

# Perceptions of Vocabulary Teaching Methods among EFL Teachers

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the perceptions of teachers of English as a foreign language towards vocabulary teaching. The participants are three oral expression teachers and 32 teachers at the English Language and Literature Department at Mohamed Lamine Dabaghine University. The research follows a quantitative and a qualitative design that uses a questionnaire and an observation respectively. The questionnaire collected the perceptions of the 32 participants towards their vocabulary teaching methods. The observation collected concrete classroom vocabulary teaching data that were compared to the observed teachers' questionnaire responses. Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed different perceptions of vocabulary teaching methods. Moreover, analysis of the observation data along with the observed teachers' responses to the questionnaire confirmed explicit teaching of vocabulary using the presentation-practice-production stages.

**Keywords:** *English as a Foreign Language; Vocabulary; Vocabulary Teaching Methods; Teacher Perceptions*

## ملخص

يتناول البحث طرائق تدريس مفردات اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وبالتحديد مدى إدراك الأساتذة لمناهج تعليم المفردات. وتمثل عينة البحث في ثلاثة أساتذة لمادة التعبير الشفوي كمادة تعنى بتعليم المفردات، واثنين وثلاثين (32) أستاذا لمواد مختلفة بقسم اللغة والأدب الانجليزيين بجامعة محمد لمين دباغين سطيف 2. ونجسيدا لأهداف البحث، فقد تم اعتماد المنهج الاستقصائي لجمع المعطيات باستخدام الملاحظة والاستبيان، بينما استخدم الاستبيان لاستقصاء كيفية إدراك الأساتذة لمناهج تعليم المفردات، كما استخدمت الملاحظة لتأكيد نتائج الاستبيان. وتحليل النتائج المتحصل عليها من الاستبيان تبين أن إدراك الأساتذة لطرائق تعليم المفردات ضعيف، كما بينت نتائج الملاحظة إدراكا ضعيفا وقلة وعي بخصوص مختلف المنهجيات المعتمدة في تدريس المفردات لدى أساتذة التعبير. الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مفردات اللغة، طرائق تدريس المفردات، إدراك الأساتذة

## Introduction

As a research area, vocabulary was neglected for years in second and foreign language studies. In recent years, vocabulary started to get more importance and focus as indicated by the increase in the number of publications and researches related to the study of lexicon in the context of second and foreign language studies. While Grammar was the focal study area for second language research up to the 1980s, vocabulary “has mushroomed enormously” (Meara, 1995: 11), and turned to be the centre of research in the last three decades. This progress has settled vocabulary in the core of emerging theories where “vocabulary knowledge is indispensable to acquire grammar” (Malvern et al. 2008: 270), as stated in the theoretical tenets of the Lexical Learning Hypothesis. Although vocabulary research did not bloom until very recently, the importance of vocabulary was recognized within the heydays of most language teaching methods. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

## 1. Literature Review

As important as language structures are for language being its skeleton, so is vocabulary which provides the vital organs and flesh (harmer, 1993: 153). Vocabulary research has not reached a unified view on the efficacy of one particular instruction method over another as Beck, McKeown and Omanson (1987: 150) argue, “Research has provided much useful information about vocabulary learning and instruction. What it has *not* provided is a simple formula for optimal instruction, because no such formula can exist”. However, there is a strong debate about whether explicit or implicit instruction should be used for effective vocabulary learning.

Many researchers (Cunningham, 2005; Hiebert & Kamil, 2005; Nagy, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Stahl, 2005) opted for a direct, systematic, multifaceted instruction with room for multiple exposures, in order to promote word knowledge as well as its different aspects. Explicit vocabulary learning guides the attention of the learners to vocabulary, through their direct involvement in activities that focus primarily on vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary explicitly uses a variety of techniques including word definitions, synonym pairs, word lists, word associations, the keyword method, semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis (Duin and Graves, 1987). Other techniques include the use of realia, pictures, mimicry, explanation, and translation (Harmer, 1991). Besides, Nation (2001) argues that teaching second language vocabulary explicitly may raise the learners’ awareness about the words they learn and facilitate their recognition in later stages of learning. Schmitt (2000) also supports the beneficial role of direct instruction, stating that learners can learn large quantities of vocabulary through the use of word lists for example. The same position is held by Oxford and Scarcella (1994) who insisted on the necessity of explicit vocabulary instruction in leading the learners to develop vocabulary learning strategies inside and outside the classroom. Schmitt and Carter (2000, p.4) further claim that “Due to the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition, repeated exposures are necessary to consolidate a new word in the learner’s mind”

These teaching techniques and the whole explicit vocabulary teaching method were severely criticized for the major factor of vocabulary being too broad to be covered and learned through explicit backgrounds (Nagy, 1997, Sokeman, 1997). The alternative for this explicit vocabulary instruction was to teach vocabulary implicitly. The aim of indirect vocabulary instruction is to draw the attention of the learners to the target words, which will be grasped “incidentally” through exposure to a variety of contexts, reading and materials with the focus on language use instead of learning itself. Research indicates that this unplanned vocabulary learning goes true for the low frequency words for which the learners are exposed to in various contexts, so they do not necessitate a direct instruction. In this implicit method of vocabulary teaching, Nation and Newton (1997: 238) point out that “...the teacher needs to ensure that learners are being exposed to materials and activities that will expand their vocabulary in useful ways”. The implicit instruction requires rich contexts and multiple exposures to the target words to learn new vocabulary items (Nation, 2001).

The debate among researchers as to the efficiency of explicit and implicit vocabulary teaching was not settled, and pushed researchers to suggest more detailed methods. Seal (1991), for instance, classified vocabulary teaching strategies into planned and unplanned activities in the classroom. While unplanned strategies refer to incidental or implicit vocabulary learning, and planned vocabulary teaching refers to explicit instruction. Oxford and Crockall (1990) proposed another detailed analysis of vocabulary teaching methods with a four categories classification (1) *de-contextualising*: the words are presented in isolated forms such as word lists, flashcards, and dictionary use; (2) *semi-contextualising*: there exists some kind of context to present vocabulary, such as word grouping, association, and visual imagery; (3) *fully contextualizing* that involves the use of context to present vocabulary mainly through reading, listening, speaking, and writing; (4) *adaptable* which supplement all the other techniques. This vocabulary teaching methods variety provided in theory may not similarly be found in practice.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The importance of vocabulary as a research area does not state for granted that teachers are aware of the various methods of vocabulary teaching available in the literature. Although research has emphasized that vocabulary is the skeleton of language and its building block, teachers may not be aware of the various ways to teach vocabulary. Hence, there is a need to ask teachers- as main vocabulary resources in the EFL classroom, about their perceptions of vocabulary as a language sub-skill and the vocabulary teaching methods they use. The problem stated for the context of the present study is the lack of teacher awareness of the plethora of vocabulary teaching methods.

## 3. Research Questions

The current research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do EFL teachers perceive vocabulary teaching?
2. To what extent are EFL teachers aware of their vocabulary teaching methods?

4.

#### **5. Aims of the Study**

The main motif behind the present study is to explore the degree of awareness of EFL teachers at the English Language and Literature Department at Sétif 2 University of vocabulary teaching methods. The study also aims at describing the method (s) of vocabulary teaching in the oral expression classroom as a space devoted for teaching vocabulary per se. Last but not least, the research aspires to raise teachers' awareness about aspects related to vocabulary teaching methods.

#### **6. Methodology and Research Design**

The current study uses both a qualitative and quantitative research design to gather data. After administering the questionnaire as a main data collection instrument to the whole population of teachers to collect their perceptions of vocabulary teaching methods, a non-participant observation was carried. The aim of the observation was to survey the methodology and the types of activities that teachers use to teach vocabulary in the oral expression classroom. Upon analysis of the observation, a questionnaire was administered to the three observed teachers to compare their observed teaching method with their questionnaire responses.

##### **6.1. Participants**

The participants in the current research included 35 teachers of English as a foreign language at the English language and Literature Department at Mohamed Lamine Dabaghine University Sétif 2- Algeria.

##### **6.1.1. Oral Expression Teacher participants**

The oral expression teacher participants in the current study are three purposively selected teachers teaching third year students at the Department of English Language and Literature, Mohamed Lamine Dabaghine University Sétif 2, Algeria. Two female teachers and a male teacher share the responsibility of teaching 380 students divided into 11 groups. Oral expression module is a three hours weekly session introduced as a one hour and a half session at the language laboratory and another at the classroom. The teachers were purposively selected because they present different age, academic, and experience background levels. Further details about the oral expression teacher participants are provided in profiles below (see data analysis section).

##### **6.1.2. Teacher Participants**

The teacher participants in this study involved 32 teachers out of 53 teachers at the English Language and Literature Department at Mohamed Lamine Dabaghine University Sétif 2, Algeria. They were 10 male and 22 female teachers and have an

English teaching experience of 4 to 28 years. The teachers were selected randomly to present all levels and modules in order to cover the teaching and assessment of vocabulary methods use in the department.

## **6.2. Research Instruments**

### **6.2.1. The Questionnaire**

Designed to collect data about the perceptions of teachers towards their vocabulary teaching practices in the classroom, the Vocabulary Teaching Methods Questionnaire (VTMQ) was the main data collection instrument. It included ten questions mostly in multiple choice formats to cover most of the teaching and assessment methods of vocabulary.

### **6.2.2. The Observation**

The observation phase was conducted to gather insights about the current situation of vocabulary teaching in third year oral expression classrooms. The choice of the oral expression subject stemmed from its focus on teaching vocabulary per se if compared to other modules in which vocabulary is a vehicle to convey information or integrated within other language skills. The researcher carried a participant structured observation with a random sample of three third year classes belonging to three different teachers who teach oral expression for all third year population. Using a five-scale checklist (*Not Observed, Need Improvements, observed, and shown very well*), the researcher collected specific data relevant to the research context. The observation focused on the main aspects of teaching content and vocabulary load, vocabulary learning activities, and vocabulary instructional method.

## **6.3. Data Collection Procedures**

### **6.3.1. The Questionnaire**

To overcome any ambiguities or difficulties in understanding and responding to the statements and questions of the VTMQ, a piloting phase was conducted. The VTMQ was piloted twice with a sample of 7 teachers non-included in the overall study sample. The reflections gained from the responses of the first piloting helped the researcher restructure the questionnaire to cover a wider range of teaching and assessment methods. In the second piloting, the 7 teachers responded again to the restructured questionnaire with no difficulties. Hence, the researcher administered the final VTMQ to the teacher participants after stating the problem and aim of the study. Generally speaking, teachers reflected considerably on the questions to link the answer choices to their classroom practices.

### **6.3.2. The observation**

Selected to collect data from within the classroom, the observation phase provided data about the vocabulary teaching method in third year oral expression classrooms. Three randomly selected third year groups belonging to three different teachers responsible for teaching oral expression to the whole population of third year students were subject for

five observation sessions of three hours each. Hence, the observation lasted for fifteen hours for each group both at the language laboratory and the classroom. The observation started on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 and ended on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2015. An observation checklist was used to follow the availability or otherwise not of the research focused on elements.

#### 6.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data gathered by means of the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 software (2014). The software analyzed the obtained data to verify the questionnaire reliability. The alpha coefficient for the reliability of teachers' questionnaire across all the teachers was .78 (Cronbach alpha= .78). This alpha coefficient result reports a high reliability in excess of .70 (Dornyei, 2003). Then, frequencies and chi-square differences were calculated for the data obtained. The data collected during the observation stage were analyzed qualitatively to report on the way teachers teach vocabulary in their classrooms. The data were organized into profiles to respond to the three observed classrooms and teachers.

### 7. Results and Discussion

#### 7.1. Research Question 1

To answer the first research question, the VTMQ provided quantitative data in the form of frequencies. The VGTMQ first section on vocabulary provided quantitative data in the form of frequencies. The teachers estimated the importance of vocabulary to be ranging between important (50.0%) and very important (46.9%) to convey the content of their subject areas as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Teacher Participants' Perceptions of vocabulary importance**

Option	<i>Frequency</i>	Chi-square	<i>Df</i>	Asymp.sig
Not important	3.1			
Important	50.0	<b>13.18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>.001</b>
Very important	46.9			
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (2) and significance level 0.05

Overall, the majority of teachers (50.0%) reported that vocabulary is important. The result is significant as stated by the .001 chi-square significance. As most teachers use vocabulary as a means to introduce the knowledge relevant to the subject areas they teach, the importance of vocabulary depends on the nature of the subject itself. Many scholars (Ellis, 1994; Lewis, 1993; Nandy, 1994; Zimmerman, 1997) emphasized the importance of vocabulary in language teaching. In the same way, the teacher participants have a high perception of vocabulary as an important language component in their teaching. As a language component, vocabulary does not import its importance

to serve its own sphere; rather it spreads to affect different language learning areas. Lessard-Clouston (1996:27) affirms “Vocabulary - words, phrases, idioms, etc. is at the heart of all language usage in the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as culture.” This importance rises from the roles vocabulary plays in different contexts.

To reveal this significant importance in practice, the teacher participants were questioned about setting objectives for teaching vocabulary specifically. The results reported that only 13 teachers (40.6%) among the 32 teachers stated that they set objectives to teach vocabulary per se in their lesson plans as shown in table 2 below:

**Table 2: Teacher Participants’ Vocabulary Objectives Setting**

Option	<i>Frequency</i>	Chi-square	<i>Df</i>	Asymp.sig
Yes	40.6			
No	59.4	<b>1.125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.289</b>
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (1) and significance level 0.05

As shown in table 2 above, the majority of teachers reported that they do not set objectives specifically to teach vocabulary within their subject areas. However, the result is not significant as stated by the .289 significance level, and confirms that the participants have different perceptions towards setting objectives for teaching vocabulary per se. Setting objectives assist in directing the attention of learners to specific information that helps in developing their cognitive processes and transmitting the output into input successfully (Newton, 2001; Schank, 1999; Skehan, 1998). The obtained result implies that teachers have different perceptions towards setting objectives for vocabulary teaching as an important step in developing the vocabulary level of their learners.

Although not all the participants reported to set objectives to teach vocabulary mainly, they were further asked to specify the overall objective behind teaching vocabulary within their overall teaching. The teacher participants stated that they aim to achieve a variety of purposes as shown in table 3 below:

Option	<i>Frequency</i>	Chi-square	<i>Df</i>	Asymp.sig
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Promoting VK	28.1			
Developing VLS	15.6			
Providing VLR	9.4	<b>5.50</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>.240</b>
All of them	31.3			
Other purposes	15.6			
Total	100.0			

**Table 3: Teacher Participants' Perception of Vocabulary Teaching Purposes**

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (4) and significance level 0.05

The majority of teachers (31.3%) stated that they teach vocabulary to meet the three suggested purposes. Teachers further pointed out that promoting VK constitutes a priority for them. However, the result is not significant ( $\text{sig}=.240$ , which is beyond .05 level of significance) and reveals that teachers have different objectives behind teaching vocabulary depending on the nature of the subject area and the syllabus objectives. Among the 32 participants, 28.1 % reported that their objective is promoting the vocabulary knowledge of the learners. This reflects their awareness of the importance of vocabulary knowledge and its role in establishing successful learning (McCarthy, 1990; Read, 2000).

Similar to setting objectives for vocabulary teaching, selecting vocabulary activities is also a main part in lesson planning. In fact, the subject areas that teachers covered determined the use or otherwise not of activities in the classroom. Table 4 below reports the frequencies of vocabulary learning activities:

**Table 4: Teacher Participants' Perception of Vocabulary Activities selection**

Option	<i>Frequency</i>	Chi-square	<i>Df</i>	Asymp.sig
Yes	56.3			
No	43.8	<b>.500</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.480</b>
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (1) and significance level 0.05

The participants have differing views about selecting vocabulary activities or otherwise not for their lessons. Although most of the teachers (56.3%) stated that they select activities to teach vocabulary particularly, the result is not significant as indicated by the .48 significance level. This implies that the participants perceive vocabulary activities selection differently. Vocabulary learning activities focus primarily on



vocabulary and drive the attention of learners explicitly or implicitly to the target vocabulary aspects. Moreover, the selection of classroom activities affects positively the process of vocabulary learning and should be included in vocabulary teaching (Nation, 2001; Harmer, 2007).

As the participants had different perceptions towards selecting activities, the types of activities were also reported to be of limited use and variety. The results shown in table 5 below revealed that no activity type is used significantly over other types of activities ( $X^2= 19.000$ ,  $p=.061$ ). The teachers used different types of activities with no majoring significant rates, depending on their subject areas and lesson objectives. The results are summarized in table.5 below:

**Table 5: Teacher Participants' Perception of Vocabulary Activities use**

Option	<i>Frequency</i>	Chi-square	<i>Df</i>	Asymp.sig
Provide definitions	12.5			
sentence completion	2.8			
Reading activities	6.9			
Listening activities	8.3			
Speaking activities	5.6	<b>19.000</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>.061</b>
Writing activities	11.1			
Provide synonyms/antonyms	15.3			
Matching activities				
Use new words in context	11.1			
Use context to draw meaning	9.7			
All of them	4.2			
Others	1.4			
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (11) and significance level 0.05

Providing definitions (12.5%), synonyms and antonyms (15.3%) activities were reported to be the highly frequently used activities. These activities characterize explicit vocabulary teaching (Duin & Graves, 1987; Sokeman, 1997; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000; Oxford and Scarcella, 1994; Schmitt and Carter, 2000). Likewise,

writing activities and using context to teach vocabulary activities were also significantly reported to be used frequently (11.1%) reflecting explicit vocabulary teaching (Nagy, 1997; Nation and Newton, Sokeman, 1997).

Both aspects of vocabulary activities use and their types are dependent on the vocabulary teaching method used. Therefore, teachers were further asked about the vocabulary teaching methods they use. In fact, the obtained results emphasize that no specific method is used significantly over the other method as confirmed by means of the ( $X^2= 1.000$ ,  $p=.060$ ) which is beyond the .05 significance level. Hence, teachers selected the vocabulary method that better represent the teaching of their subject areas. Table 6 below summarizes the frequency of vocabulary teaching methods used:

**Table 6: Teacher Participants' perceptions of vocabulary teaching methods**

Option	Frequency	Chi-square	df	Asymp.sig
Deductive/explicit teaching	59.4			
Inductive/implicit teaching	40.6	<b>1.000</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.60</b>
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (2) and significance level 0.05

Concerning implicit vocabulary teaching, teacher participants use vocabulary as a means to convey knowledge relevant to the subject while vocabulary learning happens incidentally (Nagy, 1997; Sökmen, 1997). Notably, (59.4%) of the teacher participants stated that they teach vocabulary explicitly which confirms their awareness of the need to draw the attention of learners directly to the target vocabulary items. Many researchers (Nation, 2001; Lightbown and Spada 2006; Milton 2009; Allan, 2010; Schmitt, 2010) support the explicit teaching of vocabulary for more efficient vocabulary learning.

To understand their perception of their role as a potential factor affecting vocabulary knowledge, the teacher participants were further requested to specify the factors that affect learners' vocabulary knowledge. The teachers replied that both the vocabulary teaching method and the learners affect the overall vocabulary knowledge levels of learners. The results are shown in table 7 below:

**Table 7: Teacher Participants' perceptions of the Factors Affecting Vocabulary Knowledge**

Option	Frequency	Chi-square	df	Asymp.sig
The language learner	56.3			
The vocabulary teaching method	43.8	<b>.500</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.480</b>
Total	100.0			

\*Decision taken about the significance of the results at the degree of freedom (1) and significance level 0.05

The teacher participants reported that both factors interfere in the development of learner vocabulary knowledge. While the majority (56.3%) claimed out that the language learner is the main factor, the result is not significant ( $X^2 = .500$ ,  $p = .480$ ) and emphasizes that the vocabulary teaching method is also affecting the development of learners' vocabulary knowledge. The issue of whether explicit or implicit instruction should be used for effective vocabulary learning has been a debatable topic for decades. In more recent years, researchers (Milton, 2009; Chacón-Beltrán et al. 2010) support the combination of both explicit and implicit vocabulary teaching for effective vocabulary learning. The role of the individual learner in the language learning process is essential to guarantee the whole language continuum because the learner as Larsen-Freeman (2001:13) views him, is not "merely a passive recipient".

## 7.2. Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, the observation was the main tool used to collect data. The aim was to report the actual practices of oral expression teachers in terms of vocabulary teaching and assessment in the classroom. The observation data were compared with the VTMQ questionnaire answers of the observed teachers. The researcher organized the obtained data from the observation and the questionnaire in the form of profiles.

### Profile of Teacher One

**Gender:** Male

**Degree Held:** Magister

**English Teaching Experience:** 26 years

**Oral Expression teaching experience:** 19 years

**Lesson opening:** presentation

**Lesson development:** presentation and discussion

**Lesson closing:** discussion

**Types of vocabulary activities:** whole class oral discussion activity

**Teacher use of language:** questions, definitions, synonyms, antonyms, examples, keywords, use new words in context.

**Vocabulary teaching method:** deductive fully contextualizing

**Type of vocabulary knowledge emphasized:** receptive knowledge (listening)

**Purpose of vocabulary teaching:** promoting the vocabulary knowledge, development of vocabulary learning strategies, providing resources for English vocabulary learning

The first teacher observed had an overall experience of 19 years in teaching oral expression. This experience enabled him to deal with teaching vocabulary thematically to meet students' needs. His vocabulary teaching was deductive through discussions and no room for vocabulary activities use. In the language laboratory, the teacher introduced the students into English language varieties (British, American, Australian, and South African) through videos, broadcasts and recordings. Moreover, the vocabulary presented was thematic reflecting cultural and authentic contexts. Themes such as politics, domestic violence, climate change, Britain's child beggars, multiculturalism, and human trafficking were dealt with through discussions. In addition, the teacher created links between the previously stated information and the new content. The vocabulary load was appropriate to the level of the students since the teacher diversified the contexts. Hence, the students react to the theme first at the laboratory in response to the questions of the teacher. Later in the classroom, the students discussed the theme in broader terms under the full guidance of the teacher.

However, the variety of themes presented was opposed to the use of the same method of vocabulary teaching. The observed teacher used the same pattern of teaching vocabulary that focused on the presentation and discussion stages. The overall teaching method started with the teacher presenting the theme to the students through a listening task (listening to broadcast, speech, or watching a video). After the listening section, the teacher opened a discussion about the theme with the students to draw their reflections on what they had listened to. Meanwhile, the whole discussion was teacher-dominated with few interaction and discussion opportunities created for students. Moreover, there are no opportunities for vocabulary practice since there was no vocabulary activities presented and the whole stages of practice and production were totally missing. The teacher did not encourage the use of the dictionary and relied on spelling to introduce new words instead of using the white board. Overall, the teaching method was fully a one stage teacher presentation-based.

The comparison of the observation results with the teacher questionnaire answers revealed a lack of awareness of the variety of vocabulary teaching methods. The teacher stated in the questionnaire that vocabulary teaching is very important, and this was felt and observed in the classroom. Additionally, the teacher stated that his

aims of teaching vocabulary cover the aims stated in the questionnaire and the observation confirmed his answer. Yet, he did not neither provide the objectives nor discuss their attainment or otherwise not at the end of the session with his students. The teacher response to the use of vocabulary learning activities further confirmed his teaching method which lacks practice. In fact, even the types of activities the teacher reported to use in the questionnaire were teacher-handled since the students have no chances for practice.

In the questionnaire, the teacher pointed out that he uses a fully-contextualizing method of vocabulary teaching. However, the observation reports that only listening and speaking skills are reinforced with intensive focus on listening and receptive vocabulary. The overuse of the same method of presenting vocabulary which builds on presentation and discussion with total neglect of practice and few opportunities for students' spoken production emerge from the lack of awareness about vocabulary teaching methods. Besides, the focus on receptive vocabulary teaching through listening to selected instructional materials or the teacher himself limited the students' resources.

### Profile of Teacher Two

**Gender:** Female

**Degree held:** bachelor

**English teaching experience:** 11 years

**Oral expression experience:** 10 years

**Lesson opening:** presentation

**Lesson development:** practice

**Lesson closing:** practice

**Types of vocabulary activities:** providing definitions, synonyms/antonyms activity, matching activities, language games, fill-in the gaps, sentence completion

**Teacher use of language:** questions, definitions, examples, prompt instructions, synonyms, antonyms, keywords.

**Vocabulary teaching method:** deductive semi-contextualizing

**Type of vocabulary knowledge emphasized:** productive (speaking)

**Purpose of vocabulary teaching:** promoting vocabulary knowledge of learners

In the second classroom observed, the teacher has a ten years experience in teaching oral expression. Although her vocabulary teaching method was also deductive and theme discussion-based as the first teacher, the themes included were of less variety. However, practice was not neglected if compared to the first teacher. At the presentation stage, the teacher introduced the theme briefly to the students through brainstorming. Then the themes were wholly presented through a listening task in which videos and broadcasts were used in the language laboratory. In the classroom, the teacher discussed the theme with the students through questions. Then, the students practice the presented vocabulary through a series of activities. The production stage was neglected within the lesson stages, but was considered as an assessment tool in which students have to prepare projects on assigned topics and present them.

The vocabulary presented was thematic and practical reflecting authentic contexts of use, but there was no continuity between previous and new presented information. Every session contents and vocabulary stood isolated from the next content provided. The vocabulary load was adequate to the level of the intended students, but the content and situations were less stimulating of new themes. The vocabulary learning activities used were level appropriate creating opportunities for vocabulary knowledge use and for classroom participation. Moreover, there were smooth links between the activities since the students move from a recognition stage to use in assigned situation. Moreover, there was a variety in the types of activities used too, as stated in the teacher profile, since practice was the main stage of the lesson. The teacher-students interaction was remarkable with many opportunities for students to discuss and speak and the teacher was mostly and instructor and guide.

Comparing the observed data with the responses of the teacher to the VTAMQ indicates some contradictions between the real classroom performance of the teacher and her answers to the questionnaire. This contradiction resulted from the lack of awareness about vocabulary teaching and assessment methods. While the teacher stated in the questionnaire that teaching vocabulary is very important which was witnessed in the classroom, the vocabulary teaching and assessment methods reported to be used did not cope with the observed methods in the classroom. Similar to first teacher, the second teacher stated in the questionnaire that she sets objectives for teaching vocabulary; these objectives were not provided at the beginning or checked for attainment at the end of the session. Besides, some types of activities reported to be used in the questionnaire

such as using new words in context, using context to draw meaning, and listening were not observed in the classroom. In fact, the listening task was provided as a presentation stage rather than practice through listening activities.

In responding to vocabulary teaching methods, the teacher stated that she follows a semi-contextualizing method which contradicts with what was observed in the classroom. The teacher used a deductive structured reviewing vocabulary teaching method. De-contextualizing could be explained by her using word lists in the form of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, and encouraging dictionary use. Semi-contextualizing appeared in her use of word grouping and visual imagery. And fully-contextualizing was observed in the listening and speaking tasks. Moreover, the emphasis on practice as the main stage the students' intensive discussion of the theme encouraged productive vocabulary use situations to meet the teacher's objective of promoting the students' VK.

**Profile of Teacher Three**

<b>Gender:</b> female
<b>Degree held:</b> magister
<b>English teaching experience:</b> 4 years
<b>Oral expression teaching experience:</b> 3 years
<b>Lesson opening:</b> presentation
<b>Lesson development:</b> practice
<b>Lesson closing:</b> practice
<b>Types of vocabulary activities:</b> listening activity, providing definitions, providing synonyms/antonyms, matching activities, filling in the gaps, games, word mapping
<b>Teacher use of language:</b> questions, definitions, examples, explanations, gestures, translations, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, homonyms, false friends, prompts, instructions, keywords.
<b>Vocabulary teaching method:</b> deductive semi-contextualizing
<b>Type of vocabulary knowledge emphasized:</b> receptive knowledge (speaking)

<b>Purpose of vocabulary teaching:</b> promoting the vocabulary knowledge of learners
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The third teacher was the youngest and less experienced compared to the previously stated teachers. The vocabulary was presented deductively but of less thematic variety and context authenticity if compared to the themes of teacher one. Themes such as ... The content selected and the vocabulary load were level appropriate, but impractical in terms of stimulating new themes, critical thinking and problem solving skills. Furthermore, there were no links between previous and newly presented information and the cut between themes created less opportunities for the students to remember or re-use the vocabulary introduced previously. Besides, there was little if any links between the content of the laboratory session and the classroom session.

At the laboratory, the teacher started the lesson through a theme presentation by means of using videos, conversations, or songs. After listening, the teacher leads a discussion with the students through questions, examples and explanations creating various interaction opportunities for students. Hence, the laboratory session is a presentation and theme discussion-based. In the classroom, the teacher provides handouts in which the students worked on activities relevant to the theme. After answering the activity, the students provided their answers with a full discussion of each answer with the teacher in relevance to the theme presented. The teacher guided the discussion through questions and explanations. Besides, the teacher used the white board to write the new words presented and encouraged the students to use dictionaries to find out meanings of difficult words. She also created opportunities for interaction among the students to diversify the expression of ideas relevant to the theme. The use of different vocabulary activities (see the teacher profile) created practice variety from a learning session to another. Overall, the teacher relied on a two sequence teaching method in which presentation and practice were fully emphasized.

Comparing the teacher responses to the questionnaire with her observed teaching method outlines a number of contradictions. First, although the teacher stated that vocabulary teaching is very important, and that her purpose was promoting the vocabulary knowledge of learners, she did not clearly state the objectives nor check their fulfillment by the end of the sessions. In identifying her teaching method, the teacher stated in the questionnaire that she uses a semi-contextualizing method. However, the observation reveals that both de-contextualizing and semi-contextualizing were used. The types of activities selected in the questionnaire were limited to providing definitions, synonyms, antonyms and matching activities, but the observation widened the scope of activities to use speaking activities, sentence completion activities, gap filling activities, and use context to draw meaning activities.



## 7. Summary of Results and Discussion

This study investigated the methods of vocabulary teaching that Teachers of English as a foreign language at the English Language and Literature Department at Sétif 2 University use in their classrooms. The aim was to gather the perceptions of teachers towards vocabulary teaching in order to examine their degree of awareness about methods of teaching vocabulary.

The quantitative findings obtained through the questionnaire revealed that teachers' have various perceptions towards vocabulary teaching. Teachers insisted on the importance of vocabulary in teaching their modules supporting the view of many scholars (Ellis, 1994; Lewis, 1993; Nandy, 1994; Zimmerman, 1997). However, this importance was not sustained by the overall objective of developing the VK of the students that teachers stated behind teaching vocabulary. Indeed, many scholars (McCarthy, 1990; Nagy, 1997; Read, 2000) emphasized that increasing the VK of learners goes fundamentally into the whole process of teaching and education. Furthermore, teachers stated that they teach vocabulary explicitly to meet the requirements of their subject areas. Scholars (Cunningham, 2005; Hiebert & Kamil, 2005; Nagy, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Stahl, 2005) emphasized the efficiency of explicit vocabulary teaching.

The qualitative data obtained from the observation provided concrete data about vocabulary teaching methods in the classroom. The observation results confirmed the teachers' view on the importance of vocabulary for English teaching. However, the three teachers observed used the same method of teaching vocabulary. The deliberate explicit vocabulary teaching method shaped the practices of the three teachers although the themes selected were different. Furthermore, though the development of the lessons did not go in the same direction, the three teachers focused on explicit discussion of the selected themes. Noticeably, the themes of the first teacher were debatable, varied and selected carefully to create a discussion environment if compared to the themes of the other two teachers. However, the second and third teachers did not dominate the discussions in their classrooms and created opportunities for students' spoken productive vocabulary through practice.

However, the comparison of the observation findings with the observed teacher's responses to the VTMQ revealed some contradictions. In the questionnaire responses, the teachers reported to use vocabulary teaching methods and activities that they were not actually using in their classrooms. Moreover, teachers followed a deliberate explicit vocabulary teaching method that emphasized receptive vocabulary during the observation. Nation and Newton (1997: 238) considers deliberate vocabulary teaching as "one of the least efficient ways of developing learners' vocabulary knowledge". Similarly, although the teachers aimed at developing the VK of their learners in the questionnaire, they dominated the classroom discussion in ways that give little if any room for learners to use their vocabulary. This way, teachers cannot really stand on the real level of the students' vocabulary and reflect on the appropriateness of their vocabulary teaching methods. Significantly, the lack of practice opportunities created through activities obtained during the observation was contradicted with a variety of activities use in the questionnaire responses. The focus on presentation and discussion stages- which were teacher controlled, reduced the interaction of learners with the

subjects and materials selected.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research reported on the perception of EFL teachers towards vocabulary teaching methods. The low perceptions obtained via the questionnaire use overlapped with the actual situation of vocabulary teaching in the classroom as revealed by means of the observation. Hence, the findings concluded that teachers are not fully aware of their vocabulary teaching methods. Moreover, the sequencing of lesson stages excluded main stages being practice, production, or both, which affected the overall vocabulary teaching method used. In the light of these findings, teachers need to be aware of vocabulary teaching methods for better teaching performance. The findings obtained from the observation and the questionnaire could provide insights to teachers for reflecting and reviewing their vocabulary teaching methods. Receiving vocabulary positively as an important language sub-skill needs to be strengthened via efficient teaching methodologies. Keeping reflective teaching journals and participating in vocabulary teaching workshops and blogs can raise the awareness of teachers about vocabulary teaching methods. The findings of this study raised further researchable questions about the effect of using specific sequencing of lesson stages- as in the context of this study, on vocabulary learning. Similar research may be conducted with teachers at different teaching settings.

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