of a series of effective teaching behaviors" (Calderhead qtd. in Richards5). In such scenario as Borg pointed out that even the scholars did not try to explore that how the cognitive dimensions of teachers could affect their language instructions till 1990s. At present, teaching is considered mainly as a thinking activity. It is widely believed now that "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thought, and beliefs" (36).

While defining teachers' belief system, Richard (66) thought that teachers' beliefs are "the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions

about teaching and learning that teachers build up over time and bring with them to the classroom". Teachers' belief system is defined in many ways such as Borg (186) opinionated teachers' beliefs as something which "refer to teachers' pedagogical beliefs, or those beliefs of relevance to an individual's teaching". Various studies have been conducted to investigate the exact scale to which the classroom practices are affected by the teachers' beliefs. The conclusions of the mainstream research clearly advocate that ESL teachers' classroom practices are influenced by number of both conflicting and interrelated factors. The study of Woods, is an evidence of positive correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their instructional principles. In a longitudinal study of two ESL teachers, Woods reached the conclusion that "the decisions made in planning and carrying out the course were internally consistent, and consistent with deeper underlying assumptions and beliefs about language, learning and teaching" (4). He drew the above mentioned results after studying two ESL teachers with different teaching approaches. One teacher followed "student-based" and the other followed "curriculum-based" approach. Since our classroom teaching is basically, teacher centered whatever the teacher knows about the subject, forms the beliefs of the teacher. Teachers' pedagogical practices depict their awareness about the particular knowledge on which their basic teaching beliefs are based. The outcome of this sequence forms another sequence of knowledge, beliefs and their practices regarding Vocabulary learning on the part of students. The sequence of the impact of teachers' practices and learner's comprehension can be interpreted in the following figure.

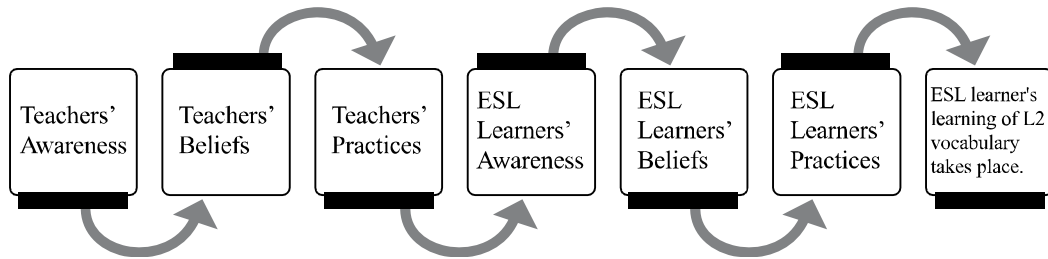


Figure 1: Formation of teachers' awareness, beliefs and their impact on learners' comprehension

Discrepancies Between Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Through many studies, it is proved that teachers implement something different from those teaching dogmas which they stated as their beliefs. In fact, while presenting their opinions, they become idealistic, while teaching in classroom they become more archetypal teachers. The evidence of this discrepancy is provided by Chang & Huang who explored the level of compatibility between teachers' doctrine and actual classroom activities while dealing with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The subjects of this study were 119 ESL teachers from Taipei public senior high schools, Taiwan. The data declared that the sample adopted a conventional teacher-centered as well as lecture mode in the language classrooms, despite of being supporters and strong believers of, communicative language teaching (CLT). Johnson also examined the beliefs and practices of four ESL pre-service teachers and found that the inconsistency between their system of beliefs and practices is rooted in their lack of alternative images of teachers.

Rafi investigated the compatibility between the natural order of vocabulary acquisition and the order in which vocabulary is presented in English textbook, published by Punjab Textbook Board (PTBB). Kanwal also worked on the ways through which the

L2 vocabulary acquisition could be enhanced. Through her study, she has suggested that suitable resource material i.e. Short stories and language puzzles can also be helpful in the L2 vocabulary development. The ultimate beneficiary of this research study would be the students who, with appropriate use of vocabulary learning strategies, would be able to overcome their writing and speaking problems that they face due to lack of vocabulary.

Research Questions

The current study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What Vocabulary Learning Strategies are most and least frequently used by ESL learners at bachelor's level in Public Sector institutions in Lahore?
2. What are ESL teachers' beliefs and awareness about the usefulness of Vocabulary Learning Strategies in learning L2 vocabulary?
3. What are main Vocabulary Learning Strategies employed by the ESL teachers?

Review

Drawing, on the previous research on vocabulary learning strategies, following theories were taken as foundation for this survey study.

The Word Meaning Theory: states that there are two ways to look at the concept of word meaning (Aitchison). One is fixed meaning concept and the second is fuzzy concept. The process of learning the meaning of new lexical items proves to be a big task for most second language learners, (Aitchison qtd.in He6) gives two main arguments about the concept of word meaning, 'Fixed Meaning assumption and Fuzzy Meaning assumption'.

Internal Architecture Theory: deals with the internal structure of the words. There are two types of words in English. There are words which exist as wholes. They cannot be subdivided. They keep and convey complete meaning. While on the other hand, there exist internally complex words. They can be divided into smaller parts which they share with other words. Addition of suffix and prefix to a stem forms new words. It changes the meaning and new word is formed. Prefixes, such as (in, un, re, etc.) or suffixes (tion, ness, ly, ful and so on) can change the meaning as well as form of the words (Nation). There are two categories of these affixes, derivational affixes and inflectional affixes.

Prototype Theory: gives an insight into the complex mechanism of ESL vocabulary learning. Prototype is “that when people categorize common objects, they do not expect them all to be on an equal footing. They seem to have some idea of the characteristics of an ideal exemplar” (Rosch qtd. in Aitchison 57).

Theory of Semantic Network: considers that L2 vocabulary development also makes use of Semantic network. The Semantic network basically shows the “connections of concepts” (He,7). The interconnected system is basically a network, which is related to the mental lexicon, which plays an important role in vocabulary development.

Behaviorist Learning Theory: states that acquiring a new language is same as forming some new habit. Ellis (31) explained that for Behaviorists, the term “habits” stands for all types of behaviors involved in language acquisition. Behaviorists consider the connection between the language learner and linguistic input as most important factor in linguistic habit formation.

Word Cards Theory: advocates that L2 vocabulary can be acquired through

decontextualized learning. Nation explains that the learner writes L2 word on one side of the card and its L1 meaning on the back of the same card. The learner reads the set of cards once and then try to recall their meanings. No contextual clues are used to enhance ones L2 vocabulary.

Incidental Learning Theory: considers Incidental learning as a kind of learning, which is done through guessing from the context. It is basically learning new words without any particular focus and intention to acquire new vocabulary. It is usually done, while being engaged in other kinds of language activities, such as reading and writing (Nation).

Methodology

Research Design

This Mixed Methods research design within the Pragmatic paradigm was employed to conduct this study. Further, the Cross-sectional survey was adopted to gather required information from the sample population by employing questionnaires for both teachers and students to get answers for the research questions.

Sample

One hundred BS, semester II, session, (2013-2017) students of same gender (female) enrolled in a women Public Sector University, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore and in its three other affiliated colleges, situated in Lahore, were the student sample of this study. They all belonged to the late teenage group (17-19years). ‘Cluster Sampling’ technique was adopted to get twenty five students randomly from each of the public sector institutions. Twenty English language teachers of same gender (female), were the respondents of Teachers’ questionnaire.

Tools

Two separate questionnaires for both teachers and students were formed and used as basic tools. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, SILL and Schmitt's Taxonomy in "Vocabulary Learning Strategies" for Vocabulary Learning became the main theoretical Frameworks, incorporated too (1- 6). Few additions and modifications were made to match the participants' background knowledge, level of competence and their learning environment.

The students' perception, forty three items questionnaire was a 5-Likert scale, ranging from 0 (Never use it) to 4 (Always use it). In addition three open ended questions were also included to get an in-depth information about the learning habits of the ESL learners' Language. The teachers' questionnaire was a thirteen-item questionnaire, ten questions were close ended and three were open ended questions. This questionnaire was mainly based on Oxford's Strategy Inventory.

Procedure

After getting consent from the heads of the institutions, pilot testing, improvement and approval of the questionnaires, the researcher got ready and confident enough to start the data collection by visiting the sample institutions herself.

Data Analysis

After collection, all of the data were computed by using the statistical package, SPSS for Windows. The analysis was done by following the steps given below:

1. The descriptive statistics was used to find frequencies, percentage, and mean (\bar{X}).
2. The questionnaires of the six strategy categories: the Determination, the Social

(Discovery), the Social (Consolidation), the Memory, the Cognitive and the Meta cognitive. The mean (\bar{X}), and percentage were used to compute the data.

The qualitative data has been analyzed thematically and the answers of the respondents have been mentioned briefly in descriptive form.

Results

Demographic Information of the Student Participants.

Characteristics	Percentage
Gender	
Female	100
Years Since Studying English	
Nursery	51
Middle Onward	9
No Response	40
Medium Of Instruction	
Urdu	47
English	29
No Response	24

Table 1: *Demographic information of the student participants*

Overall Usage of the Six Categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

After analyzing individually, the Vocabulary Learning Strategies were grouped into Six main categories as classified by Schmitt's "Vocabulary Learning Strategies."

Strategy Category	Mean
Determination	2.56
Social (Discovery)	2.55
Social (Consolidation)	2.56
Memory	2.63
Cognitive	2.37
Meta Cognitive	2.27

Table 2: *Percentage of Overall Strategy Use*

The data collected shows that the sample respondents use Memory (MEM) strategies most frequently at the highest mean score (2.63). Meanwhile the least used strategies, found were Meta Cognitive at the lowest mean score (2.27). (See Table 2).

Use Of Six Categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies
i Determination Strategies

Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	2. Use of Bilingual Dictionary	35	35	32	32	22	22	8	8	3	
17. Use of Prefixes and Affixes	17	17	18	18	30	30	20	20	15	15	2.02

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use in Individual Item of Determination*

According to the data collected, the sample was found to be the most frequent user of Bilingual dictionary (mean: 2.88) under the category of Determination Strategies. On the other hand the least used item of Determination Strategy was, the use of Prefixes and Suffixes (mean:2.02). (see table 3).

ii Social Strategies (Discovery)

Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	Q4. Support of the Teacher	23	23	27	27	28	28	17	17	05	
Q 36.Support from Classmates	37	37	20	20	22	22	13	13	08	08	2.65

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics Use in Individual Item of Social Strategies (Discovery)*

As far as the items of Discovery Strategies are concerned, it was found that the students use the strategy of getting ‘Support from Classmates’ most frequently

(mean:2.65). On the other hand the strategy of consulting teacher to get the meaning of new English word was reported as least frequently used strategy by the L2 learners (mean:2.46). (see table 4).

iii Social Strategies (Consolidation)											
Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	Q 37. Understanding Words in Group Work	36	36	28	28	22	22	8	8	6	
39 Support from Native Speakers	23	23	12	12	31	31	18	18	16	16	2.08

Table5: *Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use in Individual Item of Social Strategies*

(Consolidation)

Under the category of Social Strategies (Consolidation), the most frequently used item was to work in group while understanding new words (mean:2.80). Whereas the strategy of getting help from the native speaker, was found, as least exploited strategy(mean:2.08). (see table 5).

iv Memory Strategies (MEM)											
Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	12. Use of Physical Actions	18	18	18	18	24	24	24	24	16	
21. Use of Spellings	54	54	27	27	14	14	4	4	1	1	3.29

Table 6: *Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use in Individual Item of Memory*

Within the category of Memory Strategies, the most frequently used strategy was to learn new L2 words by learning its spellings (mean : 3.29). While on the other hand the least practiced technique was reported as use of Physical Actions, to enhance English vocabulary (mean:1.98) (see table .6).

iv Cognitive Strategies												
Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
	11. Use of Flash Cards	4	4	13	13	24	24	23	23	36		36
19. Practice of New Words	36	36	35	35	19	19	9	9	1	1	2.96	

Table 7: *Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use in Individual Item of Cognitive*

Through the survey, the data collected shows that, among the Cognitive Strategies the most often practiced was, the repetition of recently learnt word (mean:2.96). The least employed item was the use of flash cards (mean:1.26). (see table 7).

v. Meta Cognitive Strategies												
Items	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Rarely use it		Never use it		Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
	24. Watching TV Shows/ Movies	2	2.0	10	10.0	40	40.0	21	21.0	27		27.0
33. Skim through a Passage	44	44	15	15	21	21	12	12	8	8	2.75	
	13	13	15	15	23	23	28	28	21	21	1.71	

Table 8: *Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use in Individual Item of Meta cognitive*

While comparing with other items of Meta Cognitive Strategies, the strategy of watching, English movies, TV shows and sound tracks to learn new L2 words, was

recorded as most often used strategy (mean:2.75). On the other hand the least used strategy, declared was Skimming oh the passage (mean : 1.71). (See table 8).

The basic purpose of teachers' questionnaire was to collect data regarding teachers' training, instructional formats and their various approaches to teach L2 vocabulary. In this regard, 80% teachers responded as 'no' whereas 20% of in service teachers responded as 'yes', means that they have got proper training to teach VLSs. While assessing the experience of teaching ESL,40% of the teacher participants reported as having 1-10 years of teaching experience. Thirty percent 30% teachers, declared 11-20 years of teaching experience, 25% teachers belonged the category of 21 to 30 years teaching experience. Only 5% teachers responded with experience of 4 years. It is also found that 65% of the teachers teach vocabulary every day, whereas 35% respondent teachers do not. Regarding students' training in using vocabulary learning strategies, 20% teachers claimed that they give training to students. Only 5% of the teacher respondents of this survey declared that they don't give any training about using VLSs, 75% teachers claimed that they, give such training but occasionally.

In relation to the use of Native Language, Seventy five percent (75%) reported as sometimes users, whereas 25% recorded themselves as always users of this strategy. In connection with making vocabulary as main focus of ESL lesson, 20 % teacher participants fully agreed, 25% said 'no' to this preference and 55% agreed to do it only sometimes.

In response to the enquiry related to the learner's style of learning, 5% teachers reported that all learners learn in the same way, 20% were of the opinion that sometimes

learner learn in identical way. On the other hand, 75% teacher participants did not agree and claimed that learners do not learn vocabulary in the same way. In response to another survey question, 60% teachers considered Grammar, 25% teachers rated Writing and 15% respondent teachers claimed that Vocabulary is most difficult aspect of teaching.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study have clearly depicted that there is neither a definite formula, nor a particularly right or a wrong way to learn and teach English vocabulary to ESL learners. It changes, as the context, learning objectives and the level of learner's competence varies. The variations in the strategies and styles of learning English vocabulary seems to be due to different factors as Schmitt in "Vocabulary in Language Teaching" suggested that "the best practice in any situation will depend on the type of student, the words that are target, the school system and curriculum, and many other factors" (142). Apart from most and least frequently used strategies, some strategies are used, either at medium or low frequency level.

The results drawn from the students' questionnaires, depict that "Memory strategies" are most frequently exploited to learn new words by the ESL learners. These results are consistent with the conclusions drawn from the research carried out by Sahbazian, with Turkish ESL learners at university level. The preference of Memory Strategies, reported in this study, implies that the sample of this survey follows the 'Theory of Semantic network' as well. According to this theory ESL learners do not learn new words in isolation, they, in fact, build an interconnected system. Use of new vocabulary items for several times to strengthen the word knowledge, has also

been recorded as a successful Memory Strategy in the current study. Learning through repetition, belongs to the Behaviorist's theory of learning. Through repetition and practice, habit is formed. The followers of this theory consider learning new word as forming new habit. The researcher has found that most of the respondents try to become proficient in vocabulary knowledge after having oral and written repetitions. This finding is consistent with Schmitt's study of 600 Japanese ESL learners, which concluded that 'repetition strategies' in both written and verbal forms as second and third favorite strategies. Thompson talked about Memory Strategies (mnemonics) as "mnemonics work by utilizing some well-known principles of psychology: a retrieval plan is developed during encoding, and mental imagery, both visual and verbal, is used. They help individuals learn faster and recall better because they aid the integration of new material into existing cognitive units and because they provide retrieval cues"(43).

Though, Meta Cognitive strategies, as a whole group, stand as least exploited VLSs by the student respondents of this study but around sixty percent of the students rated, TV shows and Movies (segments of Metacognitive strategies group) as an effective schemes for enhancing word knowledge. It may be because, Television viewership has increased and many educational objectives can be achieved through different types of telecasts.

Determination Strategies have emerged as second favorite facilitator on the scale of most frequently used vocabulary learning styles by the ESL learners. These results are in line, to some extent with the findings of the study conducted by Schmitt and McCarthy. They found Determination Strategies as most favorite strategies, as they

declared that the use of Bilingual dictionary, as most frequently used strategy by the junior school, high school and university students. During the analysis of Determination strategies (DET) in isolation, the use of Bilingual dictionary stood at the highest order in the present study. It may be because, L2 learners always feel comfortable with their first language.

In the present study, Discovery Strategies are graded as third favorite group of strategies. By using the elements of Social Strategies, the learner resolves the ambiguities related to the culture based terminologies and other values linked with the target language. Social Discovery Strategies also promote collaborative learning.

The category of Cognitive strategy is acknowledged as fourth, most often used strategy in the process of vocabulary learning. In Schmitt's taxonomy, the Cognitive strategies basically stand for both verbal and written repetition in addition with some other mechanical means involved in vocabulary learning. The respondents of this study have proved to be the firm believers of repetition in vocabulary development. It also validates Schmitt's findings who in his study with Japanese learners reached the conclusion that 76% of the learners used repetition (both verbal and oral) strategy as second and third most used strategies. As Schmitt predicted in "Vocabulary Learning Strategies," it may assist the students to achieve high levels of competence in students regarding ESL vocabulary (22).

During the analysis of the qualitative data, it was found encouraging that the sample have acknowledged multiple vocabulary learning styles. This validates the finding of Alsafi who came up with the conclusion that learners always enjoy and prefer more

than one style of learning. It is assessed that the students take pleasure in multimodality. The students' inclination towards reading magazines, novels, newspapers, watching TV, listening conversation and both bilingual and online dictionaries is also positive. As Gune commented that learning styles do not stay same throughout the life rather they build up as the learner learns and grow (3).

It has been recognized, that teacher's beliefs influence their professional life. Teacher's beliefs are basically as Borg considers teacher's cognition as "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching-what teachers know, believe, and think" (81). Extensive reading was also acknowledged as a useful approach by the hundred percent of teacher respondents. In relation to the role of extensive reading, the findings of this study are in line with the case study, conducted by Pigada & Schmitt with a French learner.

Other than the significant and positive correlation between the teachers' beliefs and practices, however, some discrepancies also emerged. Though, teachers viewed VLSs as affective tools to build word bank, but do not practice in classroom. The result of this discrepancy as Folse stated vocabulary acquisition as something problematic because it is not treated sufficiently and professionally. "However, he does challenge the notion that vocabulary "will come naturally" or will be acquired "incidentally."(1). Another contrast appeared, regarding the styles of learning. Though it was acknowledged that learners do not learn in the same style, their ways of vocabulary acquisition varies as their learning needs and proficiency level varies from each other. But instead of diversifying their teaching method to cater the individual needs, same old and fixed VLSs are employed for all students in ESL classes. The findings of teachers' survey

regarding the compatibility between their beliefs and practices are in line with Borg, whose study pointed out that classroom practices do not at all times depict teachers' stated beliefs, pedagogical principles and personal theories (91).

It is concluded through the feedback of three research questions in the present study that learning new L2 words is multifaceted and a complex process. The ESL learners are using Memory Strategies most often and the Meta-Cognitive strategies, least frequently in the process of developing word knowledge. Discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and their vocabulary teaching practices are also reported in this study. However, both teachers and students have rated VLSs as indispensable tools and supportive gears to empower learners to become more decisive while acquiring word knowledge but do not train learners to use VLSs. Lack of resource material, constraint of lengthy syllabus to be covered within short time, unavailability of electronic aids and at times burden of excessive workload, on language teachers are reported as major reasons of the disagreement present between teachers' beliefs and practices. In order to overcome such divergence, Explicit instructions regarding vocabulary learning strategies should be embedded in regular language courses. As Cohen proposed the integration of strategy in the language program, "STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM" and then its implementation in the language lessons in the form of different activities and tasks which provide practice in the wide range of strategies (8). Teachers must shift their role from a knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator to encourage students.