

A Systematic Review on Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Comprehension in Jordanian Higher Education

Ayham Ahmad Aloqaily

School of Languages, Civilisation & Philosophy UUM College of Arts and Sciences.

Prof. Madya Dr. Manvender Kaur A/P Sarjit Singh

School of Languages, Civilisation & Philosophy UUM College of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Rafizah binti Mohd Rawian

School of Languages, Civilisation & Philosophy UUM College of Arts and Sciences.

ABSTRACT:

Learning vocabulary is one of the most difficult obstacles that learners experience though learning a second or foreign language. The importance of vocabulary in language usage has been noted, and learners with inadequate vocabulary skills have had difficulty acquiring second and foreign languages. Consequently, when learning vocabulary in a second or foreign language, students must be taught vocabulary learning techniques. This paper seeks to determine whether previous studies undertaken in Jordan follow the current pattern of research in vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the study will assist students in developing their potential when they learn about the importance of ELL techniques during their university experience.

KEYWORDS: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension, EFL

Date of Submission: 24-04-2021

Date of Acceptance: 08-05-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning strategies have a long history since Rubin (1975) started working on good language learners and presented the first list of taxonomy strategies that focused on learners' thoughts, actions, and social behaviors (Rubin, 1981). Following the research, O'Malley et al.'s (1985) presented cognitive and metacognitive strategies that new language learners use to get information about a language. Rebecca Oxford presented the multi-faceted Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) in 1990, which has been utilized to assess the language learning task assigned to students within the context of the learning.

They were acquiring a language such as English requires the learner to read, which is an ability found stable and durable for gaining the language skills (Willinsky, 2017). Reading is one of the four primary language skills that foreign language learners (FLL) require to become well-rounded learners for the language being studied (listening, publishing, reading, and speaking). Reading is divided into two text-based parts (syntax, vocabulary, structure rhetorical, and cultural content) (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). According to Zhang and Koda

(2012), vocabulary is the most critical element in reading within the text-based elements. The knowledge of vocabulary is indispensable while speaking a second language. Thus, learners must cultivate an appropriate approach for lifelong learning in order to improve one's ability on a continual basis to read and use English efficiently.

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) consider one of language learning strategy type that aids learners in developing and controlling their second or foreign language abilities (Nation, 2001; Scharle & Szabo, 2000), as well as improving learner self-direction, independence, and autonomy (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989: 291). VLS is defined as a compilation of actions taken by a student to make studying more convenient, self-directed, effective, and adaptable to different situations (Oxford, 1990). Learners who've been familiar with various strategies will determine how to manage new terms and how to use them in specific situations, making the learning experience simpler for them (Ranalli, 2003: 9). Since learning strategies are simple to teach (Oxford & Nyikos 1989: 291), thus introducing different vocabulary learning approaches takes less time. Further, the role of learner control in vocabulary learning has long been recognized by linguists; the explanation for this is that after elementary school, it becomes more difficult for teachers to use vocabulary that is equally valuable for all learners. Therefore, Schmitt (2000) suggested that students develop strategies for learning words on their own

by exposing them to a range of learning strategies and allowing them to choose which ones they prefer. However, studies on vocabulary acquisition are an abandoned part of language learning.

Despite the fact that several research on the VLS used by native language learners has been published in recent years (Abraham and Vann, 1987, Arnaud and Bejoint, 1992, Long and Richards, 1997, Nation, 1990; 2001, Nassaji, 2006, Richards, 1985, Schmitt, 2000; Thornbury, 2002, Yali, 2010), however, in Jordan, where English is a foreign language, the phenomenon has received little attention.

In light of this historical backdrop, this paper aims to investigate the level of current VLS studies in Jordan in order to find out how English language research has responded to the introduction of vocabulary learning strategies.

Related Work about Jordan

As a part of the British settlement of Jordan, English has been spoken in Jordan since 1920; since then, English has grown in importance as a result of formal education and second language learning. It has also played an important role in Jordan's educational sector, and the students are expected to communicate efficiently in universities. However, English is taught as a foreign language (Szubko-Sitarek et al., 2014). Therefore, language students face difficulties in learning English vocabularies, and they feel depressed, resulting in self-dissatisfaction (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). In Jordan, while studying English vocabularies, students prefer to translate texts, sentences, and words into their mother language to facilitate the ability to understand and learn the words quickly and when needed (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998). Furthermore, Jordanian students of public schools face more difficulties as the lecturers do not enrich teaching English (Al-Zaidiyeen, Mei, & Fook, 2010).

Al Sarhan (2011) revealed that vocabulary learning would be easier for most learners if they classify the words into different fields. That's to say that each field of knowledge and various sciences has its own technical and specific words, and by classifying the words within those fields, most students and learners would easily learn the new words related to that specific field of knowledge, and rather use them appropriately in later stages.

Dalqamouni (2010) claimed that vocabulary learning is considered and should be dealt with as a way of learning any subject or any science, which means that such learning would be enriched if practiced and used several times. Vocabulary learning needs practical oral and written scripts to be fully used and understood.

According to (Rababah, Melhem, & Arabia, 2015), by learning strategies, students can be groomed to understand the importance of reading skills and thus continue to employ the strategies appropriately in order to accomplish their reading tasks. Various findings have shown that learning strategies lead to increasing EFL learning motivation (Rababah, Melhem, & Arabia, 2015), and it can enable students to become more autonomous, lifelong learners. It is essential for every teacher to know how to help students become more effective learners. Strategies that include instructions in language teaching, especially for beginner EFL learners, helps students to build their knowledge and make the English learning process easier and more efficient.

According to Qrgez, M., & Ab Rashid. R. (2017) discusses English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension difficulty. The results show that the respondents are eager to learn and they are in desperate need of English. Nevertheless, students face a number of reading challenges such as the word ambiguities, vocabulary that is unfamiliar and a finite amount of time to process the text cognitively and a finite amount of time to process the text cognitively by the university student in Jordan.

One of the most recent studies by Rabadi and Al-Muhaissen(2018), the research investigates how Jordanian undergraduate students majoring in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) at Jordanian universities use VLS. Nevertheless, they have not measured the reading comprehension in their study.

Reading comprehension

Reading considers an important and valuable skill in our educational system, recreational, working as well as social lives and economic development. It is considered the most critical of the four language skills, as it has the potential to increase overall language proficiency (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Krashen & Brown, 2007). And if a person has difficulty reading in his or her mother language, the problem becomes even worse when reading in a second language, since students may be behind in a variety of reading elements, comprehension, speed, and accuracy. Further, learning disability associated with the practice of reading in a foreign language is lagging behind (Alsamadani, 2008). Additionally, these problems are more likely to be linked to the pragma linguistic or even sociocultural elements of the language.

Reading comprehension, according to most scholars, is more than just understanding individual sentences or even comprehending each word as our eyes scan it .Most of the comprehension models acknowledge the readers need to figure out the conceptual representation of the text, a procedure that necessitates the incorporation of data from a variety of sources, concerning the events around the world throughout the lexical features of the knowledge (Garnham, 2001; Gernsbacher, 1990; Kintsch, 1998). As a result, the Simple View of Reading, which may be regarded as the first attempt to define “*balanced literacy*,”

suggests that improving skills in encoding and linguistic comprehension leads to improved reading comprehension (Kirby & Savage, 2008).

Reading is a complicated procedure that necessitates a wide range of skills. Accordingly, Hancock (1998) believes that comprehension in reading includes understanding language, identifying connections between words and concepts, arranging thoughts, recognizing the author's intent, assessing meaning, and making decisions. The effectiveness of the prior knowledge on reading comprehension was investigated by a number of studies (Brantmeier, 2005; Hammadou, 1991, 2000; Johnson, 1982; Lee, 1986; Nassaji, 2003; Qian, 2002), whereas the impact of vocabulary knowledge has been studied by others scholars (Al-derson, 2000; Joshi & Aaron, 2000; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Pressley, 2000). Identifying how prior knowledge of vocabulary aids reading comprehension might be considered a valuable field to be investigated and enhance teachers with new teaching methods. Nevertheless, regarding the Jordanian context, fewer studies have been conducted.

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper seeks to determine whether previous studies undertaken in Jordan follow the current pattern of research in vocabulary learning strategies. For this purpose, the current study discusses the recent literature to provide a comprehensive view of the area of VLS. Therefore, this section explains the features of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). An SLR relies on the use of a structured method to identify the study area, identify particular studies, determine their quality, and summarize the findings.

The papers retrieved were all peer-reviewed English language publications from various databases. Many databases have been scanned to collect the literature, such as Social sciences (Abstracts, Citation Index, and the Applied Social Sciences Index); and Scopus. The vocabulary learning methods and VLS are the keywords used in the search strings. Further, search strings included reference to language learning strategies and also referenced to vocabulary learning strategies among Jordanian students. The two search strings are identified, with the goal of collecting explicit knowledge for understanding the study being considered. Further, to write queries, each database has its own syntax; thus, the search strings were modified to some extent for each database in order to achieve the anticipated outcome. In addition, the time duration of 2008 to 2018 was chosen as the cut-off point for empirically examining predictors of efficient VLS usage by Jordanian students. Furthermore, additional findings were found in the reference lists of these journals

III. RESULTS

Reading in a foreign language is very different from reading in a native language. In Jordan, English is a Foreign language, the process of reading a text and comprehending it takes more time than for native English speakers. Reading considers a difficult and cognitive phase (Akamatsu, 1999) which means supporting the student with linguistic proficiency, knowledge of the words (semantic and syntactic) as per word recognition, which involves comprehending the breadth and depth of the word's sense. Additionally, being capable of understanding both conceptual and sociocultural knowledge (Lin, 2002; Wang et al., 2002). Further, reading comprehension necessary attain, according to Alderson (1984), if the difficulty of interpreting a foreign language is due to a language challenge, semantic and discourse processing must be addressed, and conceptualization related to the problems to put it crudely, word meaning. In other words, if the reader is having difficulty understanding a foreign language, he or she must struggle with word comprehension and identity issues, conceptual and textual structures, and more linguistic features of skill in a foreign language (Adams, 1980; Alderson, 1984; Fukkink et al., 2005; Lin, 2002). English in Jordan is a compulsory subject; the majority of students are unable to learn properly in a foreign language. Students reading in a foreign language tend to read with less comprehension than one would expect, and they read much slower than they do in their native language (Alderson 1984).

EFL students devote more time and effort to understanding English-language texts. They will require more time for word comprehension in order to determine the meaning of the word (August et al., 2005; Laufer, 1992; Wang & Koda, 2007). Moreover, they need linguistic competence in matters such as syntax and conceptual and sociocultural knowledge to process the information in reading (Adams, 1980; Akamatsu, 1999; Lin, 2002; Wang et al., 2002).

IV. CONCLUSION

The objective of this research is to study the literature that educators should use by faculty members and representatives in understanding their students' problems in language learning. Moreover, the study is expected to benefit educators in understanding the importance of VLS, as these strategies are related to enhancing English language learning, which is necessary for the students in various academic tasks. Understanding their students' problems can help faculty members determine how to deal with their students. With that knowledge, they will be able to develop effective teaching approaches for students. Furthermore, the

study will help students to enhance their potential as they discover the role of ELL strategies during their study time. Hence, it will aid educators in planning materials, developing curriculums, and evaluating student assignments, allowing students to develop more mature and efficient language learning methods for their learning process.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abraham, R. G., & Vann, R. J. (1987). Strategies of two language learners: A case study. *Learner strategies in language learning*, 85-102.
- [2]. Adams, K. M. (1980). An end of innocence for behavioral neurology? Adams replies.
- [3]. Akamatsu, N. (1999). The effects of first language orthographic features on word recognition processing in English as a second language. *Reading and Writing*, 11(4), 381-403.
- [4]. Alderson, J.C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5]. Al-Khasawneh, F. M. (2012). Vocabulary learning strategies: A case of Jordan University of Science and Technology. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 12(34), 1-15.
- [6]. Alsamadani, H. A. (2008). The relationship between Saudi EFL college-level students' use of reading strategies and their EFL reading comprehension (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University).
- [7]. Al-Zaidiyeen, N. J., Mei, L. L., & Fook, F. S. (2010). Teachers' Attitudes and Levels of Technology Use in Classrooms: The Case of Jordan Schools. *International education studies*, 3(2), 211-218.
- [8]. Arnaud, P. J., & Béjoint, H. (Eds.). (1992). *Vocabulary and applied linguistics*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- [9]. August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 20(1), 50-57.
- [10]. August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 20(1), 50-57.
- [11]. Brantmeier, C. (2005). Anxiety about L2 reading or L2 reading tasks? A study with advanced language learners. *Reading*, 5(2), 67-85.
- [12]. Fukkink, R. G., Hulstijn, J., & Simis, A. (2005). Does training in second-language word recognition skills affect reading comprehension? An experimental study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(1), 54-75.
- [13]. Garnham, A. (2001). *Mental models and the interpretation of anaphora*. Psychology Press.
- [14]. Gernsbacher, M. A., Varner, K. R., & Faust, M. E. (1990). Investigating differences in general comprehension skill. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 16(3), 430.
- [15]. Graves, M. F., Juel, C., & Graves, B. B. (1998). *Teaching Reading in the 21st Century*. Order Processing, Allyn and Bacon, PO Box 11071, Des Moines, IA 50336-1071.
- [16]. Hammadou, J. (1991). Interrelationships among prior knowledge, inference, and language proficiency in foreign language reading. *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(1), 27-38.
- [17]. Hancock, R. E. (1998). Resistance mechanisms in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and other nonfermentative gram-negative bacteria. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 27(Supplement_1), S93-S99.
- [18]. Johnson, C. (1982). *MITI and the Japanese miracle: the growth of industrial policy, 1925-1975*. Stanford University Press.
- [19]. Joshi, R.M., & Aaron, P.G. (2000). The component model of reading: Simple view of reading made a little more complex. *Reading Psychology*, 21, 85-97.
- [20]. Kintsch, W., & Walter Kintsch, C. B. E. M. A. F. R. S. (1998). *Comprehension: A paradigm for cognition*. Cambridge university press.
- [21]. Kirby, J. R., & Savage, R. S. (2008). Can the simple view deal with the complexities of reading?. *Literacy*, 42(2), 75-82.
- [22]. Krashen, S., & Brown, C. L. (2007). What is academic language proficiency. *STETS Language & Communication Review*, 6(1), 1-5.
- [23]. Laufer, B. (1992). How much lexis is necessary for reading comprehension?. In *Vocabulary and applied linguistics* (pp. 126-132). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- [24]. Lee, J. F. (1986). Background knowledge and L2 reading. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70, 350-354.
- [25]. Lin, N. (2002). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action* (No. 19). Cambridge university press.
- [26]. Martin-Chang, S.Y., & Gould, O.N. (2008). Revisiting print exposure: Exploring differential links to vocabulary, comprehension and reading rate. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 31, 273-284.
- [27]. McDonough, J. and C. Shaw. 1993. *Materials and Methods in ELT*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [28]. Nagy, W., & Scott, J. (2000). Vocabulary process. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 269-284). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- [29]. Nassaji, H. (2003). L2 vocabulary learning from context: Strategies, knowledge sources, and their relationship with success in L2 lexical inferencing. *Tesol Quarterly*, 37(4), 645-670.
- [30]. Nassaji, H. (2006). The Relationship Between Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge and L2 Learners' Lexical Inferencing Strategy Use and Success. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90, 387-401.
- [31]. Nation, I. S. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Ernst Klett Sprachen.
- [32]. Nation, P. (1990). Teaching and learning vocabulary. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- [33]. Nation, P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [34]. O'Malley, Michael J. and Chamot, A.U. 1990. Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. Cambridge-London: Cambridge University Press. O'Malley, Michael J et al. 1985. Learning Strategies Used by Beginning and Intermediate ESL Students. *Language Learning*. Vol.35 No.1. pp.21-44. Oxford, Rebecca L. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers
- [35]. Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies*. New York, 3.
- [36]. Oxford, R., & Nyikos, M. (1989). Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students. *The modern language journal*, 73(3), 291-300.
- [37]. Pressley, M. (2000). What should the comprehension instruction be instruction of? In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 269–284). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [38]. Qian, D. D. (2002). Investigating the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic reading performance: An assessment perspective. *Language learning*, 52(3), 513-536.
- [39]. Qrquez, M., & Ab Rashid, R. (2017). Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners: The case of first and second year students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* Volume, 8.
- [40]. Rababah, L., & Melhem, N. B. (2015). Investigation into strategies of creativity in EFL writing in Jordan. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 3(5), 14-25.
- [41]. Rabadi, R. I., & Al-Muhaissen, B. (2018). An Empirical Study on Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Jordanian FFL University Students. *Lebende Sprachen*, 63(2), 294-315.
- [42]. Ranalli, R. P., Howell Jr, T. A., & Siebenmorgen, T. J. (2003). Effects of controlled ambient aeration on rice quality during on-farm storage. *Cereal chemistry*, 80(1), 9-12.
- [43]. Richards, J. (1985). *The context of language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [44]. Richards, M. A., Ricard, Y., Lithgow-Bertelloni, C., Spada, G., & Sabadini, R. (1997). An explanation for Earth's long-term rotational stability. *Science*, 275(5298), 372-375.
- [45]. Rubin, D. B. (1981). The bayesian bootstrap. *The annals of statistics*, 130-134.
- [46]. Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. *TESOL quarterly*, 41-51.
- [47]. Scharle, A. and A. Szabo. 2000. 'Learner autonomy: a guide to developing learner responsibility' in P. Ur (ed.). *Cambridge Handbook for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [48]. Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [49]. Snow, B., & Burns, M. (2000). Griffin, 1998. Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: an evidencebased assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.
- [50]. Stoller, F. L., Anderson, N. J., Grabe, W., & Komiyama, R. (2013). Instructional Enhancements to Improve Students' Reading Abilities. In *English Teaching Forum* (Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 2). US Department of State. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs, SA-5, 2200 C Street NW 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.
- [51]. Szubko-Sitarek, W. (2014). On the role of pre-service language teachers' beliefs on multilingual education in developing teacher training programs. In *Language Learning, Discourse and Communication* (pp. 107-116). Springer, Cham.
- [52]. Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Malaysia: Longman-Pearson Educational.
- [53]. Wang, M., & Koda, K. (2007). Commonalities and differences in word identification skills among learners of English as a second language. *Language Learning*, 57, 201-222.
- [54]. Wang, W. X. (2002). Interactions of trace metals and different marine food chains. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 243, 295-309.
- [55]. Willinsky, J. (2017). *The new literacy: Redefining reading and writing in the schools*. Routledge.
- [56]. Yali, G. (2010). L2 Vocabulary Acquisition Through Reading-Incidental Learning and Intentional Learning. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(1), 74-93.
- [57]. Zhang, D., & Koda, K. (2012). Contribution of morphological awareness and lexical inferencing ability to L2 vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension among advanced EFL learners: Testing direct and indirect effects. *Reading and Writing*, 25(5), 1195-1216.