

การเรียนรู้คำศัพท์: จากหลักการสู่วิธีปฏิบัติและการทำให้ง่ายสำหรับผู้เรียน ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สอง

Vocabulary learning: From principle to practical strategies and how to make it
Down-to-Earth for L2 learners

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การเรียนรู้คำศัพท์นั้นถือเป็นสิ่งที่สำคัญในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ หากสามารถจดจำคำศัพท์ได้มาก ก็จะทำให้สื่อสารในภาษาอังกฤษได้ดีขึ้น ตามหลักการทั่วไปแล้ว วิธีการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์มีทั้งหลักทฤษฎีในทางวิชาการและเทคนิคในการเรียนรู้ที่ไม่เป็นทางการ คำถามที่ตามมาคือ แล้ววิธีการใดเป็นวิธีที่เหมาะสมกับตัวผู้เรียนมากที่สุด หรือโดยแท้จริงแล้ว ผู้เรียนสามารถประยุกต์หลักการไปใช้ในเชิงปฏิบัติเมื่อต้องเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ได้หรือไม่ ในหลักการเดียวกันผู้เรียนบางคนอาจจะประสบความสำเร็จแต่บางคนกลับไม่ประสบความสำเร็จ ในบทความนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออภิปรายถึง วิธีการอย่างไรและวิธีการอะไรที่ทำให้เกิดการเรียนรู้ เพิ่มพูนคำศัพท์และทำให้จำคำศัพท์ได้ด้วยวิธีการง่ายๆ โดยการประยุกต์จากหลักการที่สามารถทำให้เรียนรู้คำศัพท์มากขึ้นได้ บทความนี้ได้แบ่งหัวข้อออกดังนี้ หลักการของการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์สำหรับผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สอง ผู้เรียนควรรู้คำศัพท์จำนวนเท่าไร และคำศัพท์ใดที่เป็นคำที่จำเป็นต้องรู้ วิธีการเรียนรู้แบบทางตรงนำไปสู่การจดจำในเชิงปฏิบัติสำหรับผู้เรียนในระดับเบื้องต้น วิธีการใดที่เหมาะสมในการพัฒนาการออกเสียงและการสะกดคำ ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์และรูปแบบการเรียนรู้ และ สุดท้าย ทิศทางกลยุทธ์ในการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ในอนาคต

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Abstract

Vocabulary is one of the crucial components in learning English. The more vocabulary the learners can remember, the better they can communicate in English. Generally, there have been many principles presented regarding how to acquire vocabulary academically and tips for non-academic acquisition. However, what is the best method for the learners? Do the learners apply the principles practically when they need to learn? Some learners might be successful but some are not. Hence, this paper mainly aims to discuss what and how the best way is to acquire, expand, and retain vocabulary in a simple way by applying academic principles which are believed to enhance vocabulary knowledge. The paper is divided into topics as follows; principle of vocabulary acquisition in L2 learners, how much and what vocabulary should L2 learners know, from explicit method to practical memory strategies for L2 beginning learners, what method is suitable to improve word pronunciation and spelling?, the relationship

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between vocabulary learning strategies and learning styles, future directions in L2 vocabulary learning strategy.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, learning styles, edutainment method

Introduction

Vocabulary is counted as a vital factor for developing language skills. It can enhance the learner's capacity to learn new things and help develop life knowledge, experiences and enlarge vision through the English language. In the field of teaching English as a foreign language, it is known that learning vocabulary is generally worth the effort because it can improve the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the same time. Wilkins (1972, p.111) stated that, "without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." In a comparative sense, students can acquire better English skills through vocabulary knowledge rather than grammar knowledge. Read (2000) also stated that vocabulary is prioritized to be the first method in language teaching. Many researchers have found a relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency. Moreover, Wiener and Bazerman (1991) said that "To read well, you need a strong vocabulary." and "To build a strong vocabulary, you need to read well." This statement shows the relationship between the skill of reading and vocabulary, which depend on each other. Unsurprisingly, it is true that vocabulary is like the soul of the body. Without it, it is very difficult to communicate in the target language.

Traditionally, most learners might learn new vocabulary by writing down and trying to memorize each word. They do not realize exactly how many words they should know or what is the best method to retain or expand their vocabularies? Thus, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of vocabulary learning and realize the importance of vocabulary for L2 learners, this article mainly discusses vocabulary acquisition, expansion and retention by dividing the topics as follows: Principle of Vocabulary Acquisition in L2 Learners; How Much and What Vocabulary should L2 Learners Know; From Explicit Method to Practical Memory Strategies for L2 Beginning Learners; What Method is Suitable to Improve Word Pronunciation and Spelling?; The Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Learning Styles; and Future Directions in L2 Vocabulary Learning Strategy,

Principle of Vocabulary Acquisition in L2 Learners

Vocabulary is considered by the natural approach to be a key component in language acquisition process. Krashen & Terrell (1983) stated that acquisition depended on the ability to recognize the main elements in the text or in what is spoken. It is obvious that vocabulary acquisition will not happen without comprehension. Fraser (1999)

supported the idea that vocabulary acquisition is also determined by the relationship between reading and strategy of learning vocabulary. He investigated the strategies in lexical processing used by L2 learners when they confront unknown words while reading for comprehension and the impact of what is studied in new vocabulary. Lexical processing strategies means the options that L2 readers employ when they have to face new unknown words, including ignoring and continuing to read, looking up the meaning in a dictionary, or guessing on the basis of linguistic or context clues (Hulstijn et al, 1996)., In term of theory, two main kinds, implicit and explicit acquisition, will be therefore introduced as follows;

Implicit and Explicit Vocabulary Acquisition

Wode (1999) stated the method of implicit acquisition by saying that “a language is learned not for its own sake but as a by-product of a given individual’s socialization process”. That is to say, the learners have not learned the language only to know the language itself, but they use it as a tool to be in the society and to be a part of the world. However, they need to adjust themselves and develop their language all the time to follow what happens in the world. To be exact, the implicit learning theory refers to the acquisition of vocabulary which is perceived indirectly with one’s sub-consciousness. Acquisition of this kind will be absorbed spontaneously through extensive reading. While reading, learners do not focus on the vocabulary itself but the story instead (Krashen,1993). In this method, the way we have

perceived the vocabulary is incidental from the activities of reading and listening. For instance, when writers are reading and writing material, they tend to gain more knowledge through the language; they acquire the meaning and how to use vocabulary practically without paying attention to the specific words. This is also true of one who tries to understand a novel without paying attention to the meaning of every word but they understand the content as a whole. Some psychologists stated that much of the new information in our life acquired during the normal daily life is perceived by this method. Basically, it is not easy to say how is it learned but they know and learn it unconsciously. According to Hulstijn et al.(1996), a large amount of vocabulary cannot be learned only by direct activity. Extensive reading will help them to gain a huge amount of lexicon spontaneously.

On the other hand, explicit acquisition is the direct method in which the learners learn the new words. This method is basically used in the classroom with Thai students. Explicit learning is when the teaching plan is already stated in the first place before the start of an activity. The learners know exactly the objective of learning and what exact new words they should know. Souleyman (2009) reported that “Intentional learning becomes explicit when the learners are clearly informed about what activity they are to perform and what objective they are supposed to attain by the end of the activity, without any essential part whatsoever hidden or obscured”. The learners know the purpose of the

activity and what new vocabulary will be learned. They might recite a single vocabulary word with its meaning without any context clues. Moreover, the essential factor of explicit acquisition is when the students are informed the objective of what they need to know through the method of a test at the end of the lecture or activities. Most of the time, the learners will pay attention more actively, especially Thai students who are usually concerned about the scores and mostly get motivated by them. Hulstijn (2003) stated that the direct learning happened if the learners know that there will be a test at the end of the activity. Generally, the test is a clear objective for the learners and it's a practical achievement that can be evaluated. Coady et al. (1997) also summarizes that explicit learning of vocabulary is more useful and can result in long term retention as well as allows the readers to retrieve productive vocabulary automatically.

Nonetheless, which approach better is generally discussed by many researchers? Krashen (1993) stated that implicit vocabulary learning is more beneficial than explicit because, while learning, the learners focus on the story comprehension, not on the item or vocabulary. On the other hand, many researchers argued that only extensive reading is not adequate to empower L2's knowledge of vocabulary because it will be more effective in the advance-skill learners or readers that know how to use context clues. Notwithstanding that extensive reading can make the readers recognize more words, they are unable to use those words in a

productive way (Folse, 2004; Nation, 2008; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). So, knowing a lot of words from extensive reading can be useless if the learners are not competent enough or know the basic necessary words. Sokmen (1997) also said that each learner has a different method to acquire vocabulary. Being able to find out the words' meanings from the context does not mean that those words will be contained in their long term memory. In summary, successful learners should combine the two methods properly in the right situation. To become more professional, one needs to develop and shift the methods automatically to discover what is suitable for each situation.

How Much and What Vocabulary should L2 Learners Know

First of all, I would like to point out the amount of words that L2 learners should know. Nation (2001) is one of the influential researchers in the field of English as a second or foreign language. The amount of the words the learners are supposed to know in order to be able to read the text with comprehension is discussed as follows: He stated that the general amount of words the learners should know is 2000 to 3000 word families to understand most texts by reading. A word family refers to the main word, its changed form and its derived form. In other words, if they know word families, they will understand the texts more 96.75%. If they know the most frequent 3000 word families, they will understand 95% of the words in television programs,

movies, and conversation. If 8000-9000 word families are known, 98% of the words are known in novels and newspapers (Nation, 2006). However, PhD students are supposed to have 9000 word families. The approaches that help learning loads of vocabulary are both explicit and implicit methods. By any means the learners employ, they should focus more on the high frequency words. The important point in learning the new vocabulary is that the learners should have a clear objective. Frequency of words should be taken into consideration to make sure that it is worth the learners' efforts. The vocabulary should always be encountered in general texts, newspapers or in their daily reading. Therefore, this does not mean that the learners should not know a large amount of the words, but it does mean that the teachers or the instructor should recognize high frequency words as a reference to consider how vital the words are that they are supposed to concentrate on or even if the text and material is suitable or not.

From Explicit Method to Practical Memory Strategies for L2 Beginning Learners

The main problem for the beginning learners is that they cannot provide sufficient words to create the sentences. They should build more vocabulary and memorize words that will be frequently employed. Liu Na and Nation (1985) have suggested that we need a vocabulary of about 3,000 words which provides coverage of at least 95% of a text before we can efficiently learn from context with

simplified text. Nonetheless, this is a huge amount of start-up vocabulary for a learner. How can we get learners to learn large amounts of vocabulary in a very short time? Therefore, some example of the explicit way of building vocabulary for L2 beginning learners will be discussed here. First of all, grouping is a good way to help them recall vocabulary. Sometimes, people seem to categorize the words into groups naturally. Bousfield (1953) stated that in the free-recall studies, L1 subjects were assigned word lists to study and recall the words in any order automatically. Basically, the same types of word meanings are recalled in the same group. For example, all of the animals are focused first and then family members before moving on to some other kinds of words. If the words are organized in some way before memorization, the method of recalling words seems to be developed (Cofer, Bruce & Reicher, 1966 ; Craik & Tuiving. (1975). So, it may work better with the proficient learners as they can categorize the words more than the beginners (Chamot, 1984 as cited in Thompson, 1987). In addition, using related words is one of the psychological methods that can help them to remember the new vocabulary. New words can be linked to L2 words which the learner already knows. It is concerned with the sense of relationship, such as if we talk about a vegetable like a "carrot", there must be some similar kinds like beetroot, taro, or it can be in a synonym or antonym set, for example, "increase" and "decrease" or "dead" and its opposite "alive". According to Aitchison (1987),

there is research regarding association words that coordinates in particular have very strong connective bonds. Oxford (1990) reported that these kinds of relationships of the words can be explained with an organized and clear mind map to increase vocabulary.

What Method is Suitable to Improve Word Pronunciation and Spelling?

Pronunciation and spelling are also crucial in learning new vocabulary. Celce-Murcia (2001) and Laufer (1998) stated that in order to learn new words, the learner is supposed to learn its meaning, pronunciation and spelling. To learn the exact pronunciation is considered essential for L2 vocabulary acquisition as well as its meaning. Spelling and pronunciation seem to be significantly related. Many people misspell some easy words because they are unable to pronounce them. With some words, the spelling and the pronunciation are not matched. We can say that English spelling is quite complicated. Crystal (2002) stated that English spelling is difficult because it has a complex history and was not originated from one single source. He said that English lexicon includes two main sources which are Greco-Latin and Anglo-Saxon. Anglo-Saxon words in English include about 35% of words of French and Latin origin. Greek origins comprise the rest of the lexicon. This covers about 50% of the high frequency words that are used in our daily lives (Nation, 1994, 2001 as cited in Min, 2013). The learners should pronounce the words carefully and get in the habit of looking at the words regularly.

Then, the learner should write them down and read them out loud at the same time in order to make the brain memorize, retain and ready to retrieve them when in use. Moreover, they should consider that sometime the way words are pronounced may be different from the written form. After all this, the pronunciation of the words would be greatly improved.

The Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Learning Styles

Every L2 learner including adults, children, teachers or parents have challenges with some obstacles in learning and using language. Some people cope with them successfully and use language more correctly and fluently. In contrast, some learners can't master them properly and finally end up with demotivation. Why is it like this? With the same theory or same method of vocabulary acquisition, why does it give a different result? So, the main topic discussed next will be about "learning styles" which might partly answer the questions above. Therefore, learning styles should be more focused on by L2 acquisition researchers. Each person has their own favorite style of learning which might depend on gender, age, attitude or cultural and educational background etc. Learning style is concerned directly with how the L2 learners perceive and collect vocabulary. Reid (1999) lists the learning styles into eight types as follows; Firstly, visual learners generally prefer to learn from seeing the words and pictures or flashcards. Secondly, auditory learners usually enjoy conversation and prefer to

learn by listening. Thirdly, tactile learners like to learn new words while touching the objects. Next, kinesthetic learners prefer to move while learning the new words. Vocabulary verbs are very suitable with this style of learning. Then, field-independent learners prefer to focus on the language details such as grammar rules and taking apart words and sentences. They are unable to look from the "big picture" because of their concentration on the details. On the other hand, field-dependent learners, they always pay attention to the big picture and ignore some trivial details which they think unnecessary. They will focus on communicating the main idea instead of worrying about the grammatical rules. In addition, reflective learners like to focus on the language and how to convey the message correctly. So, they will take time to construct the sentences they would communicate with and they're likely to make no mistakes. Lastly, impulsive learners are the risky learners. They need to speak fluently rather than correctly and tend to make more mistakes. However, one learner might alter their learning style depending on the situation. There is no proof that one is the best style. If the research in this field is increased, the right strategy of learning vocabulary along with the right learning style probably increase the capacity of L2 learner's vocabulary expansion.

Future Directions in L2 Vocabulary Learning Strategy

I believe that it will be very beneficial to focus on additional research in the topic of vocabulary strategies for L2 learners in the future. The topics I think it should be concentrated on to achieve the goal of increased vocabulary are as follows; (1) the role of new technology to enhance vocabulary learning (2) the strategy of English vocabulary expansion using an edutainment method like games and movies and (3) The role of social media in vocabulary learning strategy.

The Role of New Technology to Enhance Vocabulary Learning

New technologies have played a significant role in accelerating how information is communicated and transported (Black, 2009; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010) It is impossible that the technology will replace the teacher, but in the near future, it is possible that the teacher who uses technology will replace ones who won't. We can say that new technology is necessary in nowadays classroom in order to adapt to the new generation of the students. Using technology and technological devices can be a bridge for the gap between formal and informal settings (Druin, 2005; Voithofer & Winterwood, 2010; Ware, 2008). Thereby, a teacher need to make vocabulary session more active and should call for attention by taking advantage of many applications of technology. So, to adjust with the change of the world and new generation, technologies

like the iPod, iPad, and SMART Board are probably become necessary in the classrooms. Moreover, many university starts to have an online course and the application that the teachers and the students can work together. This can enhance the learners to be more active and learn more of vocabularies. For instance, flip classroom is one of the popular choices. The flipped classroom is a model that the general tasks in the classroom as lecturing are reversed. The short video lectures are provided to allow the students to view before they come to the classroom. While in the classroom, they will do activities, projects, and discussion. In addition, MOOC courses are free online courses from well-known universities around the world. For example, Stanford, Harvard, MIT which offer anyone to access through the internet connection. There are many MOOC platforms such as Coursera, Udacity, EdX, and NovoEd. In term of vocabularies learning, this is an indirect way that vocabularies can be taught and linked with the true experiences throughout the courses. However, it is recommended to select target vocabulary words which rely on the students' language background and the word that has a potential in frequency of use as suggested by Hickman, Pollard-Duradola, & Vaughn (2004). The effective means of teaching vocabulary to ESLs is through explicit teaching of high utility of words.

Strategy of English Vocabulary Expansion by the Edutainment Method

Learning new vocabulary in an entertaining way is essential in order to stimulate the learners. So, with any kinds of learning styles, they seemingly need to learn new things with a less stressed approach (Fallata, 2012). Learning vocabulary from songs and movies are likely to be the favored choices. With this method, the learners can be able to perceive new vocabulary in an incidental way. This natural and practical way of using vocabulary is advantageous; for example, many Thai learners were firstly inspired to enjoy learning English by music and superstars in English movies. Therefore, I think these kinds of learners seem to have more motivation. The main advantages that the edutainment atmosphere should support are as follows; Firstly, the learners will acquire new vocabulary in a practical way. For example, from a movie, they can know how to use the words in real situations and importantly how the characters pronounce each word. From songs, they will know and learn the words promptly through the whole lyric. Secondly, the learners will feel free to learn new things, but it should be in a systematic way. It will help more to learn without boredom. Thirdly, edutainment will help motivate the learners to continue learning in the next steps by themselves, keep them engaged and "repeat" which is the heart of learning a language. Pae & Shin (2010) reported that in learning a foreign or a second language, a long time motivation has been considered to be the key factor that affects

achievement and educational achievement. Thereby, the atmosphere of edutainment should be promoted in learning new vocabulary. Also, if we can integrate it, in an academic and non-academic way through research, it would help the learners to learn new vocabulary in a fun and effective way at the same time.

The Role of Social Media in Vocabulary Learning Strategy

For the recent new generation of the learners, browsing social media like Facebook or Twitter through smart phones or computers plays a crucial role nowadays. Hutchison (2012, p.18) suggested that “Juggling multiple streams of media has become (the) norm (for) the 21st century (for) work and play, (and is productive) for adults and young people alike”. It is partly resulting from smart phones too. We can see that a smart phone is so handy that the users can bring it along everywhere. Social networks displayed through mobile phones could be one of the methods that helps the learners to learn new English vocabulary, because it will help them learn anywhere or anytime at their convenience. So, to adjust to this evolution of people’s daily life trend, the rising question is which method through social media would be the most efficient for the users? Istifci, Lomidazde, & Demiray (2011) also reported that the instructor should employ the technology both in and out of the class which can enhance learner’s critical thinking skills. In addition, the instructors might use social networks to build a

relationship with the students and reduce the stressed atmosphere. The formal and informal learning atmospheres should be integrated together via social network sites like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram as the students mostly spend time on these three sites for entertainment. They tend to follow the news, follow their interesting topics there, or they even become a channel for shopping. If the developer and educators can work together to create assessments and curriculums to strengthen the power of media for learning (Fallata, 2012), the learners can learn in a fun way more effectively. There is some online learning through social network research which indicates that many of the learners tend to access the learning source with convenience and at a low cost. The research in the field of online e-learning suggests it can reinforce the strength of media learning. However, in the field of ESL education, there is one undeniable fact which is that traditional instructional methods seem to be the main reason why education systems are obsolete (Fallata, 2012, p.16). Therefore, in order to be more modern and apply educational tools for the new generation, the vital questions are “How can a teacher support technology dependent students in a classroom?” and “How can the teachers make the material to engage students so that they will be eager to learn?”

Conclusion

Acquiring, expanding and retaining vocabulary are considered to be challenging for L2 learners. There are many ways that will help them to be

successful in learning. However, the important point is that they should apply suitable methods with their own learning style. The L2 learners might focus on the topics introduced above in order to achieve their goal of learning vocabulary. This paper has provided principle of vocabulary acquisition in L2 learners, how much and what vocabulary should L2 learners know, from explicit method to practical memory strategies for L2 beginning learners, what method is suitable to improve word pronunciation and spelling?, the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and learning styles, the future directions in L2 vocabulary learning strategy. With all mentioned strategies, learning vocabulary will be successful if the learners know how to integrate the knowledge from the principles and adapt them in the real life situation to make language learning more beneficial. I hope that this paper will be helpful and offer practical methods for those in the field of English teaching or learners in every level so they can understand and strategically apply the simple methods.

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