Vol. 1, No. 2, 2026
https://dkujournals.edu.et

Ras Dejen Journal of Sciences

An Investigation on Teachers' Perception and Use towards Vocabulary Teaching Strategies with Particular Reference to Dabat Secondary and Preparatory School

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Article History:

Received: May 13, 2026

Revised: September 22, 2026

Published: November 12, 2026

Abstract

This study aimed to explore EFL teachers' perceptions and use of vocabulary teaching strategies, focusing specifically on two schools: Dabat Secondary and Preparatory Schools. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The participants were 20 EFL teachers selected through a comprehensive sampling method. Data were collected using two instruments: questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data from the closed-ended questionnaires were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while the qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that 75% of teachers held positive views toward vocabulary instruction. In terms of strategy usage, the following order was identified from most to least frequently used: Determination strategies are methods that students employ to solve language difficulties on their own, without consulting others, or to acquire the meaning of new word termination strategies, memory strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. This suggests that determination strategies were 65% commonly employed, while metacognitive strategies were 35% used. The study also highlighted that many teachers lacked awareness or familiarity with a broad range of vocabulary teaching strategies. Therefore, it is recommended that students be encouraged to utilize a variety of vocabulary learning strategies rather than relying on a single approach to effectively enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching strategies, EFL teachers, perceptions, strategies used, vocabulary instruction

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1.1. Background of the Study

Language serves as a fundamental instrument for thought, cultural transmission, and communication. Consequently, nations worldwide prioritize foreign language instruction. Among the core language skills, speaking is paramount for personal expression and interaction and is the most frequently utilized skill in daily communication. In Ethiopia, English is taught as a foreign language from elementary school and serves as the medium of instruction in higher education. Despite this extended exposure, students often enter tertiary institutions with English proficiency levels below expectations, exhibiting significant difficulties in comprehension and usage.

A primary contributor to this proficiency gap is vocabulary. Lexical knowledge is the essential element that interlinks listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Scholars contend that without a robust vocabulary, mastery of grammar is insufficient for effective communication. If grammar forms the skeleton of a language, vocabulary constitutes its vital organs and flesh. It is the primary tool for thought, self-expression, and communication.

Mastering English vocabulary presents distinct challenges, as words can be difficult in form, meaning, or usage. This complexity necessitates that instructors select and implement appropriate pedagogical strategies. Vocabulary is the heart of language; without it, neither comprehension nor production is possible. While traditional methods emphasized rote memorization, contemporary pedagogy views vocabulary as a dynamic skill to be cultivated within a communicative context.

This study is motivated by the critical importance of vocabulary instruction and the challenges educators face in implementing effective strategies. It aims to investigate the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers regarding vocabulary teaching strategies in selected schools.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Historically, vocabulary instruction was marginalized in favor of syntactic and grammatical teaching, influenced by structuralists and Chomskyan linguistic theories. A prevailing current consensus, however, recognizes vocabulary as crucial for fluency and communication.

The researcher's extensive teaching experience since 2006 has revealed that secondary school students exhibit significant weaknesses in reading, listening, speaking, and writing, largely attributable to a limited vocabulary. This deficiency appears to stem from

insufficient focus on and practice in vocabulary teaching. This study therefore seeks to explore teachers' attitudes and the strategies they employ to address this critical area.

This research is contextualized by both international studies (e.g., Khelifi, 2015; Lisa-Renée, 2016), which confirm teachers' awareness of vocabulary's importance, and local Ethiopian studies (e.g., Gashaw, 2008; Abebe, 1997), which indicate a disconnect between teacher beliefs and the effective implementation of diverse strategies.

1.3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the perceptions and use of vocabulary teaching strategies among EFL teachers at Dabat Secondary and Preparatory Schools.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives:

- To identify EFL teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching strategies.
- To determine the vocabulary teaching strategies most frequently used by EFL teachers.
- To assess the vocabulary teaching strategies least frequently used by EFL teachers.

1.4. Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards vocabulary teaching strategies?
2. Which vocabulary teaching strategies do English teachers use most frequently?
3. Which strategies do English teachers use least frequently?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to make significant contributions to improving vocabulary teaching and learning practices by providing valuable insights into effective instructional approaches and strategies. Specifically, the study will help identify practical strategies for addressing the challenges students encounter in learning, retaining, and using vocabulary productively. It is also expected to raise students' awareness of diverse vocabulary learning strategies and encourage them to adopt appropriate techniques that enhance their vocabulary knowledge, learning autonomy, and ability to use newly acquired words in different communicative contexts.

Moreover, the findings may provide useful feedback for English language teachers to reflect on their existing instructional practices and make informed decisions about selecting and implementing effective vocabulary teaching strategies that respond to students' learning needs. In addition, the study is expected to offer valuable insights for syllabus

designers, curriculum developers, and textbook writers by emphasizing the importance of integrating appropriate vocabulary learning strategies, meaningful classroom activities, and practical exercises that facilitate vocabulary acquisition, retention, and productive use. Ultimately, the study may contribute to enhancing the quality of vocabulary instruction and promoting more effective English language teaching and learning.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to Grades 9-12 in two selected schools, namely one secondary school and one preparatory school, at Dabat Wereda. The study focuses specifically on the issues related to vocabulary teaching and learning within these educational settings. The selection of these schools and grade levels is guided by the objectives and scope of the study. Furthermore, the study is geographically and institutionally confined to the selected schools due to limitations in time and financial resources. Therefore, the findings are intended primarily to provide insights into the specific contexts under investigation, and their applicability to other schools and educational settings should be considered in light of these delimitations.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

Despite its intended contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its findings. First, the study involves only two schools in Dabat Wereda, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other schools and educational contexts. Second, limited financial resources and the relatively short period available for conducting the research may restrict the breadth and depth of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the study does not incorporate classroom observations or direct participation by students, which limits the opportunity to examine vocabulary teaching practices and students' learning experiences through direct classroom-based evidence.

Consequently, the findings will primarily reflect the perspectives and information obtained from the participants and data sources included in the study. Nevertheless, the study is expected to provide useful insights into vocabulary teaching and learning within the selected schools and may serve as a foundation for further research involving a broader range of participants, additional schools, and more comprehensive data collection methods.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Definitions of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is broadly defined as the set of words known and used by a speaker of a language (Hatch & Brown, 1995). It is a fundamental component, with scholars like Richards (2001) emphasizing its primacy in language learning and the need for careful selection based on course objectives.

2.2. Types of Vocabulary

Receptive vs. Productive Vocabulary: A crucial distinction exists between receptive vocabulary (words understood when heard or read) and productive vocabulary (words used in speech and writing). Typically, a speaker's receptive lexicon is larger than their productive one, with words often moving from receptive to productive knowledge over time (Read, 2000).

2.3. Steps of Teaching Vocabulary

Effective vocabulary instruction requires systematic planning and the implementation of appropriate teaching procedures to help learners understand, retain, and use new words meaningfully. Vocabulary teaching should not be limited to presenting word meanings; rather, it should involve selecting appropriate words, organizing them logically, presenting them through suitable instructional techniques, and providing opportunities for practice and application. These steps help teachers address learners' vocabulary needs and promote the development of both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

In general, the teaching of vocabulary should be viewed as a continuous process involving selection, sequencing, presentation, practice, consolidation, and application. The effectiveness of these steps depends on teachers' ability to select appropriate words, employ varied instructional techniques, consider learners' needs, and create opportunities for meaningful language use. When systematically implemented, these procedures can enhance vocabulary acquisition, retention, and productive use.

2.4. Concept of Teaching Strategy

A teaching strategy refers to a systematic and purposeful plan that guides a teacher in organizing instructional activities, selecting appropriate teaching techniques, and facilitating learners' achievement of specified learning objectives. According to Strasser (1964), a teaching strategy can be understood as a general plan for a lesson that

incorporates the intended learning outcomes and the instructional actions required to achieve them. In this sense, a teaching strategy provides direction for classroom instruction by helping teachers determine what to teach, how to teach it, which resources to use, and how to engage learners effectively in the learning process. It is broader than an individual teaching technique because it encompasses the overall instructional plan within which particular techniques and activities are selected and implemented.

In vocabulary instruction, a teaching strategy refers to the deliberate approaches and classroom procedures that teachers employ to help learners understand, acquire, retain, and use new words appropriately. Such strategies may include explicit explanation, contextualized vocabulary presentation, the use of visual aids, semantic mapping, word association, dictionary consultation, collaborative learning, repetition, and communicative practice. The choice of strategy depends on several factors, including the nature of the target vocabulary, learners' language proficiency, their learning needs, the instructional objectives, and the available teaching resources. For instance, a teacher may use pictures and demonstrations to introduce concrete nouns, contextual examples to explain unfamiliar expressions, and semantic mapping to illustrate relationships among words. Similarly, group discussions and role-play activities can provide learners with opportunities to practise using newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful communicative situations.

An effective vocabulary teaching strategy should go beyond helping learners memorize word definitions. It should enable them to recognize words, understand their meanings in different contexts, identify relationships between words, recall them when necessary, and use them accurately in speaking and writing. Teachers therefore need to combine appropriate instructional techniques with activities that encourage active participation, independent learning, and repeated exposure to vocabulary. Moreover, the effectiveness of a teaching strategy should be evaluated in terms of its contribution to learners' vocabulary development and their ability to apply newly learned words in appropriate contexts.

It is also important to distinguish between vocabulary teaching strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary teaching strategies refer primarily to the approaches teachers use to facilitate vocabulary acquisition, whereas vocabulary learning strategies concern the actions learners undertake to discover, understand, remember, and use new words. Although these concepts are closely related, effective vocabulary instruction should connect them by helping learners develop the skills and independence needed to

manage their own vocabulary learning. Accordingly, in the context of the present study, vocabulary teaching strategies are understood as the planned instructional approaches employed by teachers to facilitate learners' understanding, retention, and productive use of English vocabulary.

2.5. The Importance of Vocabulary and Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Vocabulary constitutes a fundamental component of language proficiency because it provides the linguistic resources necessary for expressing ideas, understanding messages, and participating effectively in communication. Without an adequate knowledge of vocabulary, learners may experience considerable difficulties in understanding spoken and written texts, expressing their thoughts clearly, and engaging in meaningful interactions, even when they possess some knowledge of grammatical rules. McCarthy (1990) emphasizes the central role of vocabulary in language learning and communication, while Krashen (1998) highlights the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition. These perspectives underscore the need to give vocabulary development an important place in English language teaching and learning.

The importance of vocabulary extends beyond the ability to recognize the meanings of individual words. Learners need to understand how words function in different contexts, how they combine with other words, and how their meanings may change according to the situations in which they are used. For example, knowing the meaning of a word in isolation does not necessarily enable a learner to use it appropriately in an academic discussion, a written assignment, or an everyday conversation. Vocabulary knowledge therefore includes the ability to recognize words, understand their meanings, pronounce them appropriately, spell them correctly, identify their grammatical functions, and use them accurately in context. It also involves understanding collocations, word forms, connotations, and relationships between words. Developing this broader understanding of vocabulary is essential for improving learners' communicative competence and academic performance.

Vocabulary is particularly important in second- and foreign-language learning because it supports the development of the four major language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In listening, vocabulary knowledge helps learners recognize spoken words and interpret messages accurately. In speaking, it enables them to select appropriate expressions, communicate ideas fluently, and respond effectively to others. In reading, an adequate vocabulary facilitates comprehension by helping learners understand the

meanings of words and interpret the overall message of a text. In writing, vocabulary knowledge enables learners to express ideas precisely, maintain coherence, and select language appropriate to their intended audience and purpose. Consequently, inadequate vocabulary knowledge can impede learners' progress across these skills, whereas systematic vocabulary development can support more effective language learning.

Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition can be challenging for learners, particularly in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language and opportunities for exposure and practice outside the classroom are limited. Learners may struggle to understand unfamiliar words, distinguish between similar meanings, remember previously taught vocabulary, pronounce words correctly, or use them appropriately in communication. Furthermore, learning words through memorization alone may not provide sufficient opportunities to develop the contextual understanding and productive skills required for effective language use. These challenges highlight the need for teachers to adopt appropriate and varied vocabulary teaching strategies that address learners' different needs and provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with new words.

Effective vocabulary teaching strategies are important because they help make vocabulary instruction systematic, engaging, and responsive to learners' needs. Through explicit explanation, contextualized presentation, visual aids, semantic mapping, word association, collaborative activities, and repeated practice, teachers can help learners understand and retain vocabulary more effectively. Different strategies serve different instructional purposes. For instance, contextual guessing can develop learners' ability to infer word meanings independently, while semantic mapping can help them identify relationships among concepts. Repetition and vocabulary notebooks can support retention, whereas communicative activities can encourage learners to apply vocabulary in meaningful situations. The selection and combination of these strategies should be guided by instructional objectives, learners' proficiency levels, and the nature of the vocabulary being taught.

Furthermore, effective vocabulary teaching strategies can promote learner autonomy by encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their own vocabulary development. When learners become familiar with techniques such as dictionary use, contextual inference, word analysis, vocabulary recording, and self-testing, they can continue learning beyond the classroom. Such independence is particularly valuable because vocabulary development is a continuous process that requires regular exposure, practice,

and review. Teachers who explicitly introduce and model these strategies can help learners become more confident and resourceful language users.

In addition, appropriate vocabulary teaching strategies can contribute to creating more interactive and learner-centered classrooms. Activities such as pair work, group discussions, word games, storytelling, and role-play provide opportunities for learners to engage actively with vocabulary rather than simply receiving explanations from the teacher. These activities can also support collaboration, increase participation, and create meaningful contexts for practising newly learned words. However, the effectiveness of any strategy depends on its suitability for the instructional context, the clarity of the teacher's explanations, and the opportunities provided for practice and feedback.

In conclusion, vocabulary is indispensable to successful English language learning because it underpins comprehension, communication, and the development of language skills. Nevertheless, vocabulary acquisition requires more than memorizing word meanings; it involves understanding, retaining, and using words appropriately in different contexts. Vocabulary teaching strategies are therefore essential for helping learners overcome vocabulary-related difficulties, improve their communicative competence, and develop independent learning skills. Investigating the strategies employed by teachers can consequently provide valuable insights into existing instructional practices, the challenges associated with vocabulary teaching, and possible ways to improve vocabulary learning outcomes.

2.6. The Teacher's Role in Teaching Vocabulary

Teachers play a central role in facilitating vocabulary acquisition because they guide learners in identifying, understanding, practising, and using new words. Their responsibilities extend beyond presenting word meanings to creating learning environments in which vocabulary is introduced systematically, explained clearly, reinforced through practice, and applied in meaningful communicative contexts. Nation (2001) emphasizes the importance of systematic vocabulary learning and teaching, while Ur (1996) discusses key considerations in vocabulary instruction. These perspectives highlight the need for teachers to make informed decisions about vocabulary selection, presentation, practice, and review.

One of the teacher's primary responsibilities is selecting vocabulary that is appropriate to learners' proficiency levels, instructional objectives, and communicative needs. Teachers need to identify words that are particularly useful for learners' academic activities,

everyday communication, and understanding of curricular content. They should also consider the frequency, relevance, difficulty, and potential usefulness of the selected vocabulary. Appropriate selection ensures that classroom time is devoted to words that are likely to contribute meaningfully to learners' language development.

Another important responsibility is presenting new vocabulary in ways that make word meanings understandable. Teachers can achieve this by providing clear definitions, using examples, illustrating meanings through pictures and gestures, demonstrating actions, explaining word parts, and presenting words in meaningful sentences. The choice of presentation technique should depend on the nature of the word and the needs of the learners. For example, concrete words may be introduced through real objects or pictures, whereas abstract words may require explanations, contextual examples, comparisons, or discussions. Teachers should also draw attention to pronunciation, spelling, grammatical functions, word forms, and common collocations to help learners develop a more complete understanding of vocabulary.

Teachers are also responsible for helping learners understand vocabulary in context. Instead of relying exclusively on isolated word lists and translations, they can present vocabulary through reading passages, listening activities, dialogues, stories, and classroom discussions. Contextualized instruction helps learners recognize how words are used in actual communication and understand the relationships between words and their surrounding linguistic environments. Teachers can further encourage learners to infer unfamiliar word meanings from contextual clues, prefixes, suffixes, roots, synonyms, and antonyms. By modelling these techniques, teachers enable learners to develop strategies for dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary independently.

Providing opportunities for practice and reinforcement is another essential aspect of the teacher's role. Vocabulary knowledge develops gradually through repeated encounters with words and opportunities to use them. Teachers should therefore incorporate activities that require learners to recognize, recall, and apply vocabulary in different situations. Such activities may include sentence construction, matching exercises, vocabulary games, storytelling, role-play, pair discussions, paragraph writing, and group projects. Regular review, corrective feedback, and retrieval activities can help learners strengthen their understanding and retain vocabulary over time. Teachers should also ensure that practice moves beyond simple recognition to productive use in speaking and writing.

Moreover, teachers have an important responsibility to introduce and encourage effective vocabulary learning strategies. They should help learners understand that vocabulary can

be acquired through multiple approaches, including dictionary consultation, contextual inference, word association, semantic mapping, repetition, vocabulary notebooks, and collaborative learning. By demonstrating how and when to use these strategies, teachers can help students become more independent and strategic learners. They should also encourage learners to monitor their progress, identify unfamiliar words, review previously learned vocabulary, and take responsibility for their own learning.

Creating a supportive and participatory classroom environment is equally important. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions, share their interpretations of unfamiliar words, collaborate with classmates, and Practise vocabulary without fear of making mistakes. Pair work and group activities can provide opportunities for peer explanation and cooperative learning, while varied instructional techniques can accommodate differences in learners' abilities and learning preferences. Teachers should also consider the availability of teaching materials and adapt their methods to the resources accessible in their classrooms.

Finally, teachers need to assess learners' vocabulary development and use the results to inform subsequent instruction. Assessment may involve oral questioning, short quizzes, vocabulary exercises, written assignments, classroom discussions, and activities requiring learners to use target words in context. These assessment practices can help teachers identify difficulties, determine which strategies are effective, and provide additional support where necessary. In this way, vocabulary assessment becomes an integral part of instruction rather than merely a means of assigning grades.

In summary, teachers serve as planners, facilitators, language models, learning-strategy instructors, and assessors in vocabulary teaching. Their effectiveness depends on their ability to select appropriate vocabulary, explain meanings clearly, provide meaningful practice, encourage independent learning, and assess learners' progress. The present study therefore considers teachers' roles in vocabulary instruction particularly important for understanding the strategies used to facilitate vocabulary acquisition and productive vocabulary use among secondary school learners.

2.7. Strategies in Vocabulary Teaching

Vocabulary teaching strategies refer to the instructional approaches and procedures teachers use to help learners discover word meanings, understand relationships between words, remember newly acquired vocabulary, and apply it appropriately in communication. An effective approach to vocabulary instruction recognizes that learners

require different kinds of support at different stages of vocabulary development. They need opportunities to discover unfamiliar words, consolidate their understanding, practise retrieval, and use vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies provides a useful conceptual framework for examining the processes involved in vocabulary acquisition. Although the taxonomy primarily concerns strategies used by learners, its categories can be adapted to analyze how teachers introduce, model, encourage, and support these strategies in classroom instruction.

For the purposes of the present study, the strategies are discussed under six related categories: discovery, social, memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and consolidation strategies. These categories are interconnected rather than mutually exclusive. A teacher may, for example, introduce an unfamiliar word through contextual clues, encourage learners to discuss its meaning in groups, use a semantic map to reinforce its meaning, and then ask students to review it in their vocabulary notebooks. Such a combination can support vocabulary learning more comprehensively than relying on a single technique.

2.7.1. Discovery Strategies

Discovery strategies refer to the approaches learners use to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words, with teachers providing appropriate guidance and support. Before learners can remember or use a new word effectively, they need to establish what it means and how it functions in context. Teachers can facilitate this process through contextual guessing, dictionary use, word-part analysis, inference, synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and collocations.

Contextual guessing involves using the surrounding words, sentences, and ideas in a text to infer the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Teachers can demonstrate this strategy by presenting a sentence or short passage in which the meaning of a target word can be inferred from the context. For example, in the sentence, "Although the road was narrow, the experienced driver maneuvered the vehicle through it carefully," learners may infer the meaning of narrow from the surrounding information. Teachers can encourage students to identify contextual clues, propose possible meanings, and check whether their interpretations fit the passage.

Dictionary use is another important discovery strategy. Teachers can train learners to consult dictionaries to identify word meanings, pronunciation, grammatical categories, word forms, and usage examples. Rather than simply providing definitions, teachers can demonstrate how learners can use dictionaries to investigate unfamiliar vocabulary

independently. Similarly, word-part analysis helps learners infer meanings by examining prefixes, suffixes, and roots. For example, understanding the prefix un- can help learners recognize the negative meaning of words such as unhappy and unfair.

Teachers can also explain unfamiliar vocabulary through synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and collocations. A synonym may help clarify a word's meaning, while an antonym may illustrate its contrast with another concept. Collocations can help learners understand which words commonly occur together, such as make a decision and heavy rain. These techniques are particularly useful when teachers select examples appropriate to learners' proficiency levels and explain differences in meaning and usage.

Discovery strategies are important because they encourage learners to become active participants in vocabulary learning. By learning how to infer meanings and consult appropriate resources, students can develop the ability to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary without depending entirely on their teachers.

2.7.2. Social Strategies

Social strategies involve learning vocabulary through interaction with other people. In the classroom, teachers can encourage students to learn new words by asking questions, discussing meanings, explaining vocabulary to classmates, and participating in collaborative activities. Such interaction creates opportunities for learners to encounter words from different perspectives and clarify misunderstandings through communication.

Teachers may implement social strategies through pair work, group discussions, peer teaching, cooperative vocabulary tasks, role-play, and information-gap activities. For example, students can work in pairs to identify unfamiliar words in a reading passage, discuss their possible meanings, and explain their interpretations to the class. In another activity, one student may describe a target word without mentioning it directly, while a partner attempts to identify the word from the description. These activities encourage learners to explain meanings, listen to others, and practise vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Asking the teacher or classmates for clarification is also a social strategy. When learners encounter unfamiliar words, they can request explanations, examples, synonyms, or translations. Teachers should encourage such questions and provide opportunities for students to share their understanding of new vocabulary. However, peer explanations should be monitored when necessary to ensure that misunderstandings do not become established.

Social strategies can make vocabulary learning more interactive and provide additional opportunities for exposure and practice. They may also help learners develop confidence in using English and increase classroom participation. Their effectiveness, however, depends on clear instructions, purposeful task design, and the teacher's ability to ensure that all learners participate meaningfully.

2.7.3. Memory Strategies

Memory strategies, sometimes associated with mnemonic techniques, help learners establish mental connections that make vocabulary easier to remember and retrieve. These strategies are based on linking new information with existing knowledge through associations, images, categories, personal experiences, and other meaningful relationships. Teachers can use them to help learners move beyond memorizing isolated words and develop stronger connections between word forms and meanings.

One commonly used memory strategy is imagery, which involves associating words with mental pictures or visual representations. Teachers may present pictures, drawings, or real objects to help learners connect a word with its meaning. For example, pictures of different types of weather can help learners understand and remember words such as sunny, cloudy, windy, and rainy. Similarly, teachers can use semantic grouping to organize vocabulary into related categories, such as food, transportation, occupations, or environmental features.

The keyword method is another possible memory technique. It involves associating an unfamiliar word with a familiar-sounding word or image to create a memorable connection. Teachers may also use word association, personal examples, and physical actions to strengthen learners' recall. For instance, learners may remember action verbs more effectively when they perform or observe the actions represented by words such as jump, clap, and stretch. This approach can be particularly useful for concrete vocabulary and activities involving physical responses.

Teachers can further support memory through word families, semantic maps, and connections between new vocabulary and learners' previous knowledge. When learners organize words according to meaningful relationships, they may find it easier to recall them and recognize their connections. Nevertheless, memory techniques should be selected carefully because not every technique is equally suitable for every word or learner. Teachers should combine meaningful associations with contextualized practice and opportunities to use vocabulary in communication.

2.7.4. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies involve the deliberate manipulation, organization, and practice of vocabulary through learning activities that do not necessarily require complex mental associations. They often include repetition, note-taking, vocabulary lists, flashcards, copying words, organizing vocabulary records, and practicing spelling or pronunciation. Teachers can introduce these techniques to help learners study new vocabulary systematically and reinforce their knowledge through repeated engagement.

Repetition is a common cognitive strategy in which learners encounter, pronounce, read, write, or use words several times. Teachers may organize oral repetition, written exercises, short review activities, and sentence-construction tasks to reinforce vocabulary knowledge. However, repetition is likely to be more useful when combined with meaningful engagement rather than performed mechanically without attention to meaning or context.

Vocabulary notebooks provide another practical cognitive strategy. Teachers can encourage students to record unfamiliar words together with their meanings, pronunciations, grammatical forms, example sentences, synonyms, antonyms, or collocations. Organizing vocabulary records in this way helps learners maintain a personal collection of useful words for later review. Teachers may also encourage students to arrange words alphabetically, thematically, or according to their communicative functions.

Flashcards and word lists can likewise support vocabulary practice. Flashcards may contain a word on one side and its meaning, definition, picture, or example on the other. They can be used for individual study, pair work, and classroom review. Word lists may help learners identify and revise important vocabulary from a particular lesson or reading passage. Nevertheless, teachers should ensure that these materials encourage both recognition and recall and, where possible, connect word meanings with appropriate usage. Cognitive strategies can support organized and independent vocabulary study, particularly when learners are given clear guidance on how to use them. Their effectiveness can be enhanced by combining repeated practice with contextual examples, self-testing, and communicative activities.

2.7.5. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies refer to the approaches learners use to plan, monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own vocabulary learning. Unlike strategies that focus directly on discovering or remembering words, metacognitive strategies help learners make informed decisions about what to learn, how to allocate their time, which techniques to use, and

how to evaluate their progress. Teachers play an important role in developing these skills by explicitly guiding learners to become more independent and reflective vocabulary learners.

Planning is an important component of metacognitive learning. Teachers can encourage students to set vocabulary learning goals, identify important words from their lessons, allocate time for review, and establish realistic targets. For example, learners may decide to study a manageable number of useful words each week and practise using them in sentences. Such planning can help them approach vocabulary learning systematically rather than waiting until an examination or assignment is approaching.

Monitoring involves checking one's understanding and progress during learning. Teachers can encourage students to ask themselves whether they understand a word, can recall its meaning without assistance, recognize it in a text, and use it correctly in a sentence. Self-testing, vocabulary quizzes, progress records, and reflection activities can help learners identify words that require additional practice.

Evaluation is another important metacognitive process. Learners need to assess whether their vocabulary learning techniques are effective and decide whether adjustments are necessary. For instance, a student who repeatedly forgets words after copying their definitions may benefit from additional contextual practice, flashcards, or spaced review. Teachers can support this process by discussing the strengths and limitations of different learning techniques and helping students select approaches suited to their needs.

Prioritizing vocabulary is also relevant to metacognitive learning. Learners may encounter more unfamiliar words than they can study in detail at a given time. Teachers can help them distinguish between essential vocabulary that requires immediate attention and less important words whose meanings may be inferred from context. This does not mean that unfamiliar vocabulary should always be ignored; rather, learners should develop the ability to make purposeful decisions about their learning priorities.

Metacognitive strategies are important because they encourage students to take greater responsibility for vocabulary development and continue learning beyond the classroom. By planning, monitoring, and evaluating their progress, learners can identify difficulties, use their study time more effectively, and develop greater independence in language learning.

2.7.6. Consolidation Strategies

Consolidation strategies involve activities designed to strengthen learners' knowledge of vocabulary after they have initially discovered or learned the meanings of words. Discovering a word's meaning does not automatically ensure that the learner will remember it over time or use it appropriately. Therefore, teachers need to provide repeated opportunities for learners to revisit, retrieve, practise, and apply vocabulary in different contexts.

Teachers can facilitate consolidation through systematic review, retrieval practice, spaced repetition, vocabulary games, sentence construction, storytelling, reading activities, dialogue practice, and writing assignments. For example, after introducing vocabulary related to environmental protection, a teacher may ask students to use the words in sentences, discuss environmental problems in groups, write a short paragraph, and revisit the vocabulary in a later lesson. Such activities provide multiple opportunities to encounter and use the same words in meaningful situations.

Recycling previously taught vocabulary is particularly important. Teachers should revisit words across different lessons rather than treating vocabulary as a topic that is completed after a single presentation. Previously learned words can be incorporated into reading comprehension exercises, oral discussions, writing tasks, and classroom instructions. This repeated exposure helps learners strengthen their understanding and retrieve vocabulary when needed.

Feedback and correction also contribute to consolidation. Teachers can identify inaccurate word choices, misunderstandings, pronunciation difficulties, and grammatical errors, then provide explanations and opportunities for improvement. Encouraging students to revise their own sentences and practise corrected forms can further reinforce learning.

Consolidation strategies are especially important for developing productive vocabulary knowledge because they encourage learners to use words rather than merely recognize them. Through regular practice, meaningful retrieval, and application in different contexts, learners can strengthen their ability to use vocabulary accurately and confidently in communication.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to capture the current status of vocabulary teaching strategies.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants were all 20 EFL teachers from Dabat Secondary School (n=12) and Dabat Preparatory School (n=8) instructing grades 9-12.

3.3. Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was selected the two schools due to proximity and accessibility. A comprehensive (census) sampling technique included all 20 available teachers.

3.4. Instrument of Data Collection

Questionnaire: A structured tool adapted from Schmitt (1997) with 32 close-ended items on perceptions (5-point Likert scale) and strategy use (5-point frequency scale).

Interview: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 randomly selected teachers to gather detailed qualitative data.

3.7. Techniques of Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages). Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Teachers' Questionnaire

Demographics (Table 1): The 20 participants were predominantly male (75%), aged 31-35, held Bachelor's degrees (85%), and had 6-10 years of experience (70%).

Perception (Table 2): Teachers demonstrated overwhelmingly positive perceptions. A strong majority (100% combined) agreed that vocabulary is vital for academic study and for developing other language skills. Most (90%) believed it requires regular practice and critical thinking. Notably, 80% found it interesting.

Strategies Used:

The strategies were ranked from most to least frequently used:

Determination Strategies (Most Used): Guessing from context (35% always) and using English dictionaries (45% usually) were predominant.

Memory Strategies: Teaching spelling (40% usually) and using physical actions were common.

Cognitive Strategies: Keeping a vocabulary notebook was frequent (35% usually, 40% sometimes).

Social Strategies (Less Used): Strategies like asking colleagues for translations or meanings were used infrequently (40% rarely).

Metacognitive Strategies (Least Used): Using English media (songs, movies) and spaced repetition were the least utilized strategies.

4.2. Results of Teachers Interview

The interviews reinforced the questionnaire findings:

Perception: All interviewees held a positive view, stating vocabulary is fundamental to academic success and all language skills, requiring continuous practice.

Most Frequent Strategies: Most teachers reported frequently using context clues and English dictionaries. A minority reported focusing on word parts, spelling, and notebooks.

Least Frequent Strategies: Teachers confirmed rarely using social strategies (consulting colleagues), metacognitive strategies (using media, self-testing), and cognitive strategies like labeling objects.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that while teachers highly value vocabulary instruction, their pedagogical practices are limited. They rely heavily on a narrow set of strategies (like context clues and dictionaries) and significantly underutilize a wider range of effective techniques, particularly social and metacognitive strategies, which are crucial for promoting learner autonomy and deeper word knowledge. his disparity indicates a substantial gap between classroom implementation and pedagogical belief. According to the results, teachers might not have time-efficient framework models or systematic training for incorporating interactive, higher-order vocabulary routines into their regular lectures. Therefore, closing this gap necessitates focused professional development that goes beyond providing vocabulary resources to actively scaffolding how educators might support student-led, reflective word-learning techniques.

5.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

- Balanced Emphasis: Allocate instructional time and importance to vocabulary commensurate with other language skills.
- Professional Development: Provide teachers with training on a diverse array of vocabulary teaching strategies to move beyond traditional methods.
- Promote Learner Autonomy: Train teachers to foster independent learning in students by explicitly teaching strategies like contextual guessing.
- Integrate Collaborative Strategies: Encourage the conscious integration of underused social (collaborative) strategies into daily lesson plans.

Strategy Guidance: Teachers should not only use these strategies but also explicitly teach and guide students on how to apply them independently for effective vocabulary acquisition.

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