# EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

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**Abstract:** *Vocabulary is a key element of language and has an undeniable impact on the general understanding of what was previously learned. It is obvious that a rich vocabulary is a generator for the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Researchers believe that vocabulary development strategies are a challenging aspect in the language learning process, that is why scholars consider a variety of strategies such as games and activities that serve as a main and irreplaceable aid in learning new words.*

*The given article reflects the opinions of famous researchers regarding effective strategies that would contribute to the enrichment of the English vocabulary.*

**Keywords:** *vocabulary strategies, abilities, different approaches, cognitive and metacognitive strategies.*

Learning words can be regarded as the most cognately requiring duty learners should deal with. Words are the basic elements of the language, because one cannot communicate successfully without a sufficient vocabulary. It can be stated that a rich vocabulary is a hub for the development of four language skills: *listening, speaking, reading* and *writing*. Scholars consider that Vocabulary Development Strategies are a challenging aspect of language learning that is why scholars consider a variety of strategies, as well as games and activities that serve as a leading and irreplaceable helper in the word learning process.

Acquiring a rich vocabulary stock has become one of the most significant language skills in contemporary world. Researchers work on finding ways to help language learners use easiest ways to acquire a rich vocabulary. LLS is a well-discussed facet of the language that subconsciously appeal to both educators and learners. Thus, dwelling on the given issue R. Oxford [4, p. 63] defines LS as "*specifications, behaviors, steps, or techniques- such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task-used by students to enhance their own learning*". A. Wenden, a famous psychologist in the field of education interprets this concept as "*techniques, tactics, potentially conscious plans, consciously employed operations, learning skills, basic skills, functional skills, cognitive abilities, language-processing strategies, problem solving procedures*" [7, p. 19]. L. Cameron gave another definition of VLS, clarifying that they are "*actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary*" [1, p. 92] As we can conclude these *VLS are tools for self-development that, in their turn, create a ground for developing communicative skills* as it establishes a significant relationship between VLS and learning results. Accordingly, both language educators and students are recommended to use a wide range of VLS at different steps of learning in order to memorize and systematize their usage in contextual situations.

A well-known researcher A. Wenden stated that strategies may not be conscious. This, she proposed 6 peculiarities of VLS. She considers that *strategies belong to special actions of techniques, not a learner's general approach; they can be observable or unobservable; they are problem-oriented; they may contribute to learning directly or indirectly; strategies may be consciously deployed or become automatized; they are amenable to change, they can be learned, modified and even rejected* [7, pp. 27-28].

Scholars claim that VLS definitely help learners choose and implement words effectively, help strengthen their metacognitive abilities, and connect them to the whole language learning. They also

develop some students' abilities as improving students' performance, increasing students' independence and engagement with learning. And, of course, VLS help learners understand that sometimes there is the usage of ineffective strategies but not the lack of their self-abilities.

Researchers stated that VLS are responsible for two determined roles: *cognitive* and *affective-motivational*. On the one hand, LS have a cognitive effect, because it simplifies and improves the learning process, especially in new tasks, especially those that require or allow conscious thinking and accuracy, as for example, when a learner faces certain problems such as the necessity to resort to a synonym when he/she doesn't know a word. On the other hand, LS have an affective-motivational role as it increases their self-confidence and stimulates students to work hard and improve their vocabulary.

There were a lot of researches in the past concerning VLS and their impact on vocabulary growth. And, naturally, it can be a great challenge to decide what strategy is the best. Consequently, A. Wilkins' significant phrase that *"without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed"*, illustrates that having adequate vocabulary can be really challenging [8, p. 84]. This is the main reason, why learners should be equipped with different strategies in order to face this difficulty. Thus, language learners are recommended to employ various strategies to find an effective way of acquiring vocabulary. Ellis claims [7, p. 132] that successful learners are those who use more strategies, because right and dynamic strategies have a great impact on their academic performance. All the learners are individuals, for some it is enough to read the meaning of the word, but it might take a lot of time to memorize for others.

It is worth mentioning that a set of key factors underline the irreplaceable significance of vocabulary strategies in the language learning process. For example:
1. Providing students with both *definitions and context*. Practice shows that to get a precise meaning of a word can be reached through giving a balanced combination of contextual and definitional information.
2. Students can learn more words by connecting them to the already known information. This fact guarantees that words will be kept in their long-term memory.
3. And, finally, thanks to VLS new words are acquired through all four language skills *listening, speaking, reading and writing*. That means that they are learned and repeated in various contexts and situations that help students keep them in their active use.

Scholars state that an amount of methods and factors are supposed to contribute towards the qualitative achievement of learning development. VLS allow learners to remember unknown words better and easier and keep them in their long-term memory. There are various effective and valuable VLS that can be helpful to learn words independently. Thus, we can say that it is crucial for students to learn how to use these VLS to discover the meaning of difficult words by their own, especially for mature readers. It is evident that all the learners require individual methods (*visual, audio, kinesthetic*), that consequently can be different. And, of course, the basis for a rich and sophisticated vocabulary is formed when vocabulary is acquired through a diversity of strategies. On these conditions, students will get the opportunity to learn lexical items in a qualitative way. In this case students can also enjoy VLS and appreciate the genuine beauty of words.

It is but natural that vocabulary is a key constituent of language and has an indisputable impact on the overall understanding of what was learned. In some cases, language learners tend to use a dictionary to look up appropriate definitions for words that are unfamiliar for them. As a result, these words are stored in the short-term memory, because they are not clearly understood and cannot be used in their daily speech. The goal of learning words is not to know a word and its meaning for a day, or even for an hour, but on the contrary to make them part of the vocabulary and use them as often as possible.

Having read a considerable number of scientific sources, it could be affirmed that a great variety of VLS should be- used to reach a qualitative memorization and enhance learners' vocabulary. Thus, R. Oxford identified that all VLS can be categorized into two main groups: **direct** and **indirect**. In his opinion, the first large group is oriented to explicit teaching techniques, generally to explain a specific skill. In many cases, it happens when a teacher stands in front of the students and explains them the new material. **The direct strategies are composed of *memory strategies*** (remembering and retrieving new words), ***cognitive strategies*** (understanding and producing the material),

*comprehention strategies* (using new information despite knowledge gaps). While the second group is indirect vocabulary learning strategies that focus on the fact, **when learners see and hear words through discussion with others, or through the reading process.** He affirms that this class consists of *metacognitive strategies* (coordinating the learning process), *affective strategies* (regulating emotions), *and social strategies* (learning through co-operation) [4, pp. 15-20].

| *Categories* | Sub-category | |
|---|---|---|
| **Direct** | | |
| Memory strategies | ● Creating mental linkages | Grouping, associating, placing new words into a context |
| | ● Applying images and sounds | Using imagery, semantic mapping, using key words, representing sounds in memory |
| | ● Reviewing well | Structured reviewing |
| | ● Employing action | Using sentence, using mechanical technique |
| Cognitive strategies | ● Practicing | Repeating, practicing with sounds and written systems |
| | ● Receiving and sending messages | Getting the idea quickly |
| | ● Analyzing and reasoning | Analyzing expressions, translating, transferring |
| | ● Creating structure for input and output | Taking notes, summarizing, highlighting |
| Comprehension strategies | ● Guessing intelligently | Using linguistic clues |
| | ● Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing | Switching to mother tongue, using mime or gestures, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, coining words, using synonyms |
| **Indirect** | | |
| Metacognitive strategies | ● Centering your learning | Linking with known material, paying attention. Delaying speech |
| | ● Arranging and planning your learning | Organizing, setting goals and objectives, purposes of a language task (listening, reading, speaking, writing), seeking practice opportunities. |
| | ● Evaluating your learning | Self-monitoring, self-evaluating |
| Affective strategies | ● Lowering your anxiety | Using progressive relaxation. Deep breathing, music, meditation |
| | ● Encouraging yourself | Making positive statements, rewarding yourself |
| | ● Taking your emotional temperature | Listening to your body, using a checklist, writing a language learning diary |
| Social strategies | ● Asking questions | Asking for clarification, correction |
| | ● Cooperating with others | Cooperating with peers, proficient users |
| | ● Empathizing with others | Developing cultural understanding, becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings |

After a thorough analysis, we can say that the system proposed by R. Oxford classifies strategies in different ways. It is very comprehensive and detailed, linked with four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). It is also important to mention that these two enormous groups support each other and that "*each strategy class is capable of connecting with and assisting every other strategy group*" [4, p. 16].

Analyzing vocabulary techniques, another famous linguists Lewis and Hill pointed out that the most appropriate way to learn words is to teach them in groups. In their opinion awareness of certain types of relationship between words that refer to a particular group is easier to teach and learn. Among them, we can mention the following [2, p. 93]:

1. **Synonyms**. It is the easiest way for a teacher to say "*tiny*" that means the same as "*very small*".
2. **Antonyms**. For example, to give opposites as *small/big*, in order to avoid such constructions as "*not small*".
3. **Complements**
4. **Converses**. Each pair of words suggests the others: *child/parent; employer/employee*.
5. **Hyponyms**. *Cat, dog, mouse, sheep* are hyponyms of *animals*.

In addition, Lewis and Hill underline the fact that a learning strategy should be varied. Depending on the vocabulary types and aims, educators should use the most appropriate strategies and ways to help students better memorize words and boost their speaking skills [2, p. 96]. Accordingly, language educators come with the recommendation to apply more memorable ways of explaining words as:

1. ***Demonstration.*** There is something ridiculous in explaining and translating the words as stagger and chuckle. When a teacher provides students with a verbal explanation it should by accompanied with a physical demonstration. This helps to fix the word in the students' minds, and the meaning becomes clearer. Briefly, this demonstration highlights a certain word and helps associate it with visual and audio memories.
2. ***Using the real thing***. Sometimes, explanation is a time-consuming process, and the teacher finds better solutions: showing an object or drawing it on the blackboard.
3. ***Using the blackboard to show scales or grades***.
4. ***Using dictionary.*** The more learners are engaged in the learning process, the more successful they are. The best way is asking them to look up the word in a dictionary.
5. ***Verbal explanation***. Teachers should use a variety of contexts while explaining new words. It is important to use more than one context to avoid any incidental features of that particular group.
6. ***Translating.*** Though at times it is seen a very boring and traditional method, but there are cases when only this way is appropriate. For example, to give the definition through translation of the word *measles*.

J. Scrivener in his research dedicated to "Essential Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary" proposes several effective strategies that can motivate learners to get a qualitative vocabulary stock [5, p. 64]. The scholar tackles on certain strategies such as: *vocabulary self-collection analysis, word mapping, graphic-morphemic analysis, interactive word wall, vocabulary journals, using music, creating verbal situation, associated strategy.*

Analyzing the above mentioned strategies it can be concluded that they are similar in a way. And briefly said, the most commonly effective ways teachers and students should use while working with new words are finding the *definition from a dictionary*, *guessing through description*, *examples*, *illustrations (pictures, objects)*, *demonstration (acting, gesture), context (story or a sentence in which the word is presented), synonyms, antonyms, translations and associations.*

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