



Examining the Implementation of English Vocabulary Teaching Methods in EFL/ESL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to uncover the English vocabulary teaching methods implemented by English teachers of lower-secondary and secondary-level teachers in their classroom instruction. The data were gathered from 26 (twenty-six) teachers from different government-funded community schools located in three local bodies, viz. Birendranagar Municipality, Bheriganga Municipality, and Panchapuri Municipality of Surkhet district. The total sample was selected using a simple random sampling procedure. A set of questionnaires comprising closed-ended questions was framed as the major tool for data collection. The study indicated that metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and social methods are mostly implemented by the teachers when teaching English vocabulary. In EFL/ESL classrooms, it was found that metacognitive and social methods were frequently used by English teachers when teaching English vocabulary. It is concluded that when adopting cognitive strategies, the teachers guess important questions and memorize the answers, memorize meanings, consult the dictionary, memorize grammatical rules, consult guides, and practice textbooks. They occasionally teach English newspapers, listen to the news on the radio, and watch television. The findings show that the English teachers discussed and consulted on the difficult words and helped the students

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learn English vocabulary when teaching using social strategies. This study also shows common challenges confronted by teachers while teaching English vocabulary due to students' and teachers' limited knowledge of the words, teaching methods, time constraints, and word choice.

1.0 Introduction

The building block of a language is its vocabulary. Language cannot be imagined in the absence of vocabulary. The breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge play a central role in reading comprehension, showing the importance of well-developed lexical knowledge in second-language reading (wang&Zhang,2025). Richards et al. (1999, p. 400) state, "Vocabulary refers to lexemes with compound words, single words, and idioms." Harmer (1991, p.153) states, "Language structures provide the skeleton, and the vocabulary supplies major organs and flesh". Teaching terminology is, thus, a procedure for building the skill of using the right words in the right places. Vocabulary is the most authentic aspect of language; without words, we are unable to convey our intended message. So, EFL/ESL learners ought to acquire the lexis of the language by selecting the right words. A speaker makes a good impression on the hearer. Thus, the foundational element of any language is its vocabulary. A word is spoken voluntarily to express ideas or intentions in language. Language connects social, political, economic, and geographic spaces. Understanding vocabulary is vital for achieving success in second language learning and develops learners' overall linguistic skills (Lai et al., 2025). In the global scenario, for an individual to be recognized as a dignified member of society, people must possess communication skills in English. Nowadays, not only in education but also in trade, journalism, diplomacy, IT, and more, English holds a firm position. 500 years ago in the Western world, English became the most spoken foreign language due to Latin being the main language for industry, education, government, business, and religion (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p. 3). Thus, it is needless to say that vocabulary is the basis of any language. The absence of vocabulary in a speaker leads to the breakdown of communication. Acquiring vocabulary has a pivotal place in the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in ESL/EFL contexts (Zhu et al., 2024). Words are integral parts of any language and the relevant modern-world knowledge that is needed for everyone. In the absence of adequate vocabulary, people are left embarrassed when they are unable to express themselves in the language they are attempting to master. To learn the target language, it is mandatory to learn its vocabulary first. Wallace (1982, p.9) claims that there is relatively little that



has been written about the teaching and learning of target language vocabulary because teaching a foreign language involves teaching its vocabulary.

Chomsky (1968, p.7) opposes that "A child can construct an infinite number of structures because there are only a finite set of grammatical rules. These rules are built-in into the memory of the child, but this conception is not applicable in the case of vocabulary because there are various ways to use words depending on the context."

In the same way, Wilkins (2001, p. 3) states that very little can be learned without the target language's grammar; without vocabulary, nothing can be expressed. Lexis is the salient feature of language, without which no language can live in the world among human beings. Every language is made up of vocabulary items, which are the grand building blocks of communication with one another. The greater the number of vocabulary items we possess, the greater the possibility of communication.

Consequently, vocabulary instruction for ESL/EFL learners is of great significance, since it is the most important linguistic unit without which language learning is virtually impossible. Although one may be proficient in the target language, communication may be difficult without vocabulary, which is a vital element of language.

1.1 Research Questions

R-1. What kinds of methods do English teachers at lower-secondary and secondary levels apply in teaching vocabulary?

R-2. What are the issues that arise during the implementation of these methods?

2.0 Literature Review

Dubiner (2017) stated that the 'use of structured vocabulary notebooks significantly benefits second language learning in terms of increasing learners' lexical knowledge and fostering autonomous learning behaviours. The study finds that systematic self-regulated notebooks help to retain target words and enhance pedagogical reflective practices that support both long-term vocabulary learning and explicit classroom instruction.

Zou and Zou (2017) carried out research named "A Study of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Ethnic Minority Students" at Leshan Normal University. This study aimed to characterize the vocabulary learning approach of Han students at Leshan Normal University, who were members of ethnic minorities.



To participate in this study, 250 non-English majors from different departments were chosen at random. Data for this study were gathered by the researcher using interviews and a research questionnaire. The data analysis of the study showed that the main ways that Han and ethnic minority students differed from each other were using dictionaries, guessing, selective attention, visual repetition, and mother tongues when learning vocabulary. Alghamdi and Al Ahmed (2018) conducted a study on the efficacy of seven learner-centred methods for vocabulary teaching versus conventional instruction among 248 female Saudi university students. The findings reveal that active methods are effective in vocabulary acquisition, and role-playing and blended learning were the most effective methods. Susanti (2018) examined a case study of vocabulary learning strategies used by male and female ELT Students. In this study, the vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) used by male and female students at IAIN Salatiga was described, along with any gender-based differences in VLS usage among students enrolled in the school's English study program. The method used by male and female students in the English department at IAIN Salatiga to acquire English vocabulary was examined in this qualitative case study. Thirteen men and twenty-two women, both IAIN Salatiga English majors in their second year of study, participated. Aiming to learn about the students' methods for learning vocabulary, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire and an interview. Second language learning is a process-based activity. Vocabulary learning is a prerequisite to second or foreign language learning. Yousefi and Biria (2018) mentioned that structured vocabulary teaching had a significant and positive effect on students' vocabulary skills, which was influenced by teaching methods and learners' attributes. Yogyakarta (2019) conducted the study "Vocabulary learning strategies in Madrasah Aliyah". In this study, the researcher looked at the methods used at a Madrasah Aliyah to learn vocabulary. This study involved 135 students studying religion, social science, and natural science at Madrasah Aliyah in Sleman Regency, Special District of Yogyakarta. This study made use of the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire created by Yeh and Wang (2004). In this study, the author employed a quantitative research methodology. To collect data, the author employed an open-ended questionnaire. Webb et al. (2020) focused on the value of focused activities such as flashcards, word lists, writing tasks, and gap-filling activities for vocabulary acquisition, while citing the need for recurrent repetition for enduring retention. Rezvan, Firooz & Mohammad (2021) carried out research titled "A study of vocabulary learning strategies among high and low Iranian English vocabulary learners. ". The objectives of this study were to define the research and analyse how Iranians who speak English well and those who don't learn vocabulary differently. The research design used for this study was a qualitative case study. Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire was completed by 218 EFL students, 111 of whom were high and 107 of whom were low English vocabulary learners, after they had finished vocabulary level tests and a vocabulary learning



strategies survey. Alwehebi and Ghareeb (2021) conducted a study called "Strategies for Second Language Learning in EFL Textbooks of Saudi High School: A Content Analysis." Based on the learning strategy lists derived from Chamot and Schmitt, the study's goal was to examine the second language learning strategies (LLS) across three units in each of the six new secondary school EFL textbooks, "Mega Goal." These tactics included reading techniques, vocabulary acquisition techniques, and speaking and writing techniques. Chandaran and Hashim (2022) carried out research entitled "Language Learning Strategies Used by ESL Undergraduate Students". This study sought to investigate the language learning strategies (LLS) employed by students at a private university in Selangor. One hundred and twenty freshmen from five different university faculties participated in this study. A quantitative survey research design was used in this investigation. The primary data collection tool was a modified version of the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), developed by Oxford in 1990. Utilizing descriptive statistics, the respondents' use of LLS was investigated. Among 200 first-year undergraduates at a private university, the results indicate that there are more female students than male students. 81 students, or 40.5% of the total, are male, and 119 students, or 59.5% of the total, are female. Furthermore, the majority of respondents 79.5% are in the 18-23 age range, suggesting that respondents tended to use their preferred LLS to get better at the language. Although the aforementioned research is fascinating for vocabulary training, it cannot be used to teach English vocabulary words. After looking through the pertinent literature, we found that no studies had been conducted on the methods employed by English teachers at the secondary school level to teach vocabulary words in the language. Lee and Lee (2022) stated that educators who articulated word elucidations orally made impressive vocabulary improvements. The study indicated that successful vocabulary learning and retention need a combination of explicit instruction, deliberate practice, teachers' descriptions, and adequate exposure. Tomak (2022) carried out research titled "Language learning strategies used by Turkish EFL Learners to improve their reading skill." This study looked at the strategies used to improve reading skills by students who started at the A1 (beginning) level at the School of Foreign Languages at one of the state universities in Istanbul, Turkey. This study used a variety of data collection techniques to analyze a case based on a qualitative research design. Interviews and questionnaires were used as research tools to collect data from the study's participants. Out of the 169 students in the same class, ten were chosen at random. Additionally, they were chosen from among those who would receive all departmental instruction in English if they passed the proficiency test. Consequently, three high achievers and three low achievers were chosen from among the group. These four students were among those who performed at an average level. To evaluate their reading abilities, monitor the methods they employed to finish the assignments, and confirm that they were adhering to their statements during the interviews, they

were also led to think-aloud protocols right after the interviews. According to the study's findings, the conscientious group changed their first-term strategies and the assignments given to the students in the second term, but the strategies of the other group members seemed to stay the same.

3.0 Methods and Results

The study adopted a quantitative survey design. The study was conducted in three local bodies in Surkhet district. Twenty-six (26) English teachers were sampled using a simple random sampling technique: Ten (10) teachers were lower secondary-level, and sixteen (16) were secondary-level teachers. A set of Likert-scale survey questionnaires was framed to gather the data. Descriptive statistics were used to present and analyse the data. Frequencies and percentages were obtained using SPSS software. Tables were used for presenting and analyzing the data. The gathered data were analysed and interpreted considering four methods of vocabulary teaching, viz. cognitive, social, metacognitive, and memory methods, to determine how the teachers implement vocabulary teaching techniques within the EFL/EFL context. The study was carried out under the following subtopics: a. Cognitive methods applied by English teachers.

b. Social methods applied by English Teachers.

c. Metacognitive methods applied by English Teachers.

d. Memory methods applied by English Teachers.

3.1 Responses Regarding the Cognitive Methods

Table1

S. N	Rating Scale	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Always
	Items	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1	Guessing from the textual context in	-		83	17
2	Using the keyword method	3	-	97	-
3	Teach a monolingual dictionary.	10	25	65	-
4	Using the internet related to the	5	88	7	-
5	Connecting the word to its	8	19	73	-
6	Teach the words of an idiom	9	-	19	72



7	Keep a dictionary as reference	3	72	25	-
8	Use a bilingual dictionary.	1	84	8	7
9	Read an English newspaper.	5	92	-	3
10	Teach glossary sections of the book.	12	7	81	-
11	Teach the new words by definition.	-	4	5	91
12	Consulting the practice book to	6	-	90	4
13	Using the Encyclopaedia	3	10	80	7

Table 1 shows that English vocabulary instruction methods among secondary teachers indicate differing levels of cognitive strategy adoption. The majority of teachers frequently employed approaches that involve analysing hypotheses from reading materials (83%), utilized keyword techniques (97%), and consulted monolingual dictionaries (80%). Internet utilization for educational purposes is negligible, with 88% seldom using it. Strategies such as associating words with synonyms and antonyms (73%) and consistently teaching idioms (72%) were more predominant. The use of dictionaries as reference material is infrequent (75% rarely), whereas dictionary consultation exhibits variability. Reading English newspapers is infrequent, with 92% of individuals never engaged in this activity. The utilization of the glossary is moderate, with 81% used it often. Acquiring new vocabulary and consulting practice books are prevalent strategies, with more than fifty percent consistently employing them. The use of encyclopaedia is negligible, with 7% of individuals hardly employing them. In summary, a majority of teachers (66.03%) employed cognitive strategies occasionally, whereas (33.07%) utilized them consistently, revealing a varied strategy in teaching vocabulary. Overall, teachers are more motivated to teach English in an electronic environment, but the high percentage of them who lack small dictionaries to learn new words may be related to the time it takes them to write new English vocabulary and its definitions in Nepali.

3.2 Responses Regarding Social Methods

Table 2

S.N.	Rating Scale	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Always
	Items	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1	Asking an English teacher to translate it into	13%	17%	11%	59%
2	Ask the teacher to translate it into Nepali	9.23%	5.66%	24%	61.11%
3	Teaching by group work in class	2.23%	14.43%	23%	60.34%

4	Teaching by pair work in class	1.7%	11%	23.5%	63.8%
5	Asking my brother or sister for a Nepali translation	11.21%	13%	11.56%	64.23%
6	Asking the subject teacher in school	5.11%	9.31%	27.13%	58.45%
8	Note down the meaning during the teacher's	1.66%	30%	23.33%	45%
9	Teaching the words by interacting with native English speakers	18.33%	38.33%	26.66%	16.66%
10	Teaching a word list prepared by the subject teacher	2.31%	19.56%	28%	50.13%

Table 2 vividly shows that English teachers frequently implemented social methods for teaching English vocabulary at lower secondary and secondary -level English teachers. The predominant approaches include asking for translation from their teachers, collaborating in pairs or groups, and seeking assistance from siblings or subject teachers. 58.45% of students frequently requested translations from their English teacher, while 64.23 % depended on Nepali translations. Collaborative group work 60.34% was and pair work 63.8% were also extensively practised. However, strategies that include engaging private tutors or native English speakers were employed much less frequently. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of teachers "always" adopted social methods, underlining their significant role in English vocabulary teaching.

3.3 Responses Regarding Metacognitive Methods

Table 3

S.N.	Rating Scale Strategies	Never %	Seldom %	Occasionally %	Always %
1	Having the practice of writing for	5.23%	11.17%	23.32%	60.28%
2	Using English-language media (songs, movies, and the internet) to increase new	2.1%	18.23%	27%	52.67%
3	Connecting the words that are already	1.32%	9.36%	31%	58.32%
4	Take notes in class.	2%	3%	15.33%	79.67%
5	Memorizing the parts of speech.	2.16%	11.21%	37.62%	49.01%



6	Teach an English language program.	21.66%	18.33%	41.66%	18.33%
7	Testing new words through writing	3.33%	25%	38.33%	33.33%
8	Studying new words many times	0%	10%	43.33%	46.66%
9	Teach the words through the computer.	6.66%	21.66%	41.66%	30%
10	Teach the words by using interactive conversation.	2.43%	10.36%	20%	67.21%
11	Skipping and passing the new words	13.33%	31.66%	23.33%	31.66%
12	Teaching the words by playing games such as crossword puzzles.	6.66%	6.66%	48.33%	38.66%
13	Paying attention when someone is speaking in English.	2.3%	7.1%	33.4%	57.2%
14	Teaching new words written in English magazines.	8.3%	15.33%	49%	27.37%

The data presented in Table 3 reveal diverse levels of implementation of methods among English teachers and the degree to which the educators of the study site apply metacognitive methods in their regular English classroom instruction. A substantial proportion of educators (60.28%) routinely evaluated students' writing during vocabulary acquisition, while an extra 35% do so frequently. The utilization of English-language media (songs, films, and the internet) for vocabulary acquisition is common, with 51.66% indicating they "always" used this method. Furthermore, 48.33% of teachers consistently associated new vocabulary with existing knowledge, whereas none indicated a total disregard for this approach. Note-taking is a prevalent strategy, utilized by 79.67% of teachers consistently. A majority of teachers employed the memorization of parts of speech, with 66.66% employing it regularly. Engaging in English language courses demonstrates a diverse response, with 41.66% participating occasionally, whereas 21.33% did not engage in this activity at all. The documentation of new vocabulary is practiced to a moderate extent, with 33.33% doing so consistently and 38.33% employing it infrequently. Repetition-based vocabulary instruction was employed by 46.66% of educators, whereas 41.66% intermittently incorporated computer-assisted vocabulary teaching. Thirty percent of teachers frequently employed interactive dialogue in their instruction, while 6.66% indicated that they never utilized this method. Omitting unfamiliar words during English reading is a strategy employed to varying degrees, with 31.66% utilizing it frequently. Vocabulary instruction via games, such as crossword puzzles, is utilized by 48.33% of educators occasionally, while 38.33% apply this method consistently. Emphasis on spoken English is a prevalent strategy, with 60% of educators consistently prioritizing English dialogues. Forty-five percent of teachers occasionally employ English magazines for vocabulary instruction, whereas ten percent never utilize this method. The findings

demonstrate that metacognitive strategies are essential to English language instruction, with 43% of teachers consistently utilizing them, 37% employing them occasionally, 15.5% using them infrequently, and 4.5% never implementing them. The results indicate a pronounced preference for metacognitive strategies in English language instruction.

3.4 Responses Regarding the Memory Methods

Table 4

S.N.	Rating Scale Strategies	Never %	Seldom %	Occasionally %	Always %
1.	Memorizing the meaning of affixes and roots.	2.30%	24%	51.3%	25%
2.	Memorizing the parts of speech	0%	8.33%	55%	36.66%
3.	Doing verbal repetition and teaching by heart	1.66%	16.66%	36.66%	45%
4.	Creating a mental image to remember the words	0%	13.33%	33.33%	51.66%
5.	Teaching new words to construct sentences	0%	10%	35%	55%
6.	Teaching how the word is spelled	0%	16.66%	36.66%	46.66%
7.	Saying the new words loudly while studying them	8.33%	11.66%	20%	60%
8.	Group the words to study them	3.33%	25%	33.33%	38.33%
9.	Imagine the word's meaning (i.e., if the word is a noun, I make a mental image different from its verb form)	3.33%	21.66%	41.66%	33.33%
10.	Teaching the words with a pictorial representation of their meaning	5%	28.33%	38.33%	28.33%

The above table reveals multiple methods, including memory-oriented methods such as the memorization of suffixes and roots 51.3% reported occasionally, parts of speech (55% occasionally), and verbal repetition 45% consistently). Teachers consistently employed visualization 51.66% always, sentence construction (55% always), spelling emphasis (46.66% always), and clear pronunciation (66% always). Additional methods encompassed word grouping 38.33% consistently, visualizing word meanings 33.33% consistently, and asking for teacher assistance 38.33%. The research highlights various vocabulary instruction strategies that integrate cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social methods.



The study sought to ascertain the vocabulary teaching strategies employed by lower secondary and secondary English teachers of the study area in Surkhet district. The study focused on memory, social, cognitive, and metacognitive methods, based on the data gathered from 26 English teachers and analysed through statistical methods, viz. tables, frequencies, and percentages. The results indicated that English teachers frequently employed contextual guessing, synonyms and antonyms, glossaries, and dictionaries, yet exhibited minimal interest in reading English newspapers or consulting encyclopaedias. Social methods, including engaging English teachers to translate challenging subjects, were the most frequently used in their classroom teaching. The Educators implemented English-language media, note-taking, attentive listening, interactive activities, and verbal repetition, yet showed little interest in interacting with native speakers or using visual word representations. The study underlined that secondary-level EFL teachers proficiently utilized diverse teaching strategies, particularly prioritizing social strategies.

4.0 Discussion

The present study, ‘Examining the Implementation of English Vocabulary Teaching Methods in EFL/ESL Classrooms’, aims to investigate the vocabulary-teaching methods being implemented by English teachers at lower secondary and secondary level classes. It examines the vocabulary-teaching methods implemented by English teachers when teaching their students English vocabulary in EFL/ESL classrooms. It was found that, in implementing cognitive methods, the learners memorize the spellings of the words that they find significantly difficult. They memorize meanings, consult dictionaries, and memorize and practice from textbooks. The students were more dependent on their teachers. They take the teachers as the authentic source of English vocabulary. English teaching in the ESL/EFL context is considered quite challenging. The students, most of the time, asked the teachers to translate the word into their mother tongue. There were extensive practices of bilingual discussions at the time of teaching new vocabulary. For countries like Nepal, the situation is even more complicated. The classes are large. There is a lack of trained and qualified human resources in marginalized parts of these three local bodies of Surkhet. Supplementary learning materials are not easily available in the remote areas of Punchpuri, Bheriganga, and even in the remote areas of Birendranagar municipalities. The study site is topographically very diversified, where some places are well-facilitated and, on the contrary, most of the places are highly inaccessible. The entire sample of the study consisted of twenty-six (26) English teachers selected through random sampling. To gather the data, a closed-ended questionnaire was used. Nevertheless, the study reveals that when teaching English vocabulary, the teachers implemented social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive techniques. To date, the teachers seem to be quite reluctant in bringing changing in their instructional techniques. The old-fashioned techniques are being used to instruct the learners in an ESL/EFL situation.



5.0 Conclusion

The study found that the English teachers at the lower secondary level and secondary level use a variety of methods to teach vocabulary items. The students were found to be very reluctant to learn the vocabulary on their own. They preferred their mother tongue during classroom instruction. The EFL teachers used four different methods, viz., cognitive methods, social methods, metacognitive methods, and memory methods. The findings of the study indicate that the teachers used multiple activities to enhance the number of new vocabulary items in students. They used computers and other ICT tools to help students learn English vocabulary. The students liked to have extensive use of their mother tongue for better understanding of the vocabulary taught in classroom instruction. The teachers, during the teaching, frequently used English-language media (songs, movies, and the internet) to increase the amount of new vocabulary in students, complete their assignments every day, read aloud, and compete in speech and essay contests. Another method of thinking for them is to read English newspapers or tune in to the radio or television for English news. For social methods, sharing knowledge with others, assisting others who were struggling with English lessons, and discussing difficult subjects with group members came to light. The students were specifically keen on having discussions, which the researcher found out. The study concludes that the English teachers' vocabulary instruction methods have a significant role in fostering ESL/EFL learners' vocabulary level.

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